

1923.



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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PARLIAMANTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS.

EIGHTH GENERAL REPORT.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

EIGHTH GENERAL REPORT.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

Fourth Committee:

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

Senate.

Senator Hattil Spencer Foll.
Senator John Newland.
Senator William Plain.

House of Representatives.

Arthur Blakeley, Esquire, M.P.
Robert Cook, Esquire, M.P.
David Sydney Jackson, Esquire, M.P.
George Hugh Mackay, Esquire, M.P.
James Mathews, Esquire, M.P.

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To His Excellency the Right Honorable HENRY WILLIAM, BARON FORSTER OF LEPE, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

In accordance with the requirements of Section 11 of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1921*, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has the honour to submit the following Report of the proceedings of the Committee for the year ended 31st December, 1922:—

1. During the year the Committee held 168 meetings and examined 123 witnesses in connexion with the proposed works submitted. In making its inquiries, the Committee travelled a distance of 15,284 miles by rail and 416 miles by water—a total of 15,700 miles.

QUESTIONS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE.

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

- (i) Extension of the Port Augusta-Oodnadatta Railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs;
- (ii) Northern Territory Railway—Extension from Mataranka to Daly Waters;
- (iii) Sewerage, Federal Capital—Construction of Main Intercepting Sewer from centre of City to connect with Main Outfall Sewer;
- (iv) Water Supply, Federal Capital—Distributary Works within the City Area, Canberra;
- (v) Construction of a Hostel at Canberra with necessary engineering and other services;
- (vi) Installation of Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at South Brisbane, Queensland.
- (vii) Installation of Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at Cottesloe, Western Australia;
- (viii) Installation of Automatic Telephone Exchanges and Equipment at Brighton, Glenelg, and Prospect, South Australia;
- (ix) Installation of Automatic Telephone Exchanges and Equipment at East Sydney (Paddington and William), City South (Sydney), Randwick, Waverley, and Gordon (New South Wales).
- (x) Provision of Office Accommodation for Federal Taxation Department in Melbourne;
- (xi) Provision of Office Accommodation in Adelaide for various Commonwealth Departments;
- (xii) Provision of Mobilization Depot (Defence) at Woodside, South Australia.
- (xiii) Installation of Automatic Telephone Exchanges and Equipment at the following places in Victoria:—Canterbury, South Melbourne, and Box Hill;
- (xiv) Provision of Additional Quarters at Point Cook, Victoria, for Staff of the Royal Australian Air Force.

3. Since then the following matter has been submitted to the Committee for inquiry and report, namely:—

Erection of Commonwealth Offices, Brisbane.

COMPLETED INQUIRIES.

4. The Committee dealt with all the questions submitted to it, and presented reports in connexion with them as follows :—

	<i>Estimated Cost.</i>
(a) Extension of the Port Augusta-Oodnadatta Railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs	£4,109,446
(b) Northern Territory Railway—Extension from Mataranka to Daly Waters	1,159,298
(c) Sewerage, Federal Capital—Construction of Main Intercepting Sewer from Centre of City to connect with Main Outfall Sewer	66,000
(d) Water Supply, Federal Capital—Distributary Works within the City Area, Canberra	48,200
(e) Construction of Hostel at Canberra, with necessary engineering and other services	98,750
(f) Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at South Brisbane, Queensland	121,086
(g) Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at Cottesloe, Western Australia	44,576
(h) Automatic Telephone Exchanges and Equipment at Brighton, Glenelg, and Prospect, South Australia	161,610
(i) Automatic Telephonic Exchanges and Equipment at East Sydney, Randwick, Waverley, and Gordon, New South Wales	497,452
(j) Office Accommodation for Federal Taxation Department in Melbourne	209,650
(k) Office Accommodation in Adelaide for various Commonwealth Departments	115,000
(l) Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at South Melbourne, Victoria	111,738
(m) Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at Canterbury, Victoria	113,622
(n) Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at Box Hill, Victoria	44,841
(o) Provision of Additional Quarters at Point Cook, Victoria, for Staff of the Royal Australian Air Force	31,500
(p) Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange, City South, Sydney	404,242
(q) Erection of Commonwealth Offices, Brisbane	127,000
Total	£7,464,011

REFERENCE WITHDRAWN.

5. On the 25th August, 1922, a resolution was passed by the House of Representatives, on the motion of the Honorable R. W. Foster, Minister for Works and Railways, "That the resolution of the House of the 6th December, 1921, referring the following work to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, namely, Provision of Mobilization Depot (Defence) at Woodside, South Australia, be rescinded."

SUMMARY OF COMPLETED INQUIRIES.

- (a) Extension of Port Augusta-Oodnadatta Railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs.
 (b) Northern Territory Railway—Extension from Mataranka to Daly Waters.

6. The Committee, after considerable discussion, decided that it would be to the advantage of the Government and in the interests of economy if such investigations were made in respect of these two lines as would enable a report to be presented on the whole question of the Transcontinental Railway, of which these sections were apparently designed to form part. These two references were accordingly dealt with together, and one report issued in respect of them.

