

1927.



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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE

ON PUBLIC WORKS.

SEP 29 1927

REPORT

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

RELATING TO THE PROPOSED

ERECTION OF COMMONWEALTH OFFICES, BRISBANE.

Presented by Command; ordered to be printed,

1927.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(Fifth Committee.)

(Appointed 22nd January, 1926.)

GEORGE HUGH MACKAY, Esq., M.P., Chairman.

Senate.

Senator John Barnes.
 Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch.†
 Senator Herbert James Mockford Payne.‡
 Senator Matthew Reid.

† Resigned 2nd March, 1927.
 ‡ Resigned 20th June, 1926.

House of Representatives.

Mr. Malcolm Duncan Cameron, Esq., M.P.
 Robert Cook, Esq., M.P.
 *The Honorable Henry Gregory, M.P.
 Andrew William Lacey, Esq., M.P.
 David Charles McGrath, Esq., M.P.
 Alfred Charles Seabrook, Esq., M.P.

† Appointed 1st July, 1926.
 ‡ Appointed 24th March, 1927.

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9TH FEBRUARY, 1927.

Departmental, No. 35

Executive Council, No. 6

Approved in Council.

(Sgd.) W. C. HILL

for Governor-General.
9th February, 1927.Filed in the Records of the
Executive Council.

(Sgd.) J. H. STARLING.

Works and Railways Department,
 8th February, 1927.

MINUTE PAPER FOR THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

Subject—Reference to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

Recommended for the approval of His Excellency the Governor-General in Council that, in accordance with the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act* 1913-1921, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for its investigation and report thereon to the House of Representatives, viz. :—

Brisbane, Queensland—Erection of Commonwealth Offices.

(Sgd.)

W. C. HILL,

Minister of State for Works and Railways.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

ERECTION OF COMMONWEALTH OFFICES, BRISBANE.
REPORT.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred, for investigation and report, the question of the erection of Commonwealth Offices, Brisbane, has the honour to report as follows :—

INTRODUCTORY.

1. Facing the Central Railway Station, Brisbane, is an area of land bounded by Ann, Edward, Adelaide, and Creek streets. Of this area, a block having frontages of 132 feet to Ann and Adelaide streets by about 295 feet along Creek-street is privately owned; the adjoining block, 132 feet to Ann and Adelaide streets, by a depth of 295 feet, was the property of the Commonwealth, and the remainder was State property.

2. For some time a proposal has been under consideration to provide an ornamental square in front of the entrance to the Central Railway Station, Brisbane, and in 1921 an arrangement was arrived at under which the State and Commonwealth agreed to make available strips of land having frontages of 166 feet and 34 feet respectively by the full depth of their land—the block of 200 feet by about 295 feet to be then vested in the Brisbane City Council for the purpose of forming an ornamental square to be known as the Anzac Memorial Square. It was also agreed that sufficient land should be made available by the State and Commonwealth to enable the City Council to widen Ann and Adelaide streets by 14 feet.

3. In 1922, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works reported on and recommended a proposal to erect on the reduced Commonwealth area a block of offices for taxation and other Commonwealth purposes. It was suggested that this building should be of five stories, providing approximately 86,000 square feet of effective space, and cost £115,000.

4. To give effect to this Committee's recommendation, all preparations had been made to call-tenders for the erection of the building, but during 1923, representatives of the City of Brisbane waited on the Acting Prime Minister, Dr. Earle Page, and asked that the erection of the building should not be proceeded with, as an endeavour was being made to get a larger square.

5. Extended negotiations then took place between the Commonwealth and State Governments, the Brisbane City Council, and the Returned Soldiers' Association, with the object of the Commonwealth and State Governments donating additional strips of their land towards a civic improvement scheme, consisting of a public square incorporating with it a site for a Soldiers' Memorial intended to be erected by public subscription.

6. As a result of these negotiations, the Commonwealth and State Governments each agreed to hand over an additional 12 ft. 6 in. of land, thereby making an ornamental square 225 feet wide by the full depth of the block.

PRESENT PROPOSAL.

7. The proposal now submitted to the Committee is that on the remaining area of Commonwealth property, having frontages of approximately 86 ft. 7½ in. to Ann and Adelaide streets, by a depth of 269 ft. 4 in., there be erected a building for the purpose of housing those Commonwealth activities at present occupying rented premises in Brisbane.

The building suggested is of seven stories, to be constructed with a granite base and stone facing for two stories high, and above that brick or concrete plastered to imitate stone. It will be of the usual fire-proof construction, with concrete floors 7½-in. thick supported by steel pillars encased in concrete, and having steel window sashes and a flat roof. It is planned to give large open floor space, with two indented light areas each 26 feet wide, thus making ample

provision for effective natural lighting. The height of the ground floor will be 13 ft. 1½ in., and all other floors 11 ft. 7½ in. Two main staircases will be introduced into the building, as well as four electrical lifts each 6 ft. x 7 ft. There will be four groups of lavatories on each floor, and three strong rooms of sizes 23 ft. x 12 ft., 5 ft. x 8 ft., and 6 ft. x 8 ft. on each floor. There is no suggestion of heating the building, and the cleaning will be carried out by portable vacuum-cleaning machines.

The building as proposed will provide effective office space—excluding essential corridors, light areas, staircases, and lavatories—of 96,730 square feet.

ESTIMATED COST.

8. The estimated cost of the proposal as submitted to the Committee is set down at £170,464, and the time fixed for completion two and a half to three years from date of commencement.

COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION.

9. The Committee took evidence in Melbourne from the Chief Commonwealth Architect and in Sydney from a representative of the Commonwealth Bank, and then visited Brisbane, where inspections were made of existing premises and evidence taken from the Mayor of Greater Brisbane, representatives of the State Government, and the Returned Soldiers' Association, and from the Commonwealth Works Director, the Commonwealth Public Service Inspector, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation and others.

GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING.

10. A careful inspection was made of the General Post Office Building, Brisbane, with a view to ascertaining whether any of the Departments now occupying rented premises could be provided for in that building. It was stated in evidence that on completion of the new Automatic Telephone Exchange Building now in course of erection, a space of approximately 17,000 square feet would be vacated by the existing manual telephone exchange. Of this approximately 5,000 feet will probably be required for the Postal Institute Officers' luncheon and recreation rooms now located in dark and unsuitable quarters in the basement. In the opinion of the Committee the space remaining is not suitable for the accommodation of those Departments under consideration which, moreover, could only be regarded as occupying the space on sufferance until required for postal purposes.

11. Experience in other cities has shown that in recent years postal requirements have enormously expanded, and with the increase of population and greater development foreshadowed in Queensland, the same fact will be evidenced in Brisbane. The Committee therefore considered it wise to leave the postal area free for the ultimate development of the various activities of that Department.

EXISTING RENTED OFFICES.

12. It was stated in evidence that approximately 27,000 square feet of office space is now rented for Commonwealth purposes in Brisbane at a cost of about £5,000 per annum, and that a considerable portion of this accommodation is unsuitable and inadequate, and constitutes a grave fire risk.

13. After personally inspecting this existing office accommodation, and hearing the evidence of the principal Commonwealth officials, the Committee is satisfied that more adequate, convenient, hygienic and fire-resisting premises are necessary. It is considered that greater convenience to the public and increased economy and efficiency might be expected to result from the concentration of the principal activities of the Commonwealth in a central position in its own building, and the Committee therefore is unanimously of opinion that the erection of Commonwealth offices in Brisbane should be proceeded with.

SITE.

14. The land upon which it is proposed to erect the new building was handed over by the State to the Commonwealth as a transferred property in 1901 at a valuation of £20,000, upon which the Commonwealth is paying 3½ per cent. to the State Government. It is, at present, regarded as being worth considerably more.

15. All the evidence obtained by the Committee indicated that it is suitable for building purposes and in a position convenient for the public and for the officials to be housed therein. The level of Ann-street is approximately 26 feet above that of Adelaide-street, so that accommodation on the ground floor at the Ann-street end will not be quite as good as regards light as in other portions of the building, although some help may be obtained by an arrangement of prism lights in the pavement.

BUILDINGS.

16. In 1922, when the Committee investigated the proposal to erect Commonwealth Offices in Brisbane, it obtained from the authorized representative of the State Government an assurance that, with the formation of the central ornamental square, the State would, when utilizing its property for building purposes, erect structures in architectural harmony with those erected by the Commonwealth, but stipulated that the State Architect should have an opportunity to confer with the Commonwealth Architect and examine the plans of the proposed Commonwealth building before their final adoption. Since the decision to increase the size of the square, a conference has been held between representatives of the State and Commonwealth Governments and of the Greater Brisbane City Council, and approval given for the proposed building in accordance with the plans submitted to the Committee.

17. A building of the design indicated meets with the approval of the Committee, which is unanimously of opinion that it would prove eminently suitable for the purpose for which it is intended.

SIZE OF THE BUILDING.

18. The building as planned will have a length of about 269 feet, which will be divided by the indented light areas into three approximately equal sections. The floor space available in the first or Ann-street section will amount to 33,684 square feet; the first and second sections together will contain 64,530 square feet; and the whole building 96,730 square feet of effective office space.

19. It was stated in evidence that the Commonwealth Departments in Brisbane at present occupying rented premises are:—

Electoral	2,360 square feet.
Works and Railways	3,600 "
Pensions	1,820 "
Taxation	4,850 "
Audit	1,220 "
Dairy Inspection	500 "
Navigation and Lighthouses	3,130 "
Meat Inspector	500 "
Public Service Inspector	1,300 "
Quarantine	1,300 "
Sub-Treasury	1,210 "
Attorney-General	630 "
War Service Homes	4,800 "
Total:	27,220 "

Allowing for probable expansion of Departments over a period of ten years, the Commonwealth requirements might be taken roughly at 35,000 square feet.

20. It was explained in evidence that the reason for designing a building of the size proposed is to utilize available land which is at present unproductive; while the aesthetic value of the square would naturally be enhanced by the completion of the architectural feature along the whole of its eastern side at once. Although it may not be considered within the legitimate functions of the Commonwealth to provide office accommodation for lease to private individuals, it was suggested that any accommodation not required for Commonwealth purposes might be made available for other public instrumentalities, as on the estimates prepared it was shown that if the whole building were proceeded with space could be rented at the low price of about 3s. per square foot per annum. With this object in view, information was sought from representatives of the State Government and of the Commonwealth Bank, to ascertain whether any such accommodation would be required by them.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS.

