

*brought up*  
Laid on the Table by.....  
*Senator Newland*



Pursuant to Statute  
By Command  
in return to Order  
1921:  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

*G. S. Monahan*

Clerk of the Senate.  
21-11-21

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

REPORT

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

RELATING TO THE

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF GENERAL  
POST OFFICE, PERTH.



MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

Third Committee.

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

Senate.

Senator Hatfill Spencer Foll: \*  
 Senator George Henderson. †  
 Senator John Newland, Vice-Chairman. ‡  
 Senator Edward Needham. §  
 Senator William Plain. \*

House of Representatives.

Llewelyn Atkinson, Esquire, M.P.  
 The Honorable Frederick William Bamford, M.P.  
 George Hugh Mackay, Esquire, M.P.  
 James Mathews, Esquire, M.P.  
 Parker John Moloney, Esquire, M.P.

\* Appointed 28th July, 1920. † Resigned 22nd July, 1920. ‡ Re-appointed 28th July, 1920.  
 † Ceased to be a Member of the Senate, 30th June, 1920.

INDEX.

Report .. .. .	Page
Minutes of Evidence .. .. .	iii

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF GENERAL POST OFFICE, PERTH.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

Arnott, Charles William, Contractor, General Post Office, Perth .. .. .	Page
Goodwin, John Thomas Hill, Commonwealth Surveyor-General, Department of Home and Territories .. .. .	1
Green, Ameziah, Acting Commonwealth Public Service Inspector for Western Australia .. .. .	12
Hardwick, William Burden, Principal Architect, State Public Works Department, Western Australia .. .. .	7, 18
Lapsley, James McFarlane, Chief Officer of Fire Brigades, Western Australia .. .. .	16
Lloyd, John Joseph, Deputy Postmaster-General for Western Australia .. .. .	10
Murdoch, John Smith, Chief Architect, Commonwealth Department of Works and Railways .. .. .	3, 6, 9
Tepper, John William Otto, Superintendent of Mails, General Post Office, Western Australia .. .. .	14
Tyler, Arthur George, Assistant Superintendent of Mails, General Post Office, Western Australia .. .. .	20
Way, Henry Richard, Commonwealth Electoral Officer for Western Australia .. .. .	15
Whitely, John Francis, Deputy Federal Commissioner of Taxation for Western Australia .. .. .	16

EXTRACT FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

No. 113 of 25th NOVEMBER, 1920.

7. PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE—REFERENCE OF WORK—PERTH (NEW) GENERAL POST OFFICE EXTENSION.—Mr. Groom moved, pursuant to notice, That in accordance with the provisions of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914*, the following work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for its investigation and report thereon, viz.—Perth new General Post Office building under construction—Extension by two floors for the accommodation of the Taxation and other Government Departments. Mr. Groom having laid upon the Table plans, &c., in connexion with the proposed work. Question—put and passed.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

EXTENSION GENERAL POST OFFICE, PERTH.

REPORT.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which the House of Representatives referred for investigation and report the question of the proposed Addition of Two Floors to the new General Post Office Building, Perth, for the purpose of providing accommodation for the Taxation and other Government Departments, has the honour to report as follows:—

INTRODUCTORY.

1. The existing General Post Office, Perth, is jointly occupied by the Commonwealth and the State. At the inauguration of Federation, when the postal properties were transferred to the Commonwealth, it was decided that this building should not be transferred as it was quite apparent even then that a new General Post Office would be required at an early date. Arrangements were made for only portion of the building to be regarded as Commonwealth property, the Federal Government paying interest on the value of that portion.

2. With the extension of postal business and the increase of staff, it was found necessary to provide additional accommodation and, on the 30th August, 1911, the Commonwealth acquired, as a site for a new post office, &c., an area of land having frontages of about 335 feet to Murray and Wellington streets by a depth of about 403 feet at a cost of £178,000. From Murray-street to Wellington-street, it is proposed to construct a new street 84 feet wide. This will leave a strip of land on the eastern side of the area of 66 feet by 403 feet, which it has been suggested might be let on building leases until required for Commonwealth purposes.

3. It was then decided to proceed with the erection of a new General Post Office on portion of the block to the west of the proposed new street, the remainder being reserved as sites for other Commonwealth buildings, such as Customs House and Commonwealth Bank.

4. The building, as originally designed for the new General Post Office, was of nine floors but was reduced to seven, as at that time it was considered that five floors would meet the requirements of the General Post Office and provide for reasonable expansion for a long period, and that the extra two floors would house the local branches of all other Commonwealth Departments with the exception of Defence and Customs. In 1914, a contract was accordingly let for the erection of a building of seven floors, but within a month of the letting of the contract war broke out, delays in obtaining material occurred, and the building which was to have been completed in 1917 is still unfinished.

5. The postal business has expanded, and new departments have been created notably the Taxation Department, and it is now apparent that the building as contracted for would not be large enough to accommodate the Postal Department and the local Commonwealth offices. The latest calculation shows that the Postal Department would require six floors, and that the Taxation Department would require one whole floor at once and additional space in three years.

PRESENT PROPOSAL.

6. The present proposal is that the contract be extended to include two additional floors for which the building was originally planned. This, it is anticipated, will provide for all Commonwealth requirements excluding Customs, Defence and Repatriation, for a period of approximately fifteen years, and leave a space of about half a floor, which it is hoped may be leased by the State Government.

ESTIMATED COST.

7. The contract price for the original building was £232,700, and when the question was considered some time ago it was estimated that the two extra floors could be added for about £40,000. Arrangements have, however, since been made with the Contractor, under which allowance is to be paid for increased cost of labour and material, and it is probable that the two extra stories would now cost approximately £50,000.

8. The time necessary to complete the work is estimated at two years from the date of commencement.

### COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

9. The Committee took evidence in regard to this matter in Melbourne, and then appointed a sectional committee for the purpose of making further investigations in Perth. An inspection was made of the present General Post Office and of the building in course of construction, and evidence was obtained from the Chief Architect, Department of Works and Railways, the Principal Architect, State Public Works Department, Western Australia, the Deputy Postmaster-General for Western Australia, the Contractor erecting the building and others.

10. It was apparent to the Committee that the space provided in the existing General Post Office is inadequate and unsatisfactory, and that the new building will provide much needed relief. It was seen that the building, in course of erection, is almost completed excepting for the roof, and the Committee was informed that any additional work required could be carried out more economically now than if action be deferred.


11. The figures quoted by the Deputy Postmaster-General showed that there had been a steady increase in the work of the department, and the Committee was assured that the accommodation now proposed would be adequate for a period of at least fifteen years.

12. Evidence was obtained to the effect that the various local Commonwealth Offices in Perth are situated in different parts of the city in premises leased from private owners, and that rental for such accommodation is being paid to the extent of £2,636 per annum.

13. As the present leases terminate, it is possible this figure may be increased as already a demand is being made for an increase of £110 per annum in respect of one office, the lease of which terminates during 1921. Realizing this, and the advisability and convenience of all Federal activities being concentrated in one Commonwealth building, the Committee is unanimously of opinion that the work of adding the two extra stories be proceeded with as proposed.

14. In view of the fact that the present Contractor is still in possession of the building and as his cranes, &c., are in position, it is improbable that other contractors could be induced to submit tenders for the two extra stories, neither would it, in the opinion of the Committee, be economical to call for tenders for the additional work. In the course of his examination, the present contractor stated that he would be prepared to carry on the work on a schedule basis, and the Committee recommends that, if a reasonable rate can be arrived at by agreement between the Commonwealth and State Public Works Departments and the Contractor, the work be entrusted to the present Contractor on such condition.

H. GREGORY,  
Chairman.



## ADDITIONS NEW GENERAL POST OFFICE, PERTH.

### MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

WEDNESDAY, 22ND DECEMBER, 1920.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

Present:

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Foll,  
Senator Newland,  
Senator Plain,  
Mr. Atkinson,

Mr. Bamford,  
Mr. Mathews,  
Mr. Parker Moloney.

John Thomas Hill Goodwin, Commonwealth Surveyor-General, Melbourne, sworn and examined.

1. *To the Chairman.*—I was not aware until yesterday that the question of adding two stories to the new General Post Office, Perth, had been referred to the Committee for investigation and report. The whole of the area shown on the plan before the Committee comprises approximately 3 acres 17 perches, and is situated between Murray and Wellington streets. The land was acquired on 30th August, 1911, at a total cost of £178,000, and has a frontage of 608 links to Wellington-street, and a similar frontage to Murray-street, with a depth of 611 links. The portion coloured green on the plan represents the proposed re-subdivision; the central block being the new General Post Office. The block facing Murray-street is the proposed site for a branch of the Commonwealth Bank, and that facing Wellington-street has been reserved for a Customs House building. It is proposed to construct a road 84 feet wide between Murray and Wellington streets, and that will leave a strip on the eastern side of the road 66 feet wide by the total length. I do not know what it is intended to do with that land, but in all probability it will be let on long building leases. It has, I believe, been suggested that the land might be leased for a term of ninety-nine years for building purposes. It is a very valuable strip, as it is in close proximity to the Perth Railway Station, which faces Wellington-street. Murray-street is a thoroughfare which has been considerably improved, and it will become a very good street in time. The site on which it is proposed to erect a branch of the Commonwealth Bank is worth from £40,000 to £45,000. The width of the proposed road is 84 feet, and the projections on the plan, as shown in red, indicate the existing buildings. The green line shows the proposed alignment.

2. *To Mr. Bamford.*—With regard to the new street, it will not be necessary to demolish the buildings on the Commonwealth Bank site, but some alteration will have to be made to Dynon's property. The Arcade, which is only a galvanized iron building divided into cubicles, will have to be demolished.

3. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The gross annual rental from tenants is £10,420 15s. 8d., out of which is paid £715 2s. for water rates, and £870 0s. 9d. for municipal rates, leaving a net balance of £8,907 12s. 11d., showing a net return of about 5 per cent. per annum on

the total cost of £178,000. It must be remembered that when the land was acquired in 1911 there were only frontages to Murray and Wellington streets.

4. *To the Chairman.*—I have prepared a list of the various tenancies showing those which need not be interfered with for some time, and those which will be determined immediately or as soon as the road is constructed. I hand in the list for the information of the Committee. The new street must be constructed before the General Post Office can be used.

5. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The construction of the road will depend on the completion of the General Post Office. If the road were to be put through within twelve months some of the tenancies would have to be determined in six months. Those in the arcade are weekly tenants. No arrangement has been made with the Commonwealth Bank as to the area to be taken over, and although nothing definite has been done, the block to which I have referred is always regarded as a site for a branch of the Commonwealth Bank. If it is utilized for that purpose the bank will of course have to pay for it. The Murray-street frontage of the bank block is approximately 195 feet, and it was once suggested that the new Post Office should be placed in the centre of the purchased area, with frontages to suitable entrances from Murray and Wellington streets. But the present plan was adopted as more suitable and economical as it enables the postal buildings to be constructed on the least expensive land and revenue obtained from the remainder until required for Commonwealth purposes. Several schemes were considered in connexion with the utilization of the land acquired. The land now occupied by the Royal Arcade will be very valuable when the new road is constructed.

6. *To the Chairman.*—When certain tenancies are determined the revenue from rentals will be affected; but there will be a certain area of land available for sale or leasing. The present income is obtained from premises that cannot be allowed to remain standing much longer as they are a disgrace to the city of Perth. With reference to the revenue which will be received after the tenancies in connexion with the new street have been determined, rentals to the extent of £6,640 will be affected, and the properties not interfered with by the roadway will return approximately £3,770. The opening of the road will improve the general surroundings. Some of the premises are fifty years old, and as they are in a very bad state of repair they must be demolished at no very distant date. When the roadway is completed the area on the eastern side of the General Post Office will increase in value, because it will then have a frontage. There is a frontage of 66 feet to Murray and Wellington streets, and when the road is put through the depth will become a frontage. The right-of-way shown on the plan is not a public right-of-way, and although it is included in the purchase it will not be reserved as a thoroughfare in connexion with future plans.

