

Deaf heard on building standards

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee heard from Deafness Forum of Australia, Housing Industry Association and Master Builders Australia at a public hearing in Canberra on March 19. This was the third public hearing of the committee's inquiry into the draft premises standards.

The chairman, Mark Dreyfus QC MP, said, "Accessibility of public buildings doesn't just mean mobility constraints. The Deafness Forum of Australia make this point in its submission and the committee is interested in hearing more on this issue."

The committee heard also from two peak industry groups: the Housing Industry Association and Master Builders Australia.

Master Builders Australia has asked the committee to look at the premises standards holistically to ensure that they are cost-effective and do not cause unjustifiable hardship to industry or businesses.

"The committee is interested to hear about the impacts the Standards might have on any particular sector or group within a sector," Mr Dreyfus added.

These could include such issues as access to induction loops, suppression of background noise, general acoustics, emergency alarms and other things that cause problems experienced by those hard of hearing.

The Housing Industry Association has expressed its support for the standards as they provide greater certainty for building owners.

However, HIA has cautioned that the standards must be consistent with current building approvals processes and should avoid duplication with building standards.

The committee has been given terms of reference to inquire into:

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the proposed premises standards in achieving their objects;

The interaction between the premises standards and existing regulatory schemes operating in state and territory jurisdictions, including the appropriateness and effectiveness of the proposed Model Process to Administer Building Access for People with Disability; and

Whether the premises standards will have an unjustifiable impact on any particular sector or group.

For background information, including the full terms of reference, visit the inquiry web site at

www.aph.gov.au/laca

or contact the Committee Secretariat on

phone (02) 6277 2358

or fax (02) 6277 4427.

Military justice report

The *Report of the Independent Review of the Health of the Reformed Military Justice System*, by Sir Lawrence Street and Air Marshall Les Fisher (Ret'd), now available online, is the result of the 2005 Senate Committee report *The Effectiveness of Australia's Military Justice System*. It recommended the commissioning of regular independent reviews.

The report is at

www.defence.gov.au/header/publications



Macquarie University student Kurtis Lindsay after he was presented with the first Defence Science Indigenous Scholarship.

Defence scholarship awarded

Macquarie University student Kurtis Lindsay has won the first Defence Science Indigenous Scholarship.

In a Canberra ceremony on March 18 he received the scholarship from the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon.

Defence is funding three scholarships worth more than \$300,000 over five years for indigenous students to study tertiary science full-time.

Kurtis Lindsay, from the Wiradjui community of central western NSW, has begun his bachelor of science studies in biodiversity and conservation at Macquarie University.

He has scored high distinctions in the Australian and NSW geography competitions on five occasions.

Awarded a certificate for outstanding achievement at Killara High School in 2003, he went on to receive excellent reports from work experience placements with Taronga Zoo and Macquarie University Fauna Park.

The Defence Science Indigenous Scholarship covers the student's university fees, paid 12-week annual work experience and an offer of employment with the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) on completion of the studies.

Defence works closely with Macquarie University to identify suitable indigenous students with a keen interest in pursuing a science career. The scholarship is administered by the Department of Defence via its Directorate of Indigenous Affairs.

Mr Lindsay said, "I believe my indigenous background is one of the key factors [that] strengthened my passion and respect for the land and its biological components and I thank Defence for supporting my studies."

Mr Snowdon said, "I have no doubt he will derive great benefit from working alongside DSTO's scientists in such areas as research into the effect of naval sonar on marine animals or by providing Defence with advice on the land management of our estates."

Sea Kings' safety recommendations implemented

All 256 recommendations of the Sea King Board of Inquiry report have been implemented, laying the foundation for continuing improvement of safety in naval aviation, the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Russ Crane, says.

The report on the Sea King accident on Nias Island, Indonesia, in April 2005 was published on 21 June 2007. The 256 recommendations are far-reaching and include a major review of airworthiness, risk management and safety, aviation maintenance regulations, training and cultural matters.

To ensure the highest level of overview under a Defence implementation plan, the Chiefs of Service Committee, made up of the most senior officers in Defence, monitored progress of implementation of the Board's recommendations across Defence.

"For Navy, and the entire Australian

Defence Force, completion of all the Board's recommendations is a significant milestone but not the end of our enduring focus on the future of aviation safety," Vice Admiral Crane said.

"We remain totally committed to [ensuring that] the families of those who died and the survivors of the accident are fully supported.

"Navy has appointed an advocate who is dedicated to the provision of this support and resolving claims for compensation.

"Implementing all of the Sea King Board's recommendations is the first major step to embedding a 'can-do safely' attitude into our activities. I am committed to ensuring continued improvement in safety for all our people across the range of tasks they consistently conduct in the defence of this nation."

Cluster Munitions Convention sent for review by committee

Two significant treaties have been referred to the Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee — the ASEAN-Australian-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Important as the comprehensive AANZFTA is — it includes trade in goods and services, investment and intellectual property and is the largest FTA Australia has ever signed — it is the Cluster Munitions Convention that will interest veterans and service personnel.

The Cluster Munitions Convention has been signed by Australia, as have more than 90 other countries.

It is estimated that over the decades those killed or injured by cluster bombs range from tens of thousands to 100,000 and more.

Cluster bombs can contain hundreds of submunitions or "bomblets", which blanket wide areas, inflicting enormous suffering and damage on civilians.

The convention prohibits using, producing and stockpiling of cluster munitions.

The US has not signed the agreement and is reportedly concerned that allied governments signing the convention risk the possibility of their soldiers facing criminal prosecution when fighting alongside US troops.

China and Russia, both powerful arms producers, remain outside the agreement.

Submissions to the inquiries are invited from interested parties and are due on Friday 17 April 2009.

However, but the committee says, "If you or your organisation have difficulty meeting this deadline please contact the secretariat."

The full terms of reference for the inquiry and further information about the committee are available at:

www.aph.gov.au/jsct

or by contacting the Committee Secretariat by email at jsct@aph.gov.au or phone:

(02) 6277 4002.



Vice Admiral Russ Crane