The proposals submitted provided for the construction of—

- (i) A high level line of railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs, a distance of 297½ miles, with 60 or 80-lb. rails, on a ruling grade of 1 in 100, with a minimum curvature of 40 chains radius; and
 (ii) A high level line of railway from Mataranka to Daly Waters, a distance of 95 miles, with 60-lb. rails, on a ruling grade of 1 in 100, with a minimum curvature of 40 chains radius.

In both instances it was suggested that the cuttings and banks should be sufficiently wide, the sleepers sufficiently long, and the bridges strong enough for a 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge road, with rails temporarily spiked to 3 ft. 6 in., to permit of them being readily converted to standard gauge when considered opportune.

The estimated costs of the sections as originally submitted to Parliament and transmitted to the Committee were :—

Oodnadatta to Alice Springs (80-lb. rails)	£4,109,446,
Mataranka to Daly Waters (60-lb. rails)	£1,159,298,

while the figures given as to working expenses and the revenue likely to be earned showed that there would be a loss on the

Oodnadatta to Alice Springs line of £270,566,

and on the

Mataranka to Daly Waters line of £70,000 per annum.

7. The Committee, realizing the importance of this problem, and the large expenditure involved, spared no trouble in an endeavour to inform itself fully on the subject. Evidence was taken in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, and Adelaide, and, in addition, a Sectional Committee of three members was constituted, with the object of inspecting the country which would be traversed by each of the sections proposed, and obtaining first hand information as to the actual condition of affairs in the interior of Australia, the views of the settlers therein as to the necessity for a through railway, as well as a general knowledge of the country which would be served by the two principal routes suggested for such through railway. In making its investigations, the Committee examined 136 witnesses from practically every walk of life, perused reports new and old dealing with railway matters and the Northern Territory generally, and sought in every way to place the Parliament in possession of such information as would enable it to deal with this great problem with as full a knowledge of the subject as it was possible to supply.

8. Having in view the fact that these sections are designed to be extensions of existing lines of 3 ft. 6 in. gauge, and that it is improbable that any widening of those lines will take place for as far ahead as can be foreseen; as competent railway officials also expressed the opinion that a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge line will carry all the traffic on the Northern Territory railways likely to be offering for many years, the Committee unanimously decided to recommend that a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge and 60-lb. rails should be adopted.

9. In the course of its inquiries, the Committee ascertained that since the date of the framing of the estimates presented to Parliament in respect of the sections under consideration, certain items such as steel had fallen in price. Amended estimates were accordingly obtained from the Commonwealth Railways Department as follows :—

(i) Oodnadatta to Alice Springs, 3 ft. 6 in. gauge, and 60-lb. rails	£3,192,690
Light low-level line with steep momentum grades and secondhand rails and fastenings	1,558,600
(ii) Mataranka to Daly Waters, 3 ft. 6 in. gauge and 60-lb. rails	925,386

10. After a careful consideration of the work proposed, and influenced by the necessity of adopting a progressive policy for the development of the Northern Territory, the Committee agreed to recommend the following :—

- (i) To extend the existing railway to Daly Waters on the understanding that it is to form portion of an eventual line through Newcastle Waters to Camooveal;
 (ii) That a light low-level line be constructed from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs;
 (iii) That these lines be regarded as providing sufficient railway development for the Territory for many years;
 (iv) That when the time arrives for the construction of a through transcontinental line, negotiations be entered into with South Australia which would permit of the alteration of the Northern Territory Acceptance Act 1910 to allow of such line being constructed on the route then shown to be in the best interests of Australia;
 (v) That the 3 ft. 6 in. gauge be adopted;
 (vi) That the question of the use of steel or concrete sleepers be considered with a view to their adoption if obtainable at a reasonable price;
 (vii) That sleepers be used of a size 7 feet x 9 inches x 4½ inches;
 (viii) That 60-lb. rails be used;
 (ix) That any high-level bridges of a permanent nature be of such a size as will permit of their taking the 4 ft. 8½ in. track:

- (x) That the question of improving wharf facilities at Darwin be given attention with the return of normal trade conditions there ;
 (xi) That the introduction of foreign coloured labour to the Territory be consistently opposed ;
 (xii) That a definite progressive policy for the development of the Territory be at once entered upon and vigorously pursued.

(c) *Construction of a Main Intercepting Sewer from the centre of the City of Canberra to connect with the Main Outfall Sewer*

11. This was a proposal to construct a main intercepting sewer on the south side of the Molonglo River from the western boundary of the City to a point approximately in the centre and directly opposite the proposed Parliamentary Group of buildings—a distance of a little over 2 miles. From this point, in the future, will extend two main sewers—one on the northern side of the river ultimately extending to Duntroon Military College, also taking in on its way sewage from Acton and the proposed Civic Centre, and one on the southern side extending to the Power House and Eastlake sections.

It was intended that the section of the sewer proposed should be a continuation of that previously reported upon and approved by the Committee, namely, oviform in shape, of a size 5 ft. 6 in. by 3 ft. 8 in., and constructed of concrete.

The estimated cost of this section was £66,000, and the time set down for completion eighteen months from the date of commencement.

After taking all the facts into consideration, the Committee agreed to recommend that the departmental proposal as submitted be adopted.