7. *To Mr. Atkinson.*—When the proposed roadway is constructed there will be a strip 66 feet wide after allowing for the 84 feet road. I do not know if anything definite has been suggested in connexion with the erection of a new Customs House or Commonwealth Bank building. The sites mentioned have not been specially dedicated for those purposes, because the Commonwealth Government have not adopted the practice of formally dedicating land; but we have always regarded these areas as being reserved for the purposes mentioned. The premises at present leased have not been let for long periods, and most of those likely to be disturbed are quarterly or weekly tenants. The hotel property will not be affected by this scheme. There are no leases in force which will affect our immediate future arrangements. I understand the proposal to erect two additional stories is to enable different Commonwealth Departments to be housed in the building which at present cannot be done. The Com-

monwealth Government are at present paying £2,038 2s. for this accommodation, and are occupying 20,039 square feet at an average cost of 2s. 6d. per square foot. I understand the proposal, if adopted, will add an additional 31,000 super. feet, and the extra space would not be too much to hold in reserve. I believe it to be very desirable to secure such accommodation, because on every occasion when new leases are secured the rents are increased, and in Perth, as in Melbourne, the Commonwealth offices are scattered all over the city, which causes considerable inconvenience to those having business to transact with Commonwealth Departments. Work can be more expeditiously and efficiently carried out in a modern building, and probably a saving in space would be effected. For the information of the Committee I hand in a statement giving particulars of premises leased in Perth for Commonwealth purposes. It is as follows:—

Name and Location.	Square Feet.	Annual Rental.	Rate per Sq. Ft.	Tenancy or Date of Expiration.
McNeil Chambers, Barrack-ground— Audit—Room 2 on Ground Floor .. .. .	550	134 2 0	4 10	31.8.21, then monthly
Sub-Treasury— Rooms 1 and 3 on Ground Floor .. .. .	775	165 0 0	4 0	30.6.21, with option of renewal
Room 7 on Ground Floor .. .. .	123	35 0 0	5 4	Monthly
Room 9 on Ground Floor .. .. .	180	45 10 0	5 0	30.6.21
A.M.P. Chambers, St. George's-terrace— War Pensions Branch—Rooms 80 to 90 and 100 on 5th Floor .. .. .	3,310	334 10 0	2 0	30.4.21
Old-age Pensions and War Pensions—Rooms 90 to 92 on 5th Floor .. .. .				
Works Registrar—Room 80 on 5th Floor .. .. .				
Public Service Inspector—Rooms 93 to 96 on 5th Floor .. .. .	762	130 0 0	3 5	Monthly
New Zealand Chambers, 105 St. George's-terrace—Meteorological— 4 Rooms in Basement .. .. .	429	150 0 0	7 0	Monthly
Miller's Timber and Trading Coy.—Members' Rooms—Rooms 6 and 7 on 2nd Floor .. .. .	11,300	and 19 10 0 and 600 0 0 and rates and insurance	1 2	23.5.21
King-street—Taxation Branch (leased from Mrs. Crocker) .. .. .	59,285	100 0 0	..	23.3.26
Explainside, Perth.—Repatriation Department—Offices and Artificial Limb Factory .. .. .	Unknown	470 0 0	3 0	Yearly
Willis Buildings, Murray-street.—War Service Homes .. .. .	2,000	300 0 0	3 0	31.8.21
Premises opposite Government Printing Office.—Electoral Office and D.B.O. .. .. .				
<b>Totals .. .. .</b>	<b>20,039</b>	<b>2,635 2 0</b>	<b>2 6</b>	

8. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I understand it will be twelve months before the new General Post Office is available for occupation; the completion of the work is governed largely by the supply of material. The present tenants will not be disturbed until the construction of the road is commenced. It would not be advisable to have a 60 feet road to prevent disturbing the arcade tenants, because that would mean that dilapidated premises would be opposite the Post Office. I understand the intention is to construct a road, and then lease the land on terms, which will justify the erection of suitable buildings. The structures on the General Post Office site are very old and in a bad state of repair.

9. *To the Chairman.*—In connexion with the premises leased for Commonwealth purposes it will be noted in the return submitted that the rate per square foot varies from 2s. to 7s., but that is because leases have been taken out at different times. That is probably the reason why the rate of 2s. per square foot is shown against the A.M.P. Chambers, and one of 7s. in connexion with Miller's Timber and Trading Company's building. It is not within my province to estimate the cost per square foot if the two additional stories

are constructed at the new General Post Office. If the proposed work is completed the leasing of the new offices will be under the control of the Home and Territories Department, which Department finds Commonwealth office accommodation. The rentals for accommodation in Commonwealth buildings are fixed by the Home and Territories Department on a scale which has been adopted. Where a portion of a building is available for letting my Department is approached, and the rent to be charged is based on the cost of construction, having in view the market value. I have not received any information as to the extra accommodation that would be required by the Taxation Department in the event of the Commonwealth authorities collecting State taxes. I know the premises at present occupied by the Taxation Department in Perth, and although they were adequate two years ago, I am not in a position to say whether the accommodation at present is sufficient. The Repatriation Department and Artificial Limb Factory are included in the list of premises leased for Commonwealth purposes, but as such Departments are of a temporary nature only, it is not likely that they would be housed in the new building.

10. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I am not prepared to give an approximate estimate of the freehold value of the 66 feet adjoining the proposed roadway. The best way to arrive at its true value would be to offer it at auction; but that should not be done until the construction of the roadway was well advanced, or even completed, and the debris cleared away so that purchasers could see what they were buying.

(Taken at Perth.)

TUESDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 1921.

Present:

(Sectional Committee.)

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Foll  
Mr. Mathews

Senator Newland.

John Smith Murdoch, Chief Architect, Department of Works and Railways, sworn and examined.

11. *To the Chairman.*—The plans submitted to Parliament, which are now before the Committee, are for a new fifth floor and sixth floor and elevations, showing the architectural effect of the introduction of these proposed floors. In submitting the proposal to Parliament, the Minister for Works gave a short statement regarding it. His remarks were to the effect that the building had been designed to carry nine floors, but the contract that had been let provided for seven floors only; that is, the building had been designed for two extra floors, the intention being to have them introduced at some future time when the requirements of the Commonwealth warranted it. The Minister, in tabling this reference in Parliament, said:—

When the contract was entered on in 1914, it was considered that seven floors would meet requirements as to space of the Postmaster-General's Department and local branches of other Commonwealth Departments for a long period.

Expansion of the Departments, particularly the Taxation Department, and its probable amalgamation with the Taxation Department of the State, has been such that the accommodation being provided under the contract will be insufficient to effect the intention to concentrate all the Departments in this building.

It is considered desirable, therefore, from the stand-points of economy and convenience to extend the contract by inclusion of the two additional floors for which the building has been planned.

The proposal would add about 31,000 superficial feet of effective office space to the building.

From the beginning all the space thus created might not be required for Commonwealth purposes, in which case it is expected arrangements can be made with the State Government to rent any surplus space until required by the Commonwealth.

Negotiations with the contractor as to the value of the proposed extension have not been entered on, but it is anticipated the work will cost from £45,000 to £50,000.

Perhaps it would be as well for the Committee to know that in 1914, when the contract for the building was let, just a month or so before the war broke out, it seemed that seven floors might carry on the Commonwealth activities for a long time; but the work had not progressed very far when it became apparent that further accommodation might be necessary. Perth was growing very fast, and I understand it is growing fast now. There were additional Commonwealth departmental activities on account of the war, such as the direct taxation department, and it appeared that the building, when completed according to the plan, would not house all these activities. Steps were taken when Mr. Watt was Minister for Works to approach the State Government of Western Australia with

a view to getting it to rent any surplus accommodation after the Commonwealth needs had been provided for, in the event of the Commonwealth Government going on with the two additional stories, and making the building complete. The State Government considered that proposal, which, from a building point of view, seemed a very attractive one. The Commonwealth Government suggested that the State Government should occupy at least one floor. The terms of the proposal were that the rent to be paid by the State Government should be 6 per cent. on the capital cost of the particular floor it might occupy. That was, I think, in the year 1917. There were definite estimates as to what the square foot of floor-space would cost. I might read the first memorandum on the subject, which I think summarizes the position fairly. It is dated the 31st October, 1917, and was put before Mr. Watt, who was at that time Minister for Works. It was as follows:—

The State Public Works Department, which is superintending erection of this building, now asks to be informed respecting the proposed provision of additional floors for the accommodation of local branches of all Commonwealth Departments, except Defence and Customs.

The building was originally intended, and has been designed, with the object of concentrating in its upper floors all local Commonwealth activities, but in the last few years these have so expanded that the floor space being provided under the original contract will not be sufficient for even their immediate requirements, and the question whether additional stories which the building has been designed to carry should not be provided with, as a continuation of the existing contract, has for some time been under consideration.

The section of the building now being constructed provides a basement, five floors, and a flat roof, on which will be erected recreation and eating rooms.

It is calculated that the Postmaster-General's Department will immediately require all the space being provided, with the exception of one floor (the fourth), and that possibly after about fifteen years further accommodation may be required by that Department.

This fourth floor (about 15,400 superficial feet) would thus be available for other Departments for probably about fifteen years, but the present requirements of these Departments are estimated to be about 10,000 feet of space, and that to meet a ten years' expansion they will require a further 4,000 feet. In fact, between expansion and establishment of possible additional departmental branches, I think it may be assumed that in ten years about two full floors would be required.

These branch offices at present consist of Federal Members' Rooms, Taxation, Public Service Inspector, Old-age and War Pensions, Maternity Allowance, Works, Electoral, Meteorology, Quarantine, Food Prices Regulation, &c. For these offices, rentals to private property owners amounting to about £2,200, plus sundry rates, taxes, and insurance premiums, are being paid, the accommodation being more or less unsuitable, and spread about the city.

The building has been designed to carry two full additional floors, each of about 15,300 superficial feet, total about 27,000 feet, and the probable cost of their erection would be about £50,000. Calculated at 5 per cent. for interest, liquidation, and upkeep, that capital sum would represent an annual rental per foot space of about 2s. 2d., not a high figure, considering the quality of the accommodation.

If the additional stories should be erected, the position would thus be that more than one floor and a half, or about 24,000 feet would be available for letting, either to the State Government or to private tenants, until absorbed for Commonwealth purposes, a gradual process which would extend over probably fifteen years.

The State Government has for some time contemplated building further public offices in Perth, and it might suit its policy to become tenants for some years of surplus space in the new G.P.O. building.

Erection of the further stories might also accord with Commonwealth policy in providing work at a time when large bodies of tradesmen may be returning from the war, whilst the proposal would provide the complete building at once, and avoid dislocation to the office work, which additions to the structure after occupation would necessitate.

On the other hand, there is the question of the large immediate capital expenditure to consider.

(Sgd.)

FRANCIS T. OWEN,  
Director-General of Works.

31st October, 1917.

J.S.M.

That memorandum first raised the question whether it would be advisable to proceed with the two floors. This was referred by Mr. Watt to the Postmaster-General, who saw no objection to the work going on. Then Mr. Groom became Minister for Works, and he came to Perth, and had conversations with some of the State Ministers on the subject. As a result, the following letter was forwarded by the Acting Prime Minister to the State Government, signed by Mr. Watt as Acting Prime Minister, and dated 26th July, 1918:—

In furtherance of a promise by my colleague, the Minister for State for Works and Railways, in a recent conversation with you at Perth, I am addressing you in respect to what prospect there may be of your Government being able to occupy for a term portion of the above new building in the event of the Commonwealth Government deciding to add two further floors above those provided under the current contract, and thus completing the structure.

When the building was planned in 1914, it was anticipated that without the two top floors the building would have been ample in which to accommodate the Postmaster-General's Department and local branches of other Commonwealth Departments, and that the upper floors which the structure has been designed to carry could be left for erection to meet expansion at a remote future date.

Since 1914, however, unlooked-for expansion of some Commonwealth Departments has occurred, with the result that the Post Office building as now being erected will not accommodate them all.

This brings my Government to consider the advisability or otherwise of completing the building as an extension of the existing contract; but as such extension would mean that there would be surplus accommodation to the extent of at least a full floor (about 14,000 superficial feet), which the Commonwealth Government could not utilize for some years, the whole question becomes contingent on ability to suitably let this available space.

The Commonwealth Government takes the view that private tenants in this building would be undesirable, so that its possible extension depends upon whether it would be utilized advantageously and economically by public departments.

Between Governments it is not desired that profit should be looked for, so that the terms upon which possible occupation by State Departments of the available space might be arranged would be merely interest and sinking fund, calculated upon capital cost of the space occupied, say 6 per cent. on outlay.

Calculations show that on these terms your Government would occupy the available space in this building, if such were provided, at a rate per superficial foot very much below what it is understood is being paid by it for office premises in private buildings.

Whilst the present is not a convenient time to contemplate large outlays on public works, it is thought that special circumstances surround this particular case, because it seems to carry with it a considerable direct annual saving to the public, and it is felt that if the structure is not completed continuously with the operations now in hand, the difficulties and expense of resuming construction may probably have the effect of postponing the work for a very long period.

As it has become urgently necessary to come to a decision in the matter, I should be glad to have your views in respect to it at an early date.

At that time the value of money was about 5 per cent., and 1 per cent. was added to meet liquidation. I understand that the State Government were then occupying private space in Perth, and paying something over 3s. per foot per annum for it.

12. To Mr. Mathews.—Based on a probable expenditure of £50,000 for the two stories, the approximate rent per foot was 2s. 2d. per annum.

13. To the Chairman.—The State Government was not advised of that fact; we simply said it was a price very much below what it was understood the State Government were paying for private accommodation. When the verbal representations were made, I think it was almost certain that the fact that the price would be 2s. 2d. per foot would be mentioned; to say it in a letter would rather commit the Department to a price, whereas the proposition was to base the rent on the actual cost. But 6 per cent. on the expenditure without paying anything for land and foundations, and so on, was a very attractive proposition. That was only the

opening of the negotiations. After some reminders; the following reply was received from the Premier of Western Australia, under date 17th September, 1918:—

I regret that your letter of the 25th July last, with regard to the prospects of the Western Australian Government being able to occupy part of the new Post Office building in the event of the Commonwealth Government deciding to add two further floors, has remained so long unanswered.

We have been going carefully into the matter, but find that when the present Post Office buildings are vacated we shall have ample room to accommodate all our officers for some time to come.

In any event, when the financial position of the State permits of this, we are anxious to erect modern buildings to house all our officers together.

Under the circumstances, whilst appreciating your consideration on the subject, I am unable to hold out any hope of this Government being able to make use of any portion of the new Post Office building.

The effect of this was that the Commonwealth Minister for Works intimated that under the circumstances he did not propose to proceed with the work of the two projected stories. In the meantime, the available space on the fourth floor was allotted. It was proposed to give that floor to the Taxation Department, the Commonwealth Public Service Office, and one room to the Meteorological Branch, and plans were got out on those lines. In October, 1920, the Commissioner of Taxation visited Perth in connexion with the amalgamation of the State and Federal Departments. During his visit, he sent this telegram to Melbourne:—

Re portion fourth floor new Post Office allotted us, inspected floor to-day. We must have whole floor for immediate requirements, and will need further space in about three years. Additional space would be immediately required if Commonwealth and State staffs are merged, as proposed. My scheme contractor states decision re additional floors to be erected urgently necessary, as it is about more large crane to close over floors must be erected. If new floors added will retain crane present position, place steel work in position, and carry up walls. Immediate decision will save heavy subsequent expense.

That is, the Commissioner of Taxation found that right from the beginning he would want for his own Commonwealth purposes the whole of the fourth floor that had been allotted to him and the two other Departments mentioned. That, of course, again raised the whole question of the additional two stories. Consideration was given to the possibility of getting accommodation in Perth for this very large Department, but it became quite clear that there was no suitable building. I do not think that there is a better way of providing this accommodation than by extending the new Post Office now under construction, and completing the original plan. This would provide for the concentration of all Commonwealth activities in one building.

