

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

*THE GOVERNMENT'S 1997-1998 DRAFT CAPITAL WORKS
PROGRAM*

**REPORT NO.26
OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

FEBRUARY 1997

Resolution of appointment of the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment:

[that] a Standing Committee on Planning and Environment [be established] to examine matters related to planning, land management, transport, commercial development, industrial and residential development, infrastructure and capital works, science and technology, the environment, conservation, heritage, energy and resources...

[And that the committee] inquire into and report on matters referred to [it] by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the committee to be of concern to the community.

Minutes of Proceedings (Third Assembly) No.1 - 9 March 1995, amended 22 June 1995

Terms of reference of the committee's inquiry:

To inquire into and report on the Government's 1997-1998 Draft Capital Works Program

Minutes of Proceedings (Standing Committee on Planning and Environment) 7 February 1997

Committee Membership

Mr Michael Moore MLA (Chair)
Mr Trevor Kaine MLA (Deputy Chair) *
Ms Roberta McRae OAM, MLA (Deputy Chair[⊗])
Ms Lucy Horodny MLA
Mrs Louise Littlewood MLA[◇]

Secretary: Mr Rod Power

* Discharged by the Assembly on 18 February 1997

⊗ Elected on 21 February 1997

◇ Appointed by the Assembly on 18 February 1997

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommends that the Government forward this committee's thanks to those responsible for the excellent documentation associated with the Government's 1997-1998 Draft Capital Works Program.

The committee recommends that the Government ensure the Draft Capital Works Program and supporting documentation is placed on the Internet, and made available at libraries and on the Austouch booths, as soon as the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment authorises publication of the material. Further, the committee recommends that the Government, and the Assembly, ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the Budget process to enable a wide range of community opinion to be heard, including by the Planning and Environment Committee (para 1.30).

The committee recommends that the Government require agencies to list the individuals and organisations who they consulted about proposed capital works - and, wherever possible, the date of that consultation (para 1.32).

The committee recommends that the Government advise the Assembly about the way it intends to identify, and treat, funding for capital works in the future. The committee specifically draws the Government's attention to the need for Assembly members, as well as the Canberra public, to be in a position to clearly identify projects of a capital kind in the overall activity of Government (para 2.12).

The committee recommends that the Government take into account, when determining priorities for precinct refurbishment, the possibility that shopping centre leaseholders might contribute in some way to the cost of their centre's refurbishment and also the effect of the proposed Variation to the Territory Plan whereby a wide range of Land uses will be permitted at local shopping centres. In addition, the Government should take into account the possibility that a particular precinct might warrant refurbishment even though it does not have an active precinct committee (para 2.19).

The committee recommends that the Government provide information in the Draft Capital Works Program on projects that were unsuccessfully put forward by agencies in the context of preparing the Draft Program. This information assists in working out whether the overall balance of the Draft Program is appropriate. Further, the committee should be informed about the extent of community consultation associated with projects that did not make the Draft Program (para 2.30).

The committee recommends that the Government provide more detailed information on the justification for spending \$7.525m on refurbishing the pathology building at Canberra Hospital and \$1.1m on redevelopment of bathrooms at Calvary Hospital (para 2.38).

The committee recommends that the Government provide information on the proportion of the Draft Capital Works Program devoted to constructing new assets as against refurbishing existing assets. As well, the committee recommends that the Government, in the Draft Program, classify its proposed capital works by broad type (such as roads expenditure, bike path expenditure and building expenditure - broken down by type of use: whether office, community, leisure, et cetera) [para 2.41].

The committee recommends that the Government direct officials to provide information in future Draft Works Programs on the way that projects can be assessed to see if they have delivered the benefits expected of them (para 2.46).

The committee recommends that the Government carefully monitor the extent to which key planning and monitoring functions in the oversight of capital works are passed to the private sector. In particular, the Government should ensure that it retains the capacity to secure impartial and professional advice from its own qualified staff in decisions about the planning, implementation and assessment of capital works (para 2.54).

The committee recommends that the Government pursue the construction of major roadworks in the region to which the Federal Government has earmarked funds, including duplicating the Barton Highway and upgrading the Federal Highway between Sutton Interchange and north Watson (para 2.57).

The committee recommends that the Government ensure that all details of the justification of projects linked to the Olympic Games be made public (para 3.8).

1. THE PROCESS OF CONSIDERING CAPITAL WORKS IN THE A.C.T.

1.1. In its treatment of capital works, the A.C.T. Assembly is unique among Australian parliaments/Assemblies. It is the only State or Territory to compile a draft program of capital works which is routinely referred to an Assembly committee for review. The committee's subsequent report is then taken into account by the Government in preparing its Budget papers.

1.2. This year the Draft Program was referred to the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment, by the A.C.T.'s Treasurer, on 7 February 1997. On the same day the committee resolved to inquire into and report on the Program.

1.3. The Treasurer asked the committee to report by 5 March 1997, so that the Government might consider the committee's recommendations in the context of formulating the 1997-1998 Budget (due on 6 May 1997). The committee has met the Treasurer's tight timeframe in presenting this report.

Public input

1.4. The committee placed advertisements in the local press inviting public input to the inquiry. In view of the tight deadline, the public was asked to contact the committee directly to arrange an appearance at a public hearing.

1.5. The committee's first public hearing was held on 14 February 1997. Senior officials from the following Government agencies appeared: Office of Financial Management, Department of Urban Services [DUS], Exhibition Park in Canberra [EPIC], Department of Health and Community Care, Department of Business, the Arts, Sport and Tourism [BASAT], Attorney-General's Department, Canberra Institute of Technology, the Department of Education and Training and the Children's, Youth and Family Services Bureau.

1.6. A second public hearing was held on 21 February when officials of A.C.T. Housing addressed the committee, along with representatives of the Belconnen Community Association, Weston Creek Community Council, Master Builders Association, Canberra Community Action on Acton Inc. [CCAA], and the Board of Lake Ginninderra College.

1.7. A complete list of witnesses appears at Appendix 1.

Change of committee membership

1.8. Until 18 February 1997 the members of the committee included Mr Trevor Kaine MLA (Deputy Chair). However, in keeping with his assumption of Ministerial duties in January 1997, Mr Kaine took no part in the public hearings or the committee's deliberations.

