

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 23 June 2005 the proposal for the RAAF Base Amberley Redevelopment Stage Two, Qld, 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 Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated out turn cost of the proposed work was \$285.6 million. Subject to parliamentary approval, works are planned to commence in late 2005, and be completed by December 2007.

Background

RAAF Base Amberley

- 1.3 The RAAF Base Amberley site has been used for military operations since 1938. In the early 1940s the American Air Corps was stationed at the Base with approximately 2,000 personnel. After World War II the site became a major RAAF bomber base and major realignment of the main runway was undertaken. During the Vietnam War period,

¹ Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 44, Thursday 23 July 2005

the Base was again used by the United States military. Additional accommodation and working facilities including a runway extension were constructed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

- 1.4 In 1963 Australia commenced the procurement of the F-111's with the first six aircraft arriving at RAAF Base Amberley on 1 June 1973. The twenty fourth aircraft was delivered on 31 October of the same year.² Since the arrival of the F-111, upgrading and construction of facilities has been ongoing at the Base including a major redevelopment between 1999 and 2000.

Site of the Proposed Works

- 1.5 RAAF Base Amberley is located approximately eight kilometres west of the city of Ipswich as the western edge of the Brisbane Metropolitan Area. The Base is bordered to the north, west and east by the Bremer River and Warrill Creek to the south and east. The area surrounding the Base is primarily agricultural, but increasingly becoming more residential in nature.
- 1.6 The Base and its surrounding buffer area comprise 2,503 hectares, and the developed area of the Base within the perimeter security fencing covers 1,664 hectares.³
- 1.7 All the proposed works are within RAAF Base Amberley, where the site is Commonwealth owned and Defence controlled. The proposed redevelopment does not require the acquisition of additional land.⁴

Inquiry Process

- 1.8 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁵ 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

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2

3 *ibid*, paragraph 3

4 *ibid*, paragraph 50

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

- the present and prospective public value of the work.⁶
- 1.9 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Courier Mail* on Saturday, 30 July 2005. 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.

Inspection and Public Hearing

- 1.10 On 9 September 2005 the Committee visited RAAF Base Amberley and inspected the site and environs of the proposed works. A confidential briefing from Defence and a public hearing were held within RAAF Base Amberley, later that day.⁷

6 *ibid*, Section 17

7 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 9 September 2005 in RAAF Base Amberley