

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Parliament House,  
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600.

11th June, 1969.

My dear Minister,

I write with further reference to your letter of 5th December 1968 in which you indicated that the Shoal Bay site chosen by Navy for the projected new receiving station might be required for the long term development of Darwin.

In consequence of your letter a comprehensive survey has been made by the Royal Australian Navy in conjunction with the Departments of Defence, Works and the Northern Territory Administration, of other possible sites in the Darwin area.

It has been concluded that the only practicable alternative to the Shoal Bay site is that known as Sanderson which is adjacent to Shoal Bay but some 35 to 40 miles by road from Darwin.

Comparison of the two sites indicates however that the advantages to be gained from building at Sanderson are outweighed by the disadvantages. Although it would provide a greater degree of freedom from radio and electrical interference, the technical officers of my Department consider this will not be a significant factor at the Shoal Bay site for some twenty to twenty five years.

The Sanderson site is technically inferior to Shoal Bay and the capital costs of construction would be considerably higher because of the long distance involved and the requirement for an access road and supply of primary electrical power. Department of Works have indicated that a road providing year round access, which would include a bridge over the Howard River, could not be built without enormous capital outlay.

The distance from Darwin would also result in considerably higher maintenance costs, in excess of \$120,000 per year more than for Shoal Bay, because of the need for additional watchkeeping personnel, difficulty of stores support, maintenance of transport and longer travelling time.

A comparison of the economics of each site indicates that the overall costs of building now and subsequent maintenance at Shoal Bay then of moving and rebuilding elsewhere in twenty to twenty five years time would not be significantly greater than those which would be incurred by locating the station in the first place at Sanderson.

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It is reasonable to assume that with the rapid advance of communications technology, a receiving station at Shoal Bay would be unable to meet its commitments without major reconstruction and modernisation, after a period of twenty years. However, the buildings, which would be of substantial construction, would undoubtedly have considerable commercial value as a factory, warehouse or some other use, if no longer required by the Navy.

I should be glad therefore if you would reconsider your opposition to the original Shoal Bay site, on the basis that:

- a. after a period of twenty years it may be necessary to resume the buffer zone for civil development.
- b. during the twenty years it may be possible, especially during the latter half of the period, to reconsider the need for a buffer zone of this size, depending on the "State of the art" at that time.
- c. after twenty years it may be possible to re-locate the aerial systems only and use some means of remotely connecting them to the equipment in the Shoal Bay operational buildings.
- d. should it be decided to vacate the Shoal Bay site the buildings would undoubtedly have considerable commercial value.

Considerable delay has already occurred in the development of this urgent and most important Defence project and I would appreciate your early consideration of the foregoing.

Yours sincerely,

C. R. KELLY

(C.R. KELLY)

The Hon. P.J. Nixon, M.P.,  
Minister for the Interior,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600.

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