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Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre Hawk Compound Redevelopment Project

Community Consultation Report

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Executive Summary

1. The Department of Home Affairs has referred the Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre (YHIDC) Hawk Compound Redevelopment Project to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on 02 September 2025.
2. The purpose of the project is to redevelop the Hawk Compound within YHIDC to meet the capability needs of Australia's Immigration Detention Network (IDN), address safety and security risks associated with the existing facilities and meet modern National Construction Code building compliance.
3. The Department of Home Affairs undertook community consultation through written correspondence with members of Local, State and Federal Government, and the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation in Northam, Western Australia.
4. As part of the community consultation process, the Department of Home Affairs received feedback from the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation. The consultation process identified the following requests:
 - a. The Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation requested to receive the existing demountable buildings scheduled for removal. The Department advised that the buildings were unsuitable for reuse due to their age, poor condition, and limited adaptability.
 - b. A request was made for the Department to provide an Activity Notice under Ballardong People Indigenous Land Use Agreement between the South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council Aboriginal Corporation and the State of Western Australia. The Department advised that all proposed works will be confined to Commonwealth-owned land within the existing YHIDC perimeter. As such, the Noongar Standard Heritage Agreement is not applicable to this project, and an Activity Notice under that agreement is not required.

Community Consultation Approach

5. As part of the planning for the proposed redevelopment of the Hawk Compound at YHIDC, the Department of Home Affairs consulted with the community through written correspondence to government officials and the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation in Northam, Western Australia.
6. The Department issued the following community consultation letters to the Federal, State, and Local Members of Government, on 23 May 2025:
 - a. Federal government member, Ms Trish Cook (MP), Member for Bullwinkel (WA).
 - b. State government member, Mr Lachlan Hunter (MLA), Legislative Assembly Member of the Parliament of Western Australia.
 - c. Local government member, Mr Chris Antonio, Shire President of Northam.
7. The letters described the proposed works to be undertaken by the Project, with an example provided at Attachment A. These letters outlined the proposed project timeline and allowed sufficient time for the recipients to review the information presented and, if required, seek further clarification or raise concerns with the Department with regards to the project prior to the Public Hearing.
8. The Department also issued a community consultation letter to the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation on 23 May 2025. The letter described the proposed works and associated timeline of the project, allowing sufficient time for the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation to seek further clarification or raise concerns with the Department with regards to the project prior to the Public Hearing. A copy of this letter is provided at Attachment B.

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Key Issues Raised

9. The following issues were raised by the community during the consultation process:
 - a. On 26 May 2025 the Department received a response from the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation. The response sought advice from the Department as to whether the existing demountable buildings within the Hawk Compound that will be demolished by the project could be repurposed for use by the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation. The Department's advice was that the buildings are not suitable for reuse as they are temporary in nature, have reached the end of their asset lifespan and are not readily adaptable for alternative community use without significant refurbishment.
 - b. On 31 July 2025 the Department received a response from the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation requesting that the Department issue an Activity Notice via a Noongar Standard Heritage Agreement, under the Ballardong People Indigenous Land Use Agreement between the South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council Aboriginal Corporation and the State of Western Australia. In response, the Department confirmed that all works will occur within the YHIDC perimeter on Commonwealth-owned land, specifically within the Hawk Compound. The site does not intersect with the registered site Avon River, and no approvals under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 are required. Based on this, the Department assessed that the Noongar Standard Heritage Agreement does not apply and an Activity Notice is not required. The Department acknowledged the potential for uncovering unknown cultural artefacts and advised it is open to further discussion on communication protocols for unexpected finds. The Head Contractor will be made aware of cultural sensitivities, restricted to existing road networks, and required to maintain environmental controls during construction. On 24 September 2025, the Department received acknowledgment from the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation confirming that the site is located entirely within Commonwealth land. Consequently, an Activity Notice is not required, and no further action is necessary.
10. The Department remains open to further community consultation, including providing briefings to Federal, State and Local Members of Government if requested. Any such activities will be further advised at the upcoming Hearing.

Attachments

- A. Example of Project Briefing Letter Issued to Federal, State, and Local Members of Government.
- B. Project Briefing Letter Issued to Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation.
- C. Status of Key Stakeholder Communications



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

President C R (Chris) Antonio

Shire President of Northam

PO Box 373

Northam WA 6401

M: [REDACTED]

E: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Antonio,

Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre Hawk Compound Redevelopment

I am writing to inform you of the proposed works at Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre (YHIDC), Mitchell Avenue, Northam, under the Hawk Compound Redevelopment Project, in your capacity as the Western Australian Member and President of Northam.

The current YHIDC Hawk Compound facilities pose significant risks to the safety and security of detainees. Since its establishment in 2012, the Hawk Compound has not undergone any changes. This project will deliver new and upgraded facilities, optimising use of the site. This will involve the demolition and removal of existing modular buildings and associated external works in the Hawk Compound, followed by the replacement of these facilities to accommodate high-risk detainees.

The proposed works will take place on Commonwealth owned land and will lead to the creation of local construction industry employment opportunities.

The estimated cost of the work is \$33 million. If supported by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PWC), it is expected that the works will commence in May 2026 and be completed by December 2026.

The PWC referral is likely to be held in July 2025, subject to confirmation from the Committee, which needs to be active and re-established for the project to proceed with referral, following the dissolution of the House of Representatives 28 March 2025. Additionally, the PWC Public Hearing is anticipated to take place in August 2025.

If you or your staff would like a personal briefing on the proposed project works, please contact myself via email at yhidc.redevelopment@homeaffairs.gov.au.

