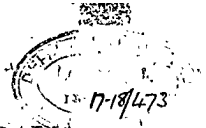


1918.



aid on the Table by *the*

Minister for Defence

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Pursuant to Statute

~~By Command~~

~~In return to Order~~

Ernest Ross Smith

Clerk of the Senate.

4-4-18.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS.

THIRD GENERAL REPORT.

Printed and Published for the GOVERNMENT of the COMMONWEALTH of AUSTRALIA by ALBERT J. MULLEN;
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No. —F.1452.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

First Committee :

EDWARD RILEY, Esquire, M.P., Chairman.

Senate.

Senator The Honorable John Henry Keating.
 Senator Edward Needham.*
 Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch, Vice-Chairman.†
 Senator William Harrison Story.

House of Representatives.

James Edward Funton, Esquire, M.P.
 William Fyfe Finlayson, Esquire, M.P.
 The Honorable Henry Gregory, M.P.
 Sydney Sampson, Esquire, M.P.
 William Henry Laird Smith, Esquire, M.P.†

* Appointed 14th December, 1916.

† Came to be a member of the Committee, 14th November, 1916.

Second Committee :

The Honorable HENRY GREGORY, M.P., Chairman.

Senate.

Senator George Henderson.
 Senator Edward Needham.
 Senator John Newland, Vice-Chairman.

House of Representatives.

William George Mahony, Esquire, M.P.
 James Mathews, Esquire, M.P.
 Sydney Sampson, Esquire, M.P.
 Hugh Sinclair, Esquire, M.P.
 The Honorable William Henry Laird Smith, M.P.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

THIRD GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honorable SIR RONALD CRAUFORD MUNRO FERGUSON,
 a Member of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross
 of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor-
 General and Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

In accordance with the requirements of Section 11 of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914*, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has the honour to submit the following Report of its proceedings during the year ending 31st December, 1917.

CHANGE IN COMMITTEE.

1. On the 26th March, 1917, the House of Representatives was dissolved, and in pursuance of Section 3 (4) of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914*, all the members of the First Committee ceased to hold office.

2. On the 21st September, 1917, the following members of the House of Representatives were selected as members of the Committee, namely:—The Honorable Henry Gregory, William George Mahony, James Mathews, Sydney Sampson, Hugh Sinclair, and the Honorable William Henry Laird Smith.

3. On the 25th September, 1917, the following members of the Senate were selected as members of the Committee, namely:—George Henderson, Edward Needham, and John Newland.

4. The appointment of the members above mentioned was notified in *Commonwealth Gazette* No. 168, of 4th October, 1917.

5. Prior to entering upon their duties each member made and subscribed the declaration required by the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914*.

6. The first meeting of the Second Committee was held on 27th September, 1917, when the Honorable Henry Gregory was elected Chairman, and Senator John Newland Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

7. During the year the First Committee held 28 meetings and examined 21 witnesses in connexion with the proposed works submitted, while the Second Committee held 28 meetings and examined 27 witnesses.

In making their inquiries the First Committee travelled 2,428 miles, and the Second Committee 4,575 miles.

QUESTIONS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE.

8. When the Committee presented its last General Report, the following questions were under consideration, namely:—

- Extension of Postal Stores, Harbour-street, Sydney.
- Erection of Power House and Workshops, Officers' Quarters, &c., Flinders Naval Base.

9. Since that date the following references have been received from Parliament, namely:—
 Flinders Naval Base—Erection of Workshops, Hospital, Detention Barracks, Quarters for Married Officers and Warrant Officers; Water, Sewerage, and Storm Water Reticulations; Electric Distribution System; and accessory Works for that Establishment.

Henderson Naval Base—Two Breakwaters, Excavations, Reclamations, Basins or Quaywalls, Floating Dock, Administrative Buildings, Permanent Railways.

The first of these references, though containing some further items, also included certain works already referred to the First Committee, but not reported upon before the members of that Committee ceased to hold office.

COMPLETED INQUIRIES.

