

3138S2 REPRESENTATIVES Tuesday, 25 September 2001

Public Works Committee

Reports

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (4.34 p.m.)—On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works I present the 11th, 12th and 13th reports for 2001 of the committee relating to the new freight and passenger facilities at Rumah Baru on West Island Cocos (Keeling) Islands; the redevelopment of residential areas at Royal Military College, Duntroon, ACT; and the Defence Intelligence Training Centre at Canungra, Queensland.

Ordered that the reports be printed.

Mrs MOYLAN—by leave—On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works I would like to make some brief comments on the three reports I have just tabled.

Freight and passenger facilities at Rumah Baru

The first report I have tabled relates to the construction of new freight and passenger facilities at Rumah Baru on West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Historically, freight handling and passenger transfer on the Cocos

(Keeling) Islands have been characterised by many logistical and environmental problems. While West Island bound containers are more numerous than those for Home Island, the direct transfer of containers to West Island

is not possible due to the lack of suitable freight facilities. In addition, containers need to be partially unloaded on Home Island

to reduce container loads. This is because there is insufficient capacity on the barge to transport containers one at a time across the lagoon to West Island.

The existing passenger jetty is located at the north-eastern end of West Island and is in

a very exposed position. This results in unsafe

passenger transfers during high wind and heavy swell conditions. The preferred solution proposed by the Department of Transport and Regional Services is to construct

an offshore island at Rumah Baru on the eastern side of West Island, which would be connected to the shore by an access bridge. The island would be linked to deeper water in the lagoon by a dredged channel of approximately 400 metres in length. The works in this proposal will allow freight containers to be towed directly from a supply

ship to the offshore island at West Island without the need for containers to be reduced in weight. The proposal will also improve the safety, efficiency and reliability of freight and passenger facilities.

During its inspections, the committee was able to observe at first hand the hazardous nature of freight and passenger handling operations

and procedures. The committee has formed the view that there is an urgent need for the provision of new freight and passenger

facilities on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Accordingly, the committee has recommended

that the works proceed as a single stage project at a cost of \$16 million.

Royal Military College, Duntroon, ACT

The second report I have tabled today relates to the development of residential areas at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. The Defence

Housing Authority is proposing to construct 100 on-base residences at the Royal Military College for married accompanied

defence staff. I note that the committee views DHA's proposals for on-base accommodation

for defence personnel with

some caution, even though dwellings are more cost effective because they are constructed on defence land. The committee's

cautionary view comes from its experience with similar projects—for example, the

dwellings built at RAAF Base Tindal near Katherine in the Northern Territory in the early 1980s. They became surplus to defence requirements because improved technology resulted in a decrease in staff numbers.

Added to this, the committee continues to have doubts about the number of defence personnel and their families who wish to live on base. To this end, the committee has recommended

that surveys of the views of personnel

and their families be undertaken together with the future viability of the base in question. However, in the specific case of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, the committee took into account its long history and role as a recognised unique training centre for Australian Army officers as well as military officers from other countries. In keeping with government policy, the committee expects that Commonwealth departments and agencies should lead the way in effecting change in how energy is managed in the community. The committee has therefore recommended that Commonwealth departments and agencies provide detailed comparative cost analyses between the various forms of energy, including solar energy, with any works proposals presented to the Public Works Committee, and this certainly applies to this particular reference on the Royal Military College, Duntroon, housing. Related to this is the minimisation of greenhouse emissions. In this area, the committee is increasingly interested to assess Commonwealth departments and agencies in terms of their commitment to the aims of the Australian Greenhouse Office. The committee has therefore recommended that Commonwealth departments and agencies ensure that consultations take place with the Australian Greenhouse Office about the most appropriate and effective methods of minimising energy for proposed public works. A number of heritage buildings are located within the Royal Military College, Duntroon area and are entered on the Register of the National Estate. Any new buildings constructed in the heritage area should be sympathetic to their surrounds. The committee has recommended that close consultation be maintained with the Australian Heritage Commission, particularly in relation to final design drawings. The committee has also

recommended the establishment of a monitoring process during trenching or excavation of all sub-surface works and that this be monitored by an archaeologist.

Despite these various recommendations, the committee supports the proposed works and has recommended that the redevelopment

proceed at the cost of \$23 million.

Defence Intelligence Centre, Canungra, Queensland

The third report I have tabled today relates to

the redevelopment of facilities for the Defence

Intelligence Training Centre at Canungra, Queensland. Following a review of defence intelligence matters, the separate defence intelligence training organisations were amalgamated in 1994 to form the Defence

Intelligence Training Wing. In 1997 this organisation was amalgamated with the School of Military Intelligence to form the Defence Intelligence Training Centre. In recommending that this work proceed at an estimated cost of \$17.745 million, the committee

has based its decision on three main factors: firstly, the recognition in the white paper on Defence 2000 that the implementation

of Australia's strategic policy requires the development of an intelligence capability through the enhancement of analytical and assessment expertise in military and strategic intelligence; secondly, the inadequacies of the existing facilities of the Defence Intelligence

Training Centre in terms of size, security, and occupational health and safety issues; and, thirdly, the strategic plan for the Defence Estate, confirming that Canungra should be retained as a significant defence training base.

The committee has recommended that Defence

consult with the Australian Heritage Commission to ensure the protection of sites of both cultural and ecological significance. The committee has also recommended that Defence consult with the Australian Greenhouse

Office in relation to the application of the Commonwealth's energy policy to defence

capital works projects. Finally, the committee has recommended that, as a matter of urgency, Defence establish an environmental advisory committee for the Ca-nungra Close Training Area to provide a forum at which local environmental issues can be discussed. This is an important recommendation, and I hasten to add that the committee was impressed by evidence from community groups regarding the importance of the area to the local community. I commend to the House each of the reports that I have tabled and I thank the secretariat and members of the committee for the way in which they have expedited quite a heavy workload in this last short period.