1.9. On 18 February 1997 the Legislative Assembly swore in Mrs Louise Littlewood to replace the former Member for Brindabella, Mr Tony De Domenico MLA. Mrs Littlewood was then appointed to the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment. She attended the public hearing on 21 February and took part in the committee's subsequent deliberations.

Basic documents

1.10. There are three basic documents used by the committee to analyse the Government's Draft Capital Works Program. The first comprises the Treasurer's letter to the Chair of this committee dated 7 February 1997, which includes the following attachments:

- 'an overview statement which provides details on the key priorities of the Government in formulating the draft program';
- Attachment A, being an internal Minute from the Office of Financial Management to Agency Heads detailing the arrangements to apply in formulating the 1997-1998 capital works programs and the 1998-2001 Forward Intentions;
- Attachment B, being the specific Construction Proposals comprising the 1997-1998 Draft Program - amounting to \$88.5m (the Attachment is shown at Appendix 2 to this report);
- Attachment C, being the Forward Design proposals - amounting to \$3.9m (see Appendix 3); and
- Attachment D, being Feasibility Study proposals - amounting to \$1.4m (see Appendix 4).

1.11. The second basic document used by the committee is mentioned in the Treasurer's letter and was forwarded separately (on 14 February 1997). It is 'a project by project status report on the 1996-1997 capital works program' (that is, the current year's program). The status report sets out the extent to which capital works in the current year are on track to completion. It enables members to quickly see where delays are being experienced. Members can then ask for an explanation from officials as they come before the committee.

1.12. The committee is aware that members of the public also find the status report useful. For example, the Master Builders' Association comments each year on aspects of project delivery. This year the Association commented that while a few of its members were experiencing unexplained delays by Government agencies in letting contracts, the whole process has significantly improved.¹

1.13. The Office of Financial Management told the committee that the 1996-1997 capital works program will come in within \$100,000 of its \$90m total. Officials said this was due to the early start of the capital works program, following early preparation of forward design work to enable a prompt start to projects as soon as the

¹ *Transcript* (Unedited) pp39-40 (21/2/97) Mr Dawes and Mr Pinter (MBA)

Government's Budget is passed by the Assembly. The committee is pleased that the Government has taken on board a recommendation to this effect, made by the committee in its report on last year's capital work. That report also called on the Government to endorse a broad range of capital works projects so as to enable the preparation of forward designs, thus permitting the quick substitution of a project in difficulties for another one on the forward design list.

1.14. The committee notes the view of the Office of Financial Management that the changed 'management scenario' - involving less central direction, the identification of agencies as the client or 'owner' of projects, and the use of performance agreements and contracts - is in large part responsible for the improved delivery and completion of capital works.² The committee reserves its judgement on this claim.

1.15. The third basic document, or set of documents, used by the committee is the detailed documentation on individual projects that is provided by each agency. This information is extremely bulky and detailed. Its format incorporates recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment in previous years. These have largely been implemented by successive Governments. The format follows the outline given in Attachment A to the Treasurer's letter (referred to above), involving the preparation of a business case outlining:

- strategic and policy planning;
 - relationship to the agency's outputs and Government outcomes;
 - relevance to service provision strategy;
 - analysis of all options;
 - environmental and heritage impacts of the proposed project;
 - cost-benefit analysis (for proposals over \$1m);
 - impact on the financial statements on a whole-of-life basis'
- risk assessment including environmental, financial and project delivery risks;
- risk minimisation and management plans, and risk allocation arrangements;
 - a detailed user requirement/functional brief;
 - site identification; and
 - timing and technical (construction) feasibility.³

1.16. This detailed information enables members of the committee to feel confident that a rigorous process has been followed in preparing capital works. In the past,

² *Transcript* (Unedited) p7

³ *Overview* paragraph 32

members have been concerned that important matters have been omitted from the formulation of works proposals, leading to needless controversy and delays.

1.17. The committee was pleased with the layout of the detailed documentation this year. In particular, the committee appreciates the efforts of agencies to clearly tab their papers to enable easy identification of particular items. The committee is aware that three agencies in particular have very bulky papers: DUS, the Department of Health, and BASAT. The first two agencies were able to place their material into spiral-bound folders, whereas BASAT was unable to do so this year. As a result, it was a little difficult to keep control of the loose papers. **It would be appreciated if each agency could provide the committee with bound folders next year. In addition, it would be appreciated if agencies can provide one copy of the detailed documentation for each member of the committee, along with one copy for the secretary of the committee.**

1.18. The Chair of the committee observed, in relation to the basic documents:

I think the reason we are able to get through the Capital Works [Program]...so quickly is not only the information... in there [the basic documents] that we have already been through from last time, but also just the way it is set out... I must say it is brilliant and I can understand why my parliamentary colleagues in other States would be incredibly jealous if they saw what we had here.⁴

1.19. The committee adds just one point. It is important that the documentation includes a simple description of each proposal, placed right at the start of that project's detailed documentation. It seems that this was not done in all cases this year.

The terms 'forward design' and 'feasibility study'

1.20. The committee asked officials to clarify the above terms, in view of the importance of properly appreciating the status of projects placed in Attachments C and D of the Treasurer's letter (referred to above).

1.21. The committee was told that agencies commission feasibility studies in areas where they have done no work or next to no work on finding solutions to particular problems. The feasibility studies canvass a whole range of issues.⁵ The studies:

enable agencies to develop projects through the conceptualisation and definition stages, with the Government's assessment of options, and reconfirmation if appropriate of the policy directions.⁶

1.22. Generally, forward design work follows completion of the feasibility study. However, exceptions may occur, such as the redevelopment proposal for Manuka and Phillip Ovals contained in this year's papers.⁷

⁴ *Transcript* (Unedited) p46

⁵ *Transcript* (Unedited) pp54-55

⁶ *Overview* paragraph 37

⁷ *Transcript* (Unedited) pp121-122

1.23. The committee asked whether the A.C.T. Cabinet directed that a particular feasibility study be undertaken. Officials said that they were not aware of any such direction.⁸ The Chair of the committee noted that he had no problem with such a direction by Cabinet but that, if this kind of direction was given, he would seek in the parliamentary arena to find out why.⁹

Supplementary documentation

1.24. During the course of the public hearings, the committee asked some agencies to provide supplementary information.

Documents authorised for publication

1.25. In accordance with its usual policy, the committee authorised publication of all the documentation. As well, the committee arranged for a *Hansard* transcript to be made of the proceedings of both public hearings. In order to distinguish between the two hearing dates, the committee has left references to the first hearing undated while inserting the date of the second hearing in the footnotes.

