

Submission No. 4  
(Multi Role Helicopter Facilities)

SL 29/4/08

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

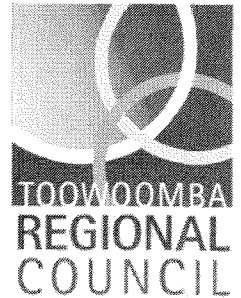
**MULTI-ROLE HELICOPTER FACILITIES AT ARMY AVIATION CENTRE,  
OAKEY.**

Toowoomba Regional Council  
PO Box 3021  
TOOWOOMBA Qld 4350

April 2008

17<sup>th</sup> April 2008

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**MULTI-ROLE HELICOPTER FACILITIES AT: HMAS ALBATROSS, NOWRS; RAAF BASE, TOWNSVILLE; ARMY AVIATION CENTRE, OAKEY; AND GALLIPOLI BARRACKS, ENOGGERA.**

Introduction. The Toowoomba Regional Council is delighted to learn of the approximate \$40 million infrastructure investment planned for the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey as a result to the introduction into service of the MRH90 Helicopters.

It is understood that the project includes a new aircraft maintenance facility and workshop, MRH90 aircraft parking pads, new aircraft shelters, new simulator buildings, new aircraft life support equipment workshop, new sheet metal workshop and associated facility reconfiguration. The project schedule quotes a commencement date of 2008 with completion by 2010.

Economic Factors. The Army Aviation Centre, Oakey, at 2,000 people, is the largest single employer in the Toowoomba Regional Council; followed by the Council itself at 1,500 and then the University of Southern Queensland at 1,250. Further, if the 380 people based at Borneo Barracks, Cabarlah are added to those of the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey, the Defence work-force represents 3.1% of the region's total labour market.

If the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey project represents 24% of the total project spend; it would appear reasonable to assume that of the projected 580 construction jobs created by this project – approximately 140 would be directly attributed to Army Aviation Centre, Oakey.

Specifically the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey with its 2,000 staff provide the region with an annual payroll spend of \$80 million. In terms of economic impact, the flow-on factor of 2.5 times is readily accepted to represent the cascading effect of a single dollar introduced into an economic cycle. This converts the \$80 million payroll into \$200 million annually.

In relation to the Centre's operating costs (one base services contract is almost \$7 million) and, using a 40% of payroll factor, a further \$32 million can be identified: a total economic impact of \$280 million.

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Importantly for the region, the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey provides employment benefits that are not predicated on weather patterns, or commodity and resource prices. This fact can often go unnoticed and unappreciated in the more urban environments.

Local Military Association. The Toowoomba region has a long historical and support association of the Australian Defence Force. The region is and has been one of the most fertile recruiting areas for the three Services. The 1st Australian Light Horse, many of whom were recruited locally, under General Chauvel bivouacked at Newtown Park, West Toowoomba prior to embarkation to the Middle Eastern during World War 1. The local 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion, still supported throughout the region, played an instrumental role in the Battle of Milne Bay, where the Japanese Imperial Forces were stopped on land for the very first time. That feat is commemorated in the city's premier recreation complex: the Milne Bay Aquatic Centre. The Army Aviation Centre, Oakey, the Joint Signals Unit, Cabarlah and the 25<sup>th</sup>/49<sup>th</sup> Royal Queensland Regiment all have had 'Freedom of the City' rights conferred upon them.

Lifestyle and Community. The Toowoomba region has a long history of low cost of living factors, based on standard grocery items (4 to 6% less than Brisbane) and housing costs – median housing price being \$257,000 (Sep. 07). The region although with a pattern of low unemployment, offers an impressive span of employment options from most other regional centres. A plethora of education institutions is on offer, with the University of Southern Queensland and the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE complementing the largest ratio of educational establishment per head of population in the country. Sporting and recreational facilities are well patronised throughout the region; and the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey people are recognised for playing leading roles in sporting, association, volunteering, cultural and recreational pursuits.

The region's lifestyle attractions are attested to by the Army Aviation Centre's personnel having one of the highest levels of home ownership in the Australian Defence Force. In terms of family amenity, we are hard to beat!

Conclusion. The Toowoomba regional Council welcomes the approximate \$40 million infrastructure investment planned for the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey as a result to the introduction into service of the MRH90 Helicopters. With the addition of the Weapons Training Simulation Systems at \$2million later this year and 36 Level 5 Accommodation Rooms in 2009, along with other facilities, the Centre will have an enhanced training capacity for ADF units.

The Toowoomba Regional Council would welcome the opportunity to explore opportunities for a greater Defence presence in the region. And, in the short term, expedite the training and deployment opportunities for closely situated ADF Units.

Yours faithfully,

PETER TAYLOR  
MAYOR - TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL

## Toowoomba Region Brief

### The Region.

The Toowoomba Regional Council was formed with the amalgamation of the previous Cambooya, Clifton, Crows Nest, Jondaryan, Millmerran, Pittsworth, Rosalie Shire Councils and the Toowoomba City Council in March 2008. The new Council is seventh largest in Queensland (12,973 sq km) following Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Moreton Bay, the Sunshine Coast, Logan City and Townsville. The Toowoomba Region's population of 151,276 is predicted to reach 193,718 by 2026 at a rate of 1.9% pa.

The Region's major centre, Toowoomba City, is Australia's largest inland regional centre. It sits atop the Great Dividing Range, 700 metres above sea level and enjoys the reputation of being the Nation's "Garden City". Its climatic environment not only provides an excellent setting for horticultural pursuits but also encourages and supports a healthy lifestyle. The beauty of this University City is unmatched for its magnificent parks, gardens and scenic range views as well as being the regional centre for one of the Nation's most fertile regions, the Darling Downs (population 225,000).

