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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

R E P O R T

relating to the proposal for the

DEVELOPMENT OF
RAAF BASE, LEARMONTH,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

(Second Report of 1981)

Australian Government Publishing Service
Canberra 1981

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
(Twenty-sixth Committee)

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Senator Harold William Young

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Benjamin Charles Humphreys, Esq., M.P.
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James Leslie McMahon, Esq., M.P.
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EXTRACT FROM
THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
NO. 5 DATED 3 DECEMBER 1980

13. PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE - REFERENCE OF WORK - DEVELOPMENT OF R.A.A.F. BASE, LEARMONTH, W.A.: Mr. McVeigh (Minister for Housing and Construction), pursuant to notice, moved - That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Development of R.A.A.F. Base, Learmonth, W.A.

Mr. McVeigh presented a plan in connection with the proposed work.

Question - put and passed.

WITNESSES

Griffiths, N.F., Esq., Design Project Leader,
Department of Housing and Construction,
207 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, Western
Australia

Lessels, Air Commodore J.D.G., O.B.E., Director-
General, Accommodation and Works, Air Force,
Department of Defence, Russell Offices,
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Statham, F.W., Esq., O.B.E., E.D., Director,
Department of Housing and Construction,
207 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, Western
Australia

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Paragraph</u>
The Reference	1
The Committee's Investigation	3
Background	6
Role of the Base	8
The Need	
Existing Facilities	11
Future Requirements	13
Committee's Conclusion	17
The Proposed Works	
Planning and Design	18
General Purpose Apron	19
Flight Line Facilities	20
Aviation Gasoline (AVGAS) Storage	22
Committee's Conclusion	24
Site	25
Committee's Conclusion	26
Limit of Cost	27
Program	28
Committee's Conclusion	29
Recommendations and Conclusions	30
Construction	
Existing Works	31
Aircraft Pavements	32
Flight Line Facilities	34
Water	39
Roads	40
Electricity	41
Sewerage	42
Fire Fighting Water Supply	43
Environmental Effects	44
Proposed Development Works	A.
Flight Line Facilities - General Layout	B.
Technical Operations Building	C.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

DEVELOPMENT OF RAAF BASE,
LEARMONTH, W.A.

R E P O R T

By resolution on 3 December 1980, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report the proposal to develop the RAAF Base at Learmonth, Western Australia.

The Committee has the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee is for an extension to the general purpose aircraft apron, the construction of five permanent buildings to provide flight line facilities and the refurbishing of an existing aviation gasoline storage facility.
2. The estimated cost of the proposed works is \$3.8 million at August 1980 prices.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Department of Defence and the Department of Housing and Construction and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Canberra on 24 February 1981. Written submissions were received from the Exmouth Shire Council and BP Australia Limited.

4. The Committee inspected the existing facilities and the site for the proposed works on 4 June 1980.

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

BACKGROUND

6. The Learmonth airfield, located at Exmouth Gulf, was first established in 1943 and originally the base was utilised as a supply depot for submarines as well as a staging post for long range bombers on the west coast. The wartime buildings, which were of a temporary nature, have long since ceased to exist and since World War II the airfield has been used mainly by civil aircraft and as a staging base for RAAF aircraft.

7. In 1969, Cabinet approved the development of Learmonth airfield which, at that time, virtually consisted only of a runway 2134 metres in length. The development provided for a runway extension to 3048 metres, together with associated services, which constitute the existing facilities. The vast majority of these works were constructed by No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron during the period January 1971 to September 1974. These works were exempted from Committee scrutiny by His Excellency the Governor-General in Council under Section 18 (8) (c) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969.

ROLE OF THE BASE

8. Learmonth is a joint user airfield with the Department of Defence as principal and the Department of Transport as tenant. The airfield is used daily by civil domestic flights and is designated as the international alternate for Perth Airport. The airfield is also used by United States Air Force C141 aircraft to support the United States Navy Communications Station Harold E. Holt at Exmouth.

9. While Learmonth is intended as a forward base for strike/reconnaissance, air defence and maritime forces, it is maintained under the 'bare base' concept. The operational potential of the base is planned to be developed in the long term to accommodate the deployment of strike/reconnaissance aircraft, air defence aircraft, long range maritime patrol aircraft, associated air transport aircraft support and a Mobile Control and Reporting Unit.