21. As a result of the Committee's investigation it may be stated that the Commonwealth Bank is prepared to lease accommodation to the extent of 10,000 square feet of effective office space; the Queensland Main Roads Commission 15,000 and the State Government 10,000 feet.

REPATRIATION DEPARTMENT.

22. It was stated in evidence that the Repatriation Department is located in a building unsuitable for its requirements, and inconveniently situated from the point of view of the sick and limbless soldiers who have to attend from time to time at that office. This building was purchased and fitted up for its present purposes some years ago and has cost the Commonwealth approximately £10,000. The evidence received indicated that there should be no difficulty in disposing of these

premises at a price which would recoup the Commonwealth for its expenditure thereon, and if this be so, the Committee considers that this Commonwealth activity, which requires approximately 10,000 square feet of office space, might with advantage also be located in the proposed new building.

LUNCHEON ROOM.

23. During the course of the inquiry a suggestion was made that provision should be included in this building for a luncheon room, following the practice of many large firms and some government offices in thus catering for the convenience and comfort of their employees.

24. Whilst members are averse from recommending anything in the nature of an elaborate catering establishment, the Committee is unanimously of opinion that space should be set aside in the building for the purpose indicated, and recommends accordingly.

25. It was shown that the luncheon and recreation rooms in the present General Post Office have an area of approximately 5,000 square feet, and it is considered that about 4,000 feet would be ample in this instance.

FEDERAL MEMBERS' ROOMS.

26. The provision of office space for Ministers, Federal Members, and Committees in Brisbane, is very inconvenient and inadequate, and it is recommended that accommodation should be set aside to the extent of about 2,000 square feet in the proposed building to meet these requirements.

SUMMARY.

27. Summarized, therefore, the amount of space required may be set down at—

Existing Departments in rented buildings allowing for normal expansion over a period of 10 years	35,000 sq. ft.
Repatriation Department	10,000 "
Luncheon room	4,000 "
Federal Members, Ministers and Committees	2,800 "
Commonwealth Bank	10,000 "
State Government	10,000 "
Main Roads Commission	15,000 "
Total	86,800 "

28. Although these figures still leave an excess in the new building of nearly 10,000 square feet of space, the Committee is aware that it has been the experience in all States that requirements have been under-estimated rather than over-estimated. The fact, also, has not been lost sight of that there is a possibility of the formation of new departments or extension of present functions which may demand further accommodation; and it is safe to assume that 10 years hence Commonwealth activities in Brisbane may be vastly different from anything that can be visualized at the present time.

DECISION.

29. After carefully reviewing the whole matter, therefore, the Committee is unanimously of opinion that the erection of a seven-story building to cover the whole of the Commonwealth property between Adelaide and Ann streets, as suggested by the Department of Works and Railways, be proceeded with.

MATERIALS.

30. As previously stated, an agreement has been arrived at between representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments and the Greater Brisbane Council that the building to be constructed should have a granite base, stone facing for two stories high, and above that brick or concrete plastered to imitate stone. In view of the class of material available locally the Committee is unanimously of opinion that the granite and sandstone proposed to be used in facing the building should be obtained from Queensland quarries.

G. H. Mackay
G. H. MACKAY,
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Federal Parliament House, Canberra,
23rd May, 1927.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

16th MARCH, 1927.

Present:

Mr. MACKAY, Chairman;

Senator Barnes	Mr. Lacey
Senator Payne	Mr. McGrath
Senator Reid	Mr. Seabrook
Mr. Cook	

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

1. To the Chairman.—The proposed erection of Commonwealth offices in Brisbane has been before the Committee in several forms. The following minute to Cabinet by the Minister for Works and Railways, dated 1st February, 1927, sets out the position:—

In 1922, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works recommended that a first section of this building should be erected on the valuable city site held by the Commonwealth in Brisbane. To give effect to the Committee's recommendation, all preparations had been made to call tenders for erection of the building, but action was suspended as a result of local representations which were made to the Acting Prime Minister, that a further donation of portion of the site, additional to the portion previously promised, should be made towards a civic improvement scheme, consisting of a Public Square, incorporating with it a site for a soldiers' memorial, intended to be erected by public subscription.

This request led to extended negotiations between the Federal and State Governments, the Brisbane Council, and the Returned Soldiers' Association, until finally an 'improvement scheme was evolved on lines agreeable to all these interested parties.

As a contribution to this last scheme, the Cabinet, upon the Minister's recommendation, agreed to the surrender of an additional 12 ft. 6 in. frontage of the Commonwealth land, which, with the previous donation of 24 feet, represents a total frontage of 46 ft. 6 in.

The Cabinet minutes stated that "the Attorney General's Department" was verbally consulted in regard to the present proposal to increase the width of land to be surrendered from 40 feet to 46 ft. 6 in., and was advised that, strictly speaking, the matter should be referred again to the Public Works Committee; but it was suggested that the case could be met by the Minister for Works and Railways explaining the matter to the House, perhaps on a motion of adjournment, by which means the House would be fully informed of the action the Government proposed to take." However, I did not have an opportunity to inform the House.

It seems to me that further reference will have to be made, because the building proposal has been necessarily greatly altered by the new dimensions of the site, and, since the Committee's previous investigations, conditions affecting the future occupation of the building, and aspects of it connected with other public interests concerned in the improvement scheme, have also changed.

The member for Brisbane is being locally pressed to influence progress with the work, and as Parliament will not meet until the 2nd proximo, I recommend that the proposal be referred to the Public Works Committee by the Governor-General, in accordance with provision under section 15 (7) of the Public Works Committee Act 1912-21.

The Cabinet having approved of the minute, the proposal now before the Committee is as to the form of building to be erected on the smaller area. The Government having agreed to give the land asked for, steps are now being taken by the Crown Solicitor to prepare the deed of submission. Consequently, the Committee is not called upon to investigate the donation of the additional land. When this proposal was

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before the Committee previously the scheme was to donate 40 feet frontage of Commonwealth land, which approximately measured 132 feet by 295 feet, having frontages to Adelaide and Ann streets. The Queensland Government agreed to cede 100 feet frontage for the purpose of creating a square 200 feet wide in the centre of Brisbane. This proposal was reported upon by the Committee, and agreed to by Parliament, but subsequently there was an agitation in Brisbane for an enlarged square, the prevailing opinion being that the whole area included in the Ann, Adelaide, Edward, and Creek street frontages should be made into a square. However, that scheme was not acceptable, either to the State or Commonwealth Governments, and a deadlock occurred. It was then suggested that both Governments might be induced to increase their donations of land so as to make it possible to have a square 295 feet wide instead of 200 feet wide. This was considered at a public meeting in Brisbane. Both Governments agreed to make the extra contribution of land. In that form, the proposal was acceptable to the Greater Brisbane Council, and also to the committee having in hand the proposal to erect a soldiers' memorial. In addition to the donation of 46 ft. 6 in. of Commonwealth land, the Commonwealth is also widening Adelaide and Ann streets. The State Government proposes to widen Ann-street from 68 feet to 80 feet. Adelaide-street has been widened already. When the Committee investigated the proposal to erect Commonwealth offices in Brisbane, in 1922, it obtained from an authorized representative of the State Government an assurance that, with the formation of a central ornamental square, the State would, when utilizing its property for building purposes, erect structures in architectural harmony with those erected by the Commonwealth, but stipulated that the State architect should have an opportunity to confer with the Commonwealth architect, and to examine the plans of the proposed Commonwealth building before their final adoption. When it was decided to increase the square from 200 to 225 feet, I took steps to plan the Commonwealth building for the reduced area available. When all excisions are made, the land available will enable a building 260 ft. 4 in. by 86 ft. 7½ in. to be erected. The Commonwealth is anxious to have better accommodation for its departments in Brisbane; and so that no time may be lost, I immediately set about revising the building scheme to suit the new area. I saw both the Mayor of Brisbane and the Chief Officer of the State Public Works Department in Brisbane. The Mayor asked me to prepare a plan so as to give the scheme a start. Accordingly, I prepared three alternative schemes, and sent copies of them to the Mayor of Brisbane, the State Public Works Department, and to our own officer in Brisbane, with a request that they should confer and come to an agreement, particularly as to height and character of the building, as well as the materials to be employed. It is desirable that both the Commonwealth and State buildings should be similar in design and harmonious in other respects. The negotiations proceeded amicably. Representatives of the Commonwealth, the State Government, and the Greater Brisbane Council, agreed that the adoption of one of the alternative schemes submitted would meet the

views of all concerned. They gave approval for the erection of a building seven stories high, with a granite base, and stone facing for two stories high, and above that brick or concrete plastered to imitate stone. I approve of that scheme, as it will make it possible to erect suitable buildings without involving undue expenditure. I submit for the information of the Committee, preliminary sketch plans of the proposed Commonwealth building. It will have a floor space of 96,730 square feet, as compared with 86,000 square feet in the previous scheme. This does not include corridors essential to the working of the building, staircases, or lavatories. Since the proposal was under consideration by the Committee previously, the Commonwealth requirements as regards accommodation in Brisbane are not so great, because the Commonwealth has effected certain administrative economies in connexion with the Taxation Department. The building will derive its light from Ann and Adelaide streets, and also from the square, as well as from two indented light areas each 20 feet wide. The design of the building is such as to make us independent of lighting from the fourth side, although until the time comes when the owners of the adjacent land there build up to the height of the Commonwealth building, we shall be able to obtain light from that side also. It may be possible to obtain permanent air and light there, because I think it probable that, in the scheme for the development of the private property adjoining the Commonwealth land, an arrangement may be made for an easement for air and light. Provision has been made to serve the existing building on the private land by making an entrance from Adelaide-street to the back of the building. If that principle is adopted in the future development of the private property, it may be possible, as I have suggested, to obtain permanent air and light. In fact, we can put in windows to admit light, and all the neighbouring proprietors could do would be to erect hoardings to block it. I have said that the new area, after all the surveys have been made, shows that there will be available for actual building, a frontage of 86 ft. 7 1/2 in. to Ann-street and Adelaide-street, and 269 ft. 4 in. to the square. The Committee will see that, by the system of lighting adopted, the building may be described as consisting of three separate blocks. It is exactly on the same lines as that shown on the plans previously before the Committee; but the building is to be erected on a smaller site. The seven floors will contain an area of 96,730 feet over and above lifts, lavatories, and staircases. The height of the ground floor will be 13 ft. 12 in.; the first floor, 12 ft. 14 in.; and all other floors, 11 ft. 7 1/2 in. The areas of each block can be conveniently subdivided into the necessary accommodation required by the departments which will occupy the building. For instance, provision can be made for large or small rooms, or a combination of both. It is proposed to introduce two main staircases to the building occupying positions at the ends of the light areas described. Within these staircases, it is proposed to have electrical lifts, each 6 feet by 7 feet, and in addition a further two lifts of the same size on the Ann-street and Adelaide-street sides to the building. These will, of course, face the corridors, and give access to the working areas of the building. The lifts are all served from the main corridors of the building, which are approached from Adelaide-street and Ann-street. There is a corridor 10 feet wide running right down the building, from which all lifts will open. There are similar corridors on each floor, and access will easily be available to all the space to be occupied, either by the Commonwealth Government or by the State Departments, should they occupy a portion of the building. There will be four groups of lavatories on each floor, each containing W.C.'s, lavatory basins and urinals. Ample