Following on that, there was another memorandum, which summarizes the position. It was addressed in October, 1920, by the Director-General of Works to the Secretary of the Department of Works and Railways:—

The new G.P.O. building under construction at Perth has been designed as an eight-story building with a roof floor.

In 1914, when a contract was let for the erection of the first section of the building, it was considered that without the two upper floors enough accommodation would be provided for the Postmaster-General's Department and for local branches of all Commonwealth Departments excepting Defence and Customs.

Since that date other Commonwealth Departments have been created, notably the Taxation Department, and it soon became apparent that the section of the building contracted for would be so large enough in which to concentrate all the Commonwealth offices.

An allotment of the available floor space showed that after the Postmaster-General's Department—allowing for its reasonable expansion—had been provided for, one clear floor only would be left available for other Departments.

As one floor would not suffice for this, the question of adding the two further stories for which the building was originally designed was in 1917 gone into in considerable detail, and at that time it appeared that if the two additional floors were

erected all Commonwealth requirements would be met, leaving a floor available for letting until such time as it might be required to meet Commonwealth expansion.

The Minister (Mr. Watt), after correspondence with the Postmaster-General's Department, was at that time favorable to the extension of the building by the two additional floors, provided the State Government could be induced to lease one floor for a term of years upon a rental based on actual cost of the space occupied.

This proposal, however, did not suit the arrangements of the State Government, and as it was not considered advisable to let any part of the building for other than Government purposes, the Minister (Mr. Groom) decided to take no further action in the matter.

Last year the matter of allotting the space on the one available floor was considered, and a plan prepared providing for the Taxation Department and offices for the Public Service Inspector, Works Registrar, and Meteorology. Since then the Taxation Department has so grown that it is clear the whole floor will be required by it alone, and, as will be seen from the attached communication from the Commissioner of Taxation, still further expansion of his Department is expected.

The position, therefore, now is that outside the Postmaster-General's Department, the building as now contracted for will not suffice for even the Taxation Department.

It seems clear that even without an undertaking by the State Government to occupy any part of the building, the question of its completion is a matter for serious consideration.

If this were done, I anticipate that probably not more than about half a floor would be prepared after all Commonwealth requirements were satisfied, and there is no doubt, I think, that State Departments could be induced to occupy that if necessary.

When the question was formerly considered, it seemed that the cost of the two floors would probably be about £10,000; but, under arrangements since made with the contractor, under which allowance is given for the cost of the crane and platform, and without entering into the matter in detail it would not be possible to accurately forecast the cost.

Should the Minister desire, negotiations might be taken up with the contractor as to the basis upon which the extra work might be carried out, some definite lines of the eventual cost of the building could then be arrived at.

Negotiations were again opened with the State Government. The following telegram was sent by the Prime Minister to the Premier of Western Australia on 10th October, 1920:—

Reference previous correspondence respecting possibility State Government renting space in new Post Office, Perth, provided building completed by additional two floors, latest calculations show that if this completed there would probably be 7,000 to 8,000 feet surplus floor space after meeting Commonwealth requirements, and this Government would be prepared to again consider question of further floors, provided your Government occupied surplus floor space until required by Commonwealth on rental basis of about 7 per cent. on actual cost. Building now at stage requiring very early decision.

That is, the terms had been put up from 6 to 7 per cent. In 1917, 6 per cent. was considered fairly commensurate, but with money at the prices it was in November last year, the suggestion was 7 per cent. This telegram was addressed to the Prime Minister by the Premier of Western Australia on 21st October, 1920:—

Your wire 18th October. Kindly advise if old Post Office will be handed back this Government on completion of new buildings; if so, may favorably consider rental space in new Post Office.

MIRCHELL, Premier.

In reply to that, the Prime Minister wired the Premier of Western Australia on the 28th October:—

Your telegram 21st October. It has always been intention Federal Government ask your Government accept re-transfer Commonwealth interest existing Post Office, Perth, as soon as new building completed.

I may say that the General Post Office, Perth, is jointly occupied by the Commonwealth and the State. At the time of Federation, when the State properties were automatically transferred, it was decided that this building should not be transferred, as it was quite apparent that a new General Post Office would be required at an early date. Arrangements were made for only a portion of the building to be regarded as Commonwealth property,

the Commonwealth Government paying interest on the value of that portion. The Post Office has never really been a transferred property. On the 17th November, 1920, the Premier of Western Australia sent the following telegram to the Prime Minister:—

Your wire 28th October—additional accommodation Post Office. Am inclined to favorably consider additional story. Think interest should not be more than 6 per cent. Please send draft agreement, setting out floor space and approximate cost. The next step was the reference to the Public Works Committee. That last telegram indicates that the State Government would be agreeable to occupy any surplus space, but it is almost impossible to say what surplus there may be; we do not know what Commonwealth developments there may be; in the last seven years, things have occurred which no man ever dreamt of. Suppose we go on with this building, and complete it, it will be two years from now before the work is finished. I do not like to prophesy, but personally, I think there will not be very much space to spare.

14. To Senator Foll.—I think the Commonwealth activities are likely to increase a bit further; and Mr. Ewing himself says the Taxation Department will need all the increased space, i.e., two full floors.

15. To the Chairman. I do not know what the value of the present General Post Office is as a transferred property; but the figures are available. The amount paid by the Commonwealth to the State as interest on the value of the portion of the building taken over is 3½ or 3¾ per cent. The original offer to the State Government of a portion of one floor in the building, although turned down some time ago, is still open under revised conditions. It is impossible to say exactly how much space there may be, but I hazard the opinion that it will be 7,000 or 8,000 feet. At any rate, it seems pretty clear that if this work goes on now, it will be no accommodation going begging. I think you will find the State Government will come in and pay us 6 per cent. on our capital for the portion they may occupy. Since the original designs were prepared, the whole question of what the Post Office will require on a fifteen years' basis has been gone into—in 1916. The postal officers, with myself, went into the exact requirements of all the different branches, and those requirements were provided for and allotted on the various floors. It transpired, as I think I have already said, that, with the exception of the fourth floor of the building under contract, the Post Office will occupy the whole; that is, on a fifteen years' basis. It has always occurred to me, however, that if the floor space is big enough to do the work on a fifteen years' basis, it is obviously too big at the present time. I have always thought that, for a period of from five to seven years, part of the space could be given up to another Department. What I mean is that a portion of the first floor space might be for some years taken away from the Mail Branch and given up to general departmental purposes. There is a basement, and the floors are all about 15,000 feet. The present contract covers the basement, ground floor, and first, second, third, and fourth floors. There is a flat roof where recreation and refectory accommodation is provided. There are seven floors altogether, and the building was designed for nine. No special means of conveying the mails to and from the railway station are at present proposed, but the walls have been so left as to enable underground communication to be made at any time. The actual engineering work of this has never been considered; but, as I say, it would be possible to make such means of communication at any time. The safest thing would be to go right down, so as not to interfere with any of the sewerage or other pipes. It would not be at all an expensive undertaking. The basement floor is now only about 2 feet above permanent water-level. The tunnelling could be done in

steel sections like the tunnelling which carries the Melbourne sewerage under the Yarra. In the new building there is, I think, about the same proportionate space allotted to the Postal Institute and dining rooms as in the Post Offices at Adelaide and Melbourne, in this case the space is about half a floor. I think that as the site attracts the people outside in Perth to a greater extent than in Melbourne, the rooms will not be used to the same extent. With regard to the cost of building, we have fallen on evil times now. The increased cost due to the war is, I suppose, close on 80 per cent, since 1914, though I would not care to give a definite figure. I can see little prospect of prices decreasing. I do not think that the building has developed to such a stage that you would be wasting money by proceeding with the proposed two stories now; I do not think anything will have to be undone. I think, however, that the stage has now been reached when the contractor ought to be informed what is the intention of the Government. In the event of the Committee advising the Government to go on with this work, and the Government agreeing to do so, I do not think it would be possible to invite fresh tenders, or to have the work done in any other way than through the present contractor. Since this reference was tabled in Parliament, the Works Department at Western Australia, which has charge of the execution of the building, has been asked to prepare an estimate of what it considers is the cost of the work. According to the plans, the proposed two floors are on exactly the same lines as the floors below. Dining and recreation accommodation will be included on the top floor, and the two new floors introduced below. One floor will be entirely occupied by the Taxation Department, which requires a big open space without subdivision. The lighting will be perfect, just as on the other floors. According to the design of the building, these two floors fortunately are very simple in their architecture; they are largely simply brick and stone work, the very elaborate frontage not being taken up. They will be completed in Dennybrook stone, but in a very much smaller degree than the floors below. I think that the addition of these two floors will very much improve the building architecturally, and there is no denying that we shall save a lot of disturbance in the future if the work is done now. The derricks will be quite sufficient for the new work. With the two new stories the building will be a complete conception. The fire brigade authorities have not been consulted as to these two new floors, but from that point of view I do not think that the condition will be any worse than at the lower levels. There is a storage of 15,000 gallons of water on the roof. The two extra floors will require one extra passenger lift.

(Taken at Perth.)

WEDNESDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 1921.

Present:

(Sectional Committee.)

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Foll  
Mr. Mathews

Senator Newland.

John Smith Murdoch, Chief Architect, Department of Works and Railways, recalled and further examined.

16. To the Chairman.—No negotiations whatever have been entered into with the contractor as to the proposed expenditure for the construction of these two extra stories. I do not suppose that

the Department will enter into such negotiations until it has an indication of the Committee's views on the project; but I do not see why tentative conversations should not be entered into with the contractor as to the best way of carrying out the work if approved. Until the intention of the Government is known, I would not suggest that negotiations be entered on. Of course, the Government no doubt seriously considered this matter when it referred it to this Committee, but it lies with the Committee to decide. In the event of its being decided to go on with the work, there will be a hand-and-fast agreement with the contractor. It would be possible for negotiations to be opened up so that there should be something definite from the contractor before the Committee finally deals with the matter. Up to the present time the work has been satisfactorily carried out by the contractor. The workmanship in all details is quite to our satisfaction. There has been far less than the average friction with this contract. I have never been connected with a building of this size before where there was so little friction. There has been no attempt to scam the work, and the contractor's relationship with his employees is marvellous. There has been no dissatisfaction and we have had no strikes, the contractor giving the best wages and conditions. I should say that the cost of a building of this kind represents an all-round increase since the war of certainly over 80 per cent, that is, as between to-day and the date of the letting of the contract. When the Department will be able to take possession if this proposed work is carried out depends very largely on the conditions. There has been very little work done on the building in the last six months, owing to the fact that it has been impossible to get certain materials. For instance, the contractor has not been able to get bricks and cement in proper quantities, and there has also been a scarcity of bricklayers. However, given fair conditions, I think that the building should be completed about the end of 1922. If we went to the expense of spending a few hundred pounds—say £300—we could temporarily cover in the building at its present level, and lay down a malthod roof on the top of the fourth floor. This would enable the contractor to finish the structure so far as it is built now. If that could be done, it would mean that the Postal Department, together with the Taxation Department, would get possession six or eight months before it would otherwise be possible. It would also enable the finishing work of the building to proceed more rapidly. There would be no danger to the public and postal employees from the derricks, but there would be some inconvenience. I do not think we could have the lifts in until the building is quite completed. I think it would add considerably to the cost if the two top floors had to be put on with people inside the building. If the present Post Office has become terribly cramped in accommodation, I would certainly take the step suggested. The contractor's idea about going on with the top floors with the lower floors covered in is conceived more from his own point of view—that it would enable him to get on with the flooring, plastering, and so forth. I do not think that, under any circumstances, the Postal Department could take possession this year, but it might be possible in April or May next—that is eight or nine months in advance of the completion of the whole work.

17. To Senator Newland.—The head of every branch of the Post Office has been consulted. The principal inspector was sent over to Melbourne to go into the whole thing, and each branch was allocated its particular place. The whole of the fourth and fifth floors, if built, will be taken for taxation purposes, and the sixth floor will be the only floor remaining for all the other Departments in Perth. Mr. Ewing, in estimating the space he required, had plans of the building, and no

doubt arranged all his furniture, and so forth. It is proposed to have accommodation for current records, which are kept in standard furniture. I think that, after a few years, the accumulated records might be destroyed. It is not proposed to provide accommodation in the basement for records apart from postal records, though it might be done by arrangement with the Post Office. There is very fine record storage for the Post Office. We have no building in the Commonwealth's possession so well equipped in the basement in that respect as this building. I should say that all the records connected with each Department could be stored. I do not think the Post Office will ever want the whole of the space. The taxation records are unique; they have to be kept for many years, being too important to destroy. I should say that one of the first things, in the event of the Taxation Department going there, would be some arrangement with the Post Office for storage accommodation. The offer of the State Government in respect of the floor space is 6 per cent, but the latest figure of the Commonwealth is 7 per cent. This payment will cover only interest on capital and deterioration. The water service will come out of the general supply to the building. The contractor has not asked for any additional payment on account of the increased cost of labour. The rate being paid by the Government to the contractor is, of course, the original basic rate of the contract, that is, the basic rate plus an allowance for the rise in the cost of material. That extra allowance took effect from a certain date. No claim has ever been made by the contractor on account of the increased cost of labour. If we were to call contracts now for this proposed work, it would mean that we would have to pay a higher rate than the contractor is now getting. We have no building of the same class as this with which we can make comparison; even the quality of the brick work is superior to any other brick work in Western Australia. I decidedly think that the costs compare favorably with tenders put in in the ordinary way; they compare more than favorably with a building of the same class now. I think that the difficulty in securing material such as bricks and cement is practically overcome now if no other hitch occurs, and there is every probability of good progress being made. There are no cement works being erected in Western Australia; all the cement has to be brought here, and that which the contractor uses is European. Bricks, I believe, are coming forward more freely. I understand, from conversations I have had, that the War Service Homes scheme has rather paralyzed the supply of bricks in Western Australia. Those concerned went on a system of asking for the immediate delivery of bricks instead of drawing them from the market as required, and this caused a situation very unfair to the average man who wanted to build. The steel requirements are being met fairly. We get the steel from Broken Hill; but the supply of course, has been interfered with by shipping conditions. During the war the British Government took possession of our steel, and when we made representation to it, they very politely said they were very sorry, but that we ought to realize the position. When we saw that the war was likely to continue indefinitely, we made arrangements at an advanced rate to obtain steel from the Broken Hill Company rather than stop work and allow the building to remain idle. There will be no difficulty at all in regard to the supply of timber for the floors and the supply of fittings. The flooring timbers have been stacked and seasoned for the last three or four years and ought to be of most excellent quality. The flooring and fittings will be entirely of jarrah, and the effect of this is expected to be good. The original fittings were specified as

blackwood, but I discovered, on one occasion when visiting Perth, that in some of the important buildings jarrah was being used with the best effect. In view of the satisfaction that would be felt in drawing the supplies of material from Western Australia as much as possible, arrangements were made to substitute jarrah. This building will in an extraordinary degree be made up of local materials. The granite is the finest I have ever seen. All the locks and other metal work may probably be made locally. The building must be watertight before the inside joinery work is done, and the roofing of the fourth floor would help very much; I think we would get the Postal Department into the building eight or nine months sooner. It would to some extent interfere with the work of construction generally to have the employees of the Department going in and out amongst the workmen engaged on the building. I do not think it would interfere with the work of the Post Office, or the convenience of the public, if business were started before the street is opened out. It could be arranged for the public and the workmen to have entirely independent access. It would make the work slower, and consequently a little more costly to the contractor. It is a fine point whether the building should be occupied before the completion. My mind is open on the matter.

