

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY 2011.

DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS DEVELOPMENT - NEW DEVONPORT POLICE STATION

Mr PHIL WILKINSON, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF POLICE AND DEVELOPMENT; **Mr SCOTT WILSON-HAFFENDEN**, DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES; **Mr LAUGHLAND AVERY**, COMMANDER WESTERN DISTRICT; **Mr IAN LATHAM**, MANAGER ASSET MANAGEMENT SERVICES, AND **Mr PETER GAGGIN**, CONSULTANT, PHILP LIGHTON, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Thank you gentleman, for appearing before the committee today. .
Before we convened, the question was raised of whether we needed to go back over the full presentation relating to the report. My judgment would be that the committee would not need to have a formal transcript of the background for all this, we are aware of that. I suspect that the committee would appreciate some focus on the amended plans as they have been presented to us in terms of how that addresses particularly the proposal for a remand facility in the future. Some questions may follow from that. That might be a productive way of using our time today and if we need to come back at any time we can.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - I will lead off. As stated, following on from the presentation for previous plans we know the committee's concerns about the lack of a remand centre. Hence we went back to Mr Gaggin, of Philp Lighton, to reconsider our position in relation to that and the concept. We also had some further discussions with Justice in relation to a remand centre. I guess our primary concern, as the Department of Police and Emergency Management, is that police are desperately needed and I think the committee accepted that we desperately needed a new police station in the Devonport vicinity.

We have continued to work through those plans and in essence the revised document that you have in front of you, or the new plans, do not substantially, if at all, change the original police station. What it does is add a few modifications to the customer service centre. What we have also done is taken account of the potential for future growth to enable a remand centre to be accommodated within that site if and when funding becomes available from the Justice Department and/or the Justice Department saw the need for that remand centre within the site.

Essentially that matter is outside the control of the Department of Police and Emergency Management. We have undertaken the consultation. Mr Gaggin certainly incorporated within this revised document the capacity to accommodate that remand centre and we think that would go hand in hand in with the station and the design we have. But essentially we cannot commit to anything at this point in time because it is outside our scope for the project and it is also outside our funding capacity.

Where does that leave us? I guess that leaves us in the situation where the need for the police station continues and that is an urgent need. That is a funded need at this stage. We are very keen to progress that because essentially without that our only alternative is to put a lot of money back into an existing facility which will never provide the capacity that we see as a need for the future. We actually see that as essentially spending good money on a poor outcome.

If we were to proceed with this plan we accept that it would provide both modern policing facilities for our existing needs, and that capacity for growth, the capacity to accommodate some of the services which we have in a diverse area at the moment. It also provides us with the opportunity to accommodate a remand centre in the future, if and when the money becomes available.

Essentially that is where the plan stands at the moment. The document in front of you pretty well spells out what would be accommodated within it. Again, it has been drawn up addressing the environmental needs and access issues, and none of that has changed from our original presentation. Based on that I would be happy to take any questions.

CHAIR - Do any other witnesses here today wish to make any additional comments to what Scott has outlined.

Mr WILKINSON - I think he has summarised the situation pretty well. The need remains the same. What we have done is provide the potential to allow for a remand centre to be built in the event that the funding becomes available. You can see that it is there and it works.

CHAIR - Thanks, Phil. Members, are there any questions?

Ms WHITE - Are you comfortable with the design as it sits and your view that it would meet the needs of the force?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes, it does. There has been a lot of consultation in relation to the plans and certainly Commander Avery has been closely involved to ensure that it will meet his needs. So, yes, I am confident.

Mr LATHAM - Just on that point, basically all we have done is to reposition the footprint to allow a sufficient area of space to be developed in the future. All the services that we had in the initial drawings and potential for future accommodation needs all still remain there. It has just created a space for future development.

Ms WHITE - That seems very sensible and that reflects the comments that we received on our first meeting that that provision be made as it was not catered for in the original design. I am satisfied that it seems to meet the need.

Mr BROOKS - I have a couple of questions on the realignment of existing police services. I understand traffic is based at Ulverstone at the moment on the north-west.

Mr AVERY - Ulverstone and Burnie.

Mr BROOKS - Will it be reallocated to Devonport?

Mr AVERY - That will be an operational decision that we will make. There is some possibility that there will be a team out of Devonport and there will be a team out of Burnie but once again it depends on the means.

Mr BROOKS - Does the new building have adequate space to reallocate traffic to the bigger station?