Availability of documents to the public

1.26. The committee has always welcomed input from members of the public. Representatives of community groups told the committee that they would like the basic documents to be available in libraries in both hard copy and on the Austouch machines.¹⁰ The committee shares this view.

1.27. Further, the committee understands that there is considerable interest in accessing Government information, such as the Draft Capital Works Program, on the Internet. It seems to the committee that many businesses and residents would make use of this facility.

1.28. The committee emphasises the importance of establishing procedures that facilitate the widest possible consultative process for decisions on capital works. This is the reason why the committee routinely authorises publication of the material that agencies provide, and why it seeks public comment. The committee is aware that its present method of seeking community input, by placing advertisements in the local press, itself has limitations; but this issue relates to general Assembly policy on seeking community input and is something for Assembly members to address.

1.29. Further, the committee appreciates that this issue bears on the timing of the A.C.T.'s Budget itself. The committee considers that the Government should carefully consider the need to allocate sufficient time to the Budget process to enable a wide range of community opinion to be heard, including by this committee.

1.30. *The committee recommends that the Government ensure the Draft Capital Works Program and supporting documentation is placed on the Internet, and made available at libraries and on the Austouch booths, as soon as the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment authorises publication of the material.*

⁸ *Transcript* (Unedited) p56

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ For example, *Transcript* (Unedited) p27 (21/2/97) Ms Flint (BCC)

Further, the committee recommends that the Government, and the Assembly, ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the Budget process to enable a wide range of community opinion to be heard, including by the Planning and Environment Committee.

1.31. Representatives of the Belconnen Community Council and Weston Creek Community Council also drew the committee's attention to the absence of information in the detailed documents provided by agencies about who they consulted and when.¹¹ The committee considers that it is reasonable to ask agencies to document the persons and organisations whom they consulted in preparing their capital works proposals.

1.32. The committee recommends that the Government require agencies to list the individuals and organisations who they consulted about proposed capital works - and, wherever possible, the date of that consultation.

¹¹ For example, *Transcript* (Unedited) p50 (21/2/97) Mr Henderson (Weston Creek Community Council)

2. CAPITAL WORKS 1997-1998: BROAD THEMES

Capital works and economic activity generally

2.1. The Office of Financial Management told the committee that the Government's 1997-1998 Capital Works Program of approximately \$90m will form about 11 percent of total economic activity in the Territory.¹² The Program involves funding of \$94m made up of \$60m works-in-progress and \$34m new works.¹³ These figures exclude the contribution of the two off-Budget agencies, A.C.T. Housing and ACTEW. When account is taken of their capital works, the current year's total works amounted to \$168m.

2.2. The Office of Financial Management considers that, while housing activity in the A.C.T. is down, activity in the non-dwelling sector is satisfactory.¹⁴ By contrast, the Master Builders' Association considers that the housing downturn can not be offset by activity in the non-dwelling and engineering sectors:

Much of the major building projects presently underway in the industry, together with those that are foreshadowed, for example Administrative Building (\$60m) and National Museum of Australia (\$125m) are of a scale or will be packaged on a project delivery basis which will exclude local contractors and importantly, the subcontractors who are the major employers within local industry.¹⁵

2.3. In relation to the capital works of A.C.T. Housing, the committee was told that Commonwealth funds have been decreasing over recent years and that, as a consequence, all public housing authorities have resorted to 'living off capital, leading to pressures that dictate a change in expenditure priorities'.¹⁶ There is now a greater emphasis on income flows, let-ability, whole of life costs and capital value growth. The works program for A.C.T. Housing is \$27.89m, of which \$11.9m is works underway from the 1996-1997 year.¹⁷

2.4. In relation to the capital works of ACTEW, the committee understands that its works program will amount to \$40m-50m over the 1997-1998 financial year. Details of the program have not gone before the Board and the program will not be finalised until April.

2.5. The Master Builders' Association submitted that the Draft Program 'continues the trend of a decline in A.C.T. Capital Works'.¹⁸ The committee questioned the Office of Financial Management about this claim - and was told that the level of

¹² *Transcript* (Unedited) p2

¹³ *Transcript* (Unedited) p3

¹⁴ *Transcript* (Unedited) p2

¹⁵ MBA submission p2

¹⁶ *Transcript* (Unedited) p2 (21/2/97) Mr Gilmour (Chief Executive, DUS)

¹⁷ A.C.T. Housing - document provided to the committee, dated 20/2/97

¹⁸ MBA submission p1

capital works is about where it has always been.¹⁹ The committee asked for further information and was provided with the following Table which shows (in current prices):

- actual expenditure on Budget-funded capital works by the A.C.T. Government (Column 2);
- Commonwealth expenditure on capital works (including equipment) in the A.C.T. (Column 3); and
- the total expenditure (private and public) on capital works in the A.C.T. (excluding equipment and real estate transfers).

Table 1 - A.C.T. and Commonwealth Capital Works Expenditure Components of Total Construction Activity in the Territory

Year	A.C.T. Budget-funded	Cwlth capital works in the A.C.T.	A.C.T. gross fixed capital expenditure	A.C.T. % of Total	Cwlth % of Total
1992/93	\$147m	\$273m	\$1290m	11.4%	21.2%
1993/94	\$101m	\$250m	\$1205m	8.4%	20.7%
1994/95	\$107m	\$214m	\$1145m	9.3%	18.7%
1995/96	\$91m	\$251m	\$1004m	9.1%	25.0%

2.6. The A.C.T. Government's 1996-1997 Capital Works Program amounted to \$88m and the 1997-1998 Draft Program totals \$88.5m

2.7. It is clear to the committee that expenditure on capital works in the A.C.T. has declined in recent years.

Identifying expenditure on capital works

2.8. When examining the Government's 1995-1996 Draft Capital Works Program, the committee commented on the proposed expenditure of \$8.125m to fund the demolition of the former Canberra Hospital at Acton. This money was not spent. The committee understands that the Government expects to demolish the buildings at Acton during 1997.