10. In peace-time the base will continue to be used for deployment exercises including weapons training.

THE NEED

11. Existing Facilities Facilities presently at Learmonth include a 3048 metre runway with an associated parallel taxiway system, general purpose aircraft apron, an associated airportable hangar site and a civil apron and taxiway. The base also incorporates aviation turbine (AVTUR) fuel storage, ordnance storage and preparation facilities, ordnance loading aprons and an air weapons range 30 km south-west of the base. Temporary living quarters for 180 personnel, a central emergency power house, a road system and engineering services and foundations for aircraft arrestor systems, precision approach radar and navigation aids have also been provided.

12. All of the present facilities are designed to be supplemented by the deployment of portable equipment.

13. Future Requirements The Department of Defence wishes to enlarge the general purpose apron to permit increased transport and maritime aircraft activity to take place, remote and safe, from concurrent strike and fighter aircraft ground movements. The primary purpose is to permit increased surveillance of the Western Australian coastline and reconnaissance sorties into the Indian Ocean.

14. An extended general purpose apron would also increase the capability of Learmonth as a forward support base by allowing parking of Boeing 747 and other strategic air transport in the region, whilst strike and/or tactical fighter activities are in progress. The apron would also be large enough to

accommodate large strategic transport aircraft of the USAF such as C5A Galaxies and C141 Starlifters.

15. Facilities are required at the ordnance loading aprons to accommodate 24 hour operational activities associated with flight line maintenance and servicing of fighter, strike and maritime aircraft on deployment. At present, Learmonth has no operable storage facilities for aviation gasoline (AVGAS) required for Caribou type aircraft. These aircraft are used in Joint Service exercises and other support roles to the area.

16. As the Defence infrastructure in the north and north-west of Australia improves, increased use of Learmonth is expected. These works requirements would satisfy defence needs under the current strategic guidance. Should strategic guidance change with increasing tension or other threats to Australia, then further works would be required. For instance, even with the upgrading now proposed, the airstrip will not be capable of use by American B-52s.

17. Committee's Conclusion The Committee accepts that the existing facilities at RAAF Learmonth are unsuitable to meet future Defence requirements.

THE PROPOSED WORKS

18. Planning and Design These works come under three major headings as follows:

19. General Purpose Apron The existing general purpose apron will be extended to provide pavement for simultaneous parking of four C130 (Hercules), two P3 (Orion) aircraft, plus a large visiting aircraft. The apron design also considers the need to park USAF C141 and C5A aircraft. Extension of the apron will require relocation of the transportable hangar site. An ablution building will be constructed adjacent to the site to serve the occupants of itinerant service aircraft and those working in the area during deployment exercises. A vehicle parking area will be provided beside the apron extension to accommodate nine specialised vehicles used in association with aircraft movements.

20. Flight Line Facilities These will include:

- a technical/operations area;
- ablutions area;
- lunch room and servery;
- Flyaway Kit storage;
- ground servicing equipment storage;
- hardstanding for four airportable cabins; and
- liquid dry breathing oxygen trailer storage area.

21. These will be housed in five permanent buildings and on four serviced sites and will provide facilities for approximately 120 personnel associated with aircraft operations on the adjacent aircraft Ordnance Loading Aprons.

22. Aviation Gasoline (AVGAS) Storage The existing RAAF AVGAS storage is located near the civil aviation terminal apron and, while its capacity is adequate, new pumps, filters and dispensing equipment are required to bring the unit into line with current Service standards.

23. All of these proposals accord with the Master Plan for the development of RAAF Base Learmonth.

24. Committee's Conclusion The design of the proposed works is satisfactory.

SITE

25. The RAAF Base is located adjacent to Exmouth Gulf on a clayey sand subgrade. All works will be carried out within the Base perimeter and will not interfere with normal civil aircraft operations.