Mr AVERY - We certainly have planned for office space for traffic teams.

Mr BROOKS - I suppose the feedback I get from operational police is that one of the biggest problems is the drain on police officers chauffeur driving remand prisoners to Launceston due to the cutbacks in overtime. It means those on duty have to go out of the area for that. Given that the Government has lazily just moved it over and not really done anything long term about that at all, is that still an issue on the north-west coast?

Mr AVERY - It has been an existing problem for us having to transport prisoners and we do not hide from that. It is something that we manage on a day-to-day basis. If there is a requirement and the priorities are that we need to pull someone back or pay overtime we do. If it is quiet and the demand is not so high for our services we will utilise the available resources along the coast. We have the same issues for Burnie, Devonport and Ulverstone, so therefore we can use resources right along the coast to do those sorts of things.

Mr BROOKS - On page 3, there is a matter I wanted to follow up. Under the project scope, under the four dot points, the next paragraph says:

'The project will also identify an area of land to remain undeveloped as a potential site for future construction of a remand centre for the Department of Justice.'

I suppose in other areas it says that it is for the future site of the remand centre, but is there something in there that we do not know about or has the Justice Department indicated that they will not do it anyway?

Mr LATHAM - It is probably a little bit of inconsistency on my part when I was writing the document. There is no hidden intent or anything there.

Mr WILKINSON - The Justice Department have indicated to us that a remand centre for the north-west coast or a reception prison for the north-west coast is not their highest priority.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Again, I note that our project brief is exactly what those four dot points are. The issue of 'potential' is exactly that. It is a potential capacity and there are a number of decisions which would have to be made outside the control of the Department of Police and Emergency Management which would factor into that.

Mr BROOKS - I have had some inquiries fairly recently from the Devonport Council, some elected members. I was hoping to have a written submission to present to the committee

for consideration, but I am yet to receive that. The submission would outline the possibility of tri-code services, meaning emergency services across the board, in the one location. Could we just go over that again? Was that considered at all in the initial stages?

Mr LATHAM - Yes. The issue we had is in the land exchange that we are doing with the Devonport City Council. There is a third block of land which is a car park and if we had been able to obtain that additional block of land that would have opened up the opportunity for the tri-service function. The two blocks that we hoped to do the land exchange with only accommodate the police service needs basically. We have not got sufficient room on those two blocks for a tri-service. Devonport Council was not keen to negotiate on the third block of land initially. It was an opportunity there for being able to gain titles to all three blocks.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - I think again it is important to recognise what is within the scope of this project at the moment and it is a single agency proposal. Discussions around other agencies being involved is simply not factored within the budget of the project at the moment. We have certainly had a look at the capacity to bring in State Emergency Services, which is within our own department. It certainly is something we will look at as a potential development and we think we have capacity within that. As Ian points out, that additional block does provide an opportunity for the future but I guess we are at the point where our needs are real at the moment and this would provide us with a long-term strategic asset, but otherwise we will be spending a lot of money on a site which will never accommodate any of those things if we have to go back and do works on the existing Oldaker Street site.

Mr BROOKS - For the public record, obviously this isn't about whether a new station is required at Devonport. I think it would be argued across the community that it is, but I suppose my job, as the elected member for Braddon as well as a member of this committee, is to make sure that we aren't just taking in the needs of the election cycle, but we are looking at the long-term benefits and needs of the area. Part of that question, I suppose, is was a tri-code location considered in the initial planning stages - as far as you are aware; it may have been just at a ministerial level - or was it not considered at all?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - It certainly wasn't considered with any strong detail other than, as Ian said, it provides the potential there for the future.

Mr BROOKS - Okay, so we have basically moved the site over to allow for a future remand centre. If that other block became available, it would be feasible to develop that into a tri-code area. Is that what you're saying?

Mr LATHAM - I think there would be sufficient space without going into detail. It's a very large block and there's definitely the opportunity for that to occur.