2.9. The Office of Financial Management told the committee that this work is not shown in the Capital Works Program but that \$5.4m exists in the DUS Territory recurrent budget - reflecting the project's status as a Territory project rather than an agency-specific one. The officials stated that the *Financial Management Act 1996* enabled appropriations for capital works to be treated as recurrent expenditure.²⁰

2.10. The committee appreciates the distinction between a Territory item and an agency item but has some qualms about the implications of advice by the Chief

¹⁹ *Transcript* (Unedited) p5 Mr Lilley (Under-Treasurer)

²⁰ *Transcript* (Unedited) p8

Executive of DUS²¹ that the Government is not appropriating separately for capital works any more; instead, it views funding for capital works as simply part of the funding of an agency to achieve specified outcomes.²² The committee would be concerned if the changes to financial accounting in the A.C.T. Government led to difficulties in identifying funding for capital works projects.

2.11. Further, the committee was told that officials are considering the imposition of a capital charge associated with capital injections to an agency.²³ The committee would appreciate some elaboration of this development.

2.12. The committee recommends that the Government advise the Assembly about the way it intends to identify, and treat, funding for capital works in the future. The committee specifically draws the Government's attention to the need for Assembly members, as well as the Canberra public, to be in a position to clearly identify projects of a capital kind in the overall activity of Government.

The need to know how priorities are determined

2.13. The committee closely questioned officials about the way that priorities were determined for capital works expenditure.

2.14. In the case of proposed precinct refurbishment, the draft program shows that work will be undertaken at the shopping centres of Kingston, Manuka, Yarralumla and Rivett. This follows work in the current year's program at Weston Creek and Kippax Group Centres. The Government's next priorities will be Dickson, Hall and Charnwood.²⁴

2.15. Officials told the committee that they do not have a complete list of all shopping centres and their need for repair.²⁵ They stated that priorities are determined following assessment of community concerns and the degree of community interest in refurbishment.²⁶ The Overview statement attached to the Treasurer's letter noted that this year's projects are subject to priority confirmation by the precinct community groups.²⁷

2.16. It was noted that one of the above centres (Rivett) does not have a precinct management group (unlike the other centres).²⁸ The case for rating Rivett above other centres was not clear to the committee.

2.17. Representatives of the Weston Creek Community Council noted the absence of background information to support the Rivett refurbishment. They noted that the Rivett centre is badly run down and that remedial works was required; but stated that,

²¹ *Transcript (Unedited)* p13

²² *Transcript (Unedited)* p9

²³ *Transcript (Unedited)* p10

²⁴ *Overview* paragraph 18

²⁵ *Transcript (Unedited)* p17

²⁶ *Transcript (Unedited)* p51

²⁷ *Overview* paragraph 18

²⁸ *Transcript (Unedited)* p19

as community representatives, they wanted to be talked through the plans so that they can feel confident the proposed works are the best way to improve the centre.²⁹

2.18. The committee raised two other issues when considering precinct refurbishment. The first concerns the degree to which shopping centre leaseholders might contribute in some way to the cost of their centre's refurbishment. The second is to extent to which precinct planning is taking account of the possibility that, under a draft Variation to the Territory Plan currently being considered [No.64 - B2 Commercial Land Use Policies - Local Centres (Part B2D)], some shopping centres may no longer consist of shops but may incorporate some or all of a much wider group of Land uses including Light industry, Guest house, Veterinary hospital, Community use (such as Church and Education), Industrial trades (such as motor servicing), or Residential.

2.19. The committee recommends that the Government take into account, when determining priorities for precinct refurbishment, the possibility that shopping centre leaseholders might contribute in some way to the cost of their centre's refurbishment and also the effect of the proposed Variation to the Territory Plan whereby a wide range of Land uses will be permitted at local shopping centres. In addition, the Government should take into account the possibility that a particular precinct might warrant refurbishment even though it does not have an active precinct committee.

2.20. In relation to the proposed work at Manuka, it is the understanding of the committee that it is not intended to do work on the Palmerston Lane area of Manuka - as this is affected by the proposal for Section 41 Griffith, whereby development of that Section might include a requirement to upgrade Palmerston Lane.

2.21. Another example of proposals leading the committee to query how officials determined the priority for capital works involves improvements to sportsgrounds. Officials said that they considered the condition of the sportsground and the capacity of its users to help themselves.³⁰ They cited the example of the proposal to develop a hockey facility at Tuggeranong, observing that hockey is a sport that is highly capable of organising itself, demonstrably able to raise its own funds and with a track record in terms of facility management. Therefore, officials stated, it makes sense to provide a contribution to new hockey facilities in the way of 'seed' money and encourage hockey's management to build a new facility and run it.³¹

2.22. Representatives of the Belconnen Community Council criticised this approach. They estimated that the Draft Program provided for about \$46m worth of sports funding, mainly for what they termed elitist sports. They cited proposals for the Tuggeranong hockey centre and the forward design (costing \$150,000) for an Aquatic Centre at Lake Jerrabomberra (estimated to cost \$4m). They wondered

²⁹ Transcript (Unedited) p51 (21/2/97) Mr Henderson and Mr Sutherland (Weston Creek Community Council)

³⁰ Transcript (Unedited) p115

³¹ Transcript (Unedited) p120

whether the Bureau of Sports was too closely taking the needs of organised sporting bodies into account, to the possible detriment of sports that are less well organised.³²

2.23. The committee queried the priority listing of the new Belconnen water sports storage facility.³³ In the light of the response by officials, and also in light of enthusiastic support for the proposal by Lake Ginninderra College,³⁴ the committee concludes that the proposal should be endorsed.

2.24. Further, the committee asked officials the same question of determining priorities in the case of proposed community and youth centres at Belconnen and Weston Creek. The committee was particularly interested in the extent of community consultation.

2.25. In the Weston Creek case, officials stated that they followed established benchmarks and consulted the precinct management group, though there was no survey of the young people.³⁵ It seems to the committee that students at the local high school might have been consulted. Representatives of the Weston Creek Community Council told the committee that, while a youth recreation facility is badly needed, there are different views about what sort of facility is best and where it should be sited.³⁶

2.26. Officials commented there will be opportunity for consultation in the implementation phase³⁷ but it seems to the committee that by that time the momentum of a proposal might have gone too far to easily accommodate amendment or deferral (if this was indeed warranted).