accommodation in this respect will be provided for any prospective occupants of the building. A strong-room, 23 feet by 12 feet, is provided on each floor, as well as two strong-rooms, 5 feet by 8 feet, and one 6 feet by 8 feet. No attempt has been made to accommodate any department on any particular floor; but, judging from experience, there is no doubt that ample strong-room accommodation will be provided in the building. Personally, I do not place a great deal of importance upon strong-rooms, as I regard the whole building as a strong-room. It will not contain anything liable to invite the attention of burglars; but, doubtless, income tax returns and similar documents of a private nature, will be kept under specially safe custody. The level of Ann-street is high when compared with the level of the square, and accommodation on the ground floor at the Ann-street end of the building will not be quite so good as regards light as in other portions of the building. When the departments are settled, that portion of the building on the lower floor may be used for the storage of papers and records. It is not altogether deficient in natural light, as some lighting will be obtained from Ann-street by an arrangement of prism lights in the pavement. The estimated cost of the whole building is £170,464. The engineering services contained in the estimates include £10,000 for four lifts, and £8,000 for electric light and power. There is no suggestion to heat the building, and the vacuum-cleaning will be carried out by portable vacuum-cleaning machines. The time which the building will take to construct will depend largely upon the contractor who undertakes the work; but it should be completed within two and a half to three years. The site was automatically transferred to the Commonwealth as a transferred property at a valuation of £20,000. When the scheme was before the Committee some time ago, the site was then estimated to be worth £25,000. The Commonwealth has been paying interest on the £20,000 since the land was acquired; but this can be only regarded as a book debt. The site is at present regarded as being worth about £37,500, which I think is a conservative estimate. The site is an important one in the centre of the City of Brisbane, and is at present unproductive. Commonwealth Government activities in Brisbane are being carried on in expensive and, in most cases, highly undesirable premises, and from an economic point of view, the situation is paradoxical. We have estimated the price at which space could be profitably let at about 2s. 6d. a foot a year if the whole building were occupied. The Departments in Brisbane at present occupying rented space are as follows:—Electoral Department, 2,360 feet; Works and Railways, 3,060 feet; Pensions Department, 1,820 feet; Taxation Department, 4,850 feet; Audit Department, 1,220 feet; Dairy Inspection Branch, 500 feet; Meat Inspector, 500 feet; Public Service Offices, 1,300 feet; Quarantine Offices, 1,300 feet; Sub-Treasury, 1,210 feet; and Attorney-General, 630 square feet. The space occupied by these Departments varies from time to time; but it may be said that they are now occupying approximately 30,000 feet. Considering the probable expansion of departments over a period of ten years, the requirements will be about 36,000 square feet, which I suggest should be taken as 30,000 square feet. From memory, I think the rentals paid by departments occupying rented properties amount to about £6,000; that was the figure last submitted to the Committee, but it may have increased since then. The proposal is to provide 96,000 square feet, although the Commonwealth is likely to require only 30,000 square feet, within the next ten years. This proposal involves an expenditure of 66,000 feet, which the Commonwealth is not likely to occupy for a good many years. The Committee could ascertain whether it would be good

business to proceed with the whole or a portion of the building in order to utilize all of the land. I take it that it would be a factor in influencing the Committee to come to a decision if some of the State or municipal departments could be induced to occupy a portion of the building at the very attractive rate at which the Commonwealth could afford to make space available. I do not suggest that the Commonwealth should provide accommodation to rent to private persons and thus compete with investors in the field of private enterprise, particularly as the Commonwealth is in a superior position in the matter of costs, since the Commonwealth pays no rates or taxes, and can command money at a cheaper rate, and on which it has not to earn a profit. I think I am within the mark in saying that, in providing building accommodation of this nature, a private investor would have to charge 6s. a foot in order to obtain a fair return on his capital. It is true that a building one half the size of that proposed would meet present requirements, and the only object in providing extra space is to utilize valuable land which at present is unproductive. Another alternative is that the Commonwealth might erect a building which would liberally meet its requirements and let the remainder of the land on a building lease, provided that the building to be erected followed the same lines architecturally as that now under consideration. I should like to see the whole site occupied, as I am anxious that the appearance of the Square should receive some consideration. If the whole building is not completed, the Square will not present a very attractive appearance. In many years, and the land would still be practically idle. If some expedient could be adopted whereby the whole building could be erected, it would not mean a loss to the Commonwealth, and as I have said, I think it may be possible to induce State and municipal departments to occupy a large portion, particularly at the attractive rental of 2s. 6d. a square foot. The head of the Central Roads Board has already informed me that he is anxious to obtain about 16,000 square feet for his department. There is also a probability that the Railway Department, which is occupying indifferent office accommodation, would also be willing to take some space. Public opinion in Brisbane is to the effect that the Railway Offices should be demolished and Adelaide-street extended. I think it is possible also that the Commonwealth Bank authorities might be induced to take a considerable floor space of the building. Recently, I designed a new building for the Bank in Queen-street, and from what I know of the operations of the institution, and from the way in which Brisbane is growing, I hold the opinion that the Commonwealth Bank will not be able to carry out all its general banking and savings bank business for any length of time in the new Queen-street building. The Commonwealth Bank, as members of the Committee are aware, has a monopoly of the savings bank business in Queensland, and the work is so enormous that I am of the opinion that, the Governor of the Bank may deem it advisable to at least partially divorce the savings bank operations from the general banking business in Brisbane. If so, then I know of no better accommodation in Brisbane than would be afforded by the ground floor of the proposed Commonwealth offices. There will be no premises in the whole of Brisbane more suitable for savings bank work, because it will be opposite the railway station, on the tram line, and fronting the Square, so that depositors—experience shows that in savings bank business these include a large number of women and children—will be most conveniently accommodated. It would be a most desirable place for savings bank business if the Commonwealth Bank authorities could be induced to look at it in that way. There will be a flat roof to the building, and arrangements are to be made with the

Meteorological Department to house the officials in charge of their work alongside the instruments on the centre portion of the roof. The plan also shows that provision is to be made for shelters for the staff during hours of recreation and leisure; but since the building is likely to be larger than is necessary for Commonwealth requirements, I suggest that the Committee disregard the shelter provisions—these can be added later. The windows will be of steel, and the building will be of the usual fire-proof construction, concrete floors 7 1/2 inches in thickness being supported by steel pillars increased in concrete. If the Committee finds that it cannot recommend the erection of the entire building, possibly it will make a recommendation for its erection in sections. In that event, I suggest that if one or two sections be approved of, building operations start from Ann-street. Should two sections only be built at the outset, it might be possible to lease the land to be occupied by the third section on building lease for, say, 50 years, on the understanding that the building to be erected on it should conform with the general design. We had the same problem in Perth, where we secured land for Commonwealth requirements for the next century and let portion of it for 50 years on a building lease. We are now getting a high return from that investment. The frontage in Adelaide-street, being more valuable than the Ann-street frontage, would return a greater revenue if let on building lease. It is not necessary for Government offices to occupy the most valuable portion of the land. The design of the building can be readily adapted for office accommodation, and I have no doubt that investors would take up a proposition of the kind suggested. There need be no objection to shops being provided on the ground floor of the Adelaide-street frontage. If one section only be erected, the floor space accommodation will be 33,684 square feet. This will hardly be sufficient for Commonwealth requirements, because the two lower floors on that frontage are not very well lighted as the building will be up against the retaining wall in Ann-street. The cost of the first section will be about £69,148. This works out at a rental of 3s. 10d. a square foot. The erection of two sections would provide 64,520 square feet at a probable cost of £121,375, or 3s. 3d. a square foot; but this cost will be offset by a rental obtained from the 92 feet of land which will be available on building lease. Brisbane is growing so rapidly that I feel sure there will be no difficulty in inducing private enterprise to adopt the proposal, though I am hopeful that the public may be able to enjoy the whole of the building.

2. To Senator Reid.—I think that if the Adelaide-street frontage is let on building lease there will be no objection by the lessee to a provision that the building must conform with the design of the Commonwealth building, because no better arrangement can be made, and for the period of its occupation there should be no reason why shops could not be put in. My hope is that the Committee will be able to recommend the adoption of the scheme in its entirety, because even if it is in excess of Commonwealth requirements, it should be possible to utilize the whole of the accommodation. One State Department in Brisbane has already asked us to make available over 16,000 square feet. I should like to see the Commonwealth Savings Bank occupy the whole of the ground floor and conduct its operations from Adelaide-street right through to Ann-street. I think that the bank will require that much space in a few years' time. It may be difficult at this juncture to get the bank authorities to commit themselves, but from the way in which its business is developing in Brisbane I feel sure its new bank building may perhaps require to be erected earlier than is supposed, and on occasion visit the Savings Bank in Brisbane not long ago, and I found a large crowd of people overflowing the pavement

waiting for the doors to open, just as people wait to get into a theatre, and when the doors were opened they were allowing one another in order to get to the counter first. This class of business is not in consonance with the business of general banking, and doubtless must eventually be catered for in a separate building. On the Creek-street side, above the height of buildings erected on the adjacent privately-owned land, we propose to put in windows to take full advantage of light and air from that side of the building. It is not light so much as air that I am concerned about, and it so happens that the best breezes come from the Creek-street side.

