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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS.

FOURTH GENERAL REPORT.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

FOURTH GENERAL REPORT.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

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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To His Excellency the Right Honorable SIR RONALD CRAUFURD 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 for the year, ended 31st December, 1918.

1. During the year the Committee held 84 meetings and examined 59 witnesses in connexion with the proposed works submitted. In making its inquiries the Committee travelled 4,857 miles by rail, and 165 miles by road, a total of 5,022 miles.

QUESTIONS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE.

2. When the Committee presented its last General Report, the following questions were under consideration, 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.

3. Since that date the following additional questions have been remitted to the Committee for inquiry and report, namely:—

Scheme of Housing Workmen and Others engaged in connexion with the Commonwealth Factories at Lithgow, New South Wales.

Railway to connect the Arsenal Site, Tuggeranong, Federal Capital Territory, with the New South Wales Government Railway between Nimmitabel and Goulburn.
Erection of Ordnance Store, Leichhardt, N.S.W.

COMPLETED INQUIRIES.

4. The Committee has dealt with the following questions, and has presented Reports in connexion therewith, namely:—

	Estimated cost.
	£
(a) Erection of Workshops, &c., at Flinders Naval Base	168,845
(b) Breakwaters, Excavations, Quaywalls, &c., for Henderson Naval Base	4,529,109
(c) Scheme for Housing Workmen at Lithgow	73,762
(d) Arsenal Railway	62,614
	£4,834,330

(a) *Erection of Workshops, &c., at Flinders Naval Base.*

5. The Committee made careful inquiries into the proposals submitted, but were not prepared to agree that the whole of the work as projected be carried out forthwith, and recommended the following variations:—

- (i) Elimination of the boiler shop, as owing to the size of the structure to be provided for machine and fitting shop it is thought that portion of such building might be utilized for what boiler work will be necessary, at any rate, for some years.
- (ii) Reduction by one-half of accommodation to be provided in the detention barracks.
- (iii) Reduction of amounts to be allotted for erection of married officers' quarters from £2,425 to £1,900 in the case of the Senior Officer's house; from £1,984 to £1,450 in the case of the Junior Officer's house; and from £1,465 and £1,415 to £1,200 each in the case of the ten Warrant Officers' houses.
- (iv) The calling of tenders for the erection of the married officers' quarters, the Department to submit a tender to carry out the work by day labour.
- (v) The utilization of reinforced concrete pipes for sewerage reticulation where the pipes, supported on trestles, are to cross low-lying ground.
- (vi) The utilization of reinforced concrete pipes for water reticulation where practicable.
- (vii) The undergrounding of electric wires in those positions where overhead wires would be considered dangerous to aviation.
- (viii) The elimination of the amount proposed to be expended on recreation grounds pending the formulation by the Department of a general scheme of recreation grounds at Flinders.
- (ix) The elimination of the amount of £3,945 suggested for general excavations.

By the adoption of these recommendations the Committee estimates that a saving of £26,204 will be effected without in any way restricting essential operations or interfering with the efficiency of the Base.

(b) *Breakwaters, Excavations, Quaywalls, &c., for Henderson Naval Base.*

6. The cost of the completed Naval Base at Henderson as proposed is estimated at £9,000,000, but the items which the Committee was asked to investigate are only those comprised in the first section of the work, which is known as "Scheme No. 1." This omits the destroyer and submarine basin, the south or island breakwater, the gun wharf, and three large jetties to the west of the gun wharf, and provides for only one-third of the estimated requirements of buildings.

The Committee gave close attention to the reports of the experts engaged to advise in regard to the position and lay-out of this Base, and carefully considered the amendments in lay-out and construction since proposed. After weighing all the facts, the following decisions were arrived at, namely:—

- (i) *Modification of Original Design.*—The Committee is in accord with the modification proposed by the present Director of Naval Works (Mr. Settle) in Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice's original design for the complete Base, by which the area of the main basin has been reduced from 110 acres to 68½ acres, and the area of the destroyer and submarine basin has been reduced from 35 acres to 27½ acres; and by which the position of the destroyer and submarine basin has been removed from south to north of the main basin.