2.27. The Weston Creek Community Council representatives also queried the basis for determining the priority for upgrading pre-school playgrounds.³⁸

2.28. In relation to proposed works in Margaret Timson Park in Belconnen, the Belconnen Community Council told the committee that the plans prepared by officials excluded community input. The Council's representatives asked that the proposal be put on hold until a more extensive community consultation process was completed.³⁹

2.29. In concluding this section on the way that priorities are determined, the committee draws the Government's attention to its request - over a number of years - for information, not only on the projects that successfully bid for the capital works program, but also on those that missed out - that is, were unsuccessful. This information would assist the committee in assessing whether the draft works program has 'got it right' in terms of priorities.

³² *Transcript* (Unedited) pp36-37 (21/2/97) Ms Flint (BCC)

³³ *Transcript* (Unedited) p132

³⁴ *Transcript* (Unedited) p15 (21/2/97) Mr Evans (Chairor of the Board of Lake Ginninderra College)

³⁵ *Transcript* (Unedited) p49

³⁶ *Transcript* (Unedited) pp52-53 (21/2/97) Mr Sutherland

³⁷ *Transcript* (Unedited) p50

³⁸ *Transcript* (Unedited) p53 (21/2/97) Mr Henderson

³⁹ *Transcript* (Unedited) p37 (21/2/97) Ms Flint (BCC)

2.30. *The committee recommends that the Government provide information in the Draft Capital Works Program on projects that were unsuccessfully put forward by agencies in the context of preparing the Draft Program. This information assists in working out whether the overall balance of the Draft Program is appropriate. Further, the committee should be informed about the extent of community consultation associated with projects that did not make the Draft Program.*

2.31. In the context of identifying priorities, it helps the committee when agencies clearly identify that certain kinds of capital works are required in order to meet new building standards. For example, Health officials told the committee that proposals to install fire sprinklers in the two major hospitals and to improve lighting, heating and ventilation at the Phillip Health Centre are required in order to meet building standards which now apply but which were not in existence when those buildings were built.⁴⁰

Priorities of DUS

2.32. One agency that clearly stated its priorities, and where they came from, was DUS. In noting that the projects for which DUS was responsible comprised about \$32m of the total Draft Program of \$94m, DUS cited the fact that it was following the Government's announced policy priorities, which were the redevelopment of Civic, precinct refurbishment and revitalisation of group centres, environmental matters, public transport and upgrades of schools.⁴¹

2.33. The committee has no problem with such a clear identification of basic priorities. Of course, members of the committee may take issue with the Government on individual projects or even on the general makeup of the Draft Works Program; but members acknowledge that it is the prerogative of Government to set priorities and directions.

Balance of capital works projects by broad type

2.34. As well as looking at individual projects, the committee wants to feel confident that the Government has addressed the need to devote adequate resources to the maintenance of assets (such as the refurbishment of community centres or the upgrade of roads) as against the construction of new works, and that the Government has got the balance right in determining, for example, how much should go toward roads and drains and how much should go to ongoing building programs.⁴²

2.35. On roads maintenance, the Master Builders' Association has regularly drawn the committee's attention to its view that 'the A.C.T. community has built up a liability which may exceed its subsequent financing capacity'. The Master Builders' Association considers that DUS should report on the extent of road maintenance under-funding in the Territory.⁴³

2.36. A further example of an area where it is very important to get the balance right is in the Health area, where there exists a permanent tension between meeting the

⁴⁰ Transcript (Unedited) p82

⁴¹ Transcript (Unedited) p11 and p13

⁴² Transcript (Unedited) p62

⁴³ MBA submission p4; and Transcript (Unedited) p41 (21/2/97) Mr Dawes

needs of hospitals and the needs of the community care area. In recent years the needs of hospitals have dominated expenditure, including in the area of capital works.

2.37. This trend continues in the 1997-1998 Draft Program, with \$7.525m allocated to refurbishment of the pathology building at Canberra Hospital and \$1.1m allocated to 'redevelopment of bathrooms' at Calvary Hospital.

2.38. *The committee recommends that the Government provide more detailed information on the justification for spending \$7.525m on refurbishing the pathology building at Canberra Hospital and \$1.1m on redevelopment of bathrooms at Calvary Hospital.*

2.39. Health officials told the committee that they are aware of the need for balance, and that they have measures in train to identify if they have got the balance right. These measures involve completing a major review of physical assets, preparing an in-service delivery plan, the use of new management structures including the owner and the ownership agreement, the purchaser and the purchasing agreement, and encouraging the activities of the Board of Health. The latter is charged with overseeing both the Canberra Hospital and community care.⁴⁴

2.40. Representatives of the Belconnen Community Council queried whether priorities in the health area are appropriate, pointing to the need to devote greater resources, for example, to mental health.⁴⁵

2.41. *The committee recommends that the Government provide information on the proportion of the Draft Capital Works Program devoted to constructing new assets as against refurbishing existing assets. As well, the committee recommends that the Government, in the Draft Program, classify its proposed capital works by broad type (such as roads expenditure, bike path expenditure and building expenditure - broken down by type of use: whether office, community, leisure, et cetera).*

Assessing whether capital works actually do what was claimed for them

2.42. The committee asked a number of questions this year about the way that officials intended to assess whether capital works actually deliver what is hoped, or expected, of them.

2.43. One example concerns projects intended to revitalise Civic. While the various projects appear to make sense in themselves, the committee is concerned to identify how officials will test the underlying assumption that projects of the kind suggested will actually bring more people to Civic and make it a safer, livelier place for residents and tourists.⁴⁶

2.44. It seems to the committee that it is time - now that great improvements have been made to the detailed justification of individual projects - to devote more

⁴⁴ Transcript (Unedited) p79

⁴⁵ Transcript (Unedited) p37 (21/2/97) Ms Flint (BCC)

⁴⁶ Transcript (Unedited) p27

attention to the evaluation of projects, in order to identify whether the expenditure of public money has actually accomplished what was intended.

2.45. In past years, the committee has particularly asked this question in relation to the Hospital Redevelopment Project. The committee was surprised to learn last year, when considering the 1996-1997 Draft Capital Works Program, that it had not been planned to formally evaluate the Hospital Redevelopment Program - despite the fact that it was one of the largest single capital works items undertaken in the A.C.T. in recent years. The committee therefore recommended that the Government formally evaluate the whole Hospital Redevelopment Program (following its completion in 1997) and report back to the Assembly.