3. To Mr. Lacey.—The Committee in 1922 recommended the erection of a building of five stories as the first section, the understanding being that additional floors could be added later. That scheme was held up because, as I have stated, of the agitation for additional land for the square. At present we are paying high rents for indifferent office accommodation in Brisbane. The work of erecting Commonwealth offices in Brisbane has been held up owing to a local controversy as to the form the project should take. All the materials I have mentioned for use in construction are obtainable locally. Although I have submitted alternative proposals, I should like to see the whole building erected.

4. To Senator Payne.—Any one who has not inspected the site may be in doubt as to how it is proposed to enter it from Ann-street, where the building is somewhat lower. Ann-street is about 26 feet above the level of Adelaide-street. The square commences at Adelaide-street on the level and goes back to Ann-street, where there is a retaining wall. It is proposed to construct a subway into the station joining the present subway, and, in addition, there is to be a wide monumental stair coming from the level of the square to the level of Ann-street. At present the pedestrian traffic from the station has to go around via Creek-street or Edward-street in order to get into the city. The difference in the heights of the floors shown on the plan as compared with those I mentioned this morning is due to the fact that those on the plan are from floor to floor, whereas those I mentioned in evidence are from floor to ceiling. Although there is a possibility of the State Government erecting its own building at some future date, I think it will be found that State Departments will be prepared to lease accommodation for a considerable time. The State activities in Brisbane are so numerous and so important that the State Government may find it prudent to occupy space in this building at the figure I have suggested. It will be for the Committee to decide whether that is likely. No impulse will come from any slackness of trade in Queensland, where the building trade is very brisk.

5. To Mr. Seabrook.—I did not suggest that the Government would not to purchase a strip of land 12 ft. 6 in. wide on the site adjoining in order to provide a light area. No decision has been reached concerning the manner in which the floor space will be subdivided. In modern practice, ideal office accommodation is procured by providing one large room. Adequate provision has been made for providing light to all portions of the building, and the plan shows in dotted lines prospective corridors which may or may not be needed. The whole building has been designed in such a way that light will not have to be borrowed.

6. To Senator Reid.—I believe I was responsible for suggesting to the State authorities and to the Council that a portion of the building should be of granite and stone facings and the balance in cement work. The scarcity of stone-masons is largely responsible for altered construction in recent years.

(Taken at Sydney.)

FRIDAY, 13TH MAY, 1927.

Present:

Mr. MACRAY, Chairman;

Senator Barnes	Mr. Cook
Senator Payne	Mr. Lacey
Senator Reid	Mr. McGrath
Mr. M. Cameron	Mr. Seabrook

Hugh Traill Arncliffe, Chief Inspector of the Commonwealth Bank, sworn and examined.

7. To the Chairman.—The Melbourne office of the Bank has asked the Sydney office to consider the matter of the proposed construction of Commonwealth offices at Brisbane, and give evidence before this committee. I went through the plans with Mr. Murdoch this morning. About two or three months ago Sir Robert Gibson (our chairman of directors), Mr. Riddo (the deputy governor), and I were in Brisbane, and, in the course of our inquiries into the business there, we found that our Savings Bank business was subjected to very large rushes of people on Saturday mornings, before and after holidays, and on similar occasions. We came to the conclusion that it would be very desirable, if possible, to house the main portion of our Savings Bank work in a building quite separate from the ordinary trading and general banking facilities. The scheme of Savings Bank people interfered very much with the general working of the Bank. The matter was discussed at the last board meeting, and we came to the conclusion that if the Commonwealth decided to put up offices in Brisbane, we could take approximately 10,000 feet of space on the ground floor. Our present idea is that if the building were erected, as proposed, in three sections, we should take the ground floor of the two sections facing Adelaide-street, and two-thirds of the distance along the Anzac Square front.

This would represent an estimated area of 10,000 feet working space. We should require a long tenure. We had in mind a tenure of 50 years, at a rental of between 2s. 6d. and 3s. per foot per annum. If we could get anything more permanent than a 50 years' tenure, we should be prepared to take it at the same rental. We regard ourselves as a Commonwealth institution, and we have rented space in our Commonwealth Bank, Sydney, to the Commonwealth Government at 5 per cent. on capital cost. That rental will never alter. As a matter of fact, although rentals have gone up in Sydney, we have not increased the rate to the Commonwealth Government, because we consider that, as between the Commonwealth Government and Commonwealth activities, rentals should be based on capital cost only. In those circumstances, there would be no need for a revision of the rental at which we should occupy space in the Commonwealth offices, Brisbane. We do not require a building lease, but we should require the right to sublet for the first period of time. At first we probably could not make use of more than one section of the building, bringing in the other section later on, as we required it. However, the whole question would be subject to an arrangement between the Commonwealth Government and the Bank. It would suit us to take possession of the space before the building was finished. In Brisbane, we run the Savings Bank and the general banking department in two distinct buildings. In the meantime, we are putting up a large building of our own, which will be completed in approximately two years, and our idea then was to bring the two departments under the one roof. But if the Commonwealth offices are erected, we could leave the Savings Bank department where it is for the time being, and thus avoid two moves. We could enter into occupancy of the new building in two years,

and it is quite possible that we might ask for the lower section to be made available before the whole building would be completed. In Queensland, the Commonwealth Bank does the whole of the Savings Bank business of the State, which means that we have very heavy calls on our space. For that reason, we prefer to keep the Savings Bank business, which is really of a different class from the ordinary trading bank business, in a separate building. I do not think that we shall ever require more than 10,000 feet, because we would still do some Savings Bank business at the main office in Queen-street, and in our branches in George-street and South Brisbane. I am inclined to think that 10,000 feet would be all that we should require for 20 or 30 years. The provision of strong rooms is a very material point. We do not keep large cash reserves at our Savings Bank. These are kept at the Queen-street branch. We keep only the bread-and-butter cash at the Savings Bank. The basement is the best place for a strong-room. Although we should not require very large strong-room accommodation, so far as actual cash is concerned, we should want considerable strong-room space for our books and records; and if it is decided to build the Commonwealth offices, we shall have to consult Mr. Murdoch, and ask him if he will put sufficient strong-room accommodation in our section of the building.

8. To Senator Reid.—In addition to the area which we are occupying in Queen-street, we own the 33 feet adjoining. We are now building on that 33 feet, and when this building is completed we shall remove our general bank to it, and carry on there while we go on with our construction on the site alongside which we are now occupying. It depends entirely upon the growth of Brisbane whether or not we should require the second floor of the proposed Commonwealth offices. If Brisbane, in 50 years, has a population to justify it, we shall want more space, but it is quite ample for us to look ahead for twenty years. I do not care to look ahead for more than that period, and I think that 10,000 feet will satisfy our requirements for the next twenty years. We prefer, if possible, to move straight away from Creek-street to Adelaide-street, without having to go temporarily into Queen-street.

9. To Mr. Cook.—A smaller space than 10,000 feet in the proposed building would not be sufficient for the time being. Our aim is to decentralize the rush of Savings Bank business. We have also built in George-street, where we hope to do a good deal of Savings Bank business, and we have put up a building in South Brisbane, as a population grows, and the necessity arises, instead of concentrating all our business in one building, we shall split it up. The banks in London have found it necessary to have offices on every corner instead of doing business in one main office. I understand that the proposed rental of 2s. 6d. or 3s. per foot per annum is based on 7 per cent. capital value, and includes interest and sinking fund. We are in our own building in Queen-street, where we carry on a general banking. The Creek-street office is a temporary office, which we have erected on land we leased from the Queensland National Bank. We pay the Queensland National Bank a ground rent. The land was leased to us on very advantageous terms for two or three years. As a matter of fact, we pay them practically nothing because it was simply a spare block. They said that if we put up a building, they would be satisfied if we paid them sufficient to cover rates and taxes. As to the lay-out of the proposed building, we would have to go into the matter very carefully and thoroughly with Mr. Murdoch. We would have two entrances from Adelaide-street and Anzac Square, and these, with a through corridor, would give us all we need. Having inspected the plans this morning, I can say that the space proposed to be allotted to us is particularly suitable.

10. To Senator Barnes.—Although the Commonwealth Bank is a separate entity, it is an instrument of the Commonwealth, and, as between one Commonwealth Department and another, the rental should be based on sufficient to cover interest and sinking fund on capital cost. It has to be borne in mind that half of the profits of the Commonwealth Bank go to the Commonwealth Government for sinking fund purposes, therefore any advantage the Bank would derive in the matter of a reduced rental would go back to the Treasury. We are now giving the Commonwealth Government a big advantage in the Commonwealth Bank, Sydney. The Government rents about four floors in that building, and the rental value was fixed at 5 per cent. on capital cost, when the building was finished in 1916. The capital cost then was £164,000. It would probably cost about £350,000 to erect the building now. We have not put up the rent, although the capital value of the building has increased. The Commonwealth Government still rents its space in the building on the basis of 5 per cent. on £164,000. And as long as it continues to occupy this space, it will continue to pay that rent. We are now asking the Commonwealth to reciprocate in the same way. I cannot say that the Commonwealth Bank will be doing the whole of the banking of Australia in 50 years.

11. To Senator Payne.—I understand that the proposed rental of from 2s. 6d. to 3s. is based, not only on the capital cost of building, but also on the unimproved value of the land. We have not given any consideration to the class of person to whom we might sublet the space we should occupy, but we would be quite prepared to stipulate that any tenant to whom we might sublet should be acceptable to the proper Commonwealth department.

12. To Mr. M. Cameron.—If the Commonwealth asked for a rental of more than 3s. 6d. per foot per annum, it would be more than the rental value of the building, and we should probably be obliged to look around and see if we could not get something more in keeping with our needs.

(Taken at Brisbane.)

TUESDAY, 17TH MAY, 1927.

Present:

Mr. MACRAY, Chairman;

Senator Barnes	Mr. Cook
Senator Payne	Mr. Lacey
Senator Reid	Mr. McGrath
Mr. M. Cameron	Mr. Seabrook

William Alfred Jolly, Mayor of Brisbane, sworn and examined.