Although this modification will mean an increase in the length of the foreshore breakwater by about 200 feet, it will permit of the reduction of the north breakwater by over 2,000 feet, and of the south breakwater by about 690 feet, with the result that the size of the enclosed water area or outer harbor will be reduced from about 850 acres to approximately 720 acres. The effect will be a saving of expenditure for construction of breakwaters and for dredging.

- (ii) *Provision of Transport from Wongong Quarry to the Base.*—One of the first works required for successful and economical working is the provision of means of conveying to the Base the granite required in construction, which will be won from the Wongong quarry, about 22 miles from the Base by rail. The quantity of quarried stone needed for the complete scheme is estimated at 1,150,000 tons, while the amount required for the first section of the work, or "Scheme No. 1" as approved, is set down at 840,000 tons. The Departmental proposal was to construct a light line of railway direct from the quarry to the Base, but the Committee was able to obtain from the State Railway Department terms for the construction of the necessary loop lines and the utilization of the State railway system which will have the effect of meeting all requirements and result in a saving to the Commonwealth of about £19,250.

- (iii) *Excavation and Reclamation.*—It was ascertained that two steam navvies were in operation on this work, although it was stated in evidence that to do the work in the period of ten years laid down twelve more navvies were needed; further that the cost of removing material was considerably higher than should prevail in an operation of this magnitude. In view of these facts the Committee was unanimously of opinion that continued special efforts should be made to secure adequate machinery so as to bring the costs down to a minimum. This matter was regarded as one of urgency, and the Committee suggested that, in the event of the requisite plant not being obtained by the time the reclamation reaches deep water, the work should be suspended until such plant is available.

- (iv) *Construction of Quaywalls.*—The Director of Naval Works contemplates facing the quaywalls with concrete blocks, which is in accordance with the proposals submitted by Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice, although the blocks are somewhat different in design. The Director's proposal is that the blocks will each weigh about 7 tons, and be so shaped that they will key into one another. The Committee took evidence in regard to a design for a concrete cavity wall somewhat in the nature of a series of shelves, and also for a design in the form of a cellular reinforced concrete construction, but was satisfied that less element of risk is involved in the construction of walls of the nature indicated on the concrete block system, and unanimously recommended that such design should be adopted.

- (v) *Floating Docks.*—One of the requirements of the Henderson Naval Base is that being designed as a Fleet Primary Base, it should possess docks capable of receiving the largest vessels when in a damaged condition. The Department estimates accordingly included a provisional amount of £1,342,000 for the construction of three floating docks of 6,000, 20,000 and 35,000 tons capacity respectively. During the course of its inquiry the Committee ascertained that a floating dock is more generally useful, and is to be preferred to a floating dock if it can be constructed at anything like a reasonable figure, and that the cost of maintenance of a floating dock is about eight times as large as for a dry dock.

It was represented as urgently necessary that provision for docking naval vessels should be made as soon as possible in Western Australia, and under Admiral Henderson's scheme these naval docks might be availed of for docking mercantile vessels. The Committee, however, was faced with two difficulties first, that while graving docks are admittedly the better, the knowledge of the under-water strata of Cockburn Sound is not yet sufficient to enable a definite statement to be made that graving docks could be provided at a reasonable cost; and, secondly, that the three floating docks suggested, which in pre-war times would have cost about £610,000, would, under existing war conditions cost approximately £4,270,000.

Under these circumstances, to meet the urgent necessity for docking facilities the Committee decided to recommend the provision of a 6,000-ton floating dock but suggested that the work be temporarily delayed until the price of materials more nearly approached normal. In regard to the other docks it considered that the work necessary to provide the 6,000-ton dock will furnish still further knowledge of the strata and general conditions to be met, and that the provision of the 20,000-ton and 35,000-ton docks should form the subject of a further inquiry by the Committee at some future date.

- (vi) *Administrative Buildings, &c.*—In regard to certain other proposals, including the erection of administrative buildings, dockyard surgery, workshops, and various other dockyard buildings, the provision of sewers and drains, and permanent yard railways, the Committee considered that, as under the most favorable circumstances, these works cannot be commenced for some years, and the estimates of cost framed now would probably be considerably wide of the mark at that date, it would be better that these items also form the subject of a further reference at some future date.

