

**Minutes of the Williamtown Consultative Forum (WCF)
Friday 6th March 2009, 1005-1130.
Administration Building, Port Stephens Council.**

Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies.

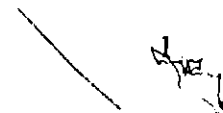
1. Mr John Owens, Head of Infrastructure in the Department of Defence (Defence) and Chair of the WCF opened the meeting at 1005. Mr Owens welcomed all members to the meeting, and, in particular, Mr Owens thanked Port Stephens Council for use of their meeting room. Attendees are listed at Attachment A.
2. Mr Owens advised that apologies were received from Mr John Tate, Lord Mayor of Newcastle City Council; Ms Jodi McKay, State Member for Newcastle, WGCDR Peter Davis and Mr Ron Hunter, Regional Manager, Defence Support, Central and Northern NSW. Mr Owens noted that Mr Joshua Brown was attending in Ms McKay's absence and that Ms Jerusha Nagle was attending in Mr Baldwin's absence.

Item 2 - Minutes from the last WCF held on 5 December 2008.

3. Mr Owens asked members if the Minutes from the previous Forum meeting were accepted. It was moved and carried that the **Minutes be accepted.**

Item 3 – Action Items from the last meeting of the WCF.

4. **Draft Terms of Reference for the WCF.**
Mr Owens noted that, at the last meeting of the WCF on the 5 December 2008, Forum members agreed to the Terms of Reference for the WCF, including broadening Forum membership to include the State Members for Newcastle and Port Stephens and the Lord Mayor and General Manager for Newcastle City Council. Mr Owens advised the Forum that Minister Fitzgibbon agreed to the Terms of Reference, together with the changes suggested by the WCF to broaden its membership.
5. **Williamtown Public Affairs Plan.**
Mr Owens advised that the suggestions made at the last WCF will be incorporated into the Public Affairs Plan. WGCDR Glen Johnson advised the Forum that, following incorporation of these amendments, the Public Affairs Plan will be made available for circulation.
6. **Defence White Paper.**
Mr Owens gave a brief overview on the Defence White Paper process. The White Paper will identify the capability and force structure Australia needs for the future. Mr Owens indicated that the timing of the release of the White Paper is not confirmed but that it is likely to be released in April/May this year. Mr Owens advised the White Paper will provide the foundation and establish the



mechanisms for the long term planning of the Defence Estate. Mr Owens advised he will provide another update on the Defence White Paper at the next meeting of the WCF. **(Action Item)**.

7. During discussion on this matter, the Mayor of Port Stephens Council, Councillor Bruce McKenzie, requested advice on when will the Kings Hill development be able to go ahead. Mayor McKenzie also commented that noise information was slow to flow through from Defence.
8. Mr Owens responded that Defence was seeking to ensure the best outcome was obtained for both Council and Defence. Mr Owens advised that obtaining the relevant noise data was a complex and costly process. Mr Owens also advised that Defence had spent a significant amount of money late last year undertaking additional noise testing in the US and that the noise data from these tests was starting to be received by Defence.
9. Mr Owens advised that Defence is taking a precautionary approach to development around RAAF Base Williamtown and that Defence was keen to work collaboratively with Council and the NSW Department of Planning to ensure development is managed sensitively.
10. Jennifer Collison advised the Forum that the NSW Minister for Planning will make a decision on the Kings Hill rezoning proposal once the noise data is available and the NSW Department of Planning's independent noise consultant has reviewed and evaluated the noise data. Ms Collison advised the Minister would like to make a decision within 6-8 weeks from having received the noise data. Ms Collison undertook to follow this matter up with the NSW Department of Planning and to ensure a meeting of the Kings Hill Working Group took place prior to the NSW Minister for Planning making a final decision on the rezoning. **(Action Item)**.

Item 4 – RAAF update on RAAF Base Williamtown matters.

11. Since the last meeting on 5 December 2008, the Base has continued to maintain a high level of operations. On 7 December 2008, 381 ECSS deployed on very short notice to activate a bare base in Western Australia to assist a whole of Government effort on illegal boat people entering Australia. 381 ECSS provided approximately 80 combat support personnel to support air operations. Personnel remained deployed until early February 2009.
12. During the period of operational stand down, the Base provided military air traffic control support to military and civil operators in the form of Certified Air Ground Radio Service (CA/GRS).
13. The Base is providing personnel or equipment to over 300 requests for ANZAC Day support across the region. Providing support to this annual event remains a priority for RAAF Base Williamtown.
14. The Base conducted a gold coin drop and received collections to assist those personnel displaced and affected by the Victorian Bush Fires. A total of \$12,

345 was collected. The RAAF and the Base remain committed to assisting those in their greatest time of need.

15. From 24 February 2009 to 4 March 2009, Air Combat Group and the Base hosted a visit by the F/A-18F Super Hornets. The Minister for Defence attended the Base on the 27th February 2009 to view the aircraft.
16. The Base will host one of the new Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft for a visit on the 16th March 2009 and then again in May 2009. The aircraft could possibly be based at Williamtown in November this year.
17. The State Member for Port Stephens, Craig Baumann raised the issue of Air Traffic Control (ATC) services over the Christmas reduced activity period and asked if any RAAF ATC personnel has resigned due to having to work over Christmas. WGCDR Glen Johnson responded that there were no resignations but there was obvious stress for personnel having to work when they would normally be on leave.
18. Mayor McKenzie asked why flying activity had increased at the Salt Ash Weapons Range (SAWR) and that he thought the RAAF were flying different patterns. He also advised that, whilst he supported the Base, he could not support SAWR and many residents wanted it closed. AIRCDRE Neil Hart responded that there had been no changes to the training cycle and the flying patterns were not dissimilar to previous years. WGCDR Johnson reiterated the existence of the 1800 number for members of the public to use if they have any queries in relation to RAAF flying programs. AIRCDRE Hart advised that SAWR will continue to be needed as part of the stepped training needs for pilots progressing from initial pilot training through fast jet training using the Hawk Lead In Fighter and then to the F/A-18 Hornets and possibly the next generation of air combat capability. Both AIRCDRE Hart and Mr Owens stressed that the RAAF Base and SAWR are enduring and both are critical for Defence capability.