(d) *Water Supply for the Federal Capital—Distributary Works within the City Area, Canberra.*

12. This was a proposal to construct those distributary works recommended in Appendix "C" of the First General Report of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, as follows:—12-in. main (2½ miles in length), commencing from Red Hill Reservoir, thence by way of Melbourne-avenue and National Circuit to Federal-avenue ; thence two 9-in. mains to be taken—one for 1½ miles *via* Federal-avenue and Station-place to a reservoir on Mount Russell of 1,000,000 gallons, with capacity to increase to 3,000,000 gallons ; the other 9-in. main, ¾ mile in length, to go along Government-terrace to Commonwealth-avenue near the proposed Hostel site. A 6-in. branch three-fifths of a mile long to be also taken from the 12-in. main at its intersection at Brisbane-avenue, and proceed thence to Interlake-avenue to supply a settlement near the Power House. From the reservoir proposed to be constructed at Mount Russell, a 6-in. main to be laid along the road parallel to Capital-terrace, a distance of 3 miles to Ainslie-avenue, to supply the settlement at the Civic Centre.

The estimated cost of the proposal was set down at £48,200, and the time fixed for completion eighteen months from the date of commencement.

After careful consideration of all the evidence placed before it, the Committee agreed to recommend that the departmental proposal as submitted be proceeded with.

(e) *Construction of a Hostel at Canberra, with necessary Engineering and other Services.*

13. This was a proposal to erect, on a site facing Commonwealth-avenue, and opposite the proposed Government Group, a hostel on garden pavilion lines, capable of affording first-class accommodation for about 200 visitors.

The design of the structure showed a central building containing the usual public rooms, the administrative section, kitchen, &c., and accommodation for the residential staff ; while grouped round an enclosed garden on each side of the central building were separate pavilions containing the guests' private, sitting, and bed rooms, connected with each other and with the central building by verandah corridors.

The building proposed was of brick, with tiled roof and rough-cast walls, the central block and the four corner pavilions being two storeys high, the remaining six pavilions being single story.

The estimated cost of the proposal, as submitted to the Committee, was £98,750. After taking evidence on this subject, the Committee reported that it was of opinion that in a hostel of the nature contemplated it was improbable that guests could be accepted at less than £1 per day, that the need for accommodation at Canberra of the class proposed was purely a matter of conjecture, and there was no guarantee that a hostel capable of taking 200 guests would, in the initial stages of the city, be reasonably filled.

It was ascertained in evidence that if the accommodation to be provided were restricted to 100 guests, an immediate reduction of £36,750 in capital cost would be effected.

Under these circumstances, the Committee recommended that for the present the construction be limited to the central administrative block, and one-half of the number of pavilions proposed.

(f) *Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at South Brisbane, Queensland.*

14. This was a proposition to erect a telephone exchange building on a site at the corner of Stanley and Vulture streets, South Brisbane, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 3,600 subscribers' lines, with an ultimate capacity of approximately 6,600 subscribers' lines. It was proposed that the initial equipment should be capable of extension to the ultimate capacity named, thereby affording sufficient accommodation for the anticipated development in the South Brisbane area.

The estimated cost of the work as submitted to the Committee was set down at £121,086.

From the evidence placed before it the Committee was satisfied that urgent necessity existed for a telephone exchange at South Brisbane, and the establishment, as proposed, might be expected to represent a substantial reduction in charges to subscribers in that area, because of the shorter distance to the exchange. It was shown that it would be economical also from a departmental point of view, and, under the circumstances, the Committee recommended that the proposal as submitted be adopted, and the work put in hand at the earliest possible moment.

(g) *Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at Cottesloe, Western Australia.*

15. The proposal submitted to the Committee in this instance was for the erection of a telephone exchange building at the corner of Clive-road, Congdon-street, and Claremont-avenue, Cottesloe, on a site which had been acquired by the Commonwealth, and the installation therein of an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 1,400 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of 2,300 subscribers' lines. It was proposed that the initial equipment should be capable of extension to the ultimate capacity named, thereby affording sufficient accommodation for the anticipated development in this area for a period of at least fifteen years.

The estimated immediate cost of the work as submitted to the Committee was £44,576.

In view of the generally recognised advantages of the automatic system of telephony, and the fact that the evidence showed that a saving in annual cost would result by its installation at Cottesloe, the Committee recommended that the proposal as submitted be approved.

(h) *Automatic Telephone Exchanges and Equipment at Brighton, Glenelg, and Prospect, South Australia.*

16. The proposals submitted involved the erection of buildings and the installation of equipment at Brighton, Glenelg, and Prospect ; but Brighton and Glenelg were practically one work, as it was proposed that Brighton should be a branch exchange of Glenelg, that is, Brighton would be able to complete a local call, but all transferred traffic must pass through Glenelg.

The details of the proposal were—

Brighton.—To erect a telephone exchange building on a site at the corner of Hartley-road and Brighton-road which had been acquired by the Commonwealth, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 570 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 1,000 subscribers' lines. Estimated cost, £26,438.