13. To the Chairman.—The Brisbane City Council will not require any space in the proposed Commonwealth offices in Brisbane. When the new city hall is completed at the end of this year, we shall not require any further accommodation. The city council, under the Greater Brisbane Scheme, will eventually control all the numerous activities in Brisbane, outside State departments. I am anxious to get the best type of building for Commonwealth offices here, but I have no desire to mislead the committee into the belief that there is a possibility of any semi-public body being erected in the new building. The likely to require space in the new building. The Water and Sewerage Board has all the space it requires, but is making arrangements for it. I am not in a position to say definitely what that board might

require. This committee, in its report in 1922, recommended the holding of a conference between the representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments, and the Brisbane City Council. That conference has been held. Mr. Foster, the city architect, has furnished me with the following report:—

PROMISED ANZAC SQUARE.

With reference to the above, I have the honour to report that the city planner and myself met in conference on Tuesday afternoon, the 27th inst., at the Department of Public Works, George-street, Mr. Quinn (the Under Secretary and Director of Public Works), Mr. Orwin (the Federal Director of Works), and Mr. Barker (superintending architect, Federal Works Department), and the following points were definitely decided upon:—

1. That the State Government buildings, when erected, shall be designed to harmonize with those to be erected by the Commonwealth Government as regards height, materials, &c., Mr. Quinn stating that Cabinet was fully in accord with this, and had minutely the papers accordingly.

2. That the base of the proposed buildings shall be constructed of freestone, up to the height of Ann-street, supported on a granite plinth, and that Anzac Square should be designed of similar material to harmonize with this treatment.

3. That of the three schemes suggested by the Commonwealth Works Department, and shown on the blue prints furnished by the Commonwealth Works Department, and attached hereto, No. 2 is the best, and would provide the most dignified setting to any memorial erected.

In a general discussion that followed, it was realized that the city council could do nothing towards the lay-out of the square until such time as the lower portion, at least, of the proposed Commonwealth Buildings were erected, as same would form the base point for the lay-out of the square. Mr. Orwin, Commonwealth Works Director, was unable to say when building operations would be commenced, but was hopeful that they would not be long delayed, and was good enough to state that he would endeavour to obtain further information for the council with regard to this. Mr. Quinn could give no information as to when the State buildings, on the opposite side of the square, would be commenced, but stated that the erection of the first section, which would be sufficient to define the square, might be considered in the near future, as they would be for the Railway Department, and when complete would enable the council to carry Adelaide-street through to North Quay. Mr. Orwin promised to place at the disposal of the State Works Department a copy of the plans of the proposed buildings for the Commonwealth, and Mr. Quinn intimated that he would be pleased to assist the council in any way he could. After some further discussion, it was considered that nothing more could be done in the meantime, and the conference terminated.

(Sgd.) A. H. FOSTER, City Architect.

I am most anxious to make a start with the lay-out of the square, but in view of the recommendations of the experts, I could not proceed with the work. The other day I instructed the city architect to confer once more with Mr. Orwin, and he reports again that it would be unwise to proceed with the lay-out of our square until the Commonwealth offices had been completed to a certain stage. It is obvious that the square would not mean anything to the City of Brisbane until something definite is done in regard to the Commonwealth offices, or a building on the other side of the square. In any case it would hamper the Commonwealth, considerably if we built our square, because part of the site would be needed for building operations. I understand that the State Government is building another school in which to house the girls who are now educated in the girls' school, which is right in the centre of the proposed square. The new school should be available within six months, but we get our starting point for the square on the Commonwealth side. We could not make a start, irrespective of action on the part of the Commonwealth. The transfer of land from the State Government has been fixed up. It is not my contention that the Commonwealth offices must be at least commenced before we can proceed with the square. I am a layman in such matters. I should like very much to make a start with the square, but I must be guided by the advice of experts. In this

connexion, the following report has been furnished to me by Mr. Foster, the city architect:—

ANZAC SQUARE.

With reference to the above, I have the honour to inform you that this morning I interviewed Mr. J. Orwin, the Commonwealth Works Director, and he confirmed the statement made in my previous report that the council cannot safely proceed with the lay-out of Anzac Square until such time as the base of the proposed Commonwealth Buildings are commenced, for the following reasons:—

(1) The lay-out of the square is likely to be disturbed by the building operations, particularly at the side where the trenches for the foundations of the buildings will be taken out.

(2) The stone used round the walling of the square should be similar to that of the base of the proposed building, and the layers of masonry (technically known as the courses), should be carried round at the same levels. It is obvious that these details cannot be ascertained until such time as the base of the building is in course of construction.

The Commonwealth Works Director is of the opinion that about six months after the Commission, due in Brisbane on the 14th of next month, matters should be finalized, and is further of the opinion, in which I concur, that it would be a pity to risk doing something which might be incongruous or which the council might afterwards regret.

However, should the proposed Commonwealth buildings be indefinitely postponed, which the Works Director does not think for one moment will be the case, then the council could take matters into its own hands.

(Sgd.) A. H. FOSTER, City Architect.

The effect of this is that until the Commonwealth offices are built to a certain stage, we cannot very well do much in laying out the square. I am not concerned so much about the height of the building; my concern is that there will be at least some attempt at architectural effect, and while I should like to see a big building in Brisbane, I am not attempting to mislead the committee by asking for a big building solely for the purpose of having one. I should prefer to have the number of stories reduced, if it came to a question of doing that or building on half the area. The latter course would have a considerable effect on our square, and no matter what might be the future intentions of the Commonwealth as to building on the other half, it might be many years before they were carried into effect. I should not regard it as a serious breach of agreement if the height of the building were reduced, if it were found necessary to do so, in order to meet the situation of lack of tenants. Brisbane City Council is very anxious to continue Adelaide-street right through to the quay, and one of the reasons advanced by the Under Secretary for Works for building on Anzac Square was to make provision for railway offices, so that the buildings now occupied by the Railway Department in George-street could be made available to the city council to permit it to carry Edward-street right through the quay, and at the same time widen the street. Of all the civic improvements in Brisbane, the city council feels that that particular undertaking is the most important. We are most anxious to get possession of the old railway building in George-street, so that we can widen Edward-street, and carry it through. The question of whether the officers now occupying the building would occupy the Commonwealth offices is a matter for the State Government to decide. We have approached the Government several times, but have no power of resumption. The Commonwealth Government is giving the City Council 14 feet of land with a frontage to Ann-street, and it will be the business of the City Council to rebuild the footpath. No doubt the City Council will see that the footpath is ready for the occupancy of the new building. Speaking from memory, the population of Brisbane increased last year by between 11,000 and 12,000 people.

14. To Senator Reid.—The Railway Department is retaining possession of the offices in George-street, because it has no accommodation for its staff in other buildings. The Government said that, as soon as it could provide accommodation elsewhere for these

officers, it would be willing to make the site available for the widening of Adelaide-street. The City Council will not wait until the whole of the Commonwealth building is finished before it makes a start with the Anzac Square improvements. A commencement will be made with this work as soon as the Commonwealth building has advanced to a stage which will enable us to make a start. We could go on with the square, even if the State offices were not put up on the other side, so long as the girls' school is removed.

15. To Mr. Lacey.—It would certainly give an undesirable architectural appearance if the height of offices on one side of the square were reduced, and if, on the other side of the square, the original height of seven stories were maintained.

16. To Mr. McGrath.—In regard to the possibility of having empty spaces in the proposed Commonwealth offices, and the possibility of letting it to private enterprise, the committee would need to take into consideration the fact that other buildings are being put up in Brisbane to cater for that class of business. However, the Commonwealth offices would be centrally situated, and therefore the space available would be sought after. I should like to see the building carried up to its full height. Whatever was done with it afterwards in the matter of letting it would be for the Government to decide.

17. To Senator Barnes.—If the land belonged to me, I should build on it to get the ground value out of it, no matter whether I let the whole of the floor space at first.

18. To Senator Payne.—If the building were four stories, which would mean only two stories on the Ann-street frontage, it would not look well. A proposal on the part of the Commonwealth to let space in the new building to private persons would not be looked upon favourably by private individuals with office space to let.

19. To Mr. M. Cameron.—I do not claim to be an authority on the question of the building space available for offices in Brisbane; all I say is that there are certain buildings in progress of construction, the Bank of Australia, eight or nine stories; the Bank of New South Wales, eight or nine stories; and others, which, within the next few years, will be out seeking tenants to occupy the accommodation they provide. On the general question as to whether it would be good business to complete the building to the full size, and let the surplus space to outside people, the committee would be well advised to consult some of the reputable real estate men of Brisbane.

20. To Mr. Seabrook.—The City Council will occupy the whole of the city hall premises. It will have no space to let in this building. It will not come into competition with the Commonwealth offices. It is proposed to provide a subway from Anzac Square under Ann-street to the railway station. That will be for pedestrian traffic only. The Federal Government will have nothing to do with that subway. If shops are to be provided in the Commonwealth offices for the purpose of utilizing the surplus space, I would rather see them on the Adelaide-street frontage. But I would have no objection to the provision of shops on the Ann-street frontage. Ann-street is a shopping centre. It would be better not to have shops, so that the Commonwealth building would harmonize with the State building, which, I understand, will not contain shops. I have no doubt that shops, if provided, would let readily, because of the proximity to the railway station. I can give the committee no idea as to when the State offices are likely to eventuate. Delay in their erection would not delay the completion of the Anzac Square.

21. To Mr. McGrath.—The increase of population in Brisbane last year was normal. The new buildings erected in greater Brisbane last year numbered 4,000. Taking its size, I believe that Brisbane is making

more progress than any other city in Australia. It will not be long before the Federal Government will require the whole of the space proposed to be afforded in the new offices. It will take three years to erect the building, and by that time the Commonwealth's demands for accommodation will be increased. Commonwealth activities are increasing. It will not be long before the Federal Government and the State activities will use up the whole of the space available in these offices.

22. To the Chairman.—There has been no scarcity of skilled labour in connexion with the building of the city hall, but, as a matter of fact, it is a contract job, and I do not come so directly into touch with the labour employed as I would if it were a council job. I think our trouble has been, not to get men, but material. I do not anticipate any difficulty in obtaining labour for the Commonwealth offices. The council is prepared to proceed with the laying out of the square at the earliest possible moment, that is to say, when the Commonwealth offices are erected to the second floor.

