

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
*1972—Parliamentary Paper No. 136*

*Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works*

## REPORT

relating to the proposed development of

# RAAF BASE

at

# Townsville, Queensland

(TWENTY-THIRD REPORT OF 1972)

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*Presented pursuant to Statute and  
ordered to be printed 19 September 1972*

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COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
CANBERRA: 1972

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS  
(TWENTY-FIRST COMMITTEE)

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EXTRACT FROM  
THE JOURNALS OF THE SENATE  
No. 182, DATED 17 AUGUST 1972

6 PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE—REFERENCES OF WORK:

(1) . . .

(2) The Minister for Works (Senator Wright), pursuant to notice, moved—That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969–1972*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report: Development of Royal Australian Air Force Base, Townsville, Queensland.

Senator Wright presented plans in connection with the proposed work.

Question—put and passed.

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## WITNESSES

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## Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

### DEVELOPMENT OF RAAF BASE, TOWNSVILLE, QUEENSLAND

# REPORT

By resolution on 17 August 1972, the Senate referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament, the proposal for the development of RAAF Base at Townsville, Queensland.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

#### THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee involves the construction at RAAF Base Townsville of new buildings and services and extension of a number of existing facilities. The work will provide for the permanent location at the Base of an RAAF Utility Helicopter (Iroquois) Squadron, the replacement of unsatisfactory technical and base support facilities and for expansion generally.

2. The estimated cost of the proposed work is \$8m.

#### THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of Air and Works and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Canberra on 29 August 1972.

4. We also took evidence at a public hearing in Townsville on 6 September, including evidence from the Deputy Mayor of Townsville and from a representative of Group Action to Stop Pollution (GASP). On the same day we inspected facilities at the Base and the sites proposed for the new buildings and services.

5. The Committee's proceedings will be published in printed form as Minutes of Evidence.

#### RAAF BASE TOWNSVILLE

6. *Background* RAAF activity at Townsville commenced in 1938 with the establishment of a Citizen Air Force Squadron on the aerodrome then known as Garbutt. At that time it was owned and operated by the Townsville City Council. Control of the aerodrome

was transferred to the Commonwealth for defence purposes in 1940. During that year work commenced on a number of buildings and engineering services for the RAAF and No. 24 General Purpose Squadron moved to the Base. During World War II, Headquarters North-Eastern Area was based there with responsibility for protecting trade through sea lanes to the north of Australia and for providing air bases throughout the Pacific Islands. It was also used by the United States Army Air Corps for the assembly of medium and heavy bombers.

7. In 1949 No. 10 General Reconnaissance Squadron was formed at the Base, equipped with long-range Lincoln aircraft. In 1953 it was renamed No. 10 Maritime Reconnaissance Squadron and was re-equipped with its current aircraft, the Neptune P2V7 in 1962.

8. Headquarters North-Eastern Area became Headquarters RAAF Townsville in 1956 and the organisation of the Base has remained relatively static since then.

9. *The Airfield* RAAF Base Townsville covers an area of 1,520 acres and a further 340 acres are being acquired. The RAAF also has a number of small properties near the Base for communication and air navigation aids. The airfield is a RAAF-Department of Civil Aviation joint-user aerodrome and an area is allocated for the Townsville Civil Airport Terminal facilities. Regular public transport aircraft and light aircraft operate from the airfield using the main runway which is 8,000 ft long. A secondary cross runway is used by light and passenger aircraft up to Fokker Friendship class under certain wind conditions.

10. *RAAF Operations* The airfield is an operational base for elements of the RAAF maritime force and also for elements of the short range transport force which support Army training in north and central Queensland. It provides domestic support for other RAAF units located in Townsville, viz., the RAAF Provost Unit, the North Queensland Air Training Corps and the Recruiting Centre

and is used as a staging airfield for aircraft proceeding further north. The current establishment is 695 officers and other ranks and 34 civilians. Headquarters RAAF Townsville, Base Squadron Townsville and No. 10 Maritime Reconnaissance Squadron comprise the units stationed at the Base.

### **NEED FOR NEW AND ADDITIONAL FACILITIES**

11. *No. 9 Squadron* The RAAF provides utility helicopters for training and operational support to the Army task force located at Townsville. With the build up of Army activities in the area, operations from Townsville of the short-range transport force have increased and are expected to remain at a high level. At present utility helicopters are deployed to Townsville by No. 9 Squadron from its base at Amberley but this is an unsatisfactory and uneconomic arrangement which does not allow maximum utilisation of aircraft. It is therefore proposed to permanently relocate No. 9 Squadron at Townsville. There are no facilities on the Base for a squadron of helicopters and it is proposed to provide new buildings and services in time for the move programmed for 1974.