2.46. *The committee recommends that the Government direct officials to provide information in future Draft Works Programs on the way that projects can be assessed to see if they have delivered the benefits expected of them.*

2.47. In assessing both an individual project and a broad type of project, the committee finds it helpful to be referred in the documentation to the existence of a broad strategy or master plan. For example, the committee found it useful to know that the various bike paths proposed for the 1997-1998 Works Program fit into an overall strategy for bike paths in the city. In the case of proposals for redevelopment works in Civic, the committee understands that their exact relationship to, for example, an overall strategy for Northbourne Avenue, is still to be determined.⁴⁷ In another case - a proposal to refurbish Kippax group centre - the committee heard criticism from the Belconnen Community Council that the proposed works, though very welcome, did not seem to link to a long-term plan for the centre, including a plan for community facilities.⁴⁸

2.48. The committee urges the Government to ensure that officials take care to provide full information on how individual capital works projects fit into an overall strategy for that particular type of work (such as the refurbishment of Kippax Centre into the overall strategy for providing community facilities in that area).

Industry concern about the management of capital works

2.49. The Master Builders' Association drew the committee's attention to one aspect of assessing whether projects actually do what is claimed for them, though in a different context to what has been discussed above. The Association expressed concern that the activity of Government organisations that have become active in the private field - following actions by Government to commercialise or privatise their operations - is depressing prices, not because the organisations are more efficient than their private competitors but because they are not really acting in a commercial way.⁴⁹ They are thus inadvertently undercutting the private operators, who may be forced to leave the Territory. Over time the Government-linked organisations will find that they cannot sustain their low prices and so will have to increase them to a more realistic level - but, in the view of the Master Builders' Association, significant damage would already have been done to the private sector.

⁴⁷ Transcript (Unedited) p28

⁴⁸ Transcript (Unedited) pp35-36 (21/2/97) Dr Watson (BCC)

⁴⁹ Transcript (Unedited) p42 (21/2/97) Mr Pinter (MBA)

2.50. The Master Builders' Association asked for:

somebody [to] monitor this competitive business from DUS and Totalcare... [to ensure] there is a method by which they can compete fairly. They have their own areas of work that they do and they just pop out into the field and do one-off jobs... [whereas] the rest of us do not get that opportunity. They are big organisations, they have actually started with all this equipment, all these employees. I have never seen a company actually start like that before.⁵⁰

2.51. The committee appreciates the need to retain as many employment opportunities as possible in the Territory. Given that the current Government has corporatised a number of former Government agencies, it is important that the Government has appropriate policies in place to allow the new bodies to apply realistic prices. Otherwise, the Territory may not only lose people from the private sector but find that the lower pricing structures are temporary and illusory. This is not in anyone's interest.

2.52. The Master Builders' Association also expressed concern about the quality of advice likely to be available to Government in the future on capital works. The committee was very interested in the following statement by the Association:

Any work that is being taken out of the public service is presumably going to the private sector and therefore, we should be happy about it. [However,] what we are concerned about is that the process does not go to a point where there is no expert advice being given to Government on the planning and implementing of programs that are necessary in the future.

We do not want the situation where non-architects, non-engineers, non-planners... are having to make decisions without a forward-looking bureaucracy (which does not have to be large and does not have to actually do the work) ... to monitor it and be aware of what is needed and what is a reasonable proposition and what should be the price... To some extent I think the move of Public Works into Totalcare gives a situation where it might actually not be in existence in 18 months... [and] what will take its place in coordinating the other purchasing departments so that they will make wise decisions?

And while I think there is a consulting industry... available to provide this sort of advice, I do not pretend that it could be completely independent and I think that therefore you would have to have somebody, a small core of people, who would actually be supervising us... [Also,] you would have to plan this out and not just have all the best people from Totalcare leaving and then have nobody left.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Transcript (Unedited)* p44 (21/2/97) Mr Barrett (MBA)

⁵¹ *Transcript (Unedited)* pp48-49 (21/2/97) Mr Pinter (MBA)

2.53. The committee appreciates this important point. The committee also is aware of the Government's view, as set out in the *Overview*:

A general framework for future capital works proposals has been developed as part of the Financial Management Reforms. In the future years, more emphasis will be placed on improving the information provided within this framework, and fully quantifying the impact of the proposed project on the financial statements on a whole-of-life basis.

Concurrently, the Government has also focussed on the project delivery aspect of capital works. From 1 January 1997, Works and Commercial Services, the project delivery arm of the Department of Urban Services, has been transferred to Totalcare Industries. This is to ensure that these functions operate under a corporatised and commercial arrangement, with a competitive focus for the future.⁵²

2.54. The committee recommends that the Government carefully monitor the extent to which key planning and monitoring functions in the oversight of capital works are passed to the private sector. In particular, the Government should ensure that it retains the capacity to secure impartial and professional advice from its own qualified staff in decisions about the planning, implementation and assessment of capital works.

Industry call for more capital works

2.55. The Master Builders' Association submitted that the Government should be planning for a number of new works in the roads and buildings area, in large part because of the depressed state of the local industry.

2.56. The Master Builders' Association submitted that the A.C.T. Government can do more than it has in pushing for greater Commonwealth roads expenditure in the local region. It suggested the Commonwealth should be encouraged to devote funds to upgrading the Federal Highway between the Sutton Interchange and north Watson, duplicating the Barton Highway within the A.C.T. and constructing a by-pass of Queanbeyan. In the case of the Barton Highway, the Association said that the Commonwealth is willing to provide the funds but the Territory Government has not pursued the offer. The Master Builders' Association concludes that the Government's 'reticence... is costing jobs in the local industry [and] an \$11m road project is going begging'.⁵³

2.57. The committee recommends that the Government pursue the construction of major roadworks in the region to which the Federal Government has earmarked funds, including duplicating the Barton Highway and upgrading the Federal Highway between Sutton Interchange and north Watson.

2.58. The Master Builders' Association also submitted that the Government should boost activity in the commercial office market by permitting the conversion of

⁵² Overview paragraphs 40,41

⁵³ MBA submission p5

properties along Northbourne Avenue to use by national associations relocating to Canberra: 'The Master Builders' Association believes this initiative should be pursued based on employment generation and long-term economic benefit to the A.C.T.'⁵⁴ The committee considers the Government should investigate this idea.