Glenelg.—To erect a telephone exchange building on a site at the corner of Jetty-road and Brighton-road which had been acquired by the Commonwealth, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 1,600 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 2,500 subscribers' lines. Estimated cost, £62,286.

Prospect.—To erect a telephone exchange building on a site in Ballville-street which had been acquired by the Commonwealth, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 1,750 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 3,300 subscribers' lines. Estimated cost, £72,886.

In each case it was intended that the initial equipment should be capable of extension to the ultimate capacity named, thereby affording sufficient accommodation for the anticipated development of the areas in question, for a period of fifteen years.

The evidence placed before the Committee showed that the installation of the automatic exchanges under consideration would be profitable to the Commonwealth, and provide greater facilities and convenience to the subscribers. It was accordingly recommended that the work be put in hand as early as possible.

(f) *Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchanges at East Sydney, Randwick, Waverley, and Gordon, New South Wales.*

17. These proposals were—

East Sydney.—To erect a new building on a site at the corner of Liverpool and Little Surrey streets, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 5,100 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 8,500 subscribers' lines. Estimated cost, £199,883.

Randwick.—To make necessary alterations and additions to the existing manual telephone exchange building in Avoca-street, Randwick, and to install therein, in lieu of the existing non-multiple magneto switchboard, an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 4,900 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 6,500 subscribers' lines. Estimated cost, £136,473.

Waverley.—To erect a new telephone exchange building on Commonwealth property at the corner of Cowper and Birrell streets, Waverley, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 3,200 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 4,500 subscribers' lines. Estimated cost, £96,187.

Gordon.—To erect a new telephone exchange building on a site which had been acquired for the purpose at the corner of Powell-street and Lane Cove-road, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 3,200 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 4,500 subscribers' lines. Estimated cost, £64,909.

From the evidence placed before the Committee, each of these installations was shown to be a good business proposition, and it was therefore recommended that the work be put in hand as early as possible.

(g) *Provision of Office Accommodation for Federal Taxation Department in Melbourne.*

18. The proposal submitted to the Committee for investigation was the question of the advisability of the Commonwealth erecting its own premises for the Taxation Department in Melbourne, and three sites were suggested for inquiry as to suitability, &c. These sites were:—

- An area of about 1½ acres on the south side of the River Yarra close to Prince's-bridge;
- An area of land about 100 feet by 200 feet, facing the Treasury Gardens, and situated between the State Treasury and the Chief Secretary's Offices;
- An area at the back of the Post Office Building in Bourke and Elizabeth streets.

19. The building to be erected would vary in design in accordance with the site decided upon: a sketch plan prepared for the Prince's-bridge site showed a rectangular building three stories high and of a size approximately 291 feet by 200 feet. The building suggested for the Treasury-place site was approximately 100 feet by 200 feet, and running into seven stories; while the design suggested for the Post Office site was approximately 59 feet by 200 feet, and seven stories high.

20. The building for the Prince's-bridge site was designed to give an effective office area of 133,698 square feet, and was estimated to cost £209,650.

The building at Treasury-place was designed to give an effective office area of 93,296 square feet at an estimated cost of £163,950.

The building on the Post Office site was designed to give an effective office area of 64,321 square feet at an estimated cost of £125,000, and the time set down for completion was approximately two years in each case.

After carefully considering the advantages and disadvantages of each site, from the point of view of the public and of the officials, the Committee unanimously recommended that the building should be erected on the vacant Commonwealth land at the rear of the Post Office building in Bourke-street.

(h) *Provision of Office Accommodation in Adelaide for various Commonwealth Departments.*

21. This was a proposal to utilize a vacant block of Commonwealth land adjoining the General Post Office, Adelaide, by erecting thereon a suitable building to be occupied by those branches of Commonwealth Departments in Adelaide now accommodated in rented premises.

The building suggested was a reinforced concrete structure having a frontage of 126 feet 6 inches to Franklin-street by a depth of 211 ft. 6 in. along Oddfellows'-place, and comprising a basement and five stories. The estimated cost was set down at £115,000.

Consideration was given to representations made that the area on which it was proposed to erect this building was eminently suitable for a new automatic telephone exchange estimated to be required for Adelaide within a few years; but after carefully viewing the matter from all stand-points, the Committee recommended that the Commonwealth offices proposed be erected on this site, and another suitable site in proximity to the present telephone exchange be acquired for automatic telephone exchange purposes.

(i) *Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at South Melbourne, Victoria.*

22. This was a proposal to erect a telephone exchange building at the corner of Green, Bank, and Crown streets, South Melbourne, on a site which was acquired by the Commonwealth some years ago, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 3,000 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 7,000 subscribers' lines. It was proposed that the initial equipment should be capable of extension to the ultimate capacity named, thereby affording sufficient accommodation for the anticipated development in this area for a period of at least fifteen years.

The estimated immediate cost of the work was set down at £111,738, including an amount of £3,350 for an air-conditioning plant.

23. After due consideration of the evidence placed before it, the Committee expressed itself in favour of the installation of an automatic telephone service for the South Melbourne area, as proposed.