Attention was also drawn to the fact that free interchange of ideas between those officers who would eventually be in charge of the activities of the Base had not taken place in regard to this work.

The value of the work deferred, including the cost of floating docks at pre-war prices, is estimated at £1,601,000.

(c) *Scheme for Housing Workmen at Lithgow.*

7. This was a proposal to erect on an area of about 130 acres of land already acquired for the purpose, 100 cottages for the housing of the workmen employed at the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow, New South Wales, with the intention of erecting a further 100 houses later should the demand warrant it, and permit of an additional 200 cottages being erected by private enterprise.

The soundness of the principle of providing reasonable accommodation for the employees of any large industrial enterprise has been conclusively proved in almost every part of the world, and, in view of the urgent necessity at Lithgow for adequate housing, the Committee suggested that 150 houses should be erected as early as possible.

Some slight modification of the lay-out of the area was suggested with a view to providing more suitable reserves and effecting some economy in road-making, and the provision of water and sewerage services, and the minimum size of blocks was fixed at 50 feet frontage by a depth of 125 feet. It was recommended that the streets should be of varying widths of 60 feet, 50 feet, and 40 feet, with only so much of that width actually made as will be necessitated by actual traffic requirements, the remainder to be planted with grass or trees, and that the dwellings be kept back at least 15 feet from the street alignment.

Attention was drawn to the necessity for making reservations for ample playgrounds, parks, churches, &c., in addition to reservations shown on plan for school, hall, &c.

The Committee considered that the buildings should be of brick, with tile roofs, and of various sizes to meet individual requirements, and that the smallest house should be built for about £250, while the cost of the largest should not exceed £600.

It was considered that while it would be equitable to lease premises for business purposes, the Commonwealth should limit itself to letting the residential cottages on a fortnightly tenancy.

The Committee recommended that the rental to be charged should be fixed on a basis of 8 per cent on cost, exclusive of water and sewerage mains. As it had been shown, however, that the lack of reasonable living accommodation at Lithgow had resulted in a large number of trained employees leaving the district and a consequent increase in the cost of running the factory, whereas the provision of comfortable housing conditions with attractive surroundings would make for a happier and more contented body of workmen and add to the efficiency and economical working of the factory, the Committee recommended that any loss resulting from the provision of water and sewerage mains should not be added to the cost of the settlement, but should be borne by the Small Arms Factory.

It was further suggested that the Commonwealth should contribute to the Municipality of Lithgow an amount equivalent to what would be chargeable as rates if Commonwealth property were rateable, and that a Board of Management should be appointed to control the settlement when established.

(d) *Arsenal Railway.*

8. This was a proposal to construct a length of about 8½ miles of railway to link up the site of the proposed Arsenal within the Federal Territory with the New South Wales railway from Goulburn to Nimmittabel, at a point about 5 miles south of Queanbeyan.

After investigation and inquiry in regard to alternative routes suggested, the Committee approved of the proposal as submitted.

INQUIRIES INCOMPLETE.

9. The inquiry respecting the proposed erection of Ordnance Store, Leichhardt, N.S.W., is incomplete.

EXEMPTIONS.

10. Mention was made in the Third General Report of the action taken to exempt from investigation by the Committee certain works proposed to be carried out in connexion with Naval Bases. The Committee desires to again draw attention to this matter as it is convinced that the spirit of the Act never contemplated that Parliament should be asked to vote large sums of money or expenditure on public works for any Department unless it was satisfied that such works were necessary.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works was appointed specially to investigate the necessity for the works proposed, and to ascertain whether they had been designed with due regard to efficiency and economy, so that Parliament could be fully informed before committing itself to expenditure on any works or series of works, and the Committee is decidedly of opinion that the power to exempt works was expected to be used, if at all, only in very exceptional cases.

Further instances have occurred where the erection or alterations of buildings, or groups of buildings, the completed cost of which the Department should have known would exceed

£25,000, have been dealt with piecemeal in such a way that while the amount spent on any particular portion of the work has not reached the sum of £25,000 specified in the Act, the total expenditure has largely exceeded that figure.

