

Puckapunyal Redevelopment, Victoria

- 4.2 The Puckapunyal Redevelopment, Victoria project proposes to provide flexible, modern purpose-built facilities to meet the Army's changing training requirements and improved access to the Puckapunyal Military Area. The estimated cost of the project is \$41.650 million (excluding GST).
- 4.3 The proposal was referred to the Committee on 28 August 2008.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 4.4 The inquiry was advertised in local and national newspapers and submissions sought from those with a direct interest in the project. The Committee received one submission and one confidential supplementary submission regarding the project costs. A list of submissions can be found at Appendix A.
- 4.5 The Committee undertook a site inspection, in-camera hearing and public hearing on 6 November 2008 in Puckapunyal and Seymour. A list of witnesses can be found at Appendix B.
- 4.6 The transcript of the public hearing as well as the submissions to the inquiry is available on the Committee's website.¹ Plans for the proposed works are detailed in Submission 1, Department of Defence (Defence).

1 <www.aph.gov.au/pwc>

Need for works

- 4.7 The redevelopment project will support Defence capability by addressing the following needs at the Puckapunyal Base associated with Army Units and their training capability:
- **Road Transport Wing, ALTC** - The Road Transport Wing needs office and instructional facilities to provide the command, working, training and administrative functions for the unit. Currently, these functions are undertaken in a mixture of old adapted storage facilities and temporary demountable buildings that have evolved over time. They are in poor condition and not suitable for long term use for the purpose of instruction and office accommodation.
 - **Safe Driver Training Area (SDTA)** - The existing SDTA provides initial driver training for soldiers to operate heavy vehicles in a controlled and safe environment. Currently this facility is limited in overall throughput capacity and cannot meet the increasing demand for drivers. Driver training for large vehicle hill starts, and high speed (80km per hour) driving and braking is unable to be undertaken within the facility.
 - **School of Armour - Combat Officer Advanced Course (COAC)** - The School of Armour conducts training to prepare individuals for employment within Army Units that operate Armoured Fighting Vehicles, Combat Communications and as Combat Team leaders (Major rank, Sub-Unit Commanders) within the Combat Arms. Future Combat Team Leaders are prepared for their role through completion of COAC. Currently, there is no training facility on the base seating more than 50 personnel. COAC in particular requires a tiered theatre training facility to accommodate 120 people, along with supporting breakout rooms to conduct smaller group training and exercises. A physical 'model' area is required within the theatre to allow tactical exercises to be communicated to trainees.
 - **Headquarters (HQ) CATC** - HQ CATC commands the Combat Arms Training Schools (School of Armour, Artillery, Infantry and Military Engineering). The total HQA CATC staff is 97 personnel. Currently 18 personnel are accommodated in a temporary building. Permanent facilities are required to accommodate HQ CATC.
 - **Battle Simulation Centre Puckapunyal (BSC-P)** - This facility provides a warfighting simulation capability to the Army particularly for the conduct of LWDC, experimental and analytical activities. Building 855 in which this is located has been progressively refurbished from its

original use as the Army Catering School. The need within this building is for minor works to upgrade lighting, heating, cooling and IT services in several existing rooms that are currently used as training spaces.²

4.8 Further needs identified are associated with the broader base community and its operation. Addressing these will enhance the overall base amenity, functionality and operating efficiency. These include:

- **Chapels** – Currently the base has three small Chapels. Each of these is in poor condition and at the end of their lifespan. The base requires a larger new Multi-Denominational Chapel to meet the needs of all faiths within the Puckapunyal community.
- **Entrance Precinct** – The base Entrance Precinct on Blamey Avenue is a basic single lane boom gate access, consisting of limited signage, temporary buildings and shelters. The need is to provide an improved Entrance Precinct that facilitates effective 24 hours a day security operations, controlling access for high volumes of Defence personnel, contractors, a significant base civilian population, visitors and delivery vehicles.
- **Range Control** – The Range Control is responsible for managing the use of the live fire manoeuvre range on a daily basis with the main function of coordinating activities on the range to ensure safety for all users. A need exists to brief personnel who enter the range on a daily basis. Briefings of up to 40 people must be accommodated utilising maps and various visual aids. There is no facility at Range Control that can accommodate this requirement at present. The existing range control building also requires minor internal refurbishment.³

4.9 At its site inspection the Committee observed that parts of Puckapunyal Base are in need of repair and personnel are working in sub-standard conditions in some areas. The Committee also recognises the need for training facilities to be improved to meet the needs of improved training techniques and equipment. The Committee finds that there is need for the proposed works.