24. As regards the air-conditioning plant suggested, however, the Committee stated that, while convinced from all the expert evidence placed before it that the economic life of the plant, its efficiency, and the service rendered to the public by an automatic telephone exchange depend largely on the air in the switch-room being kept free from dust and moisture, it was considered that sufficient time had not yet elapsed to show whether the method proposed by the Department for arriving at this desideratum would be entirely effective. The Committee therefore recommended that careful observations be taken and records kept of the results attained by the recently-erected plant at the Collingwood Exchange, and that no steps be taken to install any future air-conditioning plant on the lines of that at Collingwood, until the results achieved showed same to be justified.

(n) *Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at Canterbury, Victoria.*

25. This was a proposal to erect a new telephone exchange building at the corner of Canterbury-road and Maling-street, Canterbury, on land at the rear of the existing Post Office, which is the property of the Commonwealth, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 4,000 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 8,000 subscribers' lines.

The estimated immediate cost of the work was set down at £113,622, including an amount of £3,500 for air-conditioning plant.

26. The Committee recommended that the installation of the automatic telephone exchange be proceeded with as early as possible, but stipulated, as in the case of South Melbourne, that no steps be taken to install any air-conditioning plant on the lines of that recently erected at the Collingwood Exchange, until the results obtained showed same to be justified.

(o) *Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at Box Hill, Victoria.*

27. In this case, the proposal submitted to the Committee was to erect a telephone exchange building on a site at the corner of Whitehorse-road and Station-street, Box Hill, on land the property of the Commonwealth at the rear of the existing Post Office, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 1,500 subscribers' lines and an ultimate capacity of approximately 5,000 subscribers' lines.

The estimated immediate cost of the work was set down at £44,841.

28. The Committee ascertained in evidence that the number of subscribers connected to the present Exchange at Box Hill was 621 on the 9th March, 1923, and that it was anticipated that the number of subscribers would increase to about 1,430 by the 1st January, 1929.

29. Inquiries showed that the existing equipment, without any expenditure whatever, would meet requirements until about June, 1924, and that it would be possible, by increasing the carrying capacity of the existing switchboards from 160 to 180 subscribers each, and installing four further 200-lines' positions, to provide for the 1,430 subscribers expected by the 1st January, 1929, on the existing manually-operated switchboard, at a total expenditure of £2,720.

30. As the assurance was given that there would be no appreciable difference in the quality of the service rendered in the case of Box Hill, with its small number of subscribers, the Committee reported that there was no necessity at the present time to incur an expenditure of £44,841 on the installation of an automatic system, and recommended that the equipment at present in use be extended at a cost of approximately £2,720, to meet requirements until 1st January, 1929.

(o) *Provision of Additional Quarters at Point Cook, Victoria, for Staff of the Royal Australian Air Force.*

31. This was a project to provide additional Mechanics' Quarters, Dining Room, Recreation Rooms, Married N.C.O.'s Quarters, and necessary accessory services, at an estimated cost of £31,500.

The investigation of the Committee showed that the buildings asked for were necessary, that the structures suggested had been designed with due regard to comfort and economy, and that the land at Point Cook was being used to good advantage. It was, therefore, recommended that the work be put in hand as early as possible.

(p) *Erection of Commonwealth Offices, Brisbane.*

32. A proposal has been under consideration to provide an ornamental square in front of the entrance to the Central Railway Station, Brisbane, and the Commonwealth and State Governments have agreed to set apart portion of their respective areas in the block bounded by Anne, Edward, Adelaide, and Creek streets for the purpose. If this be done, the Commonwealth will have remaining an area having frontages of approximately 99 feet to Anne and Adelaide streets, by a depth of about 269 feet; and a proposal was submitted to the Committee that on this block there be erected a building for the purpose of housing those Commonwealth offices at present occupying rented premises in Brisbane.

The building suggested was of five stories, to be built of brick with stone dressings, and the estimated cost was given as £127,000.

33. Evidence obtained by the Committee showed that the Commonwealth is now paying about £6,000 per annum for office accommodation in Brisbane, and that a considerable portion of this accommodation is unsuitable and inadequate, and presents a fire risk dangerous to the officials and to the many valuable documents contained in the various departments.

34. Inquiries made as to whether the brick building suggested would prove most suitable led to the conclusion that a saving of approximately £12,000 could be effected by constructing the building of reinforced concrete, and this proposal commended itself to the Committee.

35. After carefully considering the whole aspect of the matter, the Committee made the following recommendations, viz. —

- (i) That office accommodation be provided on the Commonwealth property in Adelaide-street;
- (ii) That the building to be erected be of five stories;
- (iii) That the foundations be so constructed as to admit of an extra two or three stories when required;
- (iv) That the building be of reinforced concrete;
- (v) That a conference be held between representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments, the Brisbane City Council, and the Anzac Memorial Committee, with a view to placing on a definite footing the question of the formation and proper upkeep of the square, the provision of proper access, &c.
- (vi) That representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments confer, and adopt the design of the Commonwealth building, and that copies of the plan be lodged with the State Government;
- (vii) That consideration be given to the advisability of acquiring the privately-owned property between the Commonwealth land and Creek-street.