Mr BROOKS - What I am trying to ascertain is whether it is the right spot and whether there is scope for it if, later on, we wanted to move the services to that side of the town? Would it fit? That is effectively the question.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - I suspect it would fit. However, I have to say that we haven't examined that and we haven't examined what benefits would be gained from a tri-code approach to that. Certainly, it's rare that we have that sort of tri-code approach within the State at the present. That's not to say that wouldn't be the best model to move forward but that does move the scope of this project to examining a number of different options. I think this site that has been identified does provide a capacity to do that in the future if the business case stacks up to suggest that would meet the best needs of the community. I think that's the important point for us; it provides much greater potential than our existing site does. Even some of the needs of the council, one of the issues with the title was the need for car parking for the Devonport Council and they were keen to retain that site for the Devonport public. Our vacating the Oldaker Street site provides a lot of opportunity for council to redevelop that site and they, at the time, weren't really aware of what their needs were in relation to that so I think a number of those questions would have to be considered and those decisions aligned before we went to that next step of a sort of tri-code arrangement.

Mr BROOKS - The redevelopment of Formby Road - you have two lanes coming in and one lane going out. I'm certainly not going to get into a council argument over whether that was appropriate or not; it's been done. With the relocation, I suppose, it certainly puts you in a closer vicinity of that Formby Road entry and exit point to the highway. Will that have an impact on the new location at all?

Mr AVERY - We had input into the Formby Road design and we did actually ask for it to be changed to allow the crossover of emergency vehicles out of the outbound lane, which I believe they have done. Realistically that particular development doesn't change anything. It doesn't change anything for us to get out onto the highway. There are other routes if it is busy. We have already discussed the fact that between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. it is probably not the desired route you would take to get out of that area anyway, and the redevelopment it probably makes it a little bit better for traffic flow.

Mr BROOKS - So you were consulted?

Mr AVERY - Yes.

Mr BROOKS - I did have a question on King Street. On page 4, it notes the perceived trouble spots - and I will not get into the argument with the Commander over that one because we probably have different views on whether there are problems there or not - but certainly, I think it is good that the police precinct is closer to that area. Is that the feeling of the experts?

Mr AVERY - King Street is another one of those areas that could be a hot spot as we change licensed premises and bits and pieces in Devonport. It could all change and it does change. I would think if you re-examine it at the moment, your public place assaults for that division, it is over half for this year. So the problem is -

Mr BROOKS - Reported assaults?

Mr AVERY - That is all we can work on and if there is anecdotal evidence that something else is happening, we are not seeing it.

Mr BROOKS - The SES unit on page 2 has a reference there in addition. Is there a time frame on that and will that be going in there straight away, as soon as it is built?

Mr AVERY - There is no real reason why that cannot go in there. There is definitely room and we have just had a discussion with SES and that particular unit. They are quite keen to relocate back into Devonport because mainly their officers are from Devonport and when they respond they have to go out to Latrobe to pick up equipment and respond back to where ever. For training purposes we are looking at developing the training area in the old Imaginarium building for district training as well and search and rescue storage and training. So, yes, they do dovetail in with each other fairly well in that complex.

Mr BROOKS - Commander, does this new development or new station adequately accommodate the next 20 to 30 years' requirements for policing in Devonport and the north-west in general?

Mr AVERY - I believe it does. Obviously, at the moment, Devonport is the bigger demand area of the three bigger towns. Until they decide they are cities, we will call them towns at the moment.

Mr BROOKS - For the record, I would call Burnie a city!

Mr AVERY - Policing may change and it will depend on, obviously, where the changes of industry occur. But if you look at the plans, we have developed some work space areas that would allocate some functionality to it. It is excess as we go into the future. So there is definitely room there and if you look upstairs in the CI area, there is definitely room to increase significantly in the drug squad and in the criminal investigations area. There is sufficient space to expand in the future - for the next 20 years.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - It is about double the capacity of the existing station.

Mr BROOKS - Your opinion is that this is certainly something that is needed.

Mr AVERY - It is certainly needed and you only have to look at the current police station to realise that. I think it has only been the patience and goodwill of the officers there at the moment. Because there is a shining light there in the future, they are putting up with the present situation and have been able to manage it. If you look at the existing land plan and the dispute with council over the land at the back, you will see that there is no prospect of our doing anything with that particular site.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - One of the points which we probably haven't brought out previously, is that our experience with Bellerive shows us that that capacity to have officers off-site while we are actually constructing is a true advantage.

Mr HALL - I am just looking at the remand centre concept. We have 12 remand cells - is that number of cells totally adequate, in your opinion?

Mr WILKINSON - That was consistent with our early discussions with Justice - that is what it is based on.

Mr HALL - For example - and I am just looking at comparisons - what has Launceston got at the moment?

Mr WILKINSON - Fifteen comes to mind, but I am not sure.