23. To Mr. M. Cameron.—We are prepared to start the square without taking into consideration whether or not the State Government goes on with its building. As a matter of fact, it is upon the Commonwealth building line that we start the square. We are waiting on the action of the Commonwealth to enable us to start the square.

24. To Senator Payne.—If space in the building were let to private individuals at a lower rental than that ruling for similar accommodation in other parts of Brisbane, it would certainly have a tendency to interfere with land values. But unless it is proposed to build other offices for the same purpose, I do not think that the amount of space available in the proposed building would have any material effect in that direction. I do not know of any State-owned institution in Brisbane which is let partly to private individuals. As a matter of fact, as I am aware that the State Government has been obliged to rent office accommodation, I should say that it is not done. I feel sure that if the Commonwealth, as a policy, entered into competition with private individuals, there would be a good deal of opposition displayed.

25. To Mr. Lacey.—The site of the proposed Commonwealth offices would be suitable for private tenants, and the accommodation provided would be very much sought after on that account, but I am not prepared to compare the site with other portions of the city where office accommodation is available.

26. To the Chairman.—If the State Government removed its railway officers from the offices in George-street, at the top of Edward-street, and accommodated them in the Commonwealth offices, it would mean delay in the construction of the State offices on the other side of Anzac Square. I do not wish to see this, because the square will never be complete until both sides are built upon by the State and Federal Governments. We are most anxious in Brisbane to get that particular area, which is really the heart of the city, cleared up. As Mayor of the City, and as a citizen, I am not bolstering up the claim for a big building when I know the facts are against me. I would sooner have the committee's decision based on facts rather than on some case I have put up to mislead it. Assuming that it is arranged that the State Government should occupy part of the Commonwealth building, it means that the State Government will not go on with the construction of the building on the other side of the square. The square will, therefore, not be effective for many years, and, at the same time, we shall continue to have an unsightly, unoccupied allotment in the heart of the city.

27. To Mr. Seabrook.—I think it is very likely that the State Government will start its building within the next ten years, but if the railway officers are accommodated in the Commonwealth building on an

extended lease, which naturally the Commonwealth would require, the State Government may not be inclined to go on with its building.

28. *To Mr. Cook.*—I have no doubt about the future of Brisbane, but I understand there is some doubt about the right of the Commonwealth to let its offices to private individuals.

29. *To Mr. Seabrook.*—I understand that it is the present intention of the State Government to build only on the section facing Anzac Square, but if the Commonwealth induces the State Government to occupy portion of the Commonwealth offices, the latter will not build on its land. It will not be satisfactory from the city's standpoint, but in view of the progress of Brisbane, I do not think that the Commonwealth Government can go astray in erecting a seven-story building.

The witness withdrew.

William James Ewart, Chief Architect, Public Works Department, Queensland, sworn and examined.

30. *To the Chairman.*—In consequence of a communication received by the Under Secretary for Works from the Secretary to this Committee, I have made inquiries as to the possibility of State departments requiring accommodation in the proposed Commonwealth offices. The State has not very many departments housed outside its own buildings. One of these is the Main Roads Commission, with which I understand the committee is in direct touch. Outside that commission, I do not suppose that the State would require more than 10,000 feet of office accommodation in the proposed building. I understand that the State Government does not intend to proceed with its building on the other side of the square at the present time. I am not prepared to say that it will build on that site within the next ten or fifteen years. I do not think that the fact that accommodation was secured in Commonwealth offices would delay the erection of a State building which on the other side of the square. A lot of things may happen as the State grows, and we do not know what accommodation may be needed in the future. I think that the Government would be well satisfied to house in the Commonwealth offices any departments now occupying rented premises. There are, however, two departments, the Aborigines and the State Relief, which I do not think that we would locate in such a prominent place. Departments which could be housed in the Commonwealth offices are the Medical Board, now occupying about 330 feet, and the Geological Survey, now occupying 3,600 feet. The Aborigines Department occupies 1,800 feet, and the State Relief Department about 3,700 feet. The space now rented by these four departments is about 10,000 feet. I understand that the Main Roads Commission, which is now occupying rented premises, requires an area of 15,000 feet. I think it would be quite safe to say that, apart from the Main Roads Commission, the State Government would require 10,000 feet in the new building, but I am not here to commit the Government to anything. I am merely setting out the departments which are now housed in Government buildings. There are no instructions from the Minister. The Under-Secretary has merely told me to state the amount of space now being rented from private owners, and to intimate that the Government is not prepared to proceed with buildings on the other side of the square at the present time. If we say that we have so many departments housed outside our own premises, the inference is that we are likely to take that amount of space in the Commonwealth offices. That is all I can say. If the Commonwealth is willing to provide accommodation for the Aborigines Department and the Poor Relief Department, it can do so. We have recently extended the Treasury Building, which has enabled us to expand a little more, and prevents overcrowding. I think that more space will be

required in ten years. Queensland will not stop where it is; it must progress. In the event of the State Government requiring accommodation in the Commonwealth offices, I think it would prefer to get it on the Adelaide-street frontage; the second or third floor would answer its requirements. I do not think there can be any objection to having Commonwealth and State activities in the one building. At the present time, the Commonwealth Taxation Department and the State Main Roads Commission are under the one roof. The allocation of space in the proposed building is all a matter of arrangement. It might be convenient to make the entrance to some of the departments I have mentioned from Anzac-street. I take it that the main entrance to the building will be from Anzac Square. For a considerable time past it has been proposed to take Adelaide-street right through to the quay, and if the railway offices were removed to enable this to be done, accommodation elsewhere would have to be found for the Railway Department.

31. *To Mr. Lacey.*—At the rate of progress in Brisbane, it is likely that the State's requirements for accommodation in the Commonwealth offices would exceed more than 10,000 feet in this year's time. If the State built on the other side of the square, accommodation would not be required in the Commonwealth offices.

31A. *To Mr. McGrath.*—If the Commonwealth accepted as tenants the departments which I think are doubtful, the utmost space required in the Commonwealth offices by the State, apart from the Main Roads Commission, would be 10,000 feet.

32. *To Mr. Cook.*—I did not think it necessary to see the Minister before coming to give evidence. I do not think I have said anything he would turn down. On the other hand, I have certainly not given any hint that he would approve of what I have said.

33. *To Senator Barnes.*—No consideration has been given to the possibility of building on the other side of the square. In those circumstances, therefore, I cannot say what space would be afforded in State offices on the other side of the square. It is certainly not the intention of the Government to house all its department buildings being erected by the Commonwealth, as an architect I would be concerned about getting some kind of harmony by the erection of a corresponding building on the other side of the square; but I am not one to secure harmony at the expense of white elephants. The State Government is committed to the extent that, when it builds, the building it puts up will be in harmony with that which has been put up by the Commonwealth. I quite believe that the population of Brisbane has doubled within the last ten years; it will probably double again within the next ten years; but I am not up in statistics. I have not looked at this matter from the point of view of a man owning the site, and erecting a building as a business proposition.

34. *To the Chairman.*—I have been instructed to say that the only office space occupied by Government departments, outside the State's own premises, is what I have already mentioned. The rental that it is anticipated that the Commonwealth will require from the State is very reasonable, and probably the State would be quite prepared to secure the space in the Commonwealth offices in preference to renting other premises. The Under-Secretary did not tell me to tell the committee that we would require this space. He said that it was the space occupied outside the existing Government buildings. However, as a result of a telephone communication to Mr. Quinn, I am now authorized by him to say that the State is prepared to take the amount of space I have already mentioned outside the Main Roads Commission, which, I presume, will also be willing to be housed in the Commonwealth offices.

35. *To Senator Payne.*—The departments now housed in buildings not owned by the State are on leases, with the option of extension. If we knew that we could get into the Commonwealth building, we could terminate our leases when they expired. I think, in all cases, we can give up the premises within a reasonable time. If the Commonwealth offices were available in 1930, we could take immediate steps to occupy them for a reasonable time—say, for three or four years. If the State Government erected a building on the other side of the square equal to the Commonwealth offices, it would not require any space in the Commonwealth building. That is not my reason for suggesting that our occupancy of the Commonwealth space should be limited. Our lease could be renewed at any time. But I am not prepared to say for what period we would lease it. The town would depend entirely on the construction of the State offices on the other side of the square.

36. *To Mr. Cameron.*—No plans have been prepared for State offices, and as far as I know, it is not the intention of the Government to build on the other side of the square. We are quite satisfied with the proposed rental per square foot, and even if the Commonwealth asked for 1s. more per foot, I do not think it would influence the State Government.

37. *To Mr. Seabrook.*—I have not heard of the likelihood of there being less State activities in the near future. It has been decided that any building which the State puts up facing the square must be in harmony with the building erected by the Commonwealth. The understanding is that the plans prepared by the Commonwealth will be submitted to our department, and we are agreeable to proceed on the same lines. I cannot forecast what will be done, but I should love to see the State build on its side of the square.

38. *To Senator Reid.*—All the State buildings are fully occupied at the present time. The departments which are occupying rented premises could not be housed in them. As population increases, there is a natural increase in the number of Government officers for whom accommodation must be provided. The Railway Department undertakes its own erection of buildings. Its offices are scattered all over Brisbane.

39. *To the Chairman.*—I have no instructions as to the possibility of the State Government offering a building lease on the other side of Anzac Square. The matter has not been discussed, to my knowledge. All that I can say is that I do not think it is contemplated to proceed with any State building there at the present time.

40. *To Mr. Lacey.*—If there is no material difference in the plans of the proposed Commonwealth offices from those which have already been submitted to the State Government, they can be practically said to be approved of by us. I do not think there is any time limit on the State in regard to the erection of its building on the other side of the square.

(Taken at Brisbane.)

WEDNESDAY, 18th MAY, 1927.

Present:

Mr. MACKIN, Chairman;	
Senator Barnes	Mr. Cook
Senator Payne	Mr. Lacey
Senator Reid	Mr. McGrath
Mr. M. Cameron	Mr. Seabrook.

Pamberton Elliott Walcott, Commonwealth Public Service Inspector, Queensland, sworn and examined.