(q) *Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange, City South, Sydney.*

36. This was a proposal to erect a telephone exchange building on a site which had been selected in Castlereagh-street, and to install therein an automatic telephone switching system having an immediate equipment of 8,000 subscribers' lines, and an ultimate capacity of approximately 16,000 subscribers' lines. It was proposed that the number of lines to be immediately connected would be 6,245, and it was estimated that this number would increase to 8,360 in five years, and to 13,000 in fifteen years.

The estimated cost of the work as submitted to the Committee was set down at £404,242.

37. From the evidence placed before the Committee, the proposed exchange was shown to be necessary, and the excess of revenue over expenditure on the figures submitted indicated that the matter would be of considerable financial benefit to the Commonwealth.

38. Under these circumstances, the Committee had no hesitation in recommending that the installation as proposed by the Department be put in hand as early as possible.

39. *Site.*—When this proposal was first placed before the Committee, it was suggested that the building be erected on a block of land in Pitt-street, but, prior to the conclusion of the Committee's investigations, it was ascertained that the land proposed to be acquired had been purchased by a private individual and that work had been commenced thereon. A communication was accordingly addressed to the Department of Works and Railways on the 19th July, 1922, drawing attention to this matter, and intimating that the Committee could not complete its report until a definite site could be submitted to it.

On the 29th September, 1922, an intimation was received from the Postmaster General's Department that a new site was under consideration, and, with a view to expediting action in the matter, a sectional committee was constituted, and visited Sydney on the 6th October, 1922, to make inquiries with regard to it.

The land proposed to be acquired consisted of a block having a frontage of about 91 feet to Castlereagh-street, by a depth of approximately 117 feet, on which were erected a building known as "The Playhouse," a secondhand book store, a tailor's shop, and a lodging house. The site was level, centrally situated, and within a reasonable distance of the theoretic telephone centre, and after hearing the evidence of the works officials and telephone engineers, the Committee was satisfied that the land was eminently suitable for the purpose of the proposed exchange.

The Committee was, however, unfavorably impressed by the fact that, during the course of its investigations and after plans had been prepared for the erection of a costly building on the Pitt-street site, it should have been possible for a private individual to purchase the land in question without the Commonwealth having an opportunity to secure it at the same figure. The Committee realizes that of necessity certain formalities must be gone through in connexion with the purchase of land for Commonwealth purposes, but recommended that, in instances of this nature, arrangements should be made to get an option, or at least to have the land under firm offer, before a reference of this kind is submitted to the Committee.

40. *Building.*—The building plans laid before Parliament indicated a brick structure of three stories, the design being as simple as possible, consistent with the locality of the site. It was suggested, however, that at so central and valuable a site it might be advisable to anticipate future extensions of the building by an additional three stories, and the Committee was invited to consider this aspect of the question. Although the original estimate, as tabled, was for £32,900, it was stated in evidence that further estimates had been prepared, which placed the cost of a three-story building of steel construction with reinforced concrete floors at £34,064, and for a further three storeys at £21,542, making a total of £55,606. A three-storied building of reinforced concrete was estimated to cost £29,200, or if carried to six stories, £48,000. Consideration was given by the Committee to the value of the site proposed to be obtained, and, in view of the price to be paid for it, the opinion was expressed that it should be utilized to the best advantage. It was shown that there were various Commonwealth activities in Sydney, housed in rented buildings, which might be located in the proposed building in Castlereagh-street. Under these circumstances, the Committee recommended that the building to be erected on this site be of reinforced concrete, and of not less than six stories.

RECORD OF INQUIRIES.

41. Appended hereto is a return containing a record of the inquiries of the Committee from the date of its appointment to 31st December, 1922.

H. GREGORY,
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Parliament House, Melbourne,
1st June, 1923.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

RECORD OF INQUIRIES.

The following is a list of proposed public works inquired into by the Committee from the date of its appointment to 31st December, 1919, with the result of its inquiries:—

