

Introduction

Inquiry process

- 1.1 On 31 August 2000, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration referred a proposal for the construction of new Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) office accommodation and studio facilities in East Perth, Western Australia, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*.¹
- 1.2 The Committee sought submissions for the Inquiry by advertising the proposed work in *The West Australian* on 9 September 2000.
- 1.3 Letters seeking submissions were sent to those likely to have an interest in the Inquiry. This included Commonwealth, State and local government agencies, Federal and State government representatives and a range of peak organisations, professional bodies and individuals representing various interest groups.
- 1.4 On 16 October 2000, a sectional Committee, established by the Committee inspected existing facilities and the site for the proposed development and was briefed by ABC representatives. Following the inspection, the Committee held a public hearing at ABC Studios, Perth. A list of witnesses who appeared at the public hearing is at Appendix A and list of submissions at Appendix B.²

1 The Hon Peter Slipper MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, House of Representatives *Debates*, p. 18001, 31 August 2000.

2 The Committee's proceedings will be printed as Minutes of Evidence.

Scope of the proposal

- 1.5 The proposed site for the development is on 5,696 m² of vacant land located in East Perth, approximately 2km to the north-east of the Perth CBD. The proposed site is currently vacant and had been developed as a sub-division by the East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA). There is a central road running through the site which will have to be removed as part of the proposed development. An electricity sub-station is currently located on the site. This substation and associated underground services were intended to service the sub-division and it is intended to demolish that structure as part of the proposed development.
- 1.6 The proposed development will comprise a two-level office and technical zone, with undercover parking, an acoustic zone, an area for technical workshops, stores, a communication tower and parking for radio and television outside broadcast vehicles.³
- 1.7 Facilities to be provided within the proposed development include:
- a television studio of 200 m² and associated control room for general production;
 - a television news and current affairs studio of 100 m² and associated control room;
 - a music studio of 218 m² providing space for 30-50 players and retractable seating for an audience of approximately 150 people;
 - a performance studio of 75 m² for the production of radio drama, spoken word and music programs;
 - a collocated radio and television presentation centre; and
 - office accommodation and facilities for approximately 230 ABC staff.⁴
- 1.8 The ABC advised the Committee that whilst no significant future development is envisaged for the proposed site, it would be possible, within the current planning regulations, to add further accommodation of approximately 600 m².⁵

3 Evidence, pp. 87 and 88.

4 Evidence, p. 88.

5 Evidence, p. 46.

The cost

- 1.9 The cost of the proposed development is \$25.7 million at August 2000 prices, which includes escalation costs, contingencies and professional fees and charges, but excludes GST related costs.⁶ Subject to Parliamentary approval, the project will be implemented as a managing contractor contract, with construction commencing in March 2001 and occupancy by December 2002.⁷

ABC Perth

- 1.10 The ABC was established in 1932 as the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Since 1983 it has operated under the provisions of the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983*.
- 1.11 The existing ABC Perth site at 191 Adelaide Terrace was purchased by the ABC in 1943 but development was delayed, initially because of the aftermath of the war, until the mid 1950's. The first major building was completed in 1959 and others followed through to 1985.
- 1.12 The present 1.2874 hectare site at 191 Adelaide Terrace comprises six ABC owned buildings with a gross floor area of approximately 13,500 m² and is situated 1.5 kms from the Perth GPO and wholly within the City of Perth.
- 1.13 ABC Perth facilities located on the current site include:
- State Management;
 - Marketing;
 - Television;
 - Radio;
 - News and Current Affairs;
 - Program and Content Development;
 - Funding, Finance and Support Services;
 - Production Resources;
 - Technology and Distribution;

6 Evidence, p. 41.

7 Evidence, p. 39.

- Human Resources; and
- The Western Australian Symphony Orchestra.

Change in schematic design

- 1.14 On 13 October 2000, the ABC advised the Committee that following presentation of its submission to the Committee on 15 August 2000, the ABC and project consultants had undertaken a further review of the site conditions, schematic design and project cost plan for the proposed development.⁸
- 1.15 The design drawings which accompanied the ABC's 18 August 2000 submission included a basement carpark requiring mechanical ventilation, fire protection and waterproofing.
- 1.16 The ABC advised that the evaluation of additional geotechnical data from the proposed site confirmed earlier concerns regarding the risks of constructing a basement in the proposed location.⁹ The evaluation concluded that construction risks associated with a basement structure required to withstand substantial uplift pressures from groundwater approximately two metres below the surface, compounded by the need to provide extensive sheet piling and dewatering, posed a very real risk to the project's cost limits.¹⁰
- 1.17 Consequently, the ABC decided that the car park should be moved to ground level.¹¹ The ABC advised the Committee that the revised design option maintained the original concept of the three zones: office and smaller acoustic spaces, major acoustic spaces and outside broadcasting/utility, but introduced an internal street into the design.¹² It was proposed that the internal street would link the office and acoustic zones, and provide a significant public entry space at ground level.¹³ A combination of secure grill, or louvred wall system, and masonry walls are intended to surround the ground level car park.¹⁴

8 Evidence, p. 84.

9 Evidence, p. 84.

10 Evidence, p. 84.

11 Evidence, p. 84.

12 Evidence, pp. 84 and 85.

13 Evidence, p. 85.

14 Evidence, p. 85.