26. Committee's Conclusion The site selected is suitable.

LIMIT OF COST

27. The limit of cost for this project is \$3.8 million at August 1980 prices. The limit of cost is made up as follows:

	\$
Extension of general purpose aircraft apron	3 000 000
Flight line facilities	700 000
AVGAS facility	100 000
	3 800 000

PROGRAM

28. Following approval for the work to proceed, it is proposed that the works be documented for the invitation of tenders in July 1981. It is expected that all works would be completed by December 1982.

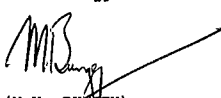
29. Committee's Conclusion The Committee recommends the construction of the work in this reference.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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

Paragraph

- | | | |
|----|--|----|
| 1. | THE COMMITTEE ACCEPTS THAT THE EXISTING FACILITIES AT RAAF LEARMONTH ARE UNSUITABLE TO MEET FUTURE DEFENCE REQUIREMENTS. | 17 |
| 2. | THE DESIGN OF THE PROPOSED WORKS IS SATISFACTORY. | 24 |
| 3. | THE SITE SELECTED IS SUITABLE. | 26 |
| 4. | THE LIMIT OF COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IS \$3.8 MILLION AT AUGUST 1980 PRICES. | 27 |
| 5. | THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE. | 29 |


(M.H. BUNNEY)
Chairman

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

18 March 1981.

APPENDIX A.

CONSTRUCTION

31. Existing Works The runway and taxiway pavements are of flexible construction comprising a 50mm thick surfacing course of bituminous concrete overlying layers of fine crushed rock and gravel with a total thickness of 425mm. Runway ends and adjacent taxiways, and RAAF aprons are concrete pavements of 350mm thickness.

32. Aircraft Pavements The aircraft pavement development comprises an apron extension as shown at Plan A. The 23 000m² pavement extension will be constructed of cement concrete 350mm thick on 150mm thickness of compacted crushed gravel base as for the existing apron pavement. Bitumen sealed shoulders 7.5 metres wide will be provided to the apron extension.

33. The existing transportable hangar site is to be relocated and comprises a concrete floor, connecting taxiway, electric power and water services. An ablution building will be constructed adjacent to the new hangar site and will have brick walls as well as sheet metal roofing. With minor modifications the existing electrical power, sewerage, roads and water supply services will cater for these facilities.

34. Flight Line Facilities These consist of five permanent buildings and the provision of serviced sites for four transportable cabins. Their location is shown at Plan B. Sound attenuation measures and air conditioning will be incorporated in the technical operations and amenities buildings. All buildings will be designed to withstand cyclonic winds.

35. The technical operations building (Plan C) will incorporate provision for a film room, offices for the Commanding Officer and Engineering Officer, flight line office, line crew room, air crew room, two briefing rooms and safety equipment store. Construction will again be in brick with sheet metal roof.

36. The amenities building will provide a lunch room, meal servery area, ablutions and store room and serve as a cyclone refuge shelter. The walls will be brick with sheet metal roof. The fly-away kit store building will be steel framed with metal wall cladding and metal roof to accommodate the special kits which accompany the operational aircraft.

37. The ground servicing equipment shelter will consist of a carport style building with chain wire mesh gates along the front and back sides, to accommodate specialised vehicles, tractors and platforms to service aircraft on the adjacent aprons. The liquid dry breathing oxygen store is a similar carport type structure to the foregoing and will house a liquid dry breathing oxygen trailer.

38. A bitumen sealed paved area will be provided to accommodate four specialised transportable cabins and will be serviced with power, water supply and sewerage. Personnel occupying the amenities building, technical operations building and transportable cabins during aircraft operations will be protected by revetments constructed of concrete slab walls 1200mm apart with a sand infill.

39. Water Domestic water supply will be obtained from an existing adjacent water main.

40. Roads Existing service and access roads in the area will adequately cater for the proposed facilities. Car parks and pavements will be bitumen seal surface.