The region is strategically located at the junction of a network of highways linking Toowoomba with five capital cities: the Warrego Highway linking Brisbane and Darwin, the New England Highway linking Sydney and the Cunningham/Newell Highway providing the in-land link to Canberra and Melbourne.

Toowoomba is a 90-minute drive (129km) from Brisbane's CBD and two hours from the Brisbane Domestic and International Airport. The Gold and Sunshine Coasts are a convenient two-hour drive away. The Toowoomba Airport is able to accommodate up to Dash 8 aircraft and charter flights provide access to capital cities and international connections.

### Industry.

There are 77,196 people employed in the Region, of which 61,260 are employed in the Toowoomba urban area. The major employment avenues are retail and wholesale trade, health and community services, manufacturing and education. The Region has over 13,000 business enterprises located within its boundary. The highest grossing industries are Manufacturing, Health & Community Services, Retail Trade, Agriculture and Education.

Toowoomba has one of the highest ratios of schools to residents in Australia. The wide range of schooling starts with State and Private primary and secondary schools. These facilities are capped with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) and the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE at tertiary level.

Toowoomba has fully diverse optical fibre routes meshing with all Australian capital cities and regional areas. This optical fibre network also provides full diversity to all three major international optical fibre cables leaving Australia and the two principal satellite earth stations.

#### Lifestyle.

The Toowoomba Region boasts a comprehensive range of health and allied services which, as well as providing an essential service to the community, form an important element of the local economy. These services include public and private hospitals a stand alone surgical centre and an inpatient mental health facility. There are also many community-based organisations, which provide a variety of services to the aged, infirm and disabled. The Toowoomba Hospice provides palliative care for the terminally ill and their families.

Beautifully renovated heritage homes are a feature of the region. In newer residential areas there are many styles and sizes to choose from in a variety of bushland, parkland or estate settings. Housing prices provide a nice surprise when compared to prices in metropolitan areas, with the median house prices ranging from \$178,000 in Clifton to \$357,000 in Crows Nest.

Toowoomba houses two major regional shopping complexes: Clifford Gardens in the west and Grand Central in the CBD and two sub-regional centres: K Mart in the south and Wilsonton in the northwest. These are supported by a network of community regional shopping centres.

The Toowoomba region attracts over 1.2 million visitors each year. The city's natural environment, heritage buildings, antique trails, dining facilities and its growing wine industry supplement Toowoomba's unhurried ambience and garden reputation.

#### The Future

Energy. Toowoomba and the region are ready to capitalise on very significant resources deposits that are situated to the west and northwest of the Darling Downs. The region provides the majority of the State's natural gas, crude oil and liquefied petroleum gas. Additional energy resources include in excess of 4 billion tonnes of viable open cut thermal coal and reserves of coal seam gas estimated in excess of 40,000petajoules. Three coalmines are currently exporting to Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Development within the resources sector could see significant flow-on effects to other sectors, particularly construction, infrastructure and transport and logistics.

Inland Rail Link. The Federal Government commissioned a study by Ernst & Young to determine future demand for and the most efficient Melbourne to Brisbane rail route. The study examined four routes based on train speeds of 110 km/hr (two of which pass through Toowoomba) and was tabled in September 2006. Increases in market demand between Melbourne and

Brisbane determine that the Link be in place by 2019. Further, a \$15m scoping study for the Western Route was commissioned in March 2008.

The Australian Transport and Energy Corridor Ltd (ATEC) and its partners have been granted a mandate by the Queensland Government to build the Dawson Valley Railway (220kms between Wandoan and Banana) and to upgrade the existing lines between Banana to Gladstone and Wandoan to Toowoomba by not later than 2011. This means that a national gauge line could exist between Melbourne to Gladstone via Toowoomba. The Inland Rail Link provides the justification for the ATEC Charlton Intermodal and logistics hub, 12 kms west of Toowoomba.

Toowoomba Bypass. Toowoomba's logistic network does suffer from its location on top of the Great Dividing Range. A heavy vehicle travelling from Toowoomba to Brisbane expends half of the total route costs ascending or descending the 500-metre range. Planning for a more efficient crossing north of Toowoomba has been completed for some time. All land purchases have now been finalised, with engineering specifications also completed. A geotechnical test tunnel is has been completed and a business case is currently being undertaken to determine the most efficient financial arrangements.

Charlton Wellcamp Industry Zone. Following a 1997 land use study conducted by Toowoomba Council and the State Government, the need for large-scale industry sites in the Toowoomba area was quickly identified. The Eastern Downs Regional Organisation of Councils (EDROC) undertook an extensive community consultation exercise, resulting in the identification of a 1,600hectare parcel of land in the Charlton/Wellcamp area, thirteen kilometres west of Toowoomba residing in the adjoining Jondaryan Shire.

The Queensland Department of State Development and Trade (DSD&T) provided funding assistance to determine the demand and opportunities to quantify the area of land required for various industrial uses and undertake planning for designation of the Charlton/Wellcamp as 'industrial.'

Conclusion.

The Toowoomba Region's time has come! With the lifestyle attractors being coupled with manageable growth rates, sustainable development and increasingly varied employment and investment options, the long-term future looks bright indeed. With the increasing demands being place on the Brisbane/Coastal conurbation; The Toowoomba Region has the opportunity to position itself as Queensland's 'Blue Mountains.'