12. *Technical and Base Support Facilities* Since World War II comparatively little development has taken place at the Base. The main runway was re-constructed in 1954-55 and more recently, an operations building and miscellaneous technical, recreational and domestic facilities have been provided to meet particular requirements as they have arisen. Consequently the position today is that the majority of buildings are of war-time origin, being of temporary timber frame construction with corrugated iron or asbestos cement cladding. Most of the buildings are not suitable for the functions which of necessity are carried out within them, generally they are unable to meet existing and planned technical, administrative and domestic needs and have been maintained beyond their normal economic life. It is therefore proposed to rehouse unsatisfactorily accommodated units and facilities in modern purpose-designed buildings and to provide new buildings and facilities to cope with expansion generally at the Base.

13. *The Committee's Conclusions* In view of the long-term commitment to provide training and operational support to the Army in north and central Queensland and the difficulty in maintaining this service from

Amberley, the Committee agree that there is a need to provide squadron level facilities at RAAF Base Townsville for helicopter operations.

14. At the site inspection the Committee noted the difficulties experienced in operating in out-moded and inadequate buildings. We therefore agree that there is a need to construct modern facilities at the Base and to provide for expansion.

### **BUILDINGS AND SERVICES**

15. *Master Plan* The buildings and services in this reference are sited in accordance with a master plan for the Base agreed jointly by the Departments of Works and Air. The plan also provides for the future development of additional domestic facilities and, possibly, a new main runway, which, with any other works that may become necessary will be the subject of further scrutiny by the Committee.

16. The Base is located 4 miles from the Townsville business district and some of the intervening space is occupied by urban development. Fears were expressed at the public hearing in Townsville that aircraft noise might become a problem with increased activity on the Base and it was suggested that perhaps consideration should be given to relocating it. The Committee were told by Department of Air representatives that an aircraft noise study is now nearing completion and its results will assist a noise abatement committee yet to be formed, in determining any necessary abatement measures. It was noted that in the event of a new runway being provided, its location on the master plan could shift approach and take-off paths further away from residential areas.

17. *No. 9 Squadron* The facilities proposed for No. 9 Squadron include an apron for the parking, re-fuelling and routine servicing of the squadron's aircraft, an access taxiway, a hangar for squadron level maintenance with annexes for workshops and flight line control purposes and a squadron headquarters building providing administrative offices, briefing and operations rooms, store rooms and other services.

18. *Ground Telecommunications Equipment Workshop* This permanent building is to be extended to provide facilities for the maintenance of new surveillance radar and approach control equipments which are to be installed at the Base.

19. *Central Battery Section* A new building is required for the charging and maintenance of the various types of batteries in use and will replace existing sub-standard facilities.

20. *Ground Equipment Maintenance Facility* The operations of this facility, which handles the maintenance of aircraft ground support equipment and motor vehicles are handicapped by having to work from 2 dispersed buildings. It is therefore proposed to extend the workshop facilities into an adjacent building to provide machining, body building and allied trades work areas and add an administrative and storage annexe.

21. *Motor Transport Section* A new facility is required to replace an old fibro cement structure of inadequate capacity. Industrial type shelters and a wash down area will be provided for vehicles and a new administrative office will be constructed.

22. *High Frequency Transmitting Station* The high frequency transmitting station is located in the Townsville suburb of Belgian Gardens. However, as it is planned to develop a new RAAF residential complex in this area and because of urban encroachment generally, it is proposed to relocate the transmitters on Commonwealth owned land about 3 miles from the Base. The new site is sufficiently remote that such encroachment will not arise in the foreseeable future.

23. The work proposed will include a transmitter building with emergency power room and generator, workshop and amenities areas. A 100-ft steel tower and concrete bases will be provided for antenna to be installed later by the RAAF.

24. *Fire Station* The fire section provides an aircraft crash rescue service for RAAF and civil aviation activities on the airfield. Its operations are carried out in a number of widely separated temporary buildings and it is proposed to centralise these in a new building to improve efficiency. The building will provide a watchroom, office accommodation and sleeping quarters for the fire crew.

25. *Telephone Exchange* A new building is required to house automatic telephone exchange equipment which will replace the present inadequate and obsolete equipment.

26. *Air Movements Section* To meet substantial increases in RAAF movements through the Base a new air movements sec-

tion is planned to provide improved cargo storage and handling and more suitable areas for administration and waiting passengers.

27. *Explosives Storage Area* The present facility is in the way of the proposed helicopter operating area and a new facility is planned in a more remote part of the airfield.

28. *Central Store and Accounting Section* A new facility is required to consolidate functions dispersed in temporary buildings and to provide for expansion.

29. *Barracks Store* Improved facilities are required to provide the domestic services outside the normal range of services provided by the Department of Works.