⁵⁴ *ibid* p6

3. CAPITAL WORKS 1997-1998: SPECIFIC MATTERS

Bruce Stadium

3.1. The Treasurer's *Overview* included the following paragraph:

Earlier this year, the Government indicated its commitment to redevelop Bruce Stadium at an indicative cost of \$27m on the basis of attracting Olympic soccer games to Canberra. This is a special project, the early announcement of which formed part of our successful bid to host some Olympic soccer games. It is expected to bring significant economic and financial benefits to the Territory through activity related to the Olympics, as well as the exposure impact on tourism in the following years.

The Draft Program supports financing of \$12.3m of works over three years. The remaining \$15m is proposed to be financed through a \$7m loan by Bruce Stadium Management and \$8m upfront revenue.⁵⁵

3.2. Officials told the committee that the financial arrangements may alter, depending on the detailed proposals of two developers recently shortlisted to provide financial packages.⁵⁶ Officials said it is up to the developers to come up with detailed proposals both to fund the Stadium and manage it on a long-term basis.⁵⁷ Officials said they want to maximise the revenue-earning potential of the Stadium in terms of pourage rights, catering, naming rights et cetera.⁵⁸ They also said that there exists a clear commitment to provide a certain level of stadium for the Olympics by September 1999.⁵⁹

3.3. Bruce Stadium is leased from the Commonwealth, with the lease expiring in twelve years. The officials consider that the proposed new investment will put the Government in a good negotiating position to extend that lease.⁶⁰

3.4. Further, the officials expressed concern that if the Stadium is not upgraded in the near future it is likely to become a white elephant. Also, they stated that if it intended to keep sports participation levels up in Canberra then the Government would have to consider constructing an alternate stadium if Bruce was unavailable.⁶¹ The officials stated that it is not possible to build a stadium for \$18m.⁶² The committee then asked for further information the cost of stadiums, and officials provided the following:

⁵⁵ *Overview* paragraphs 21, 22

⁵⁶ *Transcript* (Unedited) p103 and p108

⁵⁷ *Transcript* (Unedited) p106

⁵⁸ *Transcript* (Unedited) p102

⁵⁹ *Transcript* (Unedited) p107

⁶⁰ *Transcript* (Unedited) p110

⁶¹ *Transcript* (Unedited) p110

⁶² *Transcript* (Unedited) p111

- Parramatta Stadium, completed in 1986 with a capacity of 17,000 seats, cost \$15m;
- Homebush Athletics Stadium (Olympic Warm-up Stadium), completed in 1993 with a capacity of 5,000 seats and 10,000 on grass, cost \$23m;
- Sydney Football Stadium, completed in 1988 with a capacity of 40,000 seats, cost \$62m; and
- the Docklands Stadium (Melbourne), to be completed by September 1999 with a capacity of 52,000 seats, at a cost of \$350m.

3.5. The committee is concerned about the proposal to put up \$12.3m for a lease lasting only twelve years, particularly when account is taken of the \$6.5m the Government has spent already on attracting the Raiders to Bruce Stadium. The committee wants to know more about the point at which the A.C.T. Government might be better off building its own stadium on its own land and with a long-term plan to finance it.

3.6. The committee carefully noted the contents of an Office of Financial Management Minute dated 28/1/97 which claimed 'the potential economic benefits' of the Olympic Games Football Tournament 'could be as much as \$20m'. This was based on the following assessment:

In summary, if our female and four male teams are involved then the expected gate takings would be in the vicinity of \$5m, the 50,000 international visitors will spend on average \$340 (\$17m), and 600 jobs will be created for upgrading facilities and providing support services and accommodation for 400 competitors, officials and media staff.

3.7. Officials told the committee that the allocation of gate takings from the Olympic soccer games has not yet been finalised.⁶³ The committee considers the Government should be wary about making decisions based on the alleged benefits of activities associated with the Olympic Games.

3.8. *The committee recommends that the Government ensure that all details of the justification of projects linked to the Olympic Games be made public.*

Forward design of the Belconnen Leisure Centre

3.9. The committee notes the Government's intention to set aside \$1.490m in design fees for the above Centre, whose total cost is expected to be \$15m. Representatives of the Belconnen Community Council drew attention to the need for community involvement in the design study. They also stated that, until the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment authorised publication of the material provided by agencies, they had not been able to sight an important background document on the provision of swimming pools generally, namely, the *Strategic*

⁶³ *Transcript (Unedited)* p138

Review of Swimming Pools and Related Facilities in the A.C.T. prepared by LRM Australia Pty Ltd for the Bureau of Sport, Recreation and Racing (November 1996).⁶⁴

3.10. The above Review concluded that ‘the preferred site... [for the Belconnen pool] is immediately north of the Belconnen Centre and west of Lake Ginninderra to the north of Beissal Street’ (Block 10 of Section 149 of Belconnen Division).⁶⁵ The Chairor of Lake Ginninderra College thought this site is foolish and unwise,⁶⁶ and representatives of the Belconnen Community Council also thought the site was problematical.⁶⁷ They drew attention to the desirability of involving the community at an early stage in planning for the Leisure Centre.

3.11. The committee concurs with this view.

Encouraging local industry to recycle and reuse materials

3.12. The committee queried officials about the procedures being use to encourage Government contractors to recycle or reuse materials. The officials stated that they are still in the early days of encouraging this sort of behaviour in the building industry but that it is Government policy to move in this direction.⁶⁸ One member of the committee expressed her view that the Government’s policy is not working and is being ignored.⁶⁹

Encouraging use of stormwater

3.13. The committee queried officials about the extent to which stormwater is being used for the irrigation of ovals and parks. The committee notes that Government policy now requires developers in older areas to make provision for the retention of some stormwater on their block.⁷⁰

Mouat Street upgrade

3.14. The committee notes the ongoing difficulties associated with handling traffic on Mouat Street in Lyneham. The Draft Program provides for the upgrading of two intersections on Mouat Street. In view of widespread interest in the traffic problems of north Canberra, particularly in the light of traffic flows from Gungahlin Drive (once it is completed), the committee has requested a separate briefing by officials.⁷¹