2 Submission 1, Department of Defence (Defence), pp. 1-2.

3 Submission 1, Defence, p. 3.

Scope of works

- 4.10 The proposed scope of works is detailed in Submission 1, Department of Defence.⁴ The project includes 8 separate elements as summarised below.
- 4.11 **Road Transport Wing:**
- provision of a new purpose built headquarters facility for Road Transport Wing of 1,954m²;
 - refurbishment of an existing workshop building of 1,291m²; and
 - demolition and removal of redundant facilities.
- 4.12 **Safe Driver Training Area:**
- provision of an additional 1.6 km straight section of roadway to allow heavy vehicles to be accelerated up to 80km/hr and then safely braked;
 - a new outdoor training shelter facility of 49m²; and
 - provision of 600m extension to the hill start area located away from the main circuit to enable trainees to safely carry out hill start training.
- 4.13 **School of Armour** – the Base Instructional Facility of 1 600m² will include:
- a 120 person lecture theatre;
 - eight, ten person syndicate rooms;
 - associated breakout space, storage and utility areas; and
 - carparking and bus turnaround area.
- 4.14 **Battle Simulation Centre – Puckapunyal (BSC-P)** – upgrade Building 855 for the provision of facilities for the BSC-P, including:
- refurbishment works on the ground floor to provide three new multi-purpose training rooms of 440m²; and
 - installation of mechanical services and minor upgrade and repair work to Battle Laboratory facilities.
- 4.15 **Multi-denominational Chapel** – this element of 785m² will include:
- a shared 100 person congregational area;
 - dedicated vestry/sacristy for multi-denominational services; and
 - associated supporting spaces, storage and utility areas.

4 The submission is available on the Committee's website or by contacting the Committee Secretariat.

4.16 **Entrance Precinct:**

- provision of a new secure Blamey Avenue entrance;
- provision of a guard booth and associated ablutions;
- slip lanes for document checking and vehicle inspection;
- boom gates and associated landscaping; and
- carparking and vehicle turn around area.

4.17 **Combined Arms Training Centre** – this element of 319m² will include:

- provision of new office accommodation for the CATC Headquarters to accommodate staff currently occupying temporary office accommodation; and
- provision of associated utility spaces and ablutions to cater for the new facility.

4.18 **Range control:**

- provision of a new dedicated 40 person briefing room and associated storage requirements of 213m²; and
- refurbishment of the existing office accommodation to accommodate the Range Control staff appropriately.⁵

4.19 The Committee notes that any budget savings made will be directed towards the following deferred works:

- to house an additional eight people at the headquarters of the Combined Arms Training Centre; and
- to provide defence secret network computer terminals in the new combined arms advanced course instructional facility.⁶

4.20 The Committee considers these deferred works are an important part of the project scope and should be undertaken.

4.21 The Committee has assessed the scope of the works and finds them suitable to provide the facilities necessary to meet the needs of the Puckapunyal redevelopment project.

Cost of works

4.22 The total out-turn cost of this work is estimated to be \$41.650 million (excluding GST) which includes the construction costs, professional fees, furniture, fittings and equipment, IT

5 Submission 1, Defence, pp. 8-10.

6 Brig Grice, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2008, p. 3.

infrastructure and equipment, demolition and relocation works, contingencies and an escalation allowance.⁷

- 4.23 The Committee received detailed cost plans for the project and held an in-camera hearing with the Department of Defence on the full project costs.
- 4.24 The Committee was satisfied that the costings for the project as provided to it are adequate and suitable contingency planning is in place to ensure that the overall project is not compromised by budget overruns in any one area.

Project issues

Security

- 4.25 At present there is minimal perimeter base security. In particular, the front gate is a temporary arrangement that has been in place since 2001. It is badly planned requiring those refused entry to enter the base to turn their vehicle around.
- 4.26 Assurance was given that the proposed security measures for the entrance to the base were appropriate and sufficient. Base Commander Brig Rerden stated that surveys indicate:
- ...that access control through the main entrance to the base [will be] appropriate for the number of personnel ... on the base and the number of valuable vehicles and pieces of equipment that are stored on the base.⁸
- 4.27 There was also some concern that perimeter security could allow possible casual entry by members of the public. Brig Rerden confirmed that the base is surrounded by a normal fence and a 2.4 meter high electric fence with appropriate signage approximately every 50 metres.⁹ Responding to concerns about live firing ranges, he also confirmed that ranges are located in the centre of the base, placing them a number of kilometres from the boundary.¹⁰

7 Submission 1, Defence, p. 18.

8 Brig Rerden, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2008, p. 5.

9 Mr Waye, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2008, p. 10.

10 Brig Rerden, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2008, p. 10.

Chapel

- 4.28 A single multi-denominational chapel is to replace the three existing chapels on the base. During the site inspection the Committee received assurances from the base chaplain that the congregations involved fully supported the move. He also confirmed that the chapel catered for all faiths, recognising the large number of non-Christian faiths present at the base, particularly when hosting international forces.
- 4.29 The Committee queried the scale of the new building with regard to congregation size. The existing chapels hold approximately 100 people each and the new building has a '100-person congregational nave' capacity and denominations will stagger their services throughout the day.¹¹

Asbestos

- 4.30 Asbestos is present in a number of the existing buildings which are to be demolished during the redevelopment. Brig Grice, Director General of Infrastructure Asset Development for Defence, assured the Committee that 'licensed contractors will be used in accordance with Victorian legislation to safely remove those.'¹²

Committee comment

- 4.31 The Committee noted that the base is self-contained, that the age of the buildings and facilities is contributing to unacceptable working conditions for staff and trainees and that the need for the redevelopment project is overdue.
- 4.32 Overall, the Committee is satisfied that this project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost.
- 4.33 Having examined the purpose, need, use, revenue and public value of the work, the Committee considers that it is expedient that the proposed works proceed.

11 Mr Lembo, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2008, p. 3.

12 Brig Grice, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2008, p. 6.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to Section 18 (7) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, that it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work: Puckapunyal Redevelopment, Victoria.