

Minutes of the Williamtown Consultative Forum Friday 4th July 2008, 1000-1200

1. Mr John Owens, Head of Infrastructure in the Department of Defence and Chair of the Williamtown Consultative Forum opened the meeting at 1010. Mr Owens welcomed all members to the meeting, and then asked each attendee to introduce themselves (see attachment A).

Item 1 - Introduction

2. Mr Owens discussed the role of the Defence Support Group and specifically Infrastructure Division in support of the Australian Defence Force and in the case of RAAF Williamtown, the Royal Australian Air Force.

Item 2 - Minutes from the last Williamtown Consultative Forum

3. Mr Owens asked Mr Ron Hunter, Regional Manager Central and Northern New South Wales, Department of Defence, if the previous Forum minutes were accepted. Mr Hunter moved that the minutes be accepted. This motion was carried by the Forum.

Item 3 - Discussion on the future role of the Williamtown Consultative Forum

4. Mr Owens commenced discussion by outlining the purpose and history of the Williamtown Consultative Forum. Mr Owens suggested the Forum had evolved to become a prototype with industry representatives and elected officials as well as representatives from the three tiers of government. Mr Owens stated the Forum was currently a good vehicle for establishing productive working relationships and communication between members, and asked whether the Forum now needed to evolve into a senior level strategic Forum which draws on working level groups. Mr Owens invited members to comment.
5. The Federal Member for Newcastle, Ms Sharon Grierson stated the purpose of the Forum had become unclear – was it a community Forum or a high level strategic Forum. Ms Grierson stated that if a strategic approach is adopted, a strong community engagement strategy was required to positively manage issues with the community.
6. GPCAPT Alan Clements suggested the Forum now needed to examine strategic issues and the broader role RAAF Base Williamtown played in the Hunter Region. Ms Jennifer Collison from the NSW Premiers Department stated that the opportunity to network with local, state and federal government was a key benefit of the Forum.
7. Mr Owens stated that Defence would draft a new Terms of Reference for the Williamtown Consultative Forum, which would articulate the purpose of the Forum and suggest a new two tier structure where working groups examined

issues to present to a senior level strategically focused Forum. The draft Terms of Reference would also outline the purpose of the Forum, community engagement strategies, and membership and be circulated to members before the next Forum. **(Action item)**.

8. Mr Owens suggested the senior level Forum meet three times a year, in February, July and November and on a Friday so there is less potential for conflict with Parliament's schedule. Mr Owen stated that the Kings Hill Working Group could be the model adopted for the new working group structure.
9. Mr Owens then asked members to comment on Forum membership. The Forum agreed to the Mayor of Newcastle and the local State Member for Port Stephens should be invited to the next Forum. Mr Owens suggested meetings be themed to enable the best participants to attend the Forum - from industry, local, state and federal government, and other stakeholders as required.
10. Mr John Kerwan, Director Land Planning and Spatial Information in the Department of Defence addressed the forum on the development of a communications strategy for the Base. The strategy would review the role, frequency and degree of community engagement. Defence was currently examining the types of initiatives, resourcing and costing. Mr Kerwan states that out-of-session consultation on the Strategy would occur with Forum members **(Action item)**.
11. Councillor Ron Swan encouraged Defence to participate in the community in a subtle and passive manner. Ms Grierson stated that industry skill deficits should be highlighted in the strategy, and went on to state that the Defence and Airport Related Employment (DAREZ) proposed zone adjacent to the Base was a welcome activity that can promote a have a positive impact on the community. Mr Owens stated the Base needs to be seen as part of the broader Hunter region. Forum members then discussed ways in which the community could be engaged in base functions such as tourism activities, base open days etc.

Item 4 - Report from the Kings Hill Working Group

12. Mr Brian Murphy from the NSW Department of Planning briefed the Forum on the Kings Hill Working Group. Mr Murphy stated there had been two productive meetings with recommendations proposed to be submitted to the Ministers later in the year. David Broyd from Port Stephens Council raised the issue of aircraft noise of the proposed Joint Strike Fighter and the potential impact to development at Kings Hill and local residents.
13. Mr Owens informed the Forum that noise data on the Joint Strike Fighter is only just coming to light, but there may be a range of impacts. Mr Owens highlighted that this was an excellent Forum to discuss issues such as the impacts associated with the introduction into service of the Joint Strike Fighter.

Item 5 – RAAF update on RAAF Base Williamtown matters

14. WGCDR Peter Davis provided the Forum with an update on events at RAAF Base Williamtown. WGCDR Davis stated the base was the most complex in terms of issue management for the Royal Australian Air Force. WGCDR Davis also advised a new base Public Affairs Officer position is to be established at the Base.
15. Jennifer Collison asked the chair whether the Forum could be briefed on the strategic review of Williamtown. Mr Owens outlined the current White Paper development process and the place of the Estate Companion Review within that process. Mr Owens stated he would brief the Forum on the key judgements and findings from the Estate Companion Review at the next Forum. **(Action Item)**.

Item 6 – Other business

16. Ms Grierson asked the Chair about Defence investment at the base. Mr Owens stated Defence would invest more than \$1 billion on infrastructure at the base over the next eight years.
17. Helen Horn, Defence's Senior Environment Manager for the Central and Northern NSW Region stated a heritage interpretation project for RAAF Base Williamtown was underway and that an oral history of the Base would be compiled, including a reproduction of a wartime era Officers Mess songbook. There are also plans, subject to funds availability, for a display to be established at NAL describing the history of the Base.
18. Mr Owens raised the issue of the Quarterly Noise Reports and suggested that a higher level executive summary be circulated to members one month before Forum meetings and discussed if required, at the ensuing Forum meeting **(Action Item)**.
19. Mr Paul Hughes from Newcastle Airport Ltd (NAL) stated that Defence has approved a satellite based air traffic control system at the Base. Aircraft would be able to fly specific paths to reduce noise by the end of the year. Mr Hughes also stated there is a growing strategic campaign for a major airport accommodating overflow growth from Kingsford Smith airport to the Hunter region.
20. David Broyd from Port Stephens Council stated that the Defence and Airport Related Employment Zone (DAREZ) rezoning was supported by Port Stephens Council in June 2008 and is a high priority initiative. The approval excluded certain land along Cabbage Tree Road and the land occupied by the museum to the east. The proposal will go to NSW Department of Planning shortly. The development application for the subdivision and development of the land controlled by Hunter Land is expected to be lodged with Council in September 2008. David also advised that the Medowie rezoning proposal received 80 submissions and would go to Council in October/November. The Buldev proposal was not supported.

21. Port Stephens Council General Manager Peter Gesling advised the Forum Council has authorised Newcastle Airport Limited to proceed with an investigation into future economic and funding models for the airport.
22. An issue was also raised as to alleged jet fuel fall out. GPCAPT Alan Clements explained that there was no jet fuel fall out, however, the vortices that aircraft create can look like fuel dumping, but is actually condensation.

Item 7 – Next Meeting

23. Mr Owens advised Defence would be in-touch with all members of the Form to arrange a suitable time for the next meeting in November 2008 (**Action Item**).
24. Mr Owens thanked Forum members for a productive and open discussion and looked forward to meeting with them at the next Forum meeting. Mr Owens closed the meeting at 12:10.