18. To Senator Foll.—I have a rough method of my own of checking the amount of space which the heads of Departments say they require, and it is a method based on pretty long experience. In a big open room with a number of clerks, I estimate that there should be 60 feet of floor space per man. On the other hand, it is just one of these matters upon which one cannot generalize. Owing to the nature of the work, some offices require more furniture than others. As a rule when this matter is being inquired into, we are asked to estimate the possible requirement for, say, ten years, and the building is designed accordingly. I do not think that the heads of Departments willfully exaggerate their requirements as regards space; I have always found heads of Departments just as anxious to economize as we are ourselves. I see no indication of any decrease in the cost of material. It all depends on supply and demand. No doubt the cost of industrial metal, such as lead and zinc, is going to come down; but that will not be a big factor. The price of steel, which is a big factor, is not likely, in my opinion, to come down.

19. To Mr. Mathews.—The saving on present costs if the two stories were put in now, rather than a few years hence, depends on whether building values have attained high-water mark now. One cannot say what the building cost may be in twelve months, though, personally, I think it will probably be the same. I think there would be disturbance caused by doing the work after the building had been occupied, and that, of course, represents money.

William Burden Hardwick, Principal Architect, State Public Works Department, Western Australia, sworn and examined.

20. To the Chairman.—I have been associated with the construction of the new Post Office right from the beginning, in 1914. There has been considerable delay. The work went with a great swing until some time after the war broke out, when there was a difficulty in obtaining steel, and the whole thing had to go at a very much slower rate. The class of work done has been quite satisfactory. I think the proposed additions would architecturally be a distinct improvement to the building; in fact, without them the building will have an incomplete appearance. There are no other buildings of the same height in or around Perth. The Chairman of the Fire Brigades Board has been consulted, and every provision made for adequate service if

the additional stories are put on. Provision is made for pumping from the main if there is not enough pressure. All the usual fire appliances are provided for. Six-inch and 4-inch pipes run along the front and encircle the building, and there is a reserve of 15,000 gallons on the roof. There are fire hoses on each floor. Our instructions were to consult with the Fire Brigades Board in all these matters. There are no fire escapes beyond the ordinary lifts and staircases. The staircases will be of reinforced concrete, from floor to roof. The main staircase encircles the lift at the main entrance, and there are staircases in two other positions at the rear of the building, also two lifts in separate positions. If fire broke out near a lift and staircase, that staircase, of course, would be of no avail, but the two other lifts and two other staircases in the other parts of the building would be easily accessible. There are ample means to reach safety if fire were to break out in the basement. I do not think that the whole work of completing this Post Office can be done before the end of 1922, but with the preparatory work already done, there is a possibility of putting on a temporary roof, and, in the absence of strikes and so forth, finishing the present portion by about June of that year. I think that, with a temporary roof on the fourth floor, the Postal Department could enter into occupation of the basement portion early in 1922. I do not think that there will be any danger to the employees or the public from the continuation of the building work overhead, because the whole of the material would be lifted by cranes from the outside, and not necessarily from the street. The workmen could also be taken up in that way, and there will be no necessity for them to come into the finished portion of the building. The mails would go down the road at the side of the building, and I do not think there will be any more danger than in the case of the erection of an ordinary building; the same protection may have to be provided as is usual under the circumstances in creating a structure in a public street. The cost of the building would not be increased by allowing the Postal Department to come into occupation. Every point has been thoroughly considered. It would be impossible in this building to get into the old system of "rabbit warrens." The floors are large and open, and the partitions on most of them will be merely low screens, easily removable. The plans show each floor as allotted for the requirements of each Department. The basement is largely open space for the handling of bulk parcels, and for the receipt and delivery of mails. Provision is made for an Electrical Engineer's Department, where motor cars and also valuable parcels will be stored. Provision is also made for a power room, a telegraph despatch clerk, and message boys' waiting room, a series of strong rooms on the eastern front, and storage for telegraph vouchers. There is also a big repairing room, elevators, &c. Each floor has access to an elevator. Approximately the space occupied by each floor is 15,750 feet. So far as I am aware, there is no provision for the storage of benzine, though it could be stored there in small lots. I think there is no danger if only small lots are stored, though there would be danger with bulk benzine. The roof of the basement is reinforced concrete. I should not store benzine beyond half-a-dozen tins for immediate use; it is advisable not to store it. There is no provision for carpenters working, the workshops being over at East Perth. The ground floor is taken up by departments that come in contact with the general public. The public come in at the front, and approach the public counters, the entrance being from the new street, which has not yet been named. You enter on

the east a large vestibule. On the left-hand side all the public telegraph business is transacted, and on the right are the private letter boxes, &c. This does not mean that there is in this place provision for the electricians, but only for the reception of public telegrams. Passing through large doors on either side of the lifts, you come to the balcony of the public business is done—money orders, cashiers, parcels, registration, *post restante*, &c. The telephone cabinets are in the passage approaching the main hall, which is approximately 70 by 45 feet. The public telephone cabinets are fourteen in number, with four for long-distance trunk lines. It is not desirable, I think, to have more, though space could be found for a few. The plans show that the whole of the business—of employees and the public—can be conducted on the ground floor. Provision is made for every avenue of the Postal Department. I am not aware of any representations that have been made as to the saving that could be effected by having the mails brought in from the railway line by any other method than by car. I have not heard of any suggestion for pneumatic delivery. On the first floor there will be as much ground space as on the other floors, viz., 15,750 super feet, less the size of the public hall, and that applies to all the other floors.

21. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The space of the top floor will be reduced by being set back from the front. The first floor is for dealing with mails only—mail receiving, space for lockers, and so forth. The mails are brought up by lift. There is a passenger lift and a goods lift on either side. The range of safe load of goods lift is 0 to 6,720 lbs. The goods lifts are 10 x 6 feet, and the power is electricity. I do not remember the area that is asked for in the case of the Mail Branch, but, judging from the plotting of the furniture and fittings, I am of opinion that it will not be able to occupy the whole of the space. I think that for a few years it is probable that there will be space available for other Departments.

22. *To the Chairman.*—In the case of the second floor, the light area is covered with a glass roof the full size of the postal hall. This floor will be occupied by the Deputy Postmaster-General, the inspectors and general staff, typists, accountants, postal note-sorting staff, with a room for the detectives; this is really the general office. The space for the postal note-sorting is 20 x 22 feet, and there are also two strong rooms and elevators on this floor. The third floor is occupied generally by the Telegraph Branch and the Engineer's Department. Provision is made for the telegraph manager, library and visiting electrician, electrical engineer, and typists. Then there is space of about 47 x 90 feet for a Postal Institute, stationery store, lockers, elevators, &c. The fourth floor has been allotted to the Taxation Department, and the division of the space has been carefully considered in connexion with the taxation officers. On the roof flat, in addition to the open space, there is an accumulator room, power room, test room, library and reading room, women's lounge and retiring room, kitchen and dining room, and lower rooms, which are not allocated yet. The dining room is to accommodate 100 people; it is to be a mixed dining room, the matter was gone into carefully with the Postmaster-General. In the event of the two floors being added, and an increased staff employed, I do not think the plan in this regard will need revising. It is thought that many of the employees will bring their own lunches, and prefer to take them under the verandah. We can, however, provide additional dining

accommodation if needed. The women's lounge is 27 x 22 feet. In Western Australia we have a Land Purchase Department, which deals with all purchases and rentals. The negotiations with the State Government in regard to the use of space in the building were conducted by the Premier's office. I think a definite arrangement could be arrived at with the contractor before the determination is come to in regard to those courses to adopt. I am inclined to consider that the best course is to continue as at present—paying him the original schedule rates plus the rise in the price of labour and materials. I believe that would be most satisfactory to the Government; in that way we would have a complete check on everything done.

23. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The original contract price was £232,700. Leaving out labour; I believe that the amount paid up to date on account of the increased cost of materials is £13,600. The proportionate cost will be greater for the remaining stories, because the building was well on before the increase in the cost of materials took place: Steel, cement, and bricks had largely been purchased; the increased cost of material did not occur until some time after the war started. The progress payments are made on my authority and computation, but without reference to the figures I cannot say what has been paid up to the present. If it were decided, after a temporary roof had been put on, to allow the postal officials to avail themselves of the new building, the lifts to the fifth floor would be a difficulty, because they would have to be altered afterwards to extend to the additional floors. The lift machinery and cage would be the same, but it would mean a new cable. A temporary lift could be put in; but you could not carry on the business of the different offices on each floor without a lift. The goods lifts run up to the fifth floor at the present time just as the passenger lift does. We have not discussed taking the goods lift up, but I think it ought to go to the top as well. We should require from nine to ten months to put the roadway right, seeing that there are tenancies and other things to be considered. If these two stories go on we must calculate that the building will not be finished until 1922, and we should have to start to alter the road in February or March of that year. I do not anticipate any more trouble, so far as the streets and the public are concerned, than in the case of any other big building. We have a 16 ft. 6 in. right-of-way, besides 20 feet at the back, available for dealing with building material. The main matter will come into the new street, and then down the grade to the basement level. The right-of-way at the back will not go through between Wellington-street and Murray-street.

24. *To Senator Foll.*—I should say that the two additional stories would be sufficient for a reasonable number of years. I would not recommend more than two stories; the extensions will be provided over other buildings, viz., Commonwealth Bank and Customs offices.

25. *To the Chairman.*—The £232,700 was for the completed building less the two stories. We have paid about £13,000 on account of the extra cost of material; but you must remember that the original contract had stone dressing on three fronts, so that, although there have been a good many extras, there have also been a good many reductions, and the original contract price has not yet been exceeded; the deductions have more than offset the additions. In the schedule of transferred properties the present General Post Office was valued at £75,000, and it was taken over by the Commonwealth on a 2½ per cent. basis. I have not seen the papers, but I know that the Commonwealth has stated it is prepared to re-transfer the present Post Office when the new Post Office is finished, and I think it quite probable that the State will accept the offer.

I suggest that the goods lifts should run to the top floor, because it only means some additional cable, and it is difficult to move fittings and furniture by means of ordinary lifts and staircases. In a large building of this kind, I consider it would be a great convenience for one goods lift, at any rate, to run to the top. The inside measurement of the goods lift is 10 x 6 feet, and if you take in the well area it is 11 ft. 6 in. by about 9 feet.

26. *To Mr. Mathews.*—If the building were used solely as the Post Office, it would still be necessary to take the goods lift up to the top, where portion of the Electrical Department is situated, also the dining room. I cannot see that there is much saving in having only one lift, beyond the gaining of a little more space. There are three other outlets in case of fire, which I think it is advisable to keep, not so much in view of fire as in view of panic. The goods lifts do not work very rapidly, and the stair-cases at that side are only about 4 feet wide.

27. *To Senator Foll.*—In the case of the lifts, the winding gear could be put in temporarily and extended afterwards; all the lift machinery is on the top.

The witness withdrew.

John Smith Murdoch, recalled and further examined.

28. *To the Chairman.*—During the lunch hour, Mr. Hardwick and I discussed the question, and we find that to permit the Postal Department to go into occupation before the completion of the building would mean constructing the street a year earlier than otherwise would be necessary. This, of course, would mean the sacrifice of rentals; I cannot say how much, but a good many thousand pounds. If you gain in one way by letting the Department take possession, you lose in another. All the existing properties on the site of the new street would have to be removed. I have not consulted the Department as to the matter of urgency; I take it that that is for the Committee. From inquiries I have made, Perth seems to me to be growing tremendously in population and commerce, and no doubt that growth is reflected in the Post Office. After discussing the matter with Mr. Hardwick, I think the better policy would be to finish the building right out before allowing anybody to go in.

29. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I do not think the Government has really considered the matter of dealing with the land opposite the Post Office. My own idea is that the land could be let on a long building lease of 50 or 75 years to either one private tenant or a number, whichever seemed to be the more advantageous at the time. The fee-simple would be retained by the Government, and at the expiration of the lease, the land, with the improvements, would become the property of the Government. It would not be good business to open up this street and give somebody else the advantage of the other side of it. The moment the street is opened for the Government to retain that value. I have been asked once or twice to give my views, and those are the views I have always expressed. I do not think, however, that the Cabinet has ever considered the matter, or is likely to consider it, until the question of leasing comes up. There will be a roadway of 54 feet in front of the Post Office, and the depth of the land opposite is 66 feet. The Commonwealth Government have undertaken to widen both Wellington and Murray streets by 15 feet. The moment we start to pull down the buildings we shall lose the rentals from the area. I understand from the Home and Territories Department that there have been inquiries about this land. The right-of-way will be Commonwealth property. My view is that nine or ten months before the

probable occupation of the building by the Postal Department would begin the construction of the roadway, and the first step will be to remove the existing buildings. Some consideration has been given to the question of responsibility for the construction of the street; and my view is that the Commonwealth Government should construct the street. In our Department the other opinion has been expressed that the Perth Municipality should contribute to the cost, but I cannot see the fairness of that. We are not going to pay the municipal rates. I dare say it is a legal point whether a man who took up the land opposite to a building lease could be exempted from the payment of rates, notwithstanding that the Crown held the fee-simple. The maintenance of the road should, I think, be taken over by the municipality, even though it derived no rates; and I think that would be agreed to, in view of the public utility of the street. That, I think, is all we can expect from the municipality. Others think that the municipality should construct, at any rate, a portion of the road. The municipality has undertaken to maintain the road if we make it 84 feet instead of 66 feet, which they consider too narrow. They wish the road to be 100 feet; but that would have made the land opposite rather useless. The present proposal will enable us to plant trees all round our property. I do not think that the municipality, or any other local or parent Government, has any power to compel the Federal Government to set back the alignment 15 feet.

The witness withdrew.

John Joseph Lloyd, Deputy Postmaster-General of Western Australia, sworn and examined.

30. To the Chairman.—I have been in the service since 1876. I have been in my present position for the last six years, and was Acting Deputy Postmaster-General for some time before that. I have not for some time been concerned with regard to the accommodation required for the new Post Office; the last report I prepared was about three years ago. My original estimate as to accommodation required was made on the 7th January, 1913, on a five, fifteen, and twenty-five years basis. I have copies of the reports of the heads of branches respecting the space required. I made a later estimate in 1917. In that year the heads of the branches were called on to review the plans, and indicate what space they required. That was done, and a little later on there was a review by a sub-committee, who reduced the requirements of the heads of branches to four floors, in addition to the ground floor and the basement. That was regarded as the space actually necessary for the Department for a period of ten years. The following is copy of a memorandum addressed to the Secretary, Postmaster-General's Department, under date 15th November, 1917, by Mr. E. Woodrow, Chief Clerk, Central Administration, after consultation with the Commonwealth Chief Architect (Mr. Murdoch):—

The New General Post Office building, as approved, comprises a basement and five floors.

2. The basement and four floors will be required by this Department, on first taking possession of the building, and although it may be many years before the whole of the additional floor will be required for Postal purposes, it should always be regarded as portion of space required by this Department in any proposal to let it for other purposes.

3. The full design of the building provides a basement and seven floors, and I understand consideration is being given to the advisability of carrying out the design, so as to make two floors available to Federal Departments now occupying rented buildings in Perth.

4. There are 15,500 square feet of space on each floor.

5. It is estimated that the cost of erecting the two floors additional would, at contract schedule rates, approximate £29,180, but this cost is likely, from war conditions, to be increased.

6. At the present time the Commonwealth Government is renting buildings, for Federal Departments, either through Post Office, at a cost of £2,293 per annum, made up as follows:—

	Rent.	Space.
	£	Sq. ft.
Commonwealth Public Service Inspector and allied branches..	304	2,263
Quarantine .. .. .	105	—
War Pensions .. .. .	52	—
Electoral .. .. .	305	1,550
Federal Members .. .. .	150	429
Food Prices .. .. .	200	931
Audit .. .. .	124	559
Taxation .. .. .	600	11,300
Meteorological .. .. .	100	—
Censors .. .. .	83	284
	£2,293	

The necessity for provision for Food Prices and Censors will probably disappear at the end of the war.

7. It is estimated by the various Departments that the space required by each within twenty years will be:—

	Square Feet.
Commonwealth Public Service Inspector, &c. 4,700.	4,700
Quarantine .. .. .	1,000
War Pensions .. .. .	1,000
Electoral .. .. .	4,500
Federal Members .. .. .	500
Audit .. .. .	2,000
Taxation .. .. .	20,000
Meteorological .. .. .	2,400

If the estimate is realized, two floors in the General Post Office building would barely accommodate the branches twenty years hence.

8. The State Chief Architect has furnished me with the following statement:—

"In reply to your telephonic communication of even date I put up approximate cost of the two additional floors at the above Post Office, the quantities being arrived at by repeating the fourth floor from the existing drawings; no special working drawings have yet been made of this extra work. The prices are at schedule rates wherever they apply. The total estimated cost, after making due allowance for reductions and adding 10 per cent. contingency, is £29,180.

"I think it would not be quite reasonable to expect the contractor to take on this extra work at existing schedule rates, the additional percentages to be allowed him therefore is a matter which will require very careful consideration. There is no doubt many materials have gone up in price very considerably; the extra rate on steel work (now being rolled in New South Wales) claimed by brickwork should not be any greater as bricks are still the same price, and labour is plentiful; joinery ought not to show any very appreciable rise. All ironmongery, painters' work, &c., will certainly carry a very stiff increase. The existing schedule for stone work should still apply.

"The question of the addition of the two extra floors should be immediately decided, as we are virtually at a deadlock, as far as details for all work above fourth floor are concerned. I have already sent you particulars (plans) of the requirements of other Departments which it is presumed will occupy these extra floors, so that you will be able to come to a conclusion as to the total area which can be profitably occupied by the Commonwealth."

9. The expenditure of, say, £35,000 in providing the additional floors would, therefore, permit of an immediate saving of £2,293 per annum, and a saving of at least £4,500 per annum in ten years. In addition, it would allow of the various flats being located under more security than is possible in buildings not specially designed to meet their requirements, and scattered all over the place; and this would undoubtedly permit of an appreciable reduction in staff cost.

10. The concentration of the Federal Departments would be of great benefit to the general public.

11. I am informed by the State Chief Architect that the additional floors could now be provided cheaper than at any future period, as the work in connection with the erection of the building is at a stage permitting of such.

12. I submit the question for consideration.

13. If the floors are provided, at a cost of £35,000, the savings in rents would at once amount to about 7 per cent. per annum of that sum.

14. Plans and estimates of costs are attached.

After the war started there was a large increase in postal business in regard to both letters and parcels, but since peace has been declared the business has appreciably decreased. The following tables will show the position:—

Comparative Statement, showing the business of the Postmaster-General's Department, Western Australia (Revenue and Expenditure), for the years ended 30th June, 1913 and 1920, and the percentage of increase or decrease.

Item.	1913-15.		1919-20.		Percentage.	
	£	%	£	%	Increase.	Decrease.
1. Boxes and Bags .. .. .	2,103	13.6	2,390	13.6	13.6	—
2. Commission on Money Orders and Postage on Postal Notes .. .. .	10,380	10.8	12,329	10.8	19.8	—
3. Telegraphs .. .. .	89,013	24.3	110,705	24.3	—	—
4. Telephones .. .. .	83,248	24.3	123,020	24.3	—	—
5. Postages .. .. .	146,328	37.8	201,770	37.8	—	—
6. Miscellaneous .. .. .	13,136	15.6	33,431	15.6	—	—
Totals .. .. .	329,208	47.1	484,645	47.1	—	—
<b>EXPENDITURE.</b>						
Salaries .. .. .	201,921	42.6	267,063	42.6	—	—
Conveyance of Mails .. .. .	1,140	33.9	10,363	33.9	—	—
Contingencies .. .. .	122,705	15.4	102,768	15.4	—	—
Miscellaneous .. .. .	3,303	51.6	1,697	51.6	—	—
Pensions and Retiring Allowances .. .. .	3,720	39.4	5,189	39.4	—	—
New Works .. .. .	120,805	74.7	30,466	74.7	—	—
Totals .. .. .	620,980	9.2	478,328	9.2	—	—

Comparative Statement, showing Parcels Post Business, including Value Payable and Duty Parcels, for the years 1913 and 1920, and the percentage increase and decrease.

Particulars.	1913.		1920.		Percentage.	
	No. of Parcels	%	No. of Parcels	%	Increase.	Decrease.
Inland—						
No. of Parcels .. .. .	105,015	56	206,330	56	—	—
Weight .. .. lbs.	508,470	23	636,097	23	—	—
Postage .. .. £	8,510	47	12,546	47	—	—
Inter-States—						
Despatched—						
No. of Parcels .. .. .	17,235	24	21,358	24	—	—
Weight .. .. lbs.	40,071	49	77,477	49	—	—
Postage .. .. £	1,482	49	2,207	49	—	—
Received—						
No. of Parcels .. .. .	44,728	57	73,782	57	—	—
Beyond the Commonwealth—						
Despatched—						
No. of Parcels .. .. .	8,677	34	8,375	34	—	—
Weights .. .. lbs.	18,334	42	20,145	42	—	—
Postage .. .. £	501	104	654	104	—	—
Received—						
No. of Parcels .. .. .	33,768	5	24,034	5	—	—
Totals—						
No. of Parcels .. .. .	200,013	49	380,779	49	—	—
Weight .. .. lbs.	676,876	23	739,719	23	—	—
Postage .. .. £	10,703	45	15,087	45	—	—

The following is a comparison of parcel work for month of October, 1920, with that of October, 1910:—

Number of Oversea Parcels despatched—	
1910	1920.
October.	October.
821	1,184—Increase, 44 per cent.
Number of Inter-State Parcels despatched—	
1910	1920.
October.	October.
1,318	1,791—Increase, 35 per cent.
Number of Inland Parcels posted at Perth—	
1910	1920.
October.	October.
11,361	13,970—Increase, 22 per cent.
Number of V.P. Parcels posted at Perth—	
1910	1920.
October.	October.
1,371	2,108—Increase 52 per cent.

It should be noticed from the above figures that in all transactions, more particularly in regard to V.P. business, a comparison of business for 1910 and 1920, at chief parcel office, Perth, shows:—

	Ordinary Inland Parcels Posted.	V.P. Parcels Posted.
1910	89,248	21,460
1920	137,407	26,331

I expect a steady increase in the postal work. The heads of branches have advised me that they require five floors, but that has been reduced by the sub-committee to four floors, and the Department think that is a fair provision to cover a period of fifteen years. We carefully went through the plans of the building when the reports were being considered as to the space required. The new building entirely meets with my approval, both in regard to the public and official accommodation, which, I think, will tend to reasonable comfort and economy. I can make no suggestion for any improvement in connection with the ground floor, I do not think anything material has been omitted, and I am of opinion that the public will be satisfied. The provision of letter boxes is estimated to suffice for fifteen years from 1917, but there is room for additional boxes. The one disappointment in the plan was connected with the arrangement of conveying the mails to and from the railway station. The provision made has not improved very much on the present system. A tunnel was suggested from the building to the railway platform, and there was an alternative suggestion for an over-head railway, but both these ideas have been abandoned. I now understand that the mails are to be carried by vehicle as at present. I was anxious to save handling, and to see the mails laid on trucks, and carried to the platform alongside the vans. As it is vehicles have to be loaded, taken over the road, and then unloaded, and so in regard to the receipt of mails. There was an idea that the central railway station might be removed some distance nearer to West Perth, but it is probable that it will remain where it is for some considerable time, and we shall have to continue the old service. The carriage of mails to and from the station is not an expensive item. The contract in 1920 was £306, and the contract for this year is £380. The only saving the new post office will represent will be in the matter of distance; the handling will be exactly the same. I was, therefore, disappointed in this regard, because of the time that is lost. I am not aware of anything having been done in the direction of mechanical handling in Melbourne and Sydney. From a postal point of view, the sooner we get into the new post office the better for the very simple reason that there will be a saving of the rentals we are now paying, and what is more



important, there will be more comfort for the officers and better supervision of the work. The officers are very cramped at present. I would certainly advise a temporary roof, so as to permit early occupation of the building. There will, as I say, be better supervision, and we shall save £2,500 in rent, though, as you say, the Commonwealth would lose £6,000 odd which they now receive in rentals. We could carry on the postal work all right while the two additional stories were in course of construction.

31. To Mr. Mathews.—What principally guided us in allotting the space in the first instance was efficiency and economy in the handling of mail matter in the mail-room. I am satisfied with the provision made for the comfort of the employees, which will tend to ensure a satisfied staff. I would not advocate men working in the basement of the present building. In the new building carts will be driven in and out of the basement, but the men will be there only when loading and unloading; it is not as though they had to stay there all day and work. In many cases it is necessary to have a dining-room, but there are numbers who will not avail themselves of it as they do, for instance, in Melbourne. Provision for 100 is considered enough. There are about fifty females as typists and sorters, and I think sufficient provision has been made for them. There is not much ill-health or breaking down amongst them.