This splitting up of expenditure is, in the opinion of the Committee, a distinct evasion of the Act, which lays it down clearly that "no public work of any kind whatsoever . . . the estimated cost of completing which exceeds £25,000, and whether such work is a continuation, completion, repair, reconstruction, extension, or a new work, shall be commenced unless sanctioned as in this section provided."

NEED FOR COLLABORATION.

11. In carrying out large public works, which the expansion of the Commonwealth activities demands, it is essential that the Commonwealth should be in a position to use to advantage all the ability and experience at its disposal.

Undoubtedly the most efficient work and a considerable saving to the Commonwealth would result from a system of collaboration between officials. Although this is freely admitted, collaboration does not appear to have been adopted up to the present to the extent to which it could. No one man can be expected to possess all the detailed knowledge necessary to successfully plan a naval base, a model village, or a large industrial undertaking, consequently the Committee again draws attention to its previous Report wherein it strongly recommends the general adoption of the principle of conferences of responsible officials prior to the commencement of any large undertaking as being in the best interests of the Department itself and of the Commonwealth as a whole.

AMENDMENT OF THE ACT.

12. During the period of four years that the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914* has been in operation experience has indicated where some amendment might with advantage be made in the Act.

The clauses as at present existing, and the amendment suggested by the Committee in each case, are set down hereunder:—

Existing—

Section 10. The Committee or a Sectional Committee may sit and transact business during any adjournment or recess as well as during the session, and may sit at such times and in such places and conduct their proceedings in such manner as they deem proper, and shall sit in open court:

Provided that the Committee or a Sectional Committee shall not hold any meeting whilst either House of the Parliament is actually sitting, except by leave of that House.

Proposed—

Section 10. The Committee or a Sectional Committee may sit and transact business during any adjournment or recess as well as during the session, and may sit at such times and in such places and conduct their proceedings in such manner as they deem proper, and shall sit in open court, *except when the Committee decides that it is desirable in the interests of the Commonwealth that the proceedings shall be conducted in private:*

Provided that the Committee or a Sectional Committee shall not hold any meeting whilst either House of the Parliament is actually sitting, except by leave of that House.

* This amendment is designed to meet cases where the Committee may be inquiring into certain naval or military works of a secret character.

Existing—

Section 11. The Committee shall, before the commencement of each session of the Parliament, make a report to the Governor-General of their proceedings under this Act; and the report shall be laid before both Houses of the Parliament within fourteen days after the making thereof, if the Parliament is then sitting, and if not, then within fourteen days after the commencement of the next session.

Proposed—

Section 11. The Committee shall, *during the month of March in each year*, make a report to the Governor-General of their proceedings under this Act for the previous calendar year, and the report shall be laid before both Houses of the Parliament within fourteen days after the making thereof, if the Parliament is then sitting, and if not, then within fourteen days after the commencement of the next session.

It has happened that one session of the Parliament has extended for nearly three years and another session lasted one day.

The Committee, however, has assumed that it was the intention of the Parliament that an annual Report should be issued and suggests, therefore, the amendment giving statutory approval in the matter.

Existing—

Section 14.—(1) The Committee shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, consider and report upon every public work (except any work already authorized by Parliament or which is authorized during the present session, and except works for the naval or military defence of the Commonwealth exempted by Order in Council from the operation of the Act) to be executed after the passing of this Act (and whether such work is a continuation, completion, repair, reconstruction, extension, or new work) in all cases where the estimated cost of completing the work exceeds £25,000.

Proposed—

Section 14.—(1) The Committee shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, consider and report upon every public work to be executed after the passing of this Act (and whether such work is a continuation, completion, repair, reconstruction, extension, or new work) in all cases where the estimated cost of completing the work exceeds £25,000.

Provided that where works to be executed for the naval or military defence of the Commonwealth are stated in the reference to the Committee to be of a secret nature the investigation may be undertaken by the Committee in camera and the evidence and proceedings of the Committee treated as secret.

This is designed to cover investigations of certain Defence Works which it is deemed inadvisable should receive publicity.

Existing—

Section 15. (1) No public work of any kind whatsoever (except such works as have already been authorized by Parliament or which are authorized before 1st January, 1916, and except works for the naval or military defence of the Commonwealth exempted by Order in Council from the operation of the Act) the estimated cost of completing which exceeds £25,000 and whether such work is a continuance, completion, repair, reconstruction, extension, or a new work, shall be commenced unless sanctioned as in this section provided.

