

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 31 March 2004 the proposal to provide facilities for the Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HJOC) near Bungendore, NSW, was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act)¹. The proponent agency for this work is the Department of Defence (Defence).
- 1.2 The Hon Peter Slipper MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$318.08 million at 2003-04 prices. Mr Slipper noted further that, subject to Parliamentary approval, construction of the facilities would commence mid-2005, with a view to completion by late 2007.

Background

Establishment of Australian Theatre Command

- 1.3 In 1995 the Chief of Defence initiated measures intended to realise increased cohesion and operational unity in Australia's Defence command arrangements. These measures included the establishment of Commander

¹ Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 165, Wednesday, 31 March 2004

Australian Theatre, a permanent joint operational level commander who would exercise command through Headquarters Australian Theatre.

- 1.4 Headquarters Australian Theatre operated from interim premises established at HMAS Kuttabul, Potts Point, Sydney, whilst the Theatre Component Commanders for Maritime, Land, Air and Special Forces remained at their original headquarters elsewhere in the Sydney region.²

Establishment of Joint Operations Command

- 1.5 In March 2004 Joint Operations Command was established to provide simpler and more direct command and control of Defence Force operations. Under the revised arrangements, operational command of the Defence Force is exercised by the Vice Chief of Defence in his role as Chief of Joint Operations. Headquarters Australian Theatre was renamed Headquarters Joint Operations Command.³

Moves towards Collocation

- 1.6 Australia's Defence Policy 2000 identified the establishment of a collocated Headquarters Australian Theatre as a key project for the coming decade and highlighted the importance of improved command arrangements and systems.⁴
- 1.7 In July 2001 the Government announced its decision to construct a new collocated command headquarters in the ACT/Queanbeyan region.⁵

Site of the Proposed Work

- 1.8 The site is located on a greenfield site within the Kings Highway corridor on part of the 'Woodlands' property, 11 kilometres southwest of Bungendore, NSW.⁶
- 1.9 The site will occupy some 100 hectares on the northwest boundary of the 'Woodlands' property.⁷ The entire site to be acquired measures some 200 hectares and is bounded to the north and west by the ACT/NSW border.⁸

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, Department of Defence, paragraph 7

3 *ibid*, paragraph 9

4 *ibid*, paragraph 8

5 *ibid*, paragraph 10

6 *ibid*, paragraphs 6 and 22

7 *ibid*, paragraph 33

8 *ibid*, paragraph 47

Inquiry Process

- 1.10 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁹ and report to Parliament on:
- the purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - the need for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - whether the money to be expended on the work is being spent in the most cost effective manner;
 - the amount of revenue the work will generate for the Commonwealth, if that is its purpose; and
 - the present and prospective public value of the work.¹⁰
- 1.11 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Canberra Times* on Saturday 1 May 2004. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, local government, private organisations and individuals, who may be materially affected by or have an interest in the proposed work. The Committee subsequently placed submissions and other information relating to the inquiry on its web site in order to encourage further public participation.

Inspections and Public Hearing

- 1.12 On 18 June 2004 the Committee inspected the site and environs of the proposed works, and received a commercial-in-confidence briefing on project costs from the Department of Defence and its consultants. A public hearing was held in Queanbeyan later that day.¹¹

9 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8)

10 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 17

11 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 18 June 2004 in Queanbeyan