41. *To the Chairman.*—Some Commonwealth departments in Brisbane will not occupy space in the proposed Commonwealth offices. I refer to the Light-

house and Navigation Departments, also to the Repatriation Commission and the Meteorological Bureau. The last two are housed in their own buildings. The premises occupied by the Repatriation Department are out of the way. The site is not very nice for a federal office doing business with the public. I think it would be better for the public generally, and for the department itself, if the premises were sold, and the department were housed in the proposed Commonwealth offices. The building now occupied by the Repatriation Department is more upon location and structure for a warehouse, and would probably sell well. However, I have no connection with that branch. I understand that about £8,000 was paid for the building. The portion of the Navigation branch devoted to the engagement of seamen would need to be on the river front, but I do not see why the balance of the office staff should not go into the Adelaide-street building. Possibly the office staff of the lighthouse service could also be housed in Adelaide-street. The space occupied by them would be about 4,000 feet. The Meteorological Bureau would probably prefer to be near the Observatory. The space occupied is about 1,000 feet. It has a small staff. About 100 public officers are now housed in rented premises, i.e., apart from Navigation, the Repatriation Commission, and the Meteorological Bureau. I have looked back for the last five years, and looked forward with my knowledge of the functions performed by the Commonwealth officers in Brisbane, and I do not think there will be any material increase in the size of the existing departments. For some years to come, at any rate, there should be only about four new appointments annually. Some departments are now smaller than they were five years ago. Because of an alteration in the audit work, the Audit Office, which employed 31 officers five years ago, now employs seventeen. The departments now do their own internal auditing. Owing to the finalization of the war gratuity work the staff of the Sub-Treasury has decreased. Some of the departments have remained stationary. It is not likely to same as it was seven years ago, and it is not likely to increase. Some departments, like the Works Department, are expanding. I keep in close touch with the work that is going on in the departments. I have not given any consideration to the possibility of the Commonwealth embarking upon national insurance and a housing scheme. I do not know the fate of the Taxation Branch. The Taxation staff now numbers 30. Whether this branch will enter the new building or not, I cannot say. Under the *pro capite* arrangements the Commonwealth Department controlling land tax, estate duties, and entertainments tax, may disappear before the building is erected. Five years ago the income tax work required a considerable staff. The Taxation Office was then employing 215 officers, but it is now down to 39. Therefore, about 4,000 feet of space may or may not be required in the new building. I do not think that the staffs will materially increase within ten or fifteen years, but in order to make provision for that time ahead, I should say that the requirements of the existing departments, including War Service Homes and Repatriation Departments, would be met by the provision of 43,000 feet, to which is to be added for Savings Bank 10,000 feet, Main Roads Board 15,000, State Departments 10,000, and safe 5,000, making a total of 83,000 square feet. The premises now rented for Commonwealth offices are very unsatisfactory. They are all over the city. It is not a good thing for a small department to be tucked away out of observation. It is better that all departments should come together in Commonwealth offices rather than be far away by themselves. It is also far better from a public point of view to have the offices accommodated in one building. There is no better site in Brisbane for Commonwealth offices than that upon which it is proposed to build. It is a

splendid site. It is in the heart of the city convenient to the central railway station and for the general public. Most of the people who will visit the offices will enter from Adelaide-street, but it does not matter what portion of the building the Commonwealth departments occupy, because they can all be reached by lifts. It would be no disadvantage to the Commonwealth departments to be housed on the Ann-street frontage, except that it would be the hottest end of the building. I do not see why we should house our people on the western side, and give the State Main Roads Commission and other tenants the eastern or best section. It would be better to concentrate the Commonwealth departments at one part of the building rather than have them mixed up with State departments. I think it would be very desirable from the point of view of contentment, health, and community of interests between the different Commonwealth departments, to allow them to meet socially by reserving part of the building for a luncheon room and for recreation purposes. The Postal Department provides that sort of accommodation for its officers in Brisbane, and I do not see why the other staffs when once grouped together in one building should not be entitled to the same privileges. It is quite possible that such a room might have to be subsidized, as is done in the case of the Post Office, but I am strongly of opinion that it would be desirable to make provision for a café. I am inclined to think that it would almost pay for itself. I do not know what space would be necessary for it, but I think that provision should be made for supplying a lunch on the premises, as is done in the Commonwealth Bank, Sydney. There will be 300 Commonwealth officers in the building, and if the Savings Bank and the Main Roads Commission occupy portions of the building the number of officers will be nearly 400, of whom I should say that one-third would take advantage of any lunch provided. It is a fair proposition to provide a luncheon room and a reading room, but they should be confined mainly to officers occupying the building. I understand that the Commonwealth Bank intends to do something of the sort for its officers in its central bank in Queen-street.

42. *To Mr. McGrath.*—Provision has been made for federal members in the new building instead of at the Post Office, where existing accommodation is unsuitable.

43. *To Mr. Cook.*—Including the Customs and Post Office, there are sixteen Commonwealth departments in Brisbane. Offices likely to be established in the new building are Public Service Inspector, Audit, Electoral, Attorney-General's, Works, and Railways, Sub-Treasury, Pensions and Maternity Allowance, Taxation, Commerce, Health, War Service Homes, and possibly Repatriation Department and Lighthouse and Navigation staffs. A few of these departments are grouped in Desmond Chambers, alongside State departments and private offices. It would be a distinct improvement to have all departments mentioned housed together, because they are not suitably located at the present time, and there is no proper supervision over some of them. Some of them are now a mile apart. In some cases the public must have considerable trouble in finding them. There is likely to be an increase in Commonwealth offices because of new legislation, but in arriving at my figures I have not taken prospective legislation into account. It is quite possible that before the building is erected the new legislation may involve the employment of new staffs, and in any case with the general expansion of Brisbane I do not think that there will be much difficulty in having the building occupied within a reasonable time, either by Commonwealth or by State offices. I think it would be false economy to partly construct the building.

44. *To Senator Payne.*—The Repatriation Department is housed in a dingy two-story building more like a warehouse than a public office. The space pro-

vided is about 8,000 feet. I do not think there would be any difficulty in disposing of the building at a profit.

45. *To Mr. Cameron.*—I am not proud of the way in which the Commonwealth officers are now housed in Brisbane. If they were housed in a new, up-to-date building, such as is proposed, it would lead to greater efficiency and more economy. At present there must be many officers passing between the different departments, because there is community of interests between all, and this waste of time would be avoided by having them all in the one building. It would also be a great improvement in the cases of almost all departments from a hygienic point of view. I feel confident that the officers would give better service when they were all housed in the one building of the type proposed to be erected. If State officers were also housed in the new building I think they should partake of the benefits conferred by the café.

46. *To Mr. Seabrook.*—There is a possibility that the Federal Taxation Department may disappear in the near future, with the result that the 30 acres must be affected. I do not know what department would administer national insurance, but if established it would entail materially increased accommodation. Queensland is growing very rapidly, and I think there is little doubt that the whole of the space in the new building will be fully occupied within a reasonable time of the completion of the building if the Commonwealth departments and certain State departments come into it.

47. *To Senator Reid.*—The officers in the Meteorological Bureau are cramped for space. I think it is possible that they could be housed in the new building, and if necessary the existing space on the terrace could be used for grass and temperature readings. It is only a small department. I think I represent the feeling of the Commonwealth Service in Brisbane when I make the request for a café in the new building. I think a committee could be appointed to manage which would take a live interest in it. I think that Brisbane more than the southern States warrants the establishment of such a café. Our summer climate is extremely trying, and if these facilities are available in Melbourne, I think Brisbane is more entitled to have a cheap luncheon room. By "cheap" I mean a room providing a luncheon within the means of the officers employed in the building.

48. *To Mr. Lacey.*—I think that, as far as practicable, all federal activities, those occupying rented premises, and those who are in their own buildings, should be housed in this building. I think that the Federal members would be more central and would have better accommodation in the new building. Assuming that the Commonwealth gets the tenants it expects, namely, the Savings Bank, the Main Roads Commission, and several State departments, the whole of the building should be erected to provide for Commonwealth requirements in the near future. In the meantime there would be no trouble in getting private tenants to occupy the space not taken up by government activities.

49. *To Senator Payne.*—I know that the requirements of the Commonwealth departments as existing to-day would be fully supplied by 43,000 feet, leaving a surplus of 53,000 feet, but 40,000 feet additional will be taken by Savings Bank, Main Roads, and State Departments, and it will be three or four years before the building is completed. The State Government appears to be short of accommodation, and unlikely to do much building. Furthermore, I assume that there will be an increase in Federal activities in connexion with national insurance and child endowment. I am not taking its part towards making a complete whole of Anzac Square. If the State built simultaneously with the Commonwealth it would alter

the picture entirely. I think the surplus Commonwealth spaces in the building could be let at a payable rental. I think it would pay the Commonwealth to put up the complete building. Out of the 90,000 feet, I understand that about 83,000 feet will be applied for, and I am sure that the balance will be required by the State and by, possibly, new Commonwealth departments. I would not alter my opinion if I learnt that the maximum the State declares it will require is 10,000 feet. It is difficult to forecast what will be required in four years. It is on the cards that the Commonwealth will adopt new legislation. But in any case there would be no trouble in letting the accommodation handsomely to private persons. About 5,000 feet would be required for a café. In this climate officers should have whatever accommodation can be provided for them in that direction.

The witness withdrew.

John Edwin England, Secretary, the Commissioner of Main Roads, Queensland, sworn and examined.

