

Introduction – Report of the Public Works Committee of the 41st Parliament

Referral of Work

- 2.1 On 31 May 2007 a proposal for Land Engineering Agency Test Services Relocation, Monegetta, Victoria, 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.
- 2.2 The Hon Peter Lindsay MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, informed the House that the estimated cost of the proposed work was \$35.9 million excluding GST. Subject to parliamentary approval construction could commence in early 2008 with completion in mid-2009.

Background

- 2.3 The Land Engineering Agency (LEA) is one of the four main business units of Land Systems Division (LSD) within Defence Materiel

¹ Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives, No. 175, Thursday 31 May 2007.

Organisation (DMO), and has responsibility to ensure the technical integrity of equipment and hardware, including vehicles of all description, weapons and tools, described by defence as land materiel. LEA testing and evaluation activities at Maribyrnong are conducted by two operational divisions:

- Land Combat Systems (LCS); and
- Accredited Test Services (ATS).²

Land Combat Systems

2.4 LCS provides a test and evaluation capability for small arms and ammunition including safety assessment, acquisition support, reports on defective or unserviceable materiel and provision of technical advice. LCS has technical and engineering expertise in the core technologies associated with Fire Support Systems including:

- large calibre weapons systems;
- small arms weapons systems;
- ballistic performance and range safety; and
- explosive ordnance systems.³

Accredited Test Services

2.5 ATS provides test and evaluation capability for electronic, mechanical, and environmental evaluation of large scale land materiel. It also supports LCS activities with test measurement. ATS also currently undertakes testing activities at Monegeetta, at its Automotive and Electrical Performance Laboratory (AEPL).

2.6 ATS is responsible for providing performance measurement and environmental testing encompassing communications, electrical, electro-optics, electromagnetic environmental effects, mechanical tests, environmental and vehicle tests. ATS activities currently undertaken at Maribyrnong are organised within two broad business units:

- Electronics and Communications Laboratory (ECL); and
- Mechanical and Environmental Laboratory (MEL).⁴

2 Submission No. 1, paragraphs 9-10.

3 *ibid.*, paragraphs 11-12.

4 *ibid.*, paragraphs 14-15.

Site of Proposed Works

2.7 The site of the proposed infrastructure development is confined to the existing defence site (Monegetta Proving Grounds) at Monegetta, Victoria, which is located in the Macedon Ranges Shire approximately 55 kilometres from Melbourne’s central business district.⁵

Inquiry Process

2.8 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$15 million⁶ 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.⁷

2.9 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Weekend Australian* and *The Age* on Saturday, 9 June 2007. 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 Hearing

2.10 On Friday 7 September 2007, the Committee inspected the site and environs of the proposed works. A confidential hearing by officers of the

5 Submission No. 1, paragraph 17.

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

7 *ibid.*, Section 17.

Department of Defence and a public hearing were held at Monegeetta later that day.⁸

8 See <www.aph.gov.au/pwc> for the official Hansard transcript of evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Wednesday, 25 July 2007 at Monegeetta, Victoria.