



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works report:

Public works on Christmas Island
October 2011

August 2014

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Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government undertake an assessment of water flows to determine what happens to treated wastewater that leaves the Christmas Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the potential risks to the freshwater supply.

Supported. Water Corporation, Western Australia, which operates and manages the water and wastewater infrastructure on Christmas Island, had completed a geotechnical survey and prepared a Catchment Management Strategy for Christmas Island. Based on the findings of the geotechnical survey, Water Corporation considers that the discharge from the Wastewater Treatment Plant is not posing any risks to the freshwater water supply on the island.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government undertake an assessment of the Christmas Island water supply to determine whether any water supply areas are affected by contaminants from the Island's landfill site.

Supported. The landfill is considered a risk to the water source as it is situated in the greater catchment area. Water Corporation has put in place catchment management strategies to manage the risk, including frequent sampling, monitoring, inspections, operational strategies and ongoing communications with the Shire of Christmas Island as they are responsible for waste management on the island. Water Corporation monitors the groundwater surrounding the landfill and undertakes analysis for hydrocarbons, pesticides, metals and bacterial contaminants. At this stage the landfill has not had any measurable impact on the quality of the drinking water on Christmas Island.

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has provided funding of \$1.2 million to the Shire of Christmas Island for development of a waste management strategy and implementation of capital works to the Christmas Island Waste Management Facility. The first stage of the project, which involved an assessment of existing waste disposal and management strategies on the Island, and an analysis of the options available for total solid waste management, was completed in 2013.

Recommendation 3

The Committee Recommends that that the Australian Government examine alternatives for disposal of solid waste from the Christmas Island Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Supported. Water Corporation presented its report *Christmas and Cocos Islands Biosolids Strategy 2031* as part of its 2012-13 annual report. The preferred sludge management option for Christmas Island is composting. Composting will be implemented gradually over the next ten years.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection review existing medical facilities and services at the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre (North-west Point), with a view to ensuring that all detainees have full access to all medical services in an appropriate and suitable medical centre environment.

Noted. The Australian Government considers that all detainees at the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) have access to appropriate medical services which are delivered in suitable medical facilities.

The Government notes that in June 2013 the Health Services Provider at Christmas Island IDC received accreditation against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioner *Standards for Health Services in Australian Immigration Detention Centres*. Among other matters, the accreditation process included consideration of the clinic facilities.

In addition, during 2013-14 the Government allocated further resources to improve the medical facilities and to increase the range of health services available at Christmas Island IDC. This includes enhancements to pathology and imaging services, use of telemedicine facilities and expanded use of visiting specialists. These measures will further reduce the amount of time Irregular Maritime Arrivals spend in Australia before their rapid onward transfer to an Offshore Processing Centre in Nauru or Papua New Guinea

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government design and construct a fit-for-purpose medical centre for the Construction Camp Alternative Place of Detention on Christmas Island, which will include (but not be limited to):

- *a sufficient number of discrete and appropriately sized consultation and examination rooms or suites;*
- *appropriate client waiting areas;*
- *a secure drug store and dispensary;*
- *separate waiting and consultation areas for mental health care and counselling services;*
- *adequate storage for all medical supplies; and*
- *suitable kitchen and ablution facilities for staff.*

The medical facility should be attached to existing administrative areas and/or compound entrance or exit to facilitate access and egress for staff, while still allowing access for detention centre clients. Detention centre management, medical staff and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's Detention Health Advisory Group must be consulted regarding the design of any proposed medical facility.

Noted. The Construction Camp Alternative Place of Detention (APOD) clinic was renovated in early 2013. These works included the incorporation of adjacent buildings into the clinic complex, in order to provide an appropriate amount of consultation, storage, kitchen and ablution space for detainees and staff. These works also included additional access and egress points for staff.

In addition, during 2013-14 the Government allocated further resources to improve the medical facilities and to increase the range of health services available at Christmas Island IDC. This includes enhancements to pathology and imaging services, use of telemedicine facilities and expanded use of visiting specialists. These measures will further reduce the amount of time Irregular Maritime Arrivals spend in Australia before their rapid onward transfer to an Offshore Processing Centre in Nauru or Papua New Guinea.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that that the Australian Government, as an urgent priority and outside of the normal Budget process, construct new headquarters for the Australian Federal Police on Christmas Island.

Not supported. The Government has not been able to fund a new station for the Australian Federal Police on Christmas Island.

Funding from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development operating budget for the Territories enables repairs and maintenance work to be undertaken to keep the station operational.

On 17 January 2012, AFP Occupational Health and Safety staff travelled to Christmas Island to conduct a review of the station. The review found no immediate threat to officer safety. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development will continue to monitor the situation and undertake repairs as appropriate.

Comcare inspected the building in February 2014 and concluded that the remedial works previously undertaken require further attention. An engineering assessment will be conducted over the coming months to establish the scope of works.