32. To Senator Newland.—If it be decided to add to the building, and to permit occupation of the post office while the building operations are going on, I would recommend that the Parcels Post branch be shifted there first. This branch is on the two lower floors and that work above would not affect them; there is not much writing in connexion with the work. Arrangements would have to be made so that the builders' men could use one side of the building and the departmental officers the other, in order that there should be no interference. A builder, no doubt, makes arrangements in order to carry out his work in the most expeditious and complete manner, and if he is asked to shift or make a change the work may be delayed; and on the whole, I would agree with you that if the matter were left until the building was finished the whole of the staff would be transferred at an earlier period than if a section were first transferred. I should, however, like to see it arranged for the Parcels Post branch to get into the new building. In connexion with that branch the public are going in and out all day long, and the present premises are very unsuitable. Any suggestions I made as to the convenience of the public in the main hall were given due consideration, and have been largely embodied in the plans; I am sure everything is as we asked, or next door to it. I think that the plans made in the interest of the public and the officers should be satisfactory. As to the tunnel between the railway station and the post office I may say that there is a drain 20 feet below, running parallel with the building in Wellington-street, so that I think that idea would be a failure. In the absence of anything better I would have a line of rails running across the street into the station yard. I do not think that such a line would be in the way; we only cross the street ten or a dozen times a day, and the vehicles might be motor-driven. It is only a short distance of about 60 feet, and the use of rails would lessen the handling, seeing that we deliver the mails on the platform, and that the railway people do the rest. Perhaps the trains would back up to the platform for us. I do not think that we get just as near the platform with an ordinary wheeled motor vehicle. We despatch mails from several platforms, but mainly those of two or three of the main lines. If the vans

could back right alongside the platform we could load at once, and the advantage would be the same for both in-coming and out-going mails. Some arrangement would have to be made with the railway people to meet us in this matter:

33. To the Chairman.—If £40,000 or £50,000 is spent on this extension of the post office it will not tend to curtail the provision of telephone and other facilities in the country. At the present time we have plenty of money, but we have not the material here in the shape of wires and so forth. For example, for the last month we have had lying in Sydney wire which probably we shall not get for another month. In the case of automatic telephones we are depending on supplies from Chicago. The following figures may be of use to the Committee:—

STAFFS IN BRANCHES AT G.P.O., PERTH—YEARS 1913 AND 1920.

	Numbers only.	
	1913.	1920.
Correspondence, Records, and Staff	27	27
Inspection	10	10
Accounts	7	8
Mail	164	157
Telegraphs	158	150
Electrical Engineers	31	40
Telephones located at Auto-Court, Murray-street.		
Stores located at Stores, Lord-street.	464	477

OFFICERS PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED, P.M.G.'S DEPARTMENT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA—YEARS 1913 AND 1920.

	1913.		1920.	
Administrative	1	1		
Professional	7	13		
Clerical	418	354		
General	1,032	1,169		
	1,458	1,542		
Vacant Positions	191	74		
	1,649	1,616		

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

THURSDAY, 27TH JANUARY, 1921.

Present:

(Sectional Committee.)

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator FOLL  
Mr. Mathews

Senator: Newland.

Amaziah Green, Acting Commonwealth Public Service Inspector, Western Australia, sworn and examined.

34. To the Chairman.—I have not been associated with the proposal to erect this building to any great extent except as Works Registrar; I was the officer between the State and the Commonwealth. I do not criticise any of the work, or anything of that sort, but all communications go through me. In the early days,

I, from time to time, supplied information required by the Department. I inquired and reported as to the space requirements, and I have that information here in the condensed form on my records:—

PARTICULARS OF COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENTS THAT IT IS PROPOSED TO ACCOMMODATE IN NEW GENERAL POST OFFICE, PERTH.

Branch.	Present Locality.	Present Floor Space.	Estimated Floor Space for 1910 to 1925 Years.	Rental per Annum, and Remarks.
C.P.S. Inspector and Staff	A.N.P. Chambers, Perth.	1,476 sq. ft.	1,600 sq. ft.	£ 105 0 0 } Lease expires 30th April, 1921 (owners, A.M.P. Society)
Old-age Pensions and Maternity Allowance	"	1,100 sq. ft.	2,700 sq. ft. for 10 years, 3,000 sq. ft. for 15 years	180 0 0 }
Works Registrar	"	310 sq. ft.	2,000 sq. ft.	39 0 0 } 2,000 sq. ft., to include Accounts Branch, when Commonwealth Works Department is created in Western Australia
			Total	304 0 0
Federal Taxation (owner, Mrs. Crocker)	King-street	12,000 sq. ft.	30,000 ft.	600 0 0 plus rates and taxes (approximately £108 lb. 6d.). Lease expires 24th May, 1921. At expiry of lease owner requests rental at £200 per annum, plus rates and taxes with right of renewal
Electoral (owners, Young Australia League)	51 Murray-street	2,205 sq. ft.	3,160 sq. ft.	300 0 0 lease expires on 31st August, 1921
Meteorological (owners, New Zealand Insurance Company)	New Zealand Chambers	1,050 sq. ft.	2,600 sq. ft.	130 0 0 monthly tenancy
Sub-Treasury (owner, Mr. Neil McNell)	McNeill's Chambers, Barrack-street	1,001 sq. ft.	1,200 sq. ft.	240 0 0 lease expires June, 1921
Audit (owner, Mr. Neil McNell)	St. George's House	550 sq. ft.	1,500 sq. ft.	184 0 0 lease expires on 31st August, 1921
Works and Railways Accounts Branch (owners, Miller's Timber and Trading Company)	St. George's House, St. George's terrace	600 sq. ft. and strong-room	and strong-room	135 0 0
In addition to the above, there are the Federal Members' Rooms (3), approximately 643 sq. ft., in St. George's House, St. George's terrace. Rental paid for these rooms is				150 0 0
				2,341 1 6

I have not taken out the rate per square foot, but I can furnish it. The estimates were furnished to me by the Departments interested; I do not think the estimates were rough guesses. It was not assumed that the Commonwealth would take over the collection of the State tax; that is a new matter, and the 30,000 square feet, in pencil, has reference to it. The Taxation Department is now working on 12,000 square feet of space, and the 30,000 square feet is the space likely to be required after amalgamation. I should think that if the Commonwealth took over the collection of State taxation it would mean a big economy, otherwise it is not worth having. I cannot give an estimate of the anticipated economy. Some of the estimates did not go through me, but I think were obtained direct by the Government Architect of the State Works Department. As an old officer I think that these estimates are extravagant. The heads of Departments would probably be fearful of under-estimating and finding themselves cramped in a few years. I do not think that if the Electoral Offices, State and Federal, were combined it would mean a big addition to the space required. The Electoral Office is in a state of activity only occasionally; generally the staff is a small one, but when the rolls are being prepared the work is very heavy. If the Commonwealth took over the State activities, and had to make arrangements for both Commonwealth and State, I do not think a much larger space would be required, because one staff would then compile the rolls, whereas now there are two staffs. In the working of the Departments I do not think it makes very much difference whether or not they are in one building or adjoining buildings. At present the Electoral Offices is near the State Government Printing Office, and we do not feel any inconvenience from it

being a little out of the business centre. There would certainly be a saving of time to the public if they could do their business with the State and the Commonwealth in the same building. There are very valuable records kept in the Taxation and other Departments; but in some of the offices I do not think their loss by fire would be very material. It might be serious in the case of the Taxation Department, because we do not know what litigation may occur later on. In the Pensions Office, however, when an old-age pensioner dies his records might very well be destroyed. A lot of space is required for the presses for holding the records, and unless the records are valuable, as in the case of the taxation records, I cannot see why they could not be burned in ten years from the date of their origin; this matter, however, has never been mooted. There is nothing to justify the expense of housing records except the utility of the records. Valuable records should, of course, be housed in a building which is fire proof as far as is humanly possible. If all the Departments, except Repatriation, Defence, and Customs, could be housed by the addition of these two stories at an expenditure of £40,000 or £50,000, or 2s. 2d. to 2s. 6d. per square foot, I would certainly recommend that the work be carried out. In my opinion the expenditure on the Post Office will be amply justified. As to the matter of urgency we should be guided by the difference between the cost and our rentals now—would the Post Office be cheaper than the hiring of rooms? We are not entering into any leases now, so far as I am aware, in contemplation of the Post Office being completed, and we shall not enter into any for at least eighteen months. The new suggestion for completing the building has upset all our arrangements in regard to leases. If the costs were not

excessive I think it would be desirable to put a temporary roof on the fifth floor so as to enable early occupation of the lower floors, particularly for the business of the Post Office. Generally speaking, the working conditions in the present Post Office are very bad. The space is much cramped, and there are too many rooms for proper supervision; the sooner they get to the new building the better, because the work will then be more economically carried on. The Post Office will be closer to the railway, and about £800 per annum for cartage will be saved. If the scheme is carried, I take it that there will be other means of transport between the Post Office and the railway station. I have no suggestion whatever to make in regard to the handling of mail matter between the office and the station. I think that a conduit is proposed under Wellington-street—that is the only suggestion that I know of. I know of no engineering report in regard to this proposal.

35. *To Senator Foll.*—As to the responsibility for the allocation of space in the new building the head office in Melbourne has gathered information independently of me. Some of the information I have been gathered from the plans. I have no instructions at present to decide whether or not these estimates of space are extravagant; I have no instructions to estimate the space required. If every Department in that building has space over and above its actual requirements it will make a considerable difference to the business side of the venture. I have not checked the estimates, nor am I called upon to check them. I have no responsibility at all in regard to them. No official that I know of has authority to check the space, the estimates in regard to which are in the first place furnished by the heads of Departments. I have no responsibility; mine is simply an office of record between the State and the Commonwealth.

36. *To Mr. Mathews.*—If I were called upon to calculate the possible space necessary for, say, the Electoral Department for the next ten or twenty years, I would not maintain that I could do so correctly. I do not think that Western Australia is likely to go ahead to any material extent, so as to affect estimates of this sort. The Commonwealth Taxation Office occupies 12,000 feet, and it is estimated that 30,000 feet will be required at the end of fifteen years if the amalgamation is carried out; but it is almost impossible to estimate in matters of this kind. I do not agree with the increase from 1,190 feet to 3,000 feet for the Old-age Pensions and Maternity Allowance Office. These estimates were probably made when the war pensions were being paid by this Department, whereas now they are paid by the Repatriation Department. I find no desire on the part of landlords to raise rentals abnormally on the renewal of leases. The only case of an increase that I know of is that of Mrs. Crocker, owner of the Taxation Office, who is asking for £500, plus taxes, as against the previous rental of £200, plus taxes. The Electoral Office had to leave St. George's House, the space having been let, I understand, at a higher rental to some one else when the lease terminated. I do not know of any contemplated increase of rental in the case of the Federal Members' room. I am pretty sure that the Australian Mutual Provident Society will renew their lease without any increase; we have been with them ever since our establishment at Perth. I anticipate no difficulty at all in the renewal of leases except in the case of Mrs. Crocker, who is offered a higher rent by some big mercantile people. If Mrs. Crocker will not give a renewal for two years I anticipate the greatest difficulty in getting an office, because

there are no buildings available. However, on the whole, I do not anticipate much difficulty. It is better to concentrate the offices if possible.

*The witness withdrew.*

John William Otto Tepper, Superintendent of the Mail Branch, Western Australia, sworn and examined.

37. *To the Chairman.*—I have been nearly seven years Superintendent of the Mail Branch, though for the last three years I have been Acting Chief Clerk. I have had experience in the handling of mails other than in Perth, particularly in Kalgoorlie, but I have not been in any of the big offices in the other States. In Perth the mail work is divided; the Inland Mail Section and the Ship Mail Section are at the General Post Office, while the Parcels Post Section is worked at a place in Murray-street, called Melba Hall. There is a contract for the conveyance of the mails between the General Post Office and the railway station at £530 per annum, the contractor supplying sufficient horse-drawn vehicles to do the work. He works all hours, while the trains are running, from early morn until very late at night, and sometimes until 1 o'clock in the morning. He provides drivers who take delivery of the mails at the railway station and lodge them at the General Post Office after the arrival of the trains. He similarly deals with the outward mails under the same contract. Counting to and from the station as a trip, he makes twenty-one a day, though on occasions he may make more, with outward mails; the inward mails mean something like twenty-five trips a day. There are about six trips on Sundays, and for the Eastern and Inland mails three or four extra trips on each occasion. There is a separate contract for parcels post cartage at £237 per annum. This work is also carried out by horse-drawn vehicles and drivers provided by the contractor. There are, perhaps, six outward trips and ten inward trips, with special trips for the north-west mails, and the United Kingdom and Inter-State mails. He also makes eight trips between the General Post Office and the Parcels Post Office. As Superintendent of Mails I put safety first in the handling of them. We have always recognised the time factor, but it is not altogether to be sacrificed to the cost. It is undoubtedly essential to have speedy delivery of the mails. When the new Post Office was projected the question of economy in both time and money was seriously considered, but I was not asked to report on that phase, which was never before me. There are reports by my predecessor, but I do not think they deal with that particular point. For our work we want a position as nearly central as possible and convenient to the railway station and a Post Office so placed as to give every facility for the handling of mails. There was a very good report from my predecessor setting out the points essential in the erection of a new General Post Office. I cannot tell you what those points were, except that the office should be convenient to the railway station, so that the mails might be easily, quickly, and efficiently handled. I think the plans for the new building are entirely satisfactory so far, and that my branch will require the whole of the space allotted to it. The space in the new office is about double that in the present Post Office, where we are very cramped. The present space we occupy is 6,270 square feet, and we are asking for 14,000 square feet in the new office for the mail work. The area occupied by the Parcel Post Branch now is 3,844 square feet, and we are asking for 5,438 square feet. Our estimate was based on five, ten, and twenty years

originally, in view of the increase of business and population from 1903 to 1912. From 1902 to 1907 the business showed an increase of 18 per cent, and for the next five years ending in 1912 an increase of 39 per cent. In 1913 an increase of 5 per cent. was shown on the one year, and in the next five years, ending in 1918, the increase was 24 per cent. It was computed that 1928 would show an increase of 46 per cent. for the ten years, and in 1938 an increase of 30 per cent. for the following ten years. I feel sure that the space allotted to us will last for fully another fifteen years, and possibly longer. When the work is spread over a reasonable area it can be done comfortably, and much better than it is done now. I do not think it would be feasible to utilize a portion of the mail-branch space for the accommodation of some other officers of the Postal Department for the next two or three years. It would be very undesirable to have any others on the floor where all the mail branch activities are carried on.

38. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I have been thirty years associated with the Post Office in Western Australia. We have always had our cartage done by contract, although, prior to my coming to Perth, an effort was made to run motor vehicles. They were, however, of a very inferior type, and proved a total failure; costing more than we pay under the contract. The collection from letter boxes is done by contract. There are practically no complaints of losses of mail matter or parcels; there is no evidence that there has ever been a robbery from the letter boxes by any of our men. The system of sending one of our own men to accompany the contractor's driver was done away with on my recommendation five years ago, and the change has proved satisfactory. Practically no instructions are necessary for these men who know the routine and follow it. A different contractor takes delivery of mail matter at the railway station, and in that case a postal officer, though I have discussed the matter with the Chief Electoral Officer. Each succeeding State Minister reviews the file, but cannot agree to the Commonwealth handling the work; the State is prepared to amalgamate if the Commonwealth will agree to the State doing the work. There are difficulties, but I see no insurmountable ones in the way of either the Commonwealth doing the work for the State or the State doing the work for the Commonwealth; a re-arrangement of the divisional boundaries is all that is necessary. I have not estimated what economy could be effected by an amalgamation, but if the whole of the work were done by one staff, either Commonwealth or State, a very large saving could be made. An estimate made by the head of the Department would be more valuable than one prepared by the individual Electoral Officer in each State, because the head of the Department knows the basis on which the amalgamation has been effected in South Australia, and is able to adopt a uniform method of comparison.

41. *To Mr. Mathews.*—If there were an amalgamation about half the present expenditure on the collection and printing of the rolls would be saved, and that is the principal expenditure. I see no serious objection to letting the State do this work; it could be easily done by either Commonwealth or State. In Western Australia, they are in line with the Commonwealth in regard to compulsory enrolment and the card system. Nearly all the registration is done at the Central Office here. In Western Australia the names are collected by postmen. Even if it extended only to the collection of the names and printing of the rolls, amalgamation would result in considerable saving.

39. *To the Chairman.*—I would prefer the whole of the mills to be received and despatched at the railway station if the accommodation and the staff could be there—it would be an ideal place.

*The witness withdrew.*

Henry Richard Way, Commonwealth Electoral Officer for the State of Western Australia, sworn and examined.

40. *To the Chairman.*—My office is now at 51 Murray-street, formerly occupied by the State Children's Department, and opposite the Government Printing Office. We were formerly in St. George's House, but we moved in September last, owing to the lease having expired. When I came in July I approached Millars, but they said they could not give an extension of the lease because they required the space for their own business. The space we now occupy is 2,604 square feet. I have not been asked to report as to the space we shall require for the next fifteen years, but the file of my predecessor shows that he asked for 3,100 square feet, and my opinion coincides with his. That space provides room for slight expansion. It would be ample space if the Federal and State Departments were combined; the combination would merely increase the card index which represents the only records requiring any large space. I have permission to destroy records which have become valueless through lapse of time; all cards that are removed from the index we have power to destroy after a new roll is printed. We have just cleaned up the card index and taken out about 3,000 valueless cards. Our present premises are suitable for neither public nor officials. The office is one which it is essential should be in close touch with the public; and the accommodation provided in the new Post Office, with proper lift accommodation, would be quite suitable. There has been no move with a view to the amalgamation of the Federal and State activity; though I have discussed the matter with the Chief Electoral Officer. Each succeeding State Minister reviews the file, but cannot agree to the Commonwealth handling the work; the State is prepared to amalgamate if the Commonwealth will agree to the State doing the work. There are difficulties, but I see no insurmountable ones in the way of either the Commonwealth doing the work for the State or the State doing the work for the Commonwealth; a re-arrangement of the divisional boundaries is all that is necessary. I have not estimated what economy could be effected by an amalgamation, but if the whole of the work were done by one staff, either Commonwealth or State, a very large saving could be made. An estimate made by the head of the Department would be more valuable than one prepared by the individual Electoral Officer in each State, because the head of the Department knows the basis on which the amalgamation has been effected in South Australia, and is able to adopt a uniform method of comparison.

41. *To Mr. Mathews.*—If there were an amalgamation about half the present expenditure on the collection and printing of the rolls would be saved, and that is the principal expenditure. I see no serious objection to letting the State do this work; it could be easily done by either Commonwealth or State. In Western Australia, they are in line with the Commonwealth in regard to compulsory enrolment and the card system. Nearly all the registration is done at the Central Office here. In Western Australia the names are collected by postmen. Even if it extended only to the collection of the names and printing of the rolls, amalgamation would result in considerable saving.

*The witness withdrew.*

(Taken at Perth.)

FRIDAY, 28th JANUARY, 1921.

Present:

(Sectional Committee.)

Mr. GAZOON, Chairman;

Senator Foll  
Mr. Mathews  
Senator Newland.

John Francis Whiteley, Deputy Federal Commissioner of Taxation, sworn and examined.

42. To the Chairman.—There has been a deal of correspondence between myself and Mr. Ewing for several years in connexion with the housing of my Department. Our present quarters were built specially for us, and they are satisfactory, but they are becoming congested, and I have been pressing Mr. Ewing and the Works authorities to hasten the transfer of the Department to the new building. More accommodation is really required now. The health of the officers is suffering, especially in the summer time when sometimes we have a whole week with the glass at over 100. We have 10,030 square feet of floor space available for staff and furniture after taking into account staircases, passages, and so on. I have not been officially informed that the agreement has been signed, but it is considered as good as accepted that we shall collect for the State. For some time, at any rate, after the amalgamation, there will be more work than there has been, because of bringing the records together, and making the necessary readjustments. We estimate a very substantial decrease eventually, say, within a couple of years. It is a matter of some doubt what staff will be required under normal conditions; the State has entered on a scheme of card indexing of every property and block of land, and it is thought this work will necessitate fifteen new cabinets, and also twenty new officers for some time. I should say that almost immediately we shall require from 23,000 to 25,000 square feet. We receive 10,000 new returns in each year, and the Department is necessarily expanding, and I think that many years will not elapse before the saving in space that will be immediately realized in the amalgamation will be more than lost in the expansion.

If too many taxpayers will be brought within our purview if the basic wage operates? An immigration policy has been initiated, and that leads to expansion. I should say that we shall require probably both floors in the new office within five years; the Commissioner says three years, and he is better qualified and knows the local conditions. Further, he knows the mind of the Government in regard to proximate, perhaps remote legislation. The one floor in the Post Office could be easily converted into offices for us, and we have considered the lay out. I think that the position of the new Post Office will lend itself to the public convenience, seeing that it is in the very heart of the city, which is growing to the north. If the two floors are not completed until twelve to eighteen months from now, I think we can meanwhile find accommodation for the staffs. I have no authority to destroy the records. The question has been discussed, and it is felt the time has not come when the destruction ought to take place; it is a matter for serious consideration. At the present time, under the Act, reciprocity is established between the State and the Federal Departments, and in the case of the War-times Profit Tax we have had occasion to get taxpayers' records for the pre-war period. A taxpayer often has no books, and refers to the State Taxation Department, but, unfortunately, some of its records have been destroyed. In some cases we wish to go back as far as 1909. We cannot anticipate at any time what form new taxation may take

and what abnormal conditions it may introduce. As to the time that should elapse before papers are destroyed I should like the Commissioner to speak authoritatively for us. We have had conferences, but no one seems disposed to suggest that anything yet should be destroyed. We could make arrangements for our present accommodation at an increased rental of £110, the present rental being £90.

43. To Mr. Mathews.—The State authorities are in Government buildings at an estimated rental of £750, and there would be no difficulty in keeping that portion of the staff on. The amalgamation would be of great benefit to the taxpayer, and, financially, for the whole of the people of Australia. The present arrangement is that the State Commissioner shall control the State assessments, and that I shall control the Federal State assessments, but there is a provision allowing the State Government to appoint me State Commissioner. The taxpayer will fill in only one form, which is already in the hands of the printer.

44. To Senator Newland.—It is a fact that at the present time the Federal and State Taxation officers are doing practically the same work; there are two Acts, each of which requires a certain set of assessments to be prepared. The State is really doing the same kind of work that the Commonwealth is doing, but on a somewhat different method, and with amalgamation this duplication will be avoided. If amalgamation takes place we shall have to practically keep two sets of records, just the same as now, in two separate offices, so far as past years are concerned; but the records from 1st July next will be entirely unified. Broadly, I would say that after the initial adjustment of the two taxation methods one man in my office will be able to do as much work as one man in my office and one man from the State office have been doing hitherto, but it will take our one man longer to prepare the combined assessments; at the same time, there will be only one salary to pay. There is no doubt that considerable saving to the taxpayer will be shown. Notwithstanding that fact, I will say that, in time, upon amalgamation, my staff will have reached the limit of the State and the Commonwealth staffs combined. Parliament may raise the exemption, but there will be a much larger number of taxpayers, owing to the increase of salaries in the Commonwealth Service alone. Wages are going up outside, and unless the exemption be substantially increased the number of taxpayers will be increased; and, as I said before, the immigration policy will add materially to the number of taxpayers. The savings that have been looked forward to are not, however, more imaginary than real. If the Commissioner were answering your question he would say that the amalgamation could be carried on for one-third of the previous cost, taking Australia as a whole; there can be more substantial savings made elsewhere than in Western Australia. I do not wish to deal with a question which is essentially one for the Commissioner. Whether the savings will be as great as is sometimes supposed I am satisfied that the amalgamation of the two offices with up-to-date quarters will enable us to deal more expeditiously and satisfactorily with the taxpayers than now. Every one recognises that the two offices are an evil; and the removal of the obligation to prepare two returns will be a great relief to the people generally.

The witness withdrew.

James McFarlane Lapsley, Chief Officer of Fire Brigades, Western Australia, sworn and examined.

45. To Senator Newland.—I have been consulted as to the fire risk of the proposed additions to the General Post Office. In my opinion, the precautions taken in

this regard are very satisfactory—that is, if all our recommendations are carried out, which can only be ascertained when the building is completed. I should like to read the following communication from Mr. Lee, the Chief Officer of the Melbourne Fire Brigade, to Colonel Owen, the Director-General of Works:—

Perth, W.A.,  
4th July, 1918.  
FIRE INSPECTION—NEW POST OFFICE, ETC.,  
PERTH, W.A.

At the request of your Board, in company with Mr. Lapsley, Chief Officer of the Western Australian Fire Brigades, I have inspected the building in course of erection to be used for postal purposes, situated between Murray and Wellington streets, Perth.

After inspecting the works and going closely into the plans of the finished structure, I have formed the opinion that when completed it will be at least one of the best examples in Australia of what fire-resisting construction for public buildings should be, and if my recommendations herein contained are carried out, it may be considered reasonably safe from fire.

Although this will be a very fine type of fire-resisting construction, it must be remembered that the fittings and general contents will be of an inflammable nature, consequently such precaution should be taken as to reduce the risk of fire spreading to a minimum.

Adjacent Risks.—The surrounding properties are of such a character that a conflagration in the near vicinity of the building under review is possible, and arrangements should be made to counteract the effect of flying burning debris.

Water Supply.—The supply is taken from the Victoria Reservoir, 14 miles from the city, emptying into an interlocking reservoir situated about a mile and a half from the centre of the town, and containing 13,000,000 gallons. This building is reticulated on the north side by an 8-inch main, and on the south side by a 6-inch main. I recommend that three rising mains be installed adjacent to the staircases, three mains to be fitted on each floor with 2½-inch outlets of the Perth Fire Brigade standard pattern, so as to be interchangeable with the existing mains. The mains to be carried through the roof, with stand pipes erected thereto, together with the necessary hoses, branches, &c.

Owing to the poor pressure available at certain times of the year, I recommend that the rising mains be mounted with the necessary fittings to enable the brigade's pumps to rapidly get to work in order to increase the pressure throughout the pipe system in the building.

In addition, an emergency supply should be provided on the roof by means of a tank containing, say, 25,000 gallons, thus insuring at all times a water supply in the event of trouble on the town's mains.

I would also recommend that two 2½-inch single-head, pillar hydrants be installed, one on the western and the other on the eastern side of the building.

Chemical Extinguishers.—Hand chemical extinguishers to be provided for first aid in case of fire and distributed on each floor throughout the building mounted on brackets or hooks in conspicuous places.

Fire Alarms.—Fire alarms should be provided on each floor of the pattern in use throughout Perth city, these alarms to be connected direct to the local fire station. At the same time provision should be made for wiring the building for a watchmen's clock system, the wires for such to be run in the same circuits as the fire alarms.

Before closing this report it should like to place on record the valuable services and assistance I have received from Mr. Lapsley, who placed unreservedly at my disposal, not only his long experience in fire-brigade matters, but also his wide knowledge of local conditions. It is very pleasing to think that he is in the position of being able to see that the fire equipment is always in perfect order.

This report was written at the time when the additional stories were suggested. There have been several little recommendations made verbally to the local Public Works Department, which represents the Commonwealth, and I have had no trouble in having them carried out. For instance, I suggested that the 8-inch Wellington street main should be continued up to the Wellington street, and joined to the 6-inch main there. With the reserve tanks on the roof, and the pumping plant, there will be no danger of a big fire, even if the pressure otherwise was rather bad. I am satisfied that there are ample means of escape in case of fire.

46. To Mr. Mathews.—There are plenty means of escape for people able to move about and take their own part in coming down the stairs, but I would not consider it advisable to have the old-age pensioner dealt with on the sixth floor.

47. To Senator Foll.—It will be necessary to get a longer extension ladder in view of the two additional stories; but when danger comes to the top floor it will be at night time when nobody is there.

(Taken at Perth.)

SATURDAY, 29th JANUARY, 1921.

Present:

(Sectional Committee.)

Mr. GAZOON, Chairman;

Senator Foll,  
Senator Newland,  
Mr. Mathews.

Charles William Arnott, contractor for the erection of the new General Post Office, Perth, sworn and examined.