Proposed—

Section 15.—(1) No public work of any kind whatsoever (except such works as have already been authorized by Parliament or which are authorized before 1st January, 1916, and except works for the naval or military defence of the Commonwealth exempted by Order in Council from the operation of the Act) the estimated cost of completing which exceeds £25,000, and whether such work is a continuance, completion, repair, reconstruction, extension, or a series of works for the same establishment, shall be commenced unless sanctioned as in this section provided.

This addition is intended to cover cases where a number of works, each under £25,000, but the aggregate much exceeding that sum, may be undertaken for the same establishment.

Proposed additional proviso to Section 15, after sub-section (6)—

Provided also that when Parliament is not in session any work which should in accordance with the provisions of this Act be referred to the Committee and the execution of which the Governor-General in Council deems to be urgent may be submitted to the Committee for consideration and report. But in every such case the Prime Minister shall inform the House as soon as possible after the re-assembling of Parliament of such reference, and the report of the Committee shall be submitted to the Parliament in the manner prescribed by this Act.

13. 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, 1918.

H. GREGORY,
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
31 Queen-street, Melbourne, 5th May, 1919.

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, 1918, 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.
1916.		£	£	£	£	
23th Jan. to 24th Feb.	Construction of a main sewer for the city of Canberra	75,000	75,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
28th Jan. to 26th Feb.	Storage and regulating reservoir, Upper Queanbeyan 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
10th Mar. to 5th May	Sewerage scheme for Flinders Naval Base	9,500	7,500	..	2,000	
6th May to 24th June	Lithgow Small Arms Factory Extension (including power plant)	66,800	92,100	25,500	..	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 thereto 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 28th Aug. 18th Sept. to 16th Oct.	Small Arms Factory—location at Canberra Automatic Telephone Exchange, Sydney	..	..	..	..	Site recommended
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
23rd Sept. to 24th Nov.	Cement Works for Commonwealth purposes	100,000	100,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
28th Sept. to 6th Oct.	Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney	37,500	29,800	..	..	Recommended, but stipulation made that occupants be removed to temporary accommodations during alterations
12th Oct. to 16th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Malvern, Victoria	46,933	46,933	..	..	Recommended as proposed
12th Oct. to 16th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Collingwood, Victoria	49,752	49,752	..	..	Recommended as proposed
25th Oct. to 23rd 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 report)	61,481	41,000	..	10,481	
26th Feb. 1915, to 21st Aug. 1916	Water Supply scheme for Flinders Naval Base	61,000 and 6d. per 1,000 gallons with minimum annual payment of £4,000 for first three years, £3,500 for second three years, £3,000 thereafter	Capital cost nil: 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 9d. per 1,000 gallons, more than counterbalances the annual payment under the scheme recommended

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., 1915, to 30th Aug., 1916	Extension of Pine Creek-Katherine River Railway to Bitter (Mataranka) Springs	320,000	320,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
13th July, 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 surface lines at estimated cost of about £78,000
14th July, 1915, 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.						
16th Jan. to 20th Feb.	Extension of Postal Stores, Harbour-street, Sydney	68,532	68,532	..	..	Recommended as proposed
31st Jan. to 16th Mar.	Power House, Flinders Naval Base	15,000	9,600	..	5,600	
27th Sept. to 6th Mar., 1918	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	168,845	142,641	..	26,204	
27th Sept. to 1st May, 1918	Henderson Naval Base—Two breakwaters, excavations, reclamations, basins or quaywalls, floating docks, administrative buildings, and permanent railways	4,520,100	2,906,850	..	16,250	The Committee recommended that work of the estimated cost of £1,601,000 be made the subject of further inquiry at a later date. A saving of £16,250 was effected in connexion with the transport of material from Woywong
1918.						
18th June to 1st Aug.	Housing of Commonwealth workmen at Lithgow, New South Wales	73,762	..	..	..	The Committee recommended the erection of 150 houses instead of 100 as proposed, but at a lower average cost
20th Sept. to 29th Oct.	Arsenal Railway	62,614	62,614	..	..	Recommended as proposed