

1925.



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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2nd Sept, 1925.

THE SENATE.

R E P O R T

of the

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

relating to the proposed

ERECTION OF A BUILDING AT CANBERRA

TO ACCOMMODATE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

1925.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

R E P O R T

together with

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

relating to the proposed

ERECTION OF A BUILDING AT CANBERRA

TO ACCOMMODATE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(Fourth Committee.)

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

Senate.

Senator John Barnes. †
 Senator Matti Spenser Poll. †
 Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch. †
 Senator John Newland. †
 Senator William Plain. *
 Senator Matthew Reid. †

House of Representatives.

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

* Ceased to be a Member of the Senate, 30th. June, 1923. † Appointed
 5th. July, 1923. ‡ Resigned 28th. June, 1923.

I N D E X .

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EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL -

NO. 253 DATED 19th. MAY,

1925.

Home & Territories Dept.,

18th. May, 1925.

Departmental No.
 253.

MINUTE PAPER FOR THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Executive Council
 No. 25

S U B J E C T .

Reference to the Parliamentary Standing Committee
 on Public Works.

Approved in Council.

(Signed).

LL. ATKINSON

for Governor-General

19th. May, 1925.

Recommended for the approval of His Excellency the Governor-General in Council that in accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1921, the following works be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report, viz. :-

- (a) ...
- (b) ...
- (c) The erection of a building at Canberra to accommodate the National Library and for other purposes;
- (d) ...

(Signed) G. F. PEARCE

Minister of State for Home and Territories.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

page.

Bingle, Walter David, I.S.O., Secretary, Department of Works and Railways	...	...	...	...
Binns, Kenneth, Assistant Librarian and Librarian in charge of Australian Section, Commonwealth Parliamentary Library..				
Brown, Harry Percy, Secretary, Postmaster-General's Department, Central Administration	...	...	...	...
Butters, John Henry, Chairman, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra	...	...	...	...
Collins, James Richard, Secretary, Commonwealth Treasury	...			
Daley, Charles Studdy, Acting Secretary, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra..	...	...	...	...
Deane, Percy E., Secretary, Prime Minister's Department	...			
Garran, Sir Robert Randolph, K.C.M.G., Commonwealth Solicitor-General, and Secretary, Attorney-General's Department ..				
Givens, The Honorable Thomas, President of the Senate	...			
McLaren, John Gilbert, Secretary, Department of Home and Territories	...	...	...	...
Murdoch, John Smith, Director-General of Works, and Chief Architect, Department of Works & Railways .	...			...
Oakley, Robert McKeeman, Comptroller-General, Department of Trade and Customs	...	...	...	...
Ogden, Senator James Ernest	...	...	...	...
Owen, Percy Thomas, Chief Engineer, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra	...	...	...	...
Rolland, Henry Maitland, Architect, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra	...	...	...	...
Skewes, William James, Second Member, Commonwealth Public Service Board of Commissioners ..	...	...	...	...
Trumble, Thomas, Secretary, Department of Defence	...			
Wadsworth, Arthur, Librarian, Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.				

NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING, CANBERRA.

R E P O R T

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred, for investigation and report to the House of Representatives, a proposal for the erection at Canberra of a building to accommodate the National Library and for other purposes, has the honor to report as follows :-

INTRODUCTORY.

1. Upon the transfer of the seat of government to Canberra, it will be necessary to remove the National Library from its present location in Parliament House, Melbourne.

The provision made for library purposes in the Parliament House now in course of erection at Canberra contemplates housing in that building only the moderate sized library which is necessary for immediate reference purposes. No attempt has been made to accommodate the much larger collection which forms the National Library.

No permanent building/^{scheme} has as yet been formulated for the purpose of accommodating the National Library, and it is represented that this is a project which, being somewhat of a monumental character, might well be left for the future.

In the meantime, however, it is urged that some provision should be made for housing this library in an efficient manner, not only to provide information for Parliament, but also to serve the general purposes of a public library at the Federal Capital.

