

# Projects worth \$102 million under review

Commonwealth projects worth \$102 million are currently being reviewed by Parliament's Joint Committee on Public Works. The projects include the RAAF base redevelopment at Edinburgh (South Australia), a residential development for the Defence Housing Authority at Stirling (Australian Capital Territory), a CSIRO Energy Centre in Newcastle (New South Wales) and the fit-out of premises for the Australian Bureau of Statistics at Belconnen (Australian Capital Territory).

By law Commonwealth public works valued at more than \$6 million must be reviewed by the Joint Committee of Public Works before they can proceed. This includes construction, alteration, refurbishment or demolition of buildings, as well as earthworks and landscaping.

Each project proposal submitted to the Public Works Committee includes a statement of evidence with the details of the particular project. The statement outlines the reasons for the project, site information, environmental considerations and expected costs. It is available to the public to enable interested or affected people to comment to the Public Works Committee.

"This is one of the benefits of the public works review process," said Public Works Committee Chair, Judi Moylan (Member for Pearce, Western Australia). "It allows the community in which the work is being undertaken to have a say on the project."

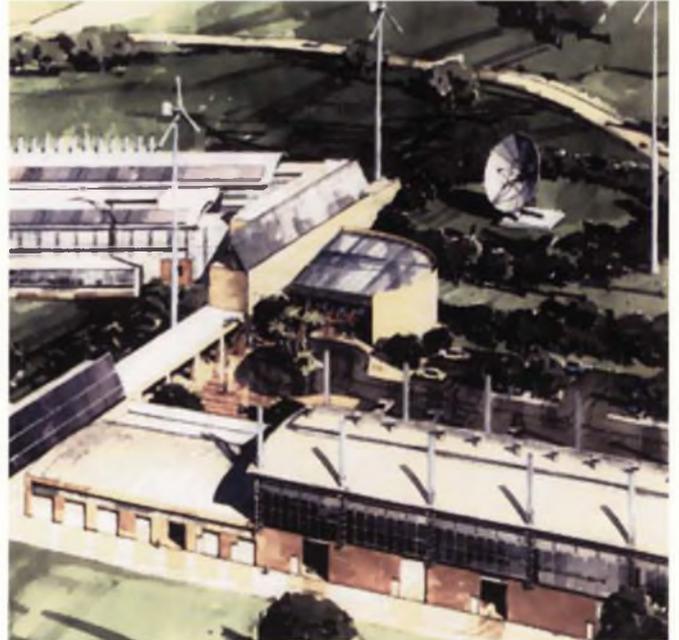
According to Ms Moylan, the Public Works Committee is there to ensure that "we get value for taxpayers' money" from public works. "But the Committee also takes into account the likely impact that the proposed works will have on local communities," Ms Moylan added.

One project generating much interest in the local community is the Defence Housing Authority's residential development proposal for Stirling (Australian Capital Territory). The proposal is for a 50 dwelling residential development to house Defence personnel and their families.

The Defence Housing Authority argues that the project has a number of benefits for the local community: "The ACT economy will benefit generally from the project and it will assist in renewal in the Weston Creek area. Local schools and retailers will be advantaged. The project should assist longer-term values in the local housing market."

While the local community council believes that most residents would support this development, other local residents are not convinced, including those living opposite the proposed development. A petition with 462 signatures protesting the development was forwarded to the Public Works Committee.

Residents have raised a number of concerns about the location of the development. They argue that 50 townhouses are too many for the selected location and that the development will cause unsafe traffic conditions in a street that is already busy. Some residents feel that existing infrastructure in the area, including the local shopping centre, is inadequate to support the population, although the community council argues that local traders support the development.



*The Public Works Committee is reviewing the proposed CSIRO Energy Centre in Newcastle.*

"It appears that the local community is not against a Defence Housing project being located in Weston Creek, the current proposal is simply not the right location," said petition organisers on behalf of a local action group.

A public hearing held on 18 August provided people affected by the development with the opportunity to talk to the Committee before it delivers its verdict on the proposal.

Less of a problem for the Committee is the proposal for a CSIRO Energy Centre in Newcastle. The proposal is supported by the Newcastle City Council, which argues that the local community will benefit substantially from the project.

"The proposed development will boost the economy of Newcastle and the Hunter significantly," says the Council. "The proposed development will sustain 120 jobs during the construction phase and 110 full time jobs when completed. The expected spending multiplier of the facility and its employees is \$23 million per annum."

But the Council has asked for some modifications to the design of the project to ensure that it is consistent with the urban design concept for the location. The modifications proposed by the City Council involve the removal of a landscaped buffer between the proposed building and a planned pedestrian plaza.

A public hearing held on 11 August enabled the Public Works Committee to discuss the project and the proposed modifications with representatives of the Newcastle community.

A report on each of the projects under review, with recommendations from the Public Works Committee, will be presented to Parliament during the Spring sittings.

#### **For more information**

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