

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 23 June 2005 the proposal to relocate selected RAAF College units to RAAF Base East Sale, Victoria (Vic) and RAAF Base Wagga, New South Wales (NSW) 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 (Defence).
- 1.2 The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the total estimated cost of the proposed works was \$133.4 million, with at least \$60 million to be expended at each site. She reported that, subject to parliamentary approval, construction would commence in late 2005, with a view to completion by the end of 2008.

1 Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 44, Thursday, 23 June 2005

Background

- 1.3 RAAF College is responsible for the delivery of up to 100 courses and the training of some 5,500 Defence recruits and personnel each year. RAAF College elements are currently dispersed over five Defence sites as follows:
- RAAF Base Point Cook, Vic – Headquarters RAAF College and Officer Training School (OTS);
 - RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia (SA) – No. 1 Recruit Training Unit (1RTU);
 - RAAF Base Wagga, NSW – School of Postgraduate Studies;
 - RAAF Base Richmond, NSW – School of Postgraduate Studies, Corporal Promotion Centre; and
 - RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland (QLD) – School of Postgraduate Studies, Corporal Promotion Centre.²
- 1.4 Both RAAF Base East Sale and RAAF Base Wagga have a history of providing training for airforce personnel dating back to their establishment in the 1940s. Recently the Government has identified both bases for long-term retention as centres for RAAF training.³

Location

- 1.5 RAAF Base East Sale occupies an 800 hectare site in the Wellington Shire, some three kilometres from Sale, Vic and 200 kilometres east of Melbourne.
- 1.6 RAAF Base Wagga occupies a 300 hectare site located 11 kilometres east of Wagga Wagga, NSW, approximately 450 kilometres south-west of Sydney.⁴

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1 from the Department of Defence, paragraph 6

3 *ibid*, paragraphs 9 – 10 and 13

4 *ibid*, paragraphs 7 – 8 and Annex A

Inquiry Process

1.7 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁵ 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.⁶

1.8 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Wagga Daily Advertiser* on Saturday, 6 August 2005 and the *Gippsland Times* on Tuesday, 9 August 2005. 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.

Public Hearings

1.9 On Friday, 16 September 2005 the Committee travelled to both RAAF Base Wagga and RAAF Base East Sale to inspect the scope and environs of the proposed works. Public hearings were conducted at each location. A confidential briefing on project costs was conducted at Parliament House, Canberra on Thursday, 15 September.

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

6 *ibid*, Section 17