Item 5 – Presentation from Defence’s New Air Combat Capability Project Team.

19. GPCAPT Ian Farnsworth from Defence’s New Air Combat Capability Project Team provided Forum members with an overview of plans for the proposed introduction of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) capability to RAAF Base Williamtown. The presentation included details on proposals for infrastructure investment, environmental approval processes and industry involvement.
20. Defence highlighted that JSF noise was considered the key environmental risk and would need to be managed carefully. Defence displayed (but did not release) a copy of the first Williamtown noise map and advised that although the JSF was not as noisy as originally expected, it would be noisier than the current ‘classic’ F/A-18 Hornet operating from RAAF Base Williamtown.
21. Mayor McKenzie suggested that Defence needs to be more transparent in its processes and planning, particularly in relation to plans for the use of SAWR and the release of JSF noise data. Mayor McKenzie did, however, express support for the continuing RAAF presence at Williamtown. Defence confirmed it is committed to working collaboratively with relevant State and Local

Government planning authorities to ensure the best outcomes can be achieved for all.

22. With regard to the Kings Hill rezoning proposal, Defence explained that the full suite of noise maps should be available for further dissemination to State and Local Government stakeholders through the Kings Hill Working Group by the end of this month. Ms Collison confirmed she would follow this matter up with the NSW Department of Planning to schedule a meeting of the Kings Hill Working Group as soon as the Department's independent review of the noise map generation process has been completed.
23. The CEO of Newcastle Airport Ltd, Paul Hughes and the General Manager of Port Stephens Council, Peter Gesling, expressed their interest in the option to potentially extend the RAAF Base Williamtown runway to the east. GPCAPT Farnsworth advised that the question of any runway extension at the Base is one of many options Defence needs to consider in relation to the facilities required for the proposed introduction of the JSF at RAAF Base Williamtown. A key component of facilities planning for the introduction of the JSF will be the associated environmental approval processes. An Environmental Impact Statement will be developed as part of this process and it will address impacts associated with any facility works such as a possible runway extension.
24. Both GPCAPT Farnsworth and Mr Owens confirmed that Defence is committed to working with Port Stephens and the relevant NSW Government agencies to consider facility options, to manage any environmental impacts and to facilitate the consultation necessary to achieve a favourable outcome for both Defence and the community.

Item 6 – Port Stephens Council Update.

25. Mr Broyd advised the Forum that the Draft Medowie Structure Plan was considered by Council very recently. Mr Broyd requested Defence to provide comments on the Plan by 24 March. **(Action Item)**.
26. Mr Broyd also advised the Forum that the NSW Government had approved the rezoning of the Defence and Airport Related Employment land immediately adjoining the Base on 13 February 2009. Hunter Land will be lodging a Development Application with Council shortly. Traffic access is one of the major issues to be resolved. Ms Collison mentioned that the Project Control Group established at an officer level to work through issues associated with the DAREZ was a good example of intergovernmental/agency cooperation.

Item 7 – NSW Premiers Department Update.

27. Ms Collison reiterated she would follow up with the NSW Department of Planning when the next meeting of the Kings Hill Working Group will take place.
28. Ms Collison also advised that the model that was used to work through the issues associated with the rezoning of the Defence and Airport Related

Employment Zone was a constructive means of ensuring all technical matters associated with complex planning issues were addressed and that this model could also be used to ensure all issues associated with the proposed introduction of the JSF to RAAF Base Williamtown were considered by all levels of Government. Mr Owens agreed and advised that the Williamtown Advisory Group that had now been established could be the appropriate mechanism to address these issues at an officer level.

Item 8 – Newcastle Airport Ltd Update.

29. Mr Hughes advised that NAL redevelopments were progressing reasonably well. In particular, Mr Hughes advised that the Development Application for the Terminal expansion has been lodged with the Port Stephens Council and that a Development Application for a new fuel farm at the eastern end of the airport is imminent. NAL is also committed to supporting the removal of the Sewage Treatment Plant as it is a major impediment to development. Mr Owens advised that Defence is committed to connecting the Base to the Hunter Water Sewage Scheme.
30. Mr Hughes also advised the Air Traffic Control issue over Christmas also had a cost impact on NAL and that he would be speaking to Minister Fitzgibbon in this regard. Mr Hughes also advised both NAL and Hunter Land would be attending the Avalon Air Show from 9 March promoting the Williamtown Aerospace Park as a marketing opportunity.

Item 9 – Other Business.

31. Mr Gesling advised that the tour of the JSF Simulator at the Base on 3 March was very worthwhile and he thanked Defence for organising this visit.

Item 10 – Next Meeting.

32. Mr Owens thanked Forum members for a productive and open discussion and looked forward to meeting with them at the next Forum meeting.

The next Forum meeting will be held on Friday 2 October 2009. Members will be further advised of its location.

Mr Owens closed the meeting at 11:30.