50. *To the Chairman.*—In 1925 the main roads legislation was amended, and the Main Roads Board was replaced by a Commissioner, who was entrusted with the sole administration of the Main Roads Commission under the Minister for Lands. The commission is now located in Desmond Chambers, with space on the second and fourth floors. Quite recently our bridge room has been located in Horsham House adjacent to Desmond Chambers. We occupy about 8,800 square feet, and we are limited to that space because we cannot spread conveniently. We are too cramped. We require considerably more space. This matter was taken up by the Commissioner with the Government some little time ago, and as a result Cabinet has authorized him to negotiate for the required additional space. I am authorized by the Commissioner to state the attitude of the commission with regard to leasing portion of the new Federal building when it is erected. We estimate that in 1930 we shall require 15,000 feet, which should provide for us for about two years. Afterwards we anticipate a 5 per cent. increase per annum. Road construction is our chief function. The State Government provides certain loan funds each year, depending upon the appropriation for the year. Our greatest activity at the present time is in connexion with the Federal aid roads. The Commonwealth has supplied us with £376,000 a year, and this amount is subsidized by the State to the extent of 16s. in the £1. In addition we have the revenue from the taxation on motor vehicles, which revenue is expended by us on main roads in their construction and maintenance, and in administrative expenses. Quite an important feature of our work is the collection of the revenue in Queensland. The secretary of the Commission is also Registrar of Motor Vehicles. The revenue from this source will amount to about £240,000 during the current year. I know of no reason to think that the commission will be other than a permanent institution. It has been established by an act of Parliament and under the Federal aid roads scheme the Federal Government has provided for a ten-years' programme, which has only run twelve months so far. The Commissioner suggests that his tenure in the Federal offices should be five years, at the least, with an option of a further five years. I think he would be prepared to take a straight-out lease of ten years. I should not like to bind him to a lease of 25 years. We should prefer to have the whole of our staff on one floor. Our work is varied. The Motor Registration Branch deals with the public. On the average we have from 50 to 60 people at the counter each hour, and the number is increasing every year. That counter should be at a spot which is handy to the public. At present we are on the fourth floor in Desmond

Chambers, and sometimes we find it inconvenient. The third floor in the Commonwealth office would be convenient, but we should like to have the whole of our office on that floor. The proposed rental of 3s. a square foot would compare favorably with the rate we are now paying. The committee can take it as definite that the commission will occupy 15,000 square feet in the Commonwealth offices.

51. *To Mr. Cook.*—The activities of the Main Roads Commission will increase by virtue of the fact that its revenue is increasing. Our motor vehicle revenue is going up. Registrations are increasing at the rate of between £40,000 and £50,000 a year. The Federal aid roads scheme is also fixed for ten years. Beyond these two sources of revenue we are dependent on the moneys appropriated from time to time by the State Parliament.

52. *To Senator Payne.*—I suppose that the Commissioner has come to his decision about having a ten-years' lease, because of the fact that, so far, the Federal aid roads scheme is limited to ten years. But there is no indication that the activities of the commission will not extend beyond that period. There is no doubt that the work of the commission has been considerably enlarged by the inauguration of the Federal aid roads scheme. If in ten years a State building were available on the other side of Anzac Square I could say what the commission would do. That is a matter for the State Government to decide. I do not think that the limitation of our lease to ten years has been influenced by any consideration of the possibility of the State Government erecting offices on the other side of the square. I have seen it stated in the press that there is a proposal to erect those offices, but I have had no official advice that the work is to be taken in hand. The proposed rent in the Commonwealth building compares very favorably with the 3s. 0.3d. per square foot we are now paying.

53. *To Mr. Cameron.*—The whole of the Queensland main roads activities are administered from Brisbane. My estimate of an annual increase of 5 per cent. in our office requirements was arrived at yesterday, when we took into consideration the amount of space we would require for each individual branch of our organization. I cannot say that, in view of the fact that it is a policy throughout Australia to make a very material increase in the construction of better roads we are likely to increase at the rate of more than 5 per cent. per annum. Going back over a period of five years, we arrived at the figure I have mentioned as our possible increase in the future. It is true that the increase in staff has been greater since the Federal grants were made available. Our road programme has become bigger, practically to the extent of the amount of money the Commonwealth has granted. The motor revenue is increasing each year. Our revenue from this source during the past five years has been as follows:—1921-22, £49,000; 1922-23, £94,000; 1923-24, £102,000; 1924-25, £144,000; 1925-26, £189,000. Judging by the revenue already received for the first eleven months of the year 1926-27, the indications are that the revenue this year will be £240,000. This increase is purely due to an increase in the number of vehicles. Motor vehicle fees in Queensland were fixed in 1921, and were not altered until the first of this month. From now on the rates are, roughly, 25 per cent. higher than previously.

54. *To Senator Reid.*—We have small offices in Yungaburra on the Atherton Tableland, Puvurille, and Rockhampton. In these offices are located engineers in charge of districts, and one or two assistant engineers. The district offices have no effect whatever on the size of the central administration staff in Brisbane. It is always our aim to spend in the twelve months the amount of revenue collected for the year, and the amount of money made available by the Commonwealth and State Governments; but it is not

always possible to do so. As our revenue increases we are likely to increase our activities and our working staff. It would suit us to get into the new building before it was completed, because our present lease expires at the end of November, 1928.

The witness withdrew.

Herbert Asher Benjamin, Staff Clerk, Postmaster-General's Department, Brisbane, and President of the Queensland Postal Institute, sworn and examined.

55. *To the Chairman.*—The Queensland Postal Institute was established a little over three years ago. I have been president of it for eighteen months. Primarily the institute is an educational establishment, but we also have a café. The educational facilities deal with postal matters. We have various classes—mathematics, accountancy, telegraphy, telephony, machine work for girls, postal work, savings bank work, and all duties a postal officer is expected to perform when he comes into contact with the public. These classes are under different instructors who are paid out of a subsidy provided by the Government. Last year, and in the previous year, we were allowed £600, but prior to that we were allowed £1,000, of which we were permitted to spend £250 on the establishment of a café. The subsidy is now solely applied to education. The £350 to which I have referred was applied towards the purchase of furniture and fittings for the café. Altogether we expended about £200 in fitting up the café, the balance of the money being obtained from members' subscriptions, from revenue derived from the recreation facilities we have, such as billiards and ping pong, and also from the sale of soft drinks and tobacco in the recreation room. The café occupies about 1,320 feet of space. It is situated in the basement of the General Post Office. We have a large recreation room and several class rooms. There are about 800 persons employed in the building. The café is patronized fairly well, but not as well as I should like to see it patronized. We employ a small staff in it, and endeavour to make it self-supporting. We supply breakfast, luncheon, and tea, and make sales over the counter. As a rule, we do not provide hot meals, but it has been the practice to supply a plate of soup in the winter months. Officers can get a hot pie, or something of that kind, and hot tea, cocoa or coffee, but otherwise the meals we provide are cold. The number who have breakfast in the café is very small, being principally confined to officers of the mail branch who have to do early morning duty and have breakfast there. We are fairly busy at lunch time. We can accommodate about 60 persons at our tables, but they are not always full. Many officers' shifts permit them to have morning tea, which they can obtain in the café. In the afternoon the same thing applies, and many of the officers' wives and families come in to the café for afternoon tea. Of course, the café is not available to the general public. I do not say that our limited accommodation is responsible for the poor patronage of the café. I think it is due to the fact that officers cannot afford to have their lunches there. The tariff is certainly very reasonable; we sell almost at cost price, just making enough profit to pay the wages of the employees in the café. It costs an officer about 1s. 3d. for a reasonable lunch. Some of the staff go outside for their lunch, but I think I am safe in saying that the majority bring a snack with them. There are retiring rooms in the mail branch and the telegraph branch in which the officers can eat their lunch; but in other branches of the department those officers who bring their lunch have to eat it in the rooms in which they work. There are facilities in those rooms for making tea. I think the café is justified. Sometimes we are rushed and

at other times we are not. We have slack as well as busy days. On the day on which the Duke of York was in Brisbane we could not accommodate the people who came into the café to have some lunch. We employ a manageress and five other persons, two of these being waitresses. We try to run the café on lines to suit the convenience of the officers. The café is just about self-supporting. Sometimes we make a profit and sometimes we suffer a loss. Last month we made a profit of £13, but in the previous month we lost £3 or £4. We have good and bad months, but we try to balance matters. There is no subsidy for the café. We are not permitted to apply any part of the subsidy to the café. The institute is managed by a council of nineteen departmental officers, three of whom are appointed by the Postmaster-General. Of the balance the deputy director nominates eight, and the other eight are nominated by members of the institute. The council thus appointed or elected chooses its own president, and appoints various sub-committees, such as the classes committee, the café committee, the recreation committee, and the finance committee. The café committee consists of three members of the council. I happen to be chairman of that committee, but we do not interfere with the management of the café. We make the managersess solely responsible to us so far as food is concerned. We simply endeavour to carry out a policy that may be laid down by the council for the running of the café and give the managersess a free hand. With my experience of the running of our café, I should recommend the provision of something of the sort in the new Commonwealth offices. I do not suggest that it should be run on the elaborate lines adopted at the outset in our institute. We provided nice tables, and covered them with very nice glass and cloths under the glass. We purchased silver rice crockery and cutlery, and all that sort of thing. I should think that the majority of our officers here would be better pleased to have a large room where they could eat their lunch and purchase a cup of tea. A cafeteria is more my idea of what should be adopted. I think it should have been adopted in the Post Office in the first instance. When the new central automatic exchange is ready, and the building in which the exchange is now located is vacated, we are to be given a larger floor space for our café. The proposal is to establish a cafeteria there on the lines I have just mentioned, and we trust that it will be made use of more freely by officers. At present we admit officers of other departments. Any Commonwealth or State officer outside the Postal Department may become an associate member of our institute, and have all the privileges of the institute with the exception that he is not permitted to ballot or vote at council meetings. Officers receiving over £156 a year in salary pay an annual subscription of 10s. a year; officers receiving less than £156 a year pay a subscription of 5s. a year. The associate members pay the same rates. We have a library containing 5,000 volumes, and we pay a librarian to look after it. We employ a steward to look after the recreation room. We derive a fair amount of revenue from billiards. The tables are about the best paying proposition we have. I think that the officers in the Post Office should be loyal to their own café by patronizing it and helping us to make it pay.

56. *To Mr. Cameron.*—Out of the 800 employees in the Post Office I should say that the average attendance for lunch in the café is not more than 50. I refer to a sit-down lunch. A large number of officers purchase their lunch at the café counter. We are very busy at that counter from midday until 1 o'clock. A fruit luncheon in the summer costs about 1s. 3d. We supply a cheaper lunch than is obtainable outside. We do not seek to make a profit out of our own officers. We sell at the lowest possible prices, and

give the staff the benefit of a cheap, decent meal. It is surprising to me that more do not avail themselves of the opportunity. When the café was first established it was rushed, but the numbers gradually fell away. We are somewhat handicapped. The engineering branch, which is a large branch, is not located in this building, and as the officers of that branch have only an hour for lunch, they have not too much time to come to the café. We have a good staff of waitresses. No one has to wait more than three or four minutes for a meal.

57. *To Senator Reid.*—I do not think that the café is patronized to the extent it should be by the senior officers. I think that the majority of our patrons are married