Yours faithfully,

Stephanie Cargill

First Assistant Secretary

Procurement, property and Contracts Division | Chief Operating Officer Group

Department of Home Affairs

23 May 2025



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

Mr Mathew Wilson

Chief Executive Officer, Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation
19 Peel Terrace, Northam, WA 6401, AUSTRALIA.
P: (08) 6607 7830
M: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Wilson

Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre Hawk Compound Redevelopment

I am writing to inform you of the proposed works at Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre (YHIDC), Mitchell Avenue, Northam, under the Hawk Compound Redevelopment Project, in your capacity as the Chief Executive Officer of the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation.

The current YHIDC Hawk Compound facilities present significant risks to the safety and security of detainees. Since its establishment in 2012, the Hawk Compound has not undergone any changes. This project will provide new and upgraded facilities, optimising the use of the site. It will involve the demolition and removal of existing modular buildings and associated external works in the Hawk Compound, followed by the construction of new facilities designed to accommodate high-risk detainees. There will be no increase in the total number of beds or the detainee population at the site.

The estimated cost of the redevelopment is \$33 million and is expected to generate local employment opportunities within the construction industry. Subject to approval by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PWC), the project is scheduled to commence in April 2026 and be completed by December 2026. The PWC referral is anticipated to take place in July 2025, contingent upon confirmation from the Committee, which must be re-established following the dissolution of the House of Representatives on 28 March 2025. Additionally, the PWC Public Hearing is expected to occur in August 2025.

The Department of Home Affairs has assessed the potential impacts on the local community. There will be no environmental, visual, or noise impacts, and there are no significant effects on the demand for or use of local facilities. The preferred construction methodology will involve modular construction, which will limit operational disruptions to YHIDC staff, detainees, and the local community. The project does not anticipate material impacts on local traffic from the construction or operation of the proposed facilities.

There are no known natural Indigenous or historical heritage items within the project area. The proposed works will take place on Commonwealth-owned land, specifically within the existing boundaries of the YHIDC site. Consultation with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage has confirmed that YHIDC spans two properties in Northam and the site does not intersect with the Avon River site boundary.

If you or your staff have any information about potential impacts or undisclosed Aboriginal heritage, or if you have questions or would like a personal briefing on the proposed project, please feel free to contact me via email at yhdc.redevelopment@homeaffairs.gov.au.

Yours faithfully,

Stephanie Cargill
First Assistant Secretary
Procurement, Property and Contracts Division | Chief Operating Officer group.
Department of Home Affairs.
23 May 2025

STATUS OF KEY STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

ORGANISATION AND MEMBER	NOTES
GOVERNMENT MEMBERS	
Ms Trish Cook (MP), Federal government member, Member for Bullwinkel (WA)	<p>23 May 2025. The Department of Home Affairs emailed a letter to Ms Trish Cook (MP), Federal government member, Member for Bullwinkel (WA), providing project information, contact details, community information session details and an invitation to contact the Department for a personal briefing.</p> <p>A response has not been received to date.</p>
Mr Lachlan Hunter, State government member, Legislative Assembly Member of the Parliament of Western Australia	<p>23 May 2025. The Department of Home Affairs emailed a letter to Mr Lachlan Hunter, State government member, Legislative Assembly Member of the Parliament of Western Australia, providing project information, contact details, community information session details and an invitation to contact the Department for a personal briefing.</p> <p>A response has not been received to date.</p>
Mr Chris Antonio, Local government member, Shire President of Northam	<p>23 May 2025. The Department of Home Affairs emailed a letter to Mr Chris Antonio, Local government member, Shire President of Northam, providing project information, contact details, community information session details and an invitation to contact the Department for a personal briefing.</p> <p>A response has not been received to date.</p>
COMMUNITY AND LOCAL INDIGENOUS GROUP	
Mr Mathew Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation	<p>23 May 2025. The Department of Home Affairs emailed a letter to Mr Mathew Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation, the relevant Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) for Northam Western Australia. The letter outlined the proposed scope of works, indicative timelines. The Department provided Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation with an opportunity to share any information regarding potential impacts or undisclosed Aboriginal heritage that may be relevant to the site and invitation for personal briefing.</p> <p>26 May 2025. The Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation raised a request to receive the existing demountable buildings within the Hawk Compound, which are scheduled for removal and replacement as part of the redevelopment works.</p>

Home Affairs Response. The Department advised that the demountable buildings are not suitable for reuse or transfer due to the following reasons:

- End-of-life condition: The buildings have reached the end of their intended operational lifespan and are no longer compliant with current standards.
- Structural integrity: The facilities are in poor condition and do not meet safety or performance requirements for continued use.
- Operational limitations: The buildings were designed for a specific detention environment and are not readily adaptable for alternative community use without significant refurbishment.

31 July 2025. The Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation requested that the Department prepare an Activity Notice to assist in determining whether a heritage survey is required.

Home Affairs Response. The Department advised that that the Noongar Standard Heritage Agreement does not apply and an Activity Notice is not required, for the following reasons:

- The Department advised that all works will occur within the YHIDC perimeter on Commonwealth-owned land, specifically within the Hawk Compound.
- The site does not intersect with the registered site Avon River, and no approvals under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 are required.

Lastly, the Department acknowledged the potential for uncovering unknown cultural artefacts and advised it is open to further discussion on communication protocols for unexpected finds.

Once appointed, the Head Contractor will be made aware of cultural sensitivities, restricted to existing road networks, and required to maintain environmental controls during construction.

24 September 2025, The Department received formal acknowledgment from the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation confirming that the site is located entirely within Commonwealth land. Consequently, an Activity Notice is not required, and no further action is necessary.