PRESENT PROPOSAL.

2. The proposal now submitted for the consideration of the Committee is to erect immediately a building similar to that at present being erected in the Governmental group for the accommodation of departmental secretariats, in a corresponding position on the other side of the group. That building is of simple design on straight square lines, with a flat roof, and is being built of brick, the walls to be covered with white plaster. It is to be of two main floors each 12 feet high, with an additional story 8 feet high in the centre of the building, and will provide a total of 27,760 feet of effective office space. It is represented that about half of the building would be needed for the purpose of the National

Library, and it is proposed that the remaining half shall be used for those officials for whom accommodation beyond that provided in the secretariat building will be required before the permanent Administrative Offices are completed.

ESTIMATED COST.

3. The estimated cost of the proposal as first submitted to the Committee was set down at :-

Building	£50,000	
Engineering services	4,500	
Overhead and interest charges during construction	4,000	£58,500.

But during the progress of the Committee's investigations, this estimate was considerably varied, as will be shown later, and the completed cost will now approximate £80,000.

The time fixed for completion is about 15 months from date of commencement.

COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

4. The Committee visited Canberra, inspected the site of the proposed building, and took evidence from the Chairman, the acting Secretary, and the architect of the Federal Capital Commission; also from the Chief Commonwealth Architect, the Parliamentary Librarian, heads of Commonwealth Departments, and others.

Site.

5. In the course of its investigations, the Committee was informed that recent more detailed examination of the site showed that there is a material difference in the levels of this building as compared with the secretariat building now in course of erection. As these two buildings are to be complementary to each other, it is considered wise to have the roofs on the same level, as they will be viewed from a distance over the top of the Parliamentary building, and if they were out of level that fact would be emphasised.

6. To overcome this difficulty, the Chief Commonwealth Architect recommends that a lower floor be introduced in this building. In the original design of this and the secretariat building, the plans provided for a large central structure with a flanking wing on the north and on

the south; the north wing having a basement. It is now suggested that in this building the basement floor be introduced in the central and flanking structures also. This will have the effect of providing further accommodation for approximately 86 officials, and will increase the cost of the building to £73,705, including £4,000 for two lifts and £7,000 for lighting and ventilation. Adding the figures previously given for engineering services and overhead and interest charges during construction, the estimated cost of the building will now approximate £80,000.

The Committee carefully considered this new aspect of the question, and as it was assured that the alteration of the plan would not destroy the harmonious effect of these two complementary buildings, welcomed the opportunity of obtaining more office accommodation in such a convenient position.

7. The estimate submitted in respect of the building as altered allowed for the provision of two lifts. In the opinion of the Committee these lifts should not be included, although the necessary space should be left in case the utilisation of the building at some future time for other purposes renders the lifts essential. The omission of the lifts would have the effect of reducing the estimated cost of the building by about £4,000.

A suggestion by the Chief Commonwealth Architect that a system of outside ornamental steps be provided, giving access to the middle as well as the ground floor, is recommended for adoption.

Library Requirements.

8. It was stated in evidence that the space in this building set apart for library requirements was 15,000 square feet, but a communication was received from the Chairman of the Library Committee under date 21st. July, 1925, intimating that for a period of about four years the Library could manage with approximately 11,800 square feet of space.

Office Accommodation Available.

9. This would mean that calculating on an average of 100 feet of floor space for each individual, there would be available in this building, if remodelled as recommended, accommodation for approximately 266 officials.

The Committee is aware that, with the idea of terminating as early as possible the expense on account of railway fares, travelling allowances, etc., necessarily associated with the secretariat scheme, the

Government is planning to transfer to Canberra as soon as practicable nuclei of essential Departments on a permanent basis. The inquiry has consequently been pursued with this scheme in view.