10 The Committee has taken evidence in regard to each of these matters, and has already presented Reports in regard to—

(a) Extension of Postal Stores, Harbour-street, Sydney	Estimated cost.
(b) Erection of Power House, Flinders Naval Base	£68,533
	15,000
	£83,533

(a) *Extension of Postal Stores, Harbour-street, Sydney.*

This was a proposal to erect on an area of land already acquired for the purpose an eight-story building for storage purposes for the Postmaster-General's Department, and to provide accommodation for the telegraph and telephone workshops at present located in rented buildings. After careful consideration, the Committee expressed itself of opinion that no necessity exists for the provision of further space for purely storage purposes for the Postmaster-General's Department in Sydney, and recommended a re-organization of the methods of purchasing and storing departmental requirements which should materially reduce the space required at present for storage accommodation. In regard to the accommodation required for telegraph and telephone workshops, the Committee favoured the principle of such workshops being the property of the Commonwealth. As the present workshop premises are held on a short lease and provide sufficient room only for a limited period, and as it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain suitable rented premises within a reasonable distance of the General Post Office, Sydney, the Committee approved of the erection of the building for telegraph and telephone workshops.

(b) *Erection of Power House, Flinders Naval Base.*

Owing to the limited time at its disposal the Committee realized that it would be impossible to make exhaustive inquiries into all the items embraced in the reference, and therefore decided to restrict itself in the first instance to an investigation into the proposed erection of the building known as the power house and workshops. After hearing the evidence, the Committee was convinced that it would be of the utmost advantage to proceed with the early provision of power and light at the Base, but was satisfied that there was not the same urgency for the erection of the workshops. It was therefore decided to allow the question of the workshops to await further consideration and to confine its recommendation to the power-house wing.

The original proposition for a steel-framed power-house wing, 46 feet high, clothed with brick, involved an expenditure of approximately £15,000, but investigation showed that a reduction of the height of the building would allow of the elimination of a large amount of expensive steel work, and that if the power house were constructed with brick walls and piers 33 feet high from the floor and provided with composite timber and steel roof trusses, it could be erected at a cost of about £9,500. In view of this the Committee recommended that the power-house wing should be erected of brick, with brick or reinforced concrete piers, composite timber and steel roof trusses, with galvanized iron covering, and that the height of the walls be restricted to approximately 33 feet.

INQUIRIES INCOMPLETE.

11. The inquiries in respect of the undermentioned public works are incomplete:—

- (i) Flinders Naval Base.—Erection of Workshops, Hospital, Detention Barracks, Quarters for Married Officers and Warrant Officers; Water, Sewerage, and Storm Water Retentions; Electric Distribution System; and Accessory Works for that Establishment.
- (ii) Henderson Naval Base.—Two Breakwaters, Excavations, Reclamations, Basins or Quay Walls, Floating Dock, Administrative Buildings, Permanent Railways.

ESTIMATES EXCEEDED.

12. The Committee considers this an appropriate opportunity to make some reference to a matter which has occasioned it some concern, that is the discrepancy which occurs in some instances between the estimate given for a work and the amount for which such work is subsequently actually carried out.

As a case in point, it may be mentioned that in 1915 certain buildings proposed to be erected at Flinders Naval Base were estimated to cost £111,032, and upon investigation the Committee recommended that their erection should be proceeded with at that figure. Recent inquiries, however, have elicited the information that up to 11th December, 1917, such buildings have cost £143,000, while it is estimated that it will actually take £179,000 to complete them.

Although the Committee is aware that much of this increase is due to the increased cost of material and labour owing to war conditions, it is considered that the spirit of the Act does not contemplate the spending on any work of an amount substantially greater than that recommended and the Committee is strongly of opinion that every case where a work on completion exceed the amount approved by more than 10 per cent. should form the subject of a special reference for further inquiry.

WORKS EXEMPTED.

13. The Committee is aware of a notification published in *Commonwealth Gazette* No. 18 of 25th October, 1917, that certain works in connexion with Naval Bases have been exempted by Order in Council from the operation of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913*, namely:—

- Naval Magazines.
- Oil Fuel Storage Tanks and Depôts.
- Water Supply and Water Storage.
- All works and buildings in connexion with Submarine Bases.
- Torpedo Stores and Workshops.
- Naval Barracks.
- Naval Training Schools.
- Naval Stores Buildings.
- Dry Dock, Pumping Stations.
- Electric Generating Stations.
- Dredging of Approach Channels to Naval Bases.
- Wireless Installations.

Whilst realizing that a necessity may exist for regarding as secret work connected with Naval Magazines and Oil Fuel Storage Tanks and Depôts, the Committee fails to appreciate any danger or inconvenience which might result from informing Parliament of the other work enumerated. Moreover, as the inquiries already conducted by the Committee into the question of Naval Barracks, Water Supply, &c. for the Flinders Naval Base have shown the necessity for a full investigation into proposals of this nature, and as increased economy and efficiency have resulted from such inquiries, the Committee desires to voice a respectful protest against works of such magnitude being undertaken until Parliament, by the investigation and report of this Committee, is satisfied that such works as contemplated are justified.

