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The Hon Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
Minister for Indigenous Health
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of Anzac

26 JUL 2011

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair of the House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr ~~Murphy~~

Thank you for your letter of 31 May 2011 to the Minister for Defence, the Hon Stephen Smith MP, concerning the petition presented by the Member for Solomon, Mrs Natasha Griggs MP, on 30 May 2011 requesting House of Representatives support to excise from Commonwealth ownership the residential housing area of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Darwin and hand these houses over to Northern Territorians for a range of housing options. As this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities, your correspondence has been passed to me for response.

RAAF Base Darwin is critical to support of military operations in defence of Australia and for other regional tasks. To enable the base to fulfil its role, the Department of Defence needs to develop appropriate facilities and infrastructure on the base to support current and future capabilities and contingency requirements.

In recognition of the housing pressures in Darwin, the Government directed Defence to review its requirement to retain the land currently allocated for housing. This review recommended that this land should be retained by Defence for development of facilities and infrastructure to support the role of the base. This recommendation has been agreed by the Government.

In considering the outcomes of the review the Government has also agreed that 8.7 hectares of this land will be developed for on-base housing for members of the Australian Defence Force. This development, to be completed by Defence Housing Australia, will see approximately 130 new detached residences constructed on the base.

In terms of the overall housing situation in Darwin, this development, together with the construction of Defence housing in the suburb of Muirhead and at Larrakeyah Barracks, will assist in alleviating the current general shortage of housing in the Darwin area.

In light of the role of RAAF Base Darwin and the requirement for Defence to be able to develop infrastructure to support this role, and the steps being taken by the Government to alleviate the housing shortage in Darwin through construction of Defence housing, I wish to advise the Committee that the Government does not support the petitioner's request for excision of the land from Commonwealth ownership.

Yours sincerely

WARREN SNOWDON