



The Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Suite R1 - 119
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Attention: Vivienne Courto

**DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS
AFFAIRS (DIMIA) RESPONSE TO PWC SUBMISSION FROM THE WESTERN
REGION ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL**

1. Thank you for referring a copy of the letter dated 9 February 2005 from the Western Region Ethnic Communities Council concerning the Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre (MIDC) Expansion Project.
2. The letter raises a number of issues regarding:
 - (i) Immigration detention policy,
 - (ii) The level of consultation,
 - (iii) The use of transportables, and
 - (iv) The need for the works.
3. The Western Region Ethnic Communities Council questioned the appropriateness of detention. Immigration detention policy issues are outside the scope of the PWC hearing, therefore DIMIA has not responded to these issues.
4. DIMIA recognises the importance of consulting the Maribyrnong City Council on the project. DIMIA representatives met with the Mr Panagakos and Mr Matteo of the Maribyrnong City Council on 15 September 2004 to discuss the project. DIMIA wrote to the then Mayor of the Maribyrnong City Council, Cr Joseph Cutri on 31 August 2004. DIMIA also wrote to the Maribyrnong City Council on 14 October 2004.

DIMIA had discussions with the owner of the adjoining factory and advised the other neighbour, Victoria University of the expansion. PWC material was sent to other neighbours and other state and community authorities.

The consultation process is ongoing. DIMIA will continue to consult with relevant stakeholders including residents at the Centre.

5. The prefabricated and partial transportable nature of some building elements does not have a detrimental effect on the amenity or utility of the Centre. The transportable units provide high quality accommodation and ablutions and have been successfully used in expanding accommodation at the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre.

Off site manufacture allows for faster installation on site and minimises the disruption to the MIDC operations.

6. The MIDC has been operating at capacity for some years. Immigration detention residents represent some 0.6% of short-term visitor arrivals. At present short-term visitors are about 3-3.5 million per year, forecast to rise to 5 million in 2005-06. Current predictions are that short-term visitors will increase by 5% per year from 2006-07. The expansion will provide additional capacity not available in the current confines of the building.

In addition to capacity, the expansion will also provide internal separation zones. The current physical layout of the MIDC generally only allows for the separate management of single adult males from females and families. The background of residents has been changing, and a growing number have criminal backgrounds and/or have used illicit drugs. In order to protect the welfare of residents and staff, immediate expansion of the facility is highly desirable.

David Doherty
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