10. Inquiries made from the various Commonwealth Departments resulted in the following figures being furnished by them as to requirements on a secretariat basis and under a permanent nucleus scheme :-

	Secretariat Basis.	Permanent Nucleus.
Prime Minister's Department	15	53
Auditor-General	-	18
Postmaster-General's Department	6	98
Public Service Board	-	48
Home and Territories	14	50
Treasury	15	51
Attorney-General	18	33
Defence	15	534
Customs	15	119
Markets and Migration	-	41
Health	-	22
Works and Railways and visiting officials	36	96
	<u>134</u>	<u>1163</u>

11. The Committee is aware that permanent Commonwealth Offices at Canberra are expected to be available by about 1930, and is consequently opposed to the provision of any temporary accommodation on a large scale which would have to be removed in a very few years, and so occupied itself with consideration of how best to provide for the officials whose presence at Canberra is considered essential until the permanent offices are erected.

12. Consideration was given to a proposition put forward by the Chairman, Federal Capital Commission, to erect portion of the permanent Government printing office in the vicinity of the Power House, portion of a permanent shopping block in the vicinity of the Civic Centre, and also erect a number of convertible residences near the Telopea Park school.

These locations are at some considerable distance from Parliament House and from each other, and the lack of concentration of Commonwealth activities would, it is thought, be uneconomical and lead to lack of efficiency in administration; consequently the suggestion was not adopted.

13. It should be explained that the scheme of establishing secretariats was evolved to give effect to the resolution of the House of Representatives that Parliament should assemble at Canberra in 1926. Evidence obtained from Permanent Heads, however, emphasised the fact that this

system of carrying on Departmental business must result in inconvenience and considerable additional expense, and in the case of some departments would be impossible. It is urged, for instance, that the Prime Minister's Department must have its full staff and records available at the seat of government while Parliament is sitting there.

14. From the points of view of convenience, economy, and efficiency, it would be preferable to have complete staffs at the outset. To effect this by the time Parliament is required to open at Canberra is obviously impossible, as in addition to office accommodation it is necessary to erect houses for the officials and their families, transfer office and domestic furniture, provide water, sewer, and lighting services, etc., the whole operation being one of considerable magnitude.

15. The Chairman, Federal Capital Commission, has intimated that his organisation is at present working at high pressure, and to carry any additional burden than that involved in the first secretariat programme would probably lead to embarrassment in respect of workmen and materials, resulting in considerably increased cost to the Commonwealth.

16. The first secretariat building is capable of accommodating 174 officials, and the building now under consideration, if enlarged as recommended by the Committee, and excluding the space required for library purposes, would accommodate 266 - a total of 440.

It was thought, therefore, that if requirements at Canberra could be restricted to 440 officials until the permanent Commonwealth Offices are completed - i.e., for a period of four or five years - much unnecessary expense would be saved.

After hearing the evidence given by the permanent heads of the various Commonwealth Departments and obtaining the views of the Public Service Board of Commissioners through the Second Member, the Committee is satisfied that this can be done without prejudicially affecting the Service, although it should be recognised that any partial transfer must at times lead to some inconvenience.

17. It is not thought that the position could be adequately met by adopting either the original suggestion of transferring a secretariat of each Department or of transferring a permanent working nucleus of each Department, but calls for a scheme of transfer which would comprise:

- (a) staffs of officials of certain Departments to be permanently transferred at the outset;
- (b) nucleus staffs of officials of other Departments to be permanently transferred and supplemented as the occasion requires by the temporary transfer of other officials; and
- (c) staffs of officials of some Departments to be temporarily transferred for the session of Parliament, or such further period as the Minister remains in Canberra.

18. After carefully reviewing all the evidence obtained, the Committee considers that to avoid as far as possible disturbance of public business, undue hardening of prices for materials, and disruption of the labor market, the transfer of the Commonwealth Service to Canberra should be effected in three stages, viz., :-

(a) FIRST STAGE.