14. Appended to this Report is a return containing a record of the inquiries of the Committee from the date of its appointment to 31st December, 1917.

H. GREGORY,
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
120 King-street, Melbourne, 31st January, 1918.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

RECORD OF INQUIRIES.

The following is a list of proposed public works inquired into by the Committee from the date of its appointment to 31st December, 1917, with the result of its inquiries:—

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure Proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
1915. 25th Jan. to 24th Feb.	Construction of a main sewer for the City of Canberra	£ 75,000	£ 75,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
28th Jan. to 25th Feb.	Storage and regulating reservoir, Upper Queensland River	100,000	..	..	100,000	Committee decided that there is no present necessity or urgency for this work
11th Mar. to 4th May	Erection of buildings at Flinders Naval Base	111,032	111,032	..	..	Recommended as proposed
18th Mar. to 8th May	Sovereign scheme for Flinders Naval Base	8,500	7,500	..	2,000	
6th May to 24th June	Lithgow Small Arms Factory Extension	86,600	92,100	25,600	..	In lieu of making additions to the existing factory at Lithgow, the Committee recommended the erection of a factory at Canberra twice the size of the existing factory, the installation of new machinery therein, and the removal thereof of the existing machinery at a convenient date
6th May to 27th May	Increase of output, Small Arms Factory, Lithgow	..	..	..	..	Committee recommended establishment of a second shift
6th May to 17th June	Increase of plant, Small Arms Factory, Lithgow	38,727	38,727	..	..	Recommended as proposed
27th July to 20th Aug.	Small Arms Factory—location at Canberra	..	..	..	..	Site recommended
18th Sept. to 15th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Sydney	93,008	..	..	..	Committee favorable to proposal subject to provision of additional means of ingress and egress
21st Sept. to 22nd Sept.	Barracks, quarters, gun park, &c., for R.A.F.A. Enoggera, Queensland	26,000	28,225	2,225	..	Recommended subject to improved lighting, water, and fire services
22nd Sept. to 24th Nov.	Commonwealth purposes	100,000	100,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
28th Sept. to 6th Oct.	Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney	37,500	29,500	..	..	Recommended, but stipulation made that occupants be removed to temporary accommodation during alterations
12th Oct. to 15th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Malvern, Victoria	46,933	46,933	..	..	Recommended as proposed
12th Oct. to 16th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Collingwood, Victoria	49,762	49,762	..	..	Recommended as proposed
25th Oct. to 26th Oct.	Additional Office accommodation, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne	35,000	35,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
1916. 14th Feb. to 1st Mar.	Selection of site for arsenal within the Federal Territory	..	..	..	..	Confidential report issued to Prime Minister
24th May to 31st May	Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney (further reports)	61,481	41,000	..	10,481	
25th Feb. to 1915, to 21st Aug. 1916	Water Supply scheme for Flinders Naval Base	61,000 and 6d. per 1,000 gallons for water consumed	Capital cost nil; 1s. per 1,000 gallons, with minimum annual payment of £4,000 for first three years, £3,500 for second three years, £3,000 thereafter	..	61,000	The interest on the capital cost of £61,000 as originally proposed plus the cost of water consumed at 6d. per 1,000 gallons, more than counterbalances the annual payment under the scheme recommended

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Record of Inquiries—List of proposed public works inquired into—continued.

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure Proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
1916. 10th Nov. to 1915, to 30th Aug. 1916	Extension of Pine Creek-Katherine River Railway to Bitter (Matarank) Springs	£ 320,000	£ 320,000	£ ..	£ ..	Recommended as proposed
13th July to 1915, to 24th Nov. 1916	City Railway, Canberra	378,972	280,000	..	98,972	The Committee recommended that requirements for some years be met by temporary surbitto lines at estimated cost of about 278,000
14th July to 1916, to 28th Nov. 1916	Dams for Ornamental Waters, Canberra	912,421	472,421	..	440,000	Most of the expenditure recommended, however, will be deferred for a period of years
1917. 10th Jan. to 20th Feb.	Extension of Postal Stores, Harbour-street, Sydney	68,632	68,632	..	..	Recommended as proposed
31st Jan. to 19th Mar.	Power House, Flinders Naval Base	15,000	6,600	..	5,500	