

An Open Letter to Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Defence

Dear Minister

Keep Seaward Village in Swanbourne, Western Australia for Defence families only

The Government Business Enterprise Defence Housing Australia's (DHA) September Concept Plan proposes redeveloping Seaward Village, Swanbourne (the residential village for Campbell Barracks) by selling off a portion of Seaward Village as a private housing estate. This development will have an unacceptable impact on both defence families and the surrounding residential community.

It adds over 160 new private residences (with very few additional homes for defence families), compromises the sense of security of the defence families, destroys native bushland, threatens fragile dunes and the vital City to Coast bush corridor, degrades an A-Class Reserve; and funnels a 300% increase in traffic through the neighbouring area.

It also compromises the noise buffer currently provided by Seaward Village and the bushland, and threatens the long-term viability of Campbell Barracks in that location.

In 1991, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works conducted an inquiry into the proposed redevelopment of Seaward Village by DHA. DHA advised, and the Committee agreed, that:

- *for operational and social reasons deriving from the responsibilities of the SASR there was no scope for DHA to develop Seaward Village as an estate containing a mixture of civilian and defence housing.*
- *there was no scope to increase the number of houses in the Seaward Village area without unacceptable extension into ecologically sensitive areas.*
- *any excavation of steep slopes in dune formations to provide suitable housing blocks was undesirable and should be avoided.*

DHA also advised that it had “*agreed to conditions which principally mean that the housing and land will not be sold into the private sector while the SASR or similar special unit is maintained at Swanbourne.*” (DHA Statement of Evidence and Supporting Drawings to Public Works Committee, April 1991)

The need to protect both the security and peace of mind of our defence families, and the precious remnant bushland and the wildlife it supports, has never been greater.

There is a long waiting list to live in Seaward Village because its location provides a level of social support for the personnel and their families that simply can't be replicated elsewhere.

This proposed redevelopment is a bad planning outcome for the long-term viability of Campbell Barracks in its current location, the welfare of the defence families, the local civilian neighbourhood, and the environment.

It is DHA's efforts to combine both civilian and defence housing that has created many of the planning constraints on the site.

We the undersigned question why, as a nation, we are requiring DHA to fund modern housing for our defence families using a commercial model.

For all of the disruption and distress that this redevelopment is causing, the current DHA concept provides only a handful of additional defence houses. This is because the commercial model DHA is using means it must achieve a yield of 163 private homes.

At a time when there is a long waiting list of defence families wishing to live in Seaward Village, up to 40% of the housing will be sold for a private development.

The current security environment means that we are asking a lot from our defence personnel, and both they and their families deserve our support.

DHA's original purpose was to support our defence personnel. As a nation we should both allow and require DHA to do this by funding the refurbishment or redevelopment of all of Seaward Village for the defence families.

The cost is tiny in the context of the Defence Budget and entirely justifiable to protect our ability to attract and retain the very best people, and for the long-term viability of Campbell Barracks.

We, the undersigned, ask that the Government keep Seaward Village for defence families only, and that the Government fund its redevelopment or refurbishment in order to meet the current and future needs of the defence families.

We ask that the Government rebuilds or refurbishes as required; and does it in a staged way with the minimum of disruption to the families and the bushland; and without the unnecessary and possibly threat-increasing planning complexities created by trying to combine private and defence housing.

We strongly believe that this will give a better outcome for both defence families and the neighbouring residential community.

We request that the Minister investigates this project, including releasing a proper cost/benefit analysis, with relevant departments/organisations under her control and advises us of her findings, as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

signatures attached

Cc The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP Prime Minister of Australia; The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Member for Curtin

September 2015