30. *Police Services Building* Existing facilities are inadequate and inappropriate for this function. The proposed new building will contain a detention centre, offices and accommodation areas for rostered service police and guards. A new security guard and police dog accommodation facility is also required and will be sited in a remote area of the Base.

31. *Power Station* A new central emergency power station is required to cope with the increased loads of the expanded services on the Base.

32. *Committee's Conclusion* The Committee concluded that the buildings and facilities proposed are appropriate to the needs of the Base.

## CONSTRUCTION

33. *Structure* 'Industrial' type construction will be used for hangars and similar buildings and will consist of steel framing with pre-finished metal cladding of walls and roofs. Floors will be of concrete. Administrative and other buildings will be of masonry and reinforced concrete construction. Steel frames will be used where large spans are required. Roofs will be of metal deck and floors will be of concrete.

34. *Finishes and Fittings* External finishes will be selected in keeping with existing permanent buildings and to provide serviceability with a minimum of maintenance. Masonry construction will be in face brick or split face concrete block. Windows and entrance door frames will be of aluminium. The large hangar doors will be of steel frame construction and will be power operated.



35. *Internal finishes and fittings* will be similar to those in permanent buildings on the Base and will include face brick work in corridors and foyers. Toilets and other wet areas will have ceramic tiled walls and floors. Floor coverings in administrative and similar areas will be of vinyl or linoleum sheeting.

36. *Noise Factors* The Committee were told that with the exception of hangar space, buildings will incorporate measures to achieve levels of noise attenuation recommended by the Commonwealth Acoustic Laboratories.

37. *Mechanical Services* Ducted air-conditioning systems will be installed in areas where there are technical requirements for environmental control. Mechanical ventilation or ceiling fans will be installed in areas which cannot be naturally ventilated because of noise attenuation measures. A variety of mechanical equipment is to be provided including domestic hot water, compressed air, hoisting facilities and garage equipment.

38. *Electrical Services* Services to be provided will include establishment of a new intake sub-station and central emergency power house, extension and modification of high voltage and medium voltage electrical reticulation and street, car park and security lighting. Fire alarm and control cabling systems will be installed.

39. *Fire Protection* Generally buildings will be provided with automatic fire protection systems, portable fire extinguishers and small bore hoses. In areas of particular fire hazard containing vital or expensive equipment, automatic extinguishing systems will be installed. Automatic opening roof vents will be installed in hangars to allow heat and smoke to escape through the roof.

40. *Hydraulic Services* Water, sewerage and stormwater reticulation will be extended as required to serve the new facilities. Sewage will be discharged to the existing treatment plant which has capacity for the increased load.

41. *Site Works* Sealed roads and car parks will be provided to give access to the new buildings. The proposal also includes the construction of paths, paving and landscaping around buildings.

42. *Aircraft Pavements* Aircraft aprons and taxiways will be constructed in bituminous surfaced pavement or concrete pavement depending on location and weight

of aircraft. Taxiway centre lighting and apron edge lighting will be installed. Aircraft service facilities will be installed in the aprons and will include power outlets, tie down and earthing points. A graded and grassed area will be provided for helicopter operations.

43. *The Committee's Conclusion* The Committee recommend the construction of the work in the reference.

### PROGRAMME

44. It is proposed to call tenders for the work in 2 stages for budgetary reasons and to allow the Department of Works to commit a substantial amount of work at an early date. After an approval to proceed is given the preparation of working drawings, tender documents and the invitation and acceptance of tenders for stage 1 is expected to take 7 months. Construction is expected to take 18 months from the time contracts are let. For stage 2 the times are 9 months and 15 months respectively.

### ESTIMATE OF COST

45. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$8m as follows:

Stage 1—comprising hangar, headquarters building, apron and taxiway for the helicopter squadron, high frequency transmitter building, central store and accounting section, power station and associated internal and external engineering services.

	\$	\$
Building works and associated engineering services	3,060,000	
Engineering and site works ..	1,995,000	5,055,000
	<hr/>	

Stage 2—balance of work

Building works and associated engineering services ..	2,145,000	
Engineering and site works ..	800,000	2,945,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
		8,000,000



**RECOMMENDATIONS AND  
CONCLUSIONS**

46. The summary of the recommendations and conclusions of the Committee are set out below. Alongside each is shown the paragraph in the report to which it refers.

	<i>Paragraph</i>
1. There is a need to provide squadron level facilities at RAAF Base Townsville for helicopter operations .. .. .	13
2. There is a need to construct modern facilities at the base and to provide for expansion ..	14
3. The buildings and facilities proposed are appropriate to the needs of the base .. .. .	32

	<i>Paragraph</i>
4. The Committee recommend construction of the work in the reference .. .. .	43
5. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$8 million .. .. .	45

C. R. KELLY  
Chairman

Parliamentary Standing Committee  
on Public Works,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, A.C.T.  
14 September 1972.