48. To the Chairman.—The contract was entered into in July, 1914, and it is anticipated that the work will be completed about next January. From a practical point of view, the proposal to add two stories is quite feasible; it was, I think, part of the original plan. I think the foundations will carry anything. I do not think it would be very expensive to throw a temporary roof over the present building, and add the two stories afterwards; but I can only guess at the cost. A very liberal estimate would be £500 or £600 for the temporary roof. There would be a certain amount of noise caused by the building operations going on; but nothing much to interfere with the public in any way; there would be no element of danger; we have not had any accident yet. If the building were used as a General Post Office, the handling of my material and raising it from the ground would not cause any obstruction to the mail carts going in and out. I do not think there is any risk, nor do I think there would be much annoyance. The principal annoyance would be people coming and interfering with the men. It is not by any means a noisy building; the floors are solid concrete, and you cannot hear through them. The noise would not penetrate up the well; we do not make much noise in a solid building like this. As contractor for the building, I have no objection at all to further contracts being let. I will do anything to facilitate the finishing of the contracts. In the event of the Government deciding to continue the contract, I could give a price, but only on a schedule of quantities—on a schedule basis. I could prepare a schedule in a very few days. I would sooner work on a schedule.

49. To Senator Newland.—The floors are completed as we go up, and the top floor is now practically completed of concrete; there is only about one week's work to complete it. We require a roof that is waterproof, and I think it would be multilith spread over the concrete which should prove sufficient protection. The Public Works Department would have to devise some means of temporarily roofing the building. Multilith would turn the water, and it could be used again; there would be a certain amount of damage done to it. Whatever the cost of the roof was, there would be a set-off in the value of the materials. I cannot say, until I see the plan, what delay there would be in the completion of the building by putting on a temporary roof. For about four years we could not get any material. In 1916, the Imperial Government prohibited the ex-

port of steel, and in this connexion I made an appeal to Mr. Fisher, the High Commissioner; but there was no chance of getting any. That went on until we arranged to get supplies from the Broken Hill Proprietary when they started operations. We have no difficulty in getting material now. There will not be the same amount of stonework in the additional stories. From a revenue-producing point of view, I think I would make provision for the bottom stories to be occupied while the top stories were being put on; the basement could be ready in a few months now. I do not know any thing as to such a course destroying certain revenue-producing buildings about the Post Office; but I would endeavour to finish the bottom stories and get into them straight away. I am very anxious to get covered in this summer. I consider that we could not complete the basement; but we could do enough to it for occupation in five months at the outside. I would not finish the basement, because some of the works might get stained and dirty. I do not think that confusion would be created by my men coming in and out while mail matters were being attended to, because there is so much room. We propose to finish the strong-room in the basement at once, and also the sewerage. There will be very little furniture in the basement to interfere with my men when they come back later on. In every public building there are workmen pretty well all the year round. I would finish off as much as I could, and finish all off completely if I could get a temporary roof. If a contract was let to another contractor for the upper floors it would not interfere with me if he worked in with me, and there was a temporary roof. I would probably get on all right with the other contractor; but the workmen of the two contractors would never agree. It is a very delicate question for me to answer, whether it would be conducive to the speedier termination of the work if arrangements were made for the Department to finish it; but, from my experience, I should say that that would be conducive to the harmony of the job. If the building were occupied by the Department, the traffic of the public in and out would not interfere with my workmen in getting the material up; it is all taken up by crane, quite away from the people. I see no difficulty in that direction. There is plenty of room for the ingress and egress of the mails; and, as far as my work is concerned, we never have a dray standing there for five minutes. We are no more in the way now than is a cart unloading in front of any store. We are not loading and discharging all day long. I only wish we were.

50. *To Senator Foll.*—My only desire is to get the place occupied as quickly as possible, and the provision of a temporary roof, as suggested, would mean the same amount of work on the roads and so forth, only the work would have to be done earlier.

51. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I think it would be better to finish the building before any one went into it; but the basement could be used in a very short time for parcels' business. It would be better, from a contractor's point of view, to finish the building before it is taken over. There would be no difficulty about obtaining materials, though I cannot speak as to industrial troubles, and the building should be finished in about eighteen months. If the matter cannot be decided until April, that, of course, will interfere with the progress of the building. We are ready to go on with the roof now, and so be able to proceed with the plastering, &c. If we knew that the work was to be gone on with, it would help us considerably. We have the whole of the freestone prepared, and financial loss could be saved, because we could have everything prepared. As to what money would be saved by determining to go on with the two stories now, or in five years' time, who can tell

what prices will be at the end of that period? It would cost a lot of money to erect cranes and get all the necessary machinery. It would cost £5,000 to equip the job, and there would be a big saving in doing the whole of the work at once. All the members of the staff understand the job. We started pile-driving in January, 1915, and completed it on the 18th May; the number of piles used being 1,629. We started concreting on the following day, 19th May; bricklaying on the 3rd July; and the setting of the granite on the 9th August. According to the contract, the building would have been completed about the end of 1917; and we were getting on swimmingly until there came the embargo on steel.

(Taken at Perth.)

WEDNESDAY, 2ND FEBRUARY, 1921.

Present:

(Sectional Committee.)

Mr. GAZDOOY, Chairman;

Senator Foll, Mr. Mathews.  
Senator Newland,

William Burden Hardwick, Principal Architect, State Public Works Department, Western Australia, recalled and further examined.

52. *To the Chairman.*—At the present time, it is proposed to use electrical heaters wherever they are required in the new building. This matter has been investigated pretty thoroughly, and we find very few private offices in Perth which have fires in the winter time; in fact, there are very few offices where I consider fires are necessary. I should not advise the installation of hot-water pipes. There is special provision in the building to produce natural ventilation. There are six large shafts around the central hall, built in the brickwork, and carried above the glass roof; they are connected by tubes with the rooms. There is no provision for mechanical ventilation, the rooms being large and open, with ample window space. If it was found necessary, owing to the heavy staffing of the offices, it would be possible to install electric fans in order to increase the ventilation. The decision in relation to the erection of the two extra floors should be given to the contractor immediately, otherwise the work will have to stop until we receive permission. We could not complete the lower floors without putting on a temporary roof. I have not estimated the cost of such a roof; but I do not think that at the outside it would be more than £500, and a lot of the material would be available again. I would not say that no temporary roof should be put on unless we determine to erect the two extra stories. Mr. Arnott may choose to cover temporarily a portion of the building so that he may get on with the work. The Department would not suggest a temporary roof unless we were sure the extra stories were going on. The present Post Office being unsuitable as a building, and the arrangements being bad, the staff naturally takes up a lot more space than they would under better conditions. I think that with the additional facilities they will not be able to occupy the whole of the first floor in the new Post Office for mail purposes. It might be arranged to finish the basement and the first two floors to allow for the transfer of a section of the officials, in the event of the additional stories being approved, and a temporary roof put on. I do not think that the presence of these officials would interfere with the work of erecting these two stories. Such an arrangement would mean the

opening up of the new street. As to the contractor's plant and material being in the way, I may point out that there is not much stonework in the extra two stories. The quantity of stone he has there will still have to be cut; but one saving plant will be sufficient. We could not get right round the building as intended ultimately. I do not think it would be advisable to occupy the basement, because the contractor would want to use it, and also the right-of-way at the side. He could carry on without the street front, but not without the two rights-of-way, and it would be inconvenient for him to be shut out of the basement. I would not advocate finishing the road until the buildings were finished. The work going on would not cause any more confusion to the officers and the public than in the case of an ordinary street building. The public would have to be protected in some way, and these are difficulties easily got over. I merely say that a section of the postal employees could be transferred to the building if so desired; it is not for me to say whether it is advisable. There are not more than thirty hot days when additional ventilation is required, and I think we can do without Sirocco fans. We took the area of the floor affected by the sun when we were considering the question of blinds, and we found that, owing to the thickness of the walls, the angle of the sun on the floors was so small it was not worth putting blinds up. Electric radiators, which are to be provided for heating purposes, can be extended if necessary. It would be very expensive to put in a hot-water system, but it could be carried out after the building is finished. I believe that at St. George's House there is provision for steam heating in the winter.

53. *To the Chairman.*—The plans for Millar's building were, I believe, prepared in England. I think it would be found that the heating appliances are used very little.

54. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The building could be occupied before it was finished; but I do not advise that course. I speak with the view of providing accommodation urgently needed by both State and Commonwealth, and the amalgamation of the Taxation Departments intensifies the urgency. The Commonwealth Taxation Department may be forced to occupy the new Post Office at considerable inconvenience, in consequence of their inability to get other premises. The owners of the building which the Department at present occupies are anxious to get rid of the Commonwealth. I think there is every possibility of the building being finished by June next twelve months if there is no delay in approving of the work.

55. *To the Chairman.*—Immediately we knew that the Public Works Committee was coming over, we had quantities prepared, and consulted with Mr. Arnott as to rates that would be reasonable to-day—increased rates on the previous schedule. Mr. Arnott said he would not like to be forced into the position of putting in a tender at the present time. We went into the matter with him, and arrived at what we considered a fair schedule rate, and made up an estimate which amounted to £55,617. That did not include the completion of the three lifts, which would probably run into £4,500. Under the present contract, we have only one lift in front, and goods lift at the back, and we have to put in three new lifts—one goods and two passenger; the two extra stories mean extra lift accommodation. Mr. Murdoch and I consulted, and came to the conclusion that the more economical way would be to proceed as we are at present, and add to the schedule rates owing to war conditions, and not to the schedule rates owing to war conditions. We are not paying for the additional costs of labour, which are still under discussion. Mr. Arnott has made no claim; but the matter will have to be thrashed out and settled. The

increased cost we have paid for building owing to war conditions is only £13,000. It is difficult to arrive at a percentage basis, because in the case of much of the material the prices were not raised until two years after the war. To date the percentage owing to the war is very small, and the building up to the present has not cost as much as the tender; we have not exceeded the original tender yet.

56. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The extra cost of labour has not been so much as the extra cost of material up to date; but from this out it will be, because the contractor will be flooding the place with workmen.

57. *To the Chairman.*—Whether an allowance should be made for the increased cost of labour, and what the policy of the State Government is in that regard, are very debatable questions, and I would rather not commit myself. I do not know of any similar case in which the State Government have taken any such action. The contractors have always taken all risks. According to our figures, the average increase in the cost of the construction of buildings since the war started has been between 60 per cent. and 100 per cent. We have been doing very little lately in the erection of workers' homes. All the business has been blown out on account of the cost. We are building some homes, but not many.

58. *To Mr. Mathews.*—Mr. Arnott is a contractor of long experience, but, judging by his schedule rates, and from a comparison of his tender with other tenders, I should say he did not make any allowance for the increased costs.

59. *To the Chairman.*—There were eight or nine tenders.

60. *To Mr. Mathews.*—Mr. Arnott's was about £32,000 below the next tender. I cannot say from memory what was the highest tender, but tenders went considerably higher. We always go by the yard in brickwork—11 in a rod. In the case of steel, the pre-war rate was £12 10s., and to-day it is £30; and it is not likely to fall readily, though it will gradually. The schedule is based on present prices, and if prices go down we will get the benefit of the fall. In the case of concrete, the pre-war rate for stone was 13s. per yard; and for sand, 2s. 6d.; while for cement the pre-war rate was 14s. 6d.; and the labour was 11s.; to-day stone is 17s.; sand is 4s.; cement is 50s. and 55s.; and labour is 16s.

61. *To the Chairman.*—No cement is being locally manufactured as yet. Various dates have been stated, but I do not think we will get any for another six months. Bricks delivered on the job cost 12s. a 1,000. They are very good, specially picked bricks, and they cost 10s. a 1,000 at the kiln. Ordinary bricks are now about 6s. 3d. a 1,000 at the kiln. Our estimate provides for the carrying of the goods' lifts to the top, and I think they are necessary; it is great trouble getting furniture up and down by hand. You cannot tell what class of work these buildings might be used for, and the extra cost is not much, being merely that of the extension of the ropes and guides. I think that if tenders were called for an ordinary building of the same class, they would amount to as much as in our own case. The rates are about those for better-class buildings. If tenders were called, and another contractor came in, I think we would get the work done at the same rate, though, at the same time, I think that if we called for tenders we would not get any response. We would not get a contractor to tender under the existing circumstances. The prices are reasonable for the work to-day. I think we shall get the advantage of the fall in prices which is bound to take place. It is possible that the work will not cost the amount set down in the schedule—that is on the assumption that

prices for certain materials will fall. If prices increase we will have to pay the increase. I have not got Mr. Arnott's definite undertaking to carry out the work on the schedule rates if prices increase; but, from talking the matter over with him, I believe he would be agreeable to do so. We will have to have a proper contract and a proper basis fixed.

*The witness withdrew.*

Arthur George Tyler, Assistant Supervisor of Mails, General Post Office, Western Australia, sworn and examined:

62. *To the Chairman.*—I have been in my present position for nine or ten years, and I have devoted all my life to mail work. We occupy some 3,000 odd feet of space in the old building, and this space is on different floors, an arrangement which tends to inefficiency. If we were on one floor, the work could be more easily got through—I mean all on one floor open to supervision—and we would then do with much less space. I have never seen the plans of the proposed new building; indeed, I have never even seen inside the building. I came back in January of last year, after being away for four years, and I have been in the Parcels Post Office for the last six months. I am only one of four assistant supervisors, and have had no opportunity to see the plans of the building. As a

matter of fact, I do not know what floor space has been allotted to the mail branch. At the present time, our space is not nearly sufficient, and the conditions are unspeakable, absolutely cramped. The fact of our being on several floors minimizes the value of the space we have, and there can be no adequate supervision. I had charge of the Army Post Office in London, where we had a floor space of some 68,000 square feet.

63. *To Mr. Mathews.*—There is more work done now in connexion with the mails than previous to the war. Before the war we were cramped for space, and are still more cramped now. With twice as much space we could have a great deal more efficiency. The bulk of the mail work is done in the room in which the members of the Committee saw me working, some of the work being performed in a space with a 7-ft. headway. I have not gone into the figures as to what additional room we require. I may say that, on my way from London, I came through America and saw how postal work was conducted there. They aim to get their Post Offices absolutely connected with every railway depot, and those in New York are right over the Pennsylvania Station, into which the mails are shot down into the train. I think it is a tremendous mistake not to have a subway from the new building to the railway station in Perth. The ground is swampy; but surely some means could be found to put in a subway.