	By transfer permanently.	By transfer for session of Parliament.
Prime Minister's Department	53	-
Public Service Board	2	-
Attorney-General's Dept.	20	-
Auditor-General's Dept.	3	-
Dept. of Home & Territories	2	5
Dept. of the Treasury	3	12
Dept. of Defence & Navy	20	-
Department of Health	-	2
Dept. of Works & Railways	1	6
Postmaster-General's Dept.	4	-
Dept. of Markets & Migration	3	-
Dept. of Trade & Customs	3	9
	<u>114</u>	<u>34</u>
	<u>TOTAL- 148</u>	

(b) SECOND STAGE

Home & Territories Dept.	40
Works & Railways Dept.	46
Treasury	48
Trade & Customs	82
Health	16
Markets & Migration	22
	<u>TOTAL - 254</u>

(c) THIRD STAGE

The remainder of all Departments.

Dates on which Transfers could take place.

19. (a) FIRST STAGE

All the evidence before the Committee indicates that the Provisional Parliament House, the first secretariat building, and housing accommodation for staffs, should be completed in time to enable the first transfer to be effected by June, 1926.

(b) SECOND STAGE

The transfer of the second stage depends not entirely on the time that would be occupied in the erection of the second building now under consideration, but on the provision of housing accommodation for staffs and their families, completion of water, sewer, lighting and such like essential services.

In a report dated 13th. August, 1925, the Chairman, Federal Capital Commission, intimated that he desired two full years from the date of completion of the first stage before he would be ready for the second stage, so that, under these circumstances, the second stage could be effected by about June, 1928. The Committee, however, considers that if the aid of private enterprise be enlisted, this second stage could be considerably accelerated.

(c) THIRD STAGE

The transfer of the remaining officials of all Departments would be effected when the permanent Commonwealth Offices are ready for occupation, which might be taken as approximately 1930.

20. It should be mentioned that this scheme excludes consideration of an estimated staff of 100 to be employed in the Government Printing Office, which will be provided for in the temporary Government Printing Office; a staff of about 38 needed to meet public requirements at the Canberra Post-office which will be accommodated in that office; and the Parliamentary staff of about 86 which will be accommodated in the Parliament House.

COMMITTEE'S DECISION.

21. Having satisfied itself that the building under consideration, if enlarged as proposed, will fit in with the scheme of transfer, and that it will be available for other purposes when no longer required for the accommodation of the National Library and departmental officials, the Committee has no hesitation in recommending that construction be proceeded with as early as possible.

The decision arrived at in connection with this matter is shown by the following extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee:-

Senator Reid moved :

That to bring this building into harmony with the first secretariat building, a lower or basement floor be introduced in the central and north flanking building as proposed by the Chief Commonwealth Architect.

Seconded by Mr. Mathews.

Carried unanimously.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

22. Briefly summarised, the recommendations of the Committee are as follow :-

- (1) That the erection of a building for the National Library and other purposes be proceeded with as early as possible;
- (2) That a lower or basement floor be introduced in the central and the north flanking building;
- (3) That no lifts be provided in the building, but that space be left so that they may be included if required in the future;
- (4) That a system of outside ornamental steps, giving access to the middle and ground floors, be provided;
- (5) That consideration be given to the question of transferring officials to Canberra in three stages as under :

FIRST STAGE :

Department.	By transfer permanently.	By transfer for session of Parliament.
Prime Minister	53	-
Public Service Board	2	-
Attorney-General	20	-
Auditor-General	3	-
Home & Territories	2	5
Treasury	3	12
Defence & Navy	20	-
Health	-	2
Works & Railways	1	6
Postmaster-General	4	-
Markets and Migration	3	-
Trade & Customs	3	9
	<u>114</u>	<u>34</u>
	<u>TOTAL - 148</u>	

SECOND STAGE :

Home & Territories	40	
Works & Railways	46	
Treasury	48	
Trade & Customs	82	
Health	16	
Markets & Migration	<u>22</u>	254.

THIRD STAGE :

The remainder of all Departments.

H. Gregory
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Federal Parliament House, Melbourne.
21st. September, 1925.