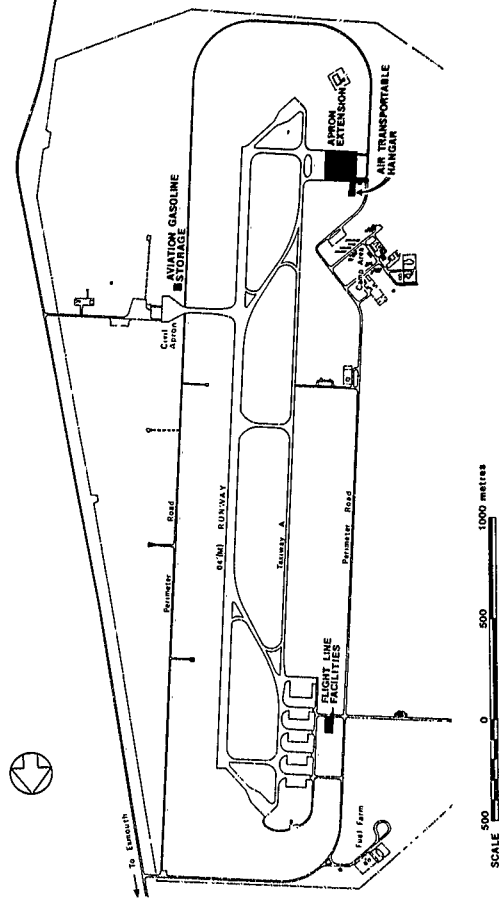
41. Electricity Power supply for the buildings will be obtained from an existing ring main.

42. Sewerage A septic tank sewerage system will be provided.

43. Fire Fighting Water Supply As part of these works, it is proposed to provide fire booster pumps, pumphouse and fire fighting water supply main from the two existing tanks in the camp area to the new facilities at both the northern and southern ends of the aerodrome. The fire mains will terminate

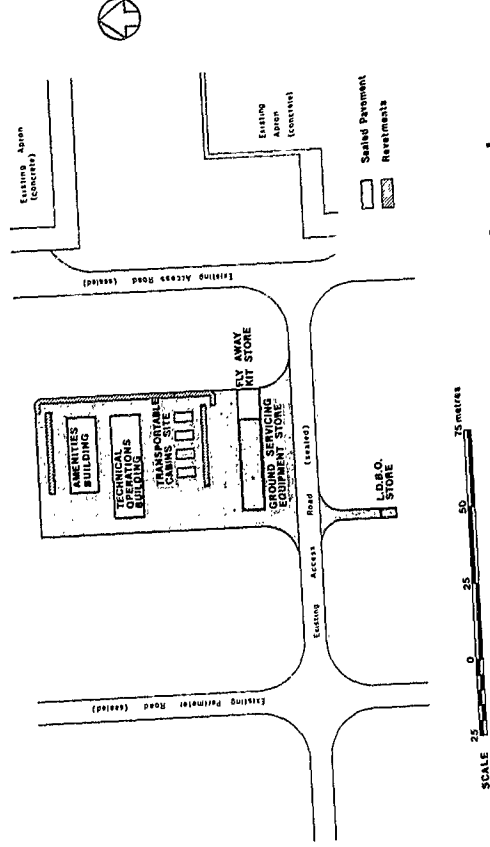
at the general purpose apron with six flush mounted fire hydrants and at the flight line facilities with four standard fire hydrants. A standard RAAF fire truck will be capable of connecting to any of these hydrants. The fire booster pumps will be activated by break glass manual alarms positioned near the hydrants.

44. Environmental Effects The administrative procedures of the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974 have been complied with.



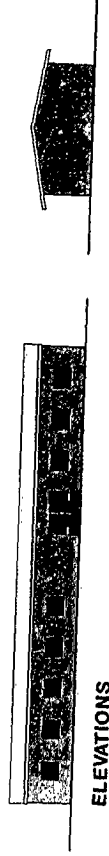
A.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WORKS RAAF BASE LEARMONTH W. A.

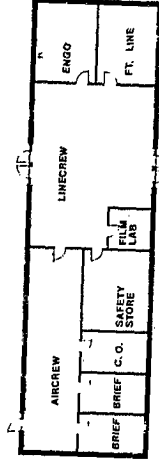


B.

FLIGHT LINE FACILITIES - General Layout
RAAF BASE LEARMOUTH W. A.



ELEVATIONS



FLOOR PLAN



SECTION



SCALE 5 0 5 10 15 metres

TECHNICAL OPERATIONS BUILDING
RAAF BASE LEARMONTH W. A.