Response to serious safety issues in the context of capital works

3.15. The committee asked for information about the procedures used by officials to take remedial action following a fatal accident on local roads and bikepaths. Officials are to provide detailed information on these procedures.⁷²

⁶⁴ *Transcript* (Unedited) p31 (21/2/97) Dr Watson and Ms Flint (BCC)

⁶⁵ *Strategic Review of Swimming Pools and Related Facilities in the A.C.T.* LRM Australia Pty Ltd (November 1996) p21

⁶⁶ *Transcript* (Unedited) p17 (21/2/97)

⁶⁷ *Transcript* (Unedited) p32 (21/2/97) Ms Flint and Dr Watson (BCC)

⁶⁸ *Transcript* (Unedited) p23

⁶⁹ *Transcript* (Unedited) p24 Ms Horodny MLA

⁷⁰ *Transcript* (Unedited) p38

⁷¹ *Transcript* (Unedited) p37

⁷² *Transcript* (Unedited) p43

Signs

3.16. The committee received advice by officials that they are placing road signs at the highest height allowed under the relevant Australian code.⁷³ In a report in 1996 on measures to handle graffiti, the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment recommended that, when directional signs were defaced by graffiti, the replacement sign be raised wherever possible. The committee is also concerned that some road signs might hinder the view of pedestrians. The committee is pleased that road signs are being raised.

EPIC

3.17. While advising the committee that EPIC is seeing the benefit of Government capital works in recent years⁷⁴, officials made no mention of the likelihood that a Memorandum of Understanding was imminent, involving the possibility of a Korean-based consortium building hotel accommodation, convention facilities and an indoor entertainment stadium at EPIC. According to newspaper reports, the General Manager of EPIC noted that the proposal is part of a long-term process to develop an entertainment complex at EPIC.

3.18. The committee appreciates the need for certain types of negotiation to be treated as confidential but is concerned that neither the Minister for Urban Services (according to newspaper reports), nor the committee itself, was given any indication that discussions affecting EPIC had reached this stage. The committee notes that the proposal may have serious implications for the desirability, or otherwise, of proceeding with the Bruce Stadium proposal already commented upon in this report.

Industrial park in Mitchell

3.19. The committee queried officials about a proposal to develop an industrial park in Mitchell. The officials said that business is saying it wants an upmarket industrial estate with high quality landscaping, community facilities and a general environment not met by the existing industrial estates in Canberra.⁷⁵ The committee wonders whether the Government might not achieve greater public good by gradually upgrading the existing facilities in Mitchell to this type of standard.

Custodial facility feasibility study

3.20. The committee asked officials whether the feasibility study of a correctional facility included use of the existing Cooma goal. The feasibility study would cost \$70,000 and the estimated cost of the project is \$25m. The committee was told that Cooma is one of the options to be considered.⁷⁶

Canberra stereo public radio

3.21. Officials told the committee that a proposal to upgrade the premises used by Canberra stereo public radio (using minor new works) is based on the extent to which the organisation has helped itself.⁷⁷ The committee queries whether this should be the

⁷³ *Transcript* (Unedited) p52

⁷⁴ *Transcript* (Unedited) p67

⁷⁵ *Transcript* (Unedited) p89

⁷⁶ *Transcript* (Unedited) p124

⁷⁷ *Transcript* (Unedited) p93

principal justification for allocating funds, given that a variety of other community organisations are doing useful work and also given that other organisations, had they been given the use of the former library site now occupied by Canberra stereo public radio, might have been similarly successful at raising funds.

Exotic weed control

3.22. The committee asked for further details on the financial allocation for exotic weed control. DUS advised that proposed expenditure on weed control in 1997-1998 will be \$215,000. In the current year (1996-1997) DUS spent \$728,000 on weed control made up \$150,000 in capital works (devoted to woody weed control in nature reserves) and \$578,000 in recurrent expenditure.

4. APPRECIATION

4.1. The committee expresses its appreciation to the many officials who prepared the voluminous documents associated with the Government's 1997-1998 Draft Capital Works Program. Also, the committee thanks the officials who appeared before it at public hearings.

4.2. In addition, the committee wishes to thank the members of the public who provided comments on the Draft Program at short notice and who re-arranged their personal schedules to appear at public hearings.

4.3. The committee is pleased that the presentation of this report meets the tight deadline requested by the Treasurer when she referred the Draft Program to this committee for inquiry and report to the Assembly. The committee looks forward to the Government's response to the recommendations set out in the body of the report.

Michael Moore MLA
26 February 1997

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF WITNESSES

Friday 14 February 1997

Government agencies:

- Office of Financial Management: Messrs Lilley, Harper, Ahmed and Spencer.
- Department of Urban Services [DUS]: Messrs Gilmour, Davidson and Chambers; and Mr Sullivan (Totalcare).
- Exhibition Park in Canberra [EPIC]: Messrs Scollay and Bol, together with Ms Windsor.
- Department of Health and Community Care: Dr Mould, Professor Herdson, Messrs Schmidt, Kendall, Cusack and McNoll.
- Department of Business, the Arts, Sport and Tourism [BASAT]: Ms Pegrum, Messrs Tidball, Osborne, Chambers and Cohen; Ms Gaskill; Messrs Ramsay, Owens, Neill and Rand.
- Attorney-General's Department: Messrs Fitzgerald, Dawson and Castle.
- Department of Education and Training, and the Children's, Youth and Family Services Bureau: Messrs Wheeler and Lebang.
- Canberra Institute of Technology: Messrs Dickson and Agius.

Friday 21 February 1997

A.C.T. Housing: Mr Bone (Director of Business Management Group) and Mr Gilmour (Chief Executive, DUS)

Members of the public:

Belconnen Community Council/Kippax Task Force: Dr Watson, Ms Flint, and Mr van der Vliet

Canberra Community Action on Acton Inc.: Mr Kershaw (President), Mrs Pape (Vice-President) and Emeritus Professor Mulvaney

Lake Ginninderra College: Mr Evans (Board Chairor)

Master Builders' Association: Messrs Dawes, Barrett and Pinter

Weston Creek Community Council: Mr Henderson (Secretary) and Mr Sutherland (Chairperson)

APPENDIX 2: THE GOVERNMENT'S 1997-1998 DRAFT CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM

APPENDIX 3: FORWARD DESIGN PROPOSALS

APPENDIX 4: FEASIBILITY STUDY PROPOSALS