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
1915.		£	£	£	£	
25th Jan. to 24th Feb.	Construction of a main sewer for the city of Canberra	75,000	76,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
23th Jan. to 25th Feb.	Storage and regulating reservoir, Upper Queanbeyan River	100,000	..	..	100,000	Committee decided that there is no present necessity or urgency for this work
11th Mar. to 4th May	Erection of buildings at Flinders Naval Base	111,032	111,032	..	..	Recommended as proposed
19th Mar. to 6th May	Sewage scheme for Flinders Naval Base	9,500	7,500	..	2,000	
6th May to 24th June	Lithgow Small Arms Factory Extension	60,500 (including power plant)	92,100	25,500	..	In lieu of making additions to the existing factory at Lithgow, the Committee recommended the erection of a factory at Canberra twice the size of the existing factory, the installation of new machinery therein, and the removal thereto of the existing machinery at a convenient date
6th May to 27th May	Increase of output, Small Arms Factory, Lithgow	..	..	..	..	Committee recommended establishment of a second shift
6th May to 17th June	Increase of plant, Small Arms Factory, Lithgow	38,727	38,727	..	..	Recommended as proposed
27th July to 26th Aug.	Small Arms Factory—location at Canberra	..	..	..	..	Site recommended
18th Sept. to 16th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Sydney	53,008	..	..	..	Committee favorable to proposal subject to provision of additional means of ingress and egress
21st Sept. to 22nd Sept.	Barracks, quarters, gun park, &c. for R.A.F.A., Enoggera, Queensland	26,000	28,225	2,225	..	Recommended subject to improved lighting, water, and fire services
23rd Sept. to 24th Nov.	Cement Works for Commonwealth purposes	100,000	100,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
23th Sept. to 6th Oct.	Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney	37,500	20,500	..	..	Recommended, but stipulation made that occupants be removed to temporary accommodation during alterations
12th Oct. to 15th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Malvern, Victoria	46,033	46,033	..	..	Recommended as proposed
12th Oct. to 15th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Collingwood, Victoria	49,762	49,762	..	..	Recommended as proposed
25th Oct. to 29th Oct.	Additional Office accommodation, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne	35,000	35,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
1916.						
14th Feb. to 1st Mar.	Selection of site for arsenal within the Federal Territory	..	..	..	..	Confidential report issued to Prime Minister
24th May to 31st May	Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney (further report)	51,481	41,000	..	10,481	
25th Feb., 1915, to 21st Aug., 1916	Water Supply scheme for Flinders Naval Base	61,000 and 9d. per 1,000 gallons for water consumed	Capital cost nil, is. per 1,000 gallons with minimum annual payment of £4,000 for first three years, £3,500 for second three years, £3,000 thereafter	..	61,000	The interest on the capital cost of £61,000 as originally proposed, plus the cost of water consumed at 9d. per 1,000 gallons, more than counterbalances the annual payment under the scheme recommended

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

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure Proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
1915.		£	£	£	£	
10th Nov. to 20th Aug., 1915	Extension of Fins Creek-Katherine River Railway to Elster (Mataranka Springs)	320,000	320,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
13th July, 1915, to 24th Nov., 1916	City Railway, Canberra	378,972	280,000	..	98,972	The Committee recommended that requirements for some years be met by temporary surface lines at estimated cost of about 278,000
14th July, 1915, to 28th Nov., 1916	Dams for Ornamental Waters, Canberra	912,421	472,421	..	440,000	Most of the expenditure recommended, however, will be deferred for a period of years
1917.						
16th Jan. to 20th Feb.	Extension of Postal Stores, Harbour-street, Sydney	68,632	68,632	..	..	Recommended as proposed
31st Jan. to 10th Mar.	Power House, Flinders Naval Base	15,000	9,500	..	5,500	
27th Sept. to 8th Mar., 1918	Flinders Naval Base—Erection of workshops, hospital, detention barracks, quarters for married officers and warrant officers; water, sewerage, and storm-water retentions; electric distribution system; and accessory works for that establishment	168,845	142,641	..	28,204	
27th Sept. to 1st May, 1918	Henderson Naval Base—Two breakwaters, excavations, reclamations, basins or quays, floating docks, administrative buildings, and permanent railways	4,629,109	2,068,850	..	19,250	The Committee recommended that work of the estimated cost of £1,901,000 be made the subject of further inquiry at a later date. A saving of £10,250 was effected in connexion with the transport of material from Wongong
1918.						
18th June to 1st Aug.	Housing of Commonwealth workmen at Lithgow, New South Wales	73,762	..	..	..	The Committee recommended the erection of 150 houses instead of 100 as proposed, but at a lower average cost
30th Sept. to 29th Oct., 1918; to 23rd Dec., 1918; to 23th June, 1919.	Arsenal Railway	62,614	62,614	..	..	Recommended as proposed
..	Ordnance Store, Leichhardt, N.S.W.	69,283	..	..	6,300	The Committee recommended the addition of another story to the building proposed, but saved the cost of same by concentration of Ordnance business at Leichhardt. A further saving of £6,300 was effected by the relocation of the railway siding
1919.						
10th June to 7th Oct.	Commonwealth Note Printing Office	47,800	46,800	..	1,000	The Committee recommended a variation in the four final proposed which would result in a saving of £1,000
1920.						
4th May to 9th June	Erection of mobilization and vehicle stores, Seymour, Victoria	78,072	80,472	1,800	..	Increase resulted from the recommendation of the Committee that fire sprinklers be installed in the Equipment Building
11th June to 19th July	Alterations and Additions to the General Post Office, Adelaide, S.A.	78,014	78,014	..	..	Recommended as proposed
13th July to 24th Aug.	Mobilization and vehicle stores, Midland Junction, Western Australia	36,570	..	..	..	The Committee recommended acquisition of additional seven acres and cottages thereon, but estimated that would be practically balanced by elimination of erection of caretaker's cottage proposed
3rd Nov., 1920; to 22nd Mar., 1921	Kidman and Mayoh's Wooden Ship-building Contract	135,200	NH	..	135,200	The Committee recommended that under no circumstances would the Commonwealth be justified in taking over the ships
22nd Dec., 1920, to 17th April, 1921	Extension by two floors of building under construction for General Post Office, Perth, W.A.	50,000	50,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed

