

## SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON THE REDEVELOPMENT OF CAMPBELL BARRACKS

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Senator Dean Smith  
Chairman

This submission has been prepared on behalf of concerned Australian Defence Force (ADF) families who reside in Seaward Village, Swanbourne WA, and on behalf of various other tax-payers whose interests will be detrimentally affected if the sale of Commonwealth /Defence Force land in Seaward Village for a civilian housing development were to proceed as currently proposed by Defence Housing Australia (DHA).

This submission might appear at first glance to be outside the scope of your Committee's Terms of Reference in that DHA's development proposals were placed outside of the Committee's preview by Government in 2014. However, we contend that in cases where DHA development proposals may impact directly and adversely on works projects which your Committee has been entrusted to overview, then the Committee could be seen as remiss if it did not examine the possible adverse impact of those DHA projects, and make its decisions and recommendations, accordingly.

We support the Redevelopment Proposal for Campbell Barracks that is before your Committee. However, we are most concerned that DHA's intention to sell Defence land in Seaward Village for civilian housing will undermine current security arrangements not only in Seaward Village but it will impact directly on the security, operational and training activities of the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) and on the high security facilities and equipment located in Campbell Barracks.

We contend that the DHA proposal to sell land in Seaward Village must be viewed in the context of the current Australian national terrorist threat - the level of threat against Australia has never been higher in peace time than it is today, and according to the 'experts' it is unlikely to be lowered in the foreseeable future. Moreover, it must be assumed that SASR, its personnel and their families are potential targets for terrorist attack, and all reasonable precautions must be observed to minimise that threat.

DHA's plans for the sale of land in Seaward Village will allow civilian housing to encroach deep into the Village precinct up to the inner security fences of Campbell Barracks. There can be little doubt that the presence of 159 civilian houses, some positioned on the highest part of the Village where they overlooking large areas inside the Barracks, and others located in close proximity to the Barrack's secure area will create additional and unnecessary security concerns for SASR. It may even cause new restrictions on the way SASR trains and operates for fear of antagonising the new civilian residents. In addition, the introduction of civilian housing into Seaward Village will erode the sense of personal safety and security of the ADF families living in the Village. It will be bad for morale, both for the families and for the soldiers who are frequently deployed away from home for long periods of time.

While the Committee may not have a parliamentary mandate to examine DHA development proposals per se, it is nevertheless aware already of DHA's intention to introduce civilian housing into Seaward Village and some idea of the potential impact that civilian encroachment will have on the security and effectiveness of SASR's training and operations. It is most important for the ongoing effectiveness of SASR that these consequences are identified and assessed before they become reality. Therefore, we request that the Committee examines the impact and consequences of the civilian housing proposal in Seaward Village as planned, in relation to:

- The works development proposals for Campbell Barracks that are currently before the Committee, and
- The impact on other facilities in Campbell Barracks that have been approved by the Committee in the past.

### **Background - Proposal in 1991 to sell land in Seaward Village for civilian housing**

In 1987 DHA was established to manage all ADF married quarters. In the early 1990s it put forward a proposal to replace the 1950s era quarters in Seaward Village with new houses, the costs of which it would be partially funded by selling a parcel of land inside the Village for civilian housing.

The ADF rejected the idea of selling land and directed that Seaward Village was to remain an exclusively military married quarter area as it exists today. A brief summary of why the ADF rejected the land sale option were included in a DHA document dated April 1991 (Reference A, below). The following extracts have been taken from that document

#### Introduction

The SASR has particular security requirements which have resulted in the **decision to redevelop Seaward Village as a wholly military residential estate...**

**The Authority has agreed to conditions which principally mean that the housing and land will not be sold into the private sector while SASR or a similar special unit is maintained at Swanbourne.**

#### Operational Requirements of the SASR

4.3 The Regiment's training commitment imposes **requirements for security in three different forms:**

- (a) Retention of existing facilities – **security of tenure;**
- (b) **Security of training and operational activities** within the Barracks; and
- (c) Safety, piece of mind and well-being of families – **family security.**

4.5 SASR has developed a large range of specialist facilities within Campbell Barracks ... to meet its particular operational and training requirements. Defence has made substantial and long term investment in facilities in Campbell Barracks. ... Therefore **development of land adjacent to Campbell Barracks must not be permitted to pose a threat to SASR's continued tenure in the location.**

4.6 Much of the SASR's day-to-day training and preparation for current operations are conducted within the Barracks. ... These activities need to be conducted in the open and must be secure from view, both casual and determined. **Concealment from civilian development in Seaward Village would be difficult to achieve.**

4.8 Training is often undertaken at irregular times throughout the day and night. ... With the Army community immediately adjacent to the Barracks, SASR is relatively free to conduct training with minimal restrictions. The civilian residential areas being marginally more removed are subject to some impact but the distance allows SASR to manage its training activities ... and minimise this. **Any new development adjacent to the Barracks must not be allowed to affect the conduct of training activities within the Barracks by imposing additional constraints.**

Those three considerations apply equally, if not more so, today and all three issues will certainly be studied by the Parliamentary Works Committee in their consideration of the security and long term tenure of the a strategic base in Swanbourne.

If land is sold for civilian housing in Seaward Village it must seriously question the long term viability of the area for a strategic Army /ADF base, and put at risk unnecessarily the security and peace of mind of military families in the Village.

For strategic planning purposes alone the proposal to sell land in Seaward Village must not go ahead for fear of undermining the continued development of Campbell Barracks as a strategic base, and its viability as such into the future.

Reference A. 'Housing Redevelopment at Seaward Village, Swanbourne WA. Statement of Evidence and Supporting Drawings for Presentation to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.' Defence Housing Authority document dated April 1991.

T.J. NOLAN  
Brig (Ret)  
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A.J.LEAHY  
(Maj) Ret  
21 Jul 2015