Mr LATHAM - It wouldn't be anymore than 15.

Mr HALL - Okay. I think Commissioner Wilkinson said it was from Justice. Was it their highest priority or -

Mr WILKINSON - No, it is not.

Mr HALL - It is not their highest?

Mr WILKINSON - No. They told us very recently that they consider Launceston to be a higher priority.

Mr HALL - In the redevelopment of the remand centre before they do anything with Devonport?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

Mr HALL - Okay, I was just clarifying that. That is all I have at the moment.

CHAIR - If I could now move to the fact that you have indicated that Justice has been provided with a copy of the revised plans and the estimated cost. Can you give us an indication of what that estimated cost is?

Mr LATHAM - I think it is \$1.845 million - it is on page 4. That, I should say, is our estimate from our understanding of what would be required to construct it. Obviously, more work would need to be done with Justice as far as the final details et cetera are concerned. I think that would be the low-cost figure in that exercise.

Mr GAGGIN - That estimate is based on those plans.

CHAIR - I am contemplating whether to revisit matters raised by Phil last year in the fact that - and these aren't your words, they are mine - good policing is compromised by the lack of a remand facility in this city. That was the clear message that we got at the last hearing. I presume nothing has changed as to that. Clearly it would be the department's preference if funds were available.

Mr WILKINSON - I think I put it like this - that policing in the north-west is conducted differently from policing in the north and south because of the absence of the remand centre. I would not want to criticise the way policing is conducted in the north-west in any way, but the different way of policing certainly does impact on their business. Again, in an ideal world, we would have the same scenario existing in each of those policing centres so that there was consistency in reception prisons, in the way the courts are managed and in the way escorts are managed - that would be the ideal scenario. That obviously involves considerable cost and other agencies.

CHAIR - Okay, that is fine, thanks.

Mr BROOKS - Just on the time frame - obviously it was a matter of wanting to get it up and running as early as possible previously when the Government tried to cheapskate the whole project. Now it has been rehashed with a cheap job, but still a good one. What is the time frame? I know it says it in the book, but does that still apply?

Mr LATHAM - We have amended the proposed schedule that we had the first time round, and for a completion date we are looking at April-May 2013.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Essentially we are in a position where the documentation for the project is well under way and we are in a position to go to tender subject to any approvals. We have had a lot of discussions with council, who have been supportive all through, we have planning permission and there is no reason for any significant delays.

Mr LATHAM - We estimate it to be a 15- to 18-month build once we have a contractor on site.

Mr BROOKS - Okay. Obviously I would be keen to see local contractors used where possible, while sticking with current government guidelines and legislation. With a project like that, how many tenders would you expect to receive?

Mr LATHAM - With the Bellerive project we had seven tenders. Given what is being talked about in the industry at the moment, we would expect a lot more than that.

Mr GAGGIN - I would find, Mr Brooks, that you would get Hobart builders tendering for the job; you would definitely get Launceston builders - obviously you will get the Fairbrothers, the Stubbs, the BOSSes and so on, but the tender market has tightened up considerably in the last year or so since the schoolworks finished, and builders are definitely looking for work, especially for a job of this size.

Mr BROOKS - Is the heating and airconditioning within the building adequately provided?

Mr GAGGIN - I believe so, yes. There has been a fair bit of consultation on that about the balance between natural ventilation and make-up air and energy boosting and cost-savings through those sorts of things. We have had a fairly decent session with the mechanical engineers involved in that process and they have briefed the police on what is proposed. The main issue at the current station is that it is too hot - especially upstairs - but obviously this building will be well insulated, double-glazed and those sorts of things.

Mr BROOKS - That leads me on to the next question about energy-efficient use of technology or power generation -

Mr GAGGIN - Once again, we have a section in the report on this. Basically we are aiming for a minimum for a 4-1/2- to 5-star rating. That would be self-assessed because there are cost implications of assessment otherwise. A lot of work has been done on exactly that sort of stuff and I think the report spells it out clearly. There has been consultation throughout the station with basically everyone from sergeant up on this project.

CHAIR - That would appear to be all the questions. Thank you, gentlemen, we appreciate your time today. We will take some time now to consider the evidence on the project and, as is the practice of which you are well aware, as soon as we have a report that will be communicated to you, once it has been tabled in the House or presented to the Government. We will move to a decision as quickly as possible. We understand the sensitivity of the project and the matters associated with it.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.