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

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure Proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
		£	£	£	£	
22nd Dec., 1920, to 13th April, 1921	Erection of an additional telegraph line from Perth to Eucla and Transcontinental Railway route	42,030	42,030	..	..	Recommended as proposed
23rd Nov., 1920, to 20th April, 1921	Erection of additional telephone line between Sydney and Melbourne	37,000	37,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
3rd March, 1921, to 8th May, 1921	Erection of Ordnance and other Defence buildings at Kelvin Grove, Brisbane, Queensland	53,041	52,131	..	910	The Committee recommended utilization of building to be acquired in lieu of erecting luncheon-rooms
23rd Nov., 1920, to 9th May, 1921	Erection of telephone trunk line between Brisbane and Sydney	35,200	31,514	..	..	The price of copper fell after preparation of estimate
1st Feb., 1921, to 9th May, 1921	Establishment of automatic telephone exchanges at Albion and Newmarket, Queensland	80,779	89,779	..	..	Recommended as proposed
17th May, 1921, to 28th June, 1921	Establishment of automatic telephone exchanges at Ascot Vale and North Melbourne, Victoria	183,092	183,092	..	..	Recommended as proposed
8th March, 1921, to 7th July, 1921	Acquisition of lands for the proposed Anzac Memorial Square, Brisbane, Queensland	..	..	..	..	The Committee recommended— (a) that Commonwealth lands be transferred to State in exchange for suitable area for Commonwealth purposes in an approved locality, or alternatively (b) that Commonwealth areas be sold to Brisbane City Council at valuation, or, failing acceptance of (a) or (b), that the Commonwealth agree to relinquish a strip 40 feet wide if the State relinquish an adjoining strip 160 feet wide for the purpose of forming a Memorial Square
30th March, 1921, to 3rd Aug., 1921	Erection of offices for Taxation and other Commonwealth Departments in Sydney	145,000	145,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
23rd Feb., 1921, to 9th Nov., 1921	Re-modelling and additions General Post Office, Sydney	268,807	268,000	plus cost of land	21,000 plus cost of land	The Committee's recommendation provided an additional 24,000 feet of floor space to enable the building to be reduced by two stories, and allow some margin for expansion when necessary
28th January, 1921, to 5th October, 1922	Extension of the Port Augusta-Oodnadatta Railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs	4,109,446	1,558,000	..	2,550,846	
28th January, 1921, to 5th October, 1922	Northern Territory Railway—Extension from Maitland to Daly Waters	1,230,298	925,380	..	233,912	
14th Dec., 1921, to 9th April, 1922	Sewerage, Federal Capital—Construction of Main Intercepting Sewer from centre of City to connect with Main Outfall Sewer	60,000	60,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
16th Dec., 1921, to 10th April, 1922	Water Supply, Federal Capital—Distributary Works within the City Area, Canberra	48,200	48,200	..	..	Recommended as proposed
10th Dec., 1921, to 11th April, 1922	Construction of Hostel at Canberra, with necessary engineering and other services	98,750	62,000	..	36,750	Committee recommended that construction be limited to central block and half the number of pavilions proposed
26th Jan., 1922, to 31st May, 1922	Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at South Brisbane, Queensland	121,086	121,086	..	..	Recommended as proposed
26th Jan., 1922, to 31st May, 1922	Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at Colleston, W.A.	44,576	44,576	..	..	Recommended as proposed
24th Feb., 1922, to 14th March, 1922	Office Accommodation for Federal Taxation Department in Melbourne	209,650	125,000	..	84,650	

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

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure Proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
		£	£	£	£	
23rd Feb., 1922, to 7th April, 1922	Office Accommodation in Adelaide for various Commonwealth Departments	115,000	115,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
16th March, 1922, to 19th June, 1922	Automatic Telephone Exchanges and Equipment at Brighton, Glenelg, and Prospect, S.A.	161,610	161,610	..	..	Recommended as proposed
4th May, 1922, to 12th Oct., 1922	Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at City South, Sydney	404,242	419,342	15,100	..	In view of value of site, the Committee recommended a six-story building in lieu of three stories proposed
8th May, 1922, to 14th Sept., 1922	Automatic Telephone Exchanges and Equipment at East Sydney, Randwick, Waverley, and Gordon, N.S.W.	497,452	497,452	..	..	Recommended as proposed
10th Aug., 1922, to 29th Aug., 1922	Automatic Telephone Exchange and Equipment at South Melbourne, Victoria	111,738	111,738	..	..	Recommended as proposed
10th Aug., 1922, to 20th Sept., 1922	Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at Canterbury, Victoria	113,622	113,622	..	..	Recommended as proposed
12th Aug., 1922, to 3rd Oct., 1922	Establishment of Automatic Telephone Exchange at Box Hill, Victoria	44,841	2,720	..	42,121	Committee recommended that existing manual exchange could be kept in operation without detriment to service until 1929
20th Aug., 1922, to 10th Oct., 1922	Provision of Additional Quarters at Point Cook, Vic., for Staff of Royal Australian Air Force	31,500	31,500	..	..	Recommended as proposed
7th Oct., 1922, to 28th Oct., 1922	Erection of Commonwealth Offices, Brisbane	127,000	115,000	..	12,000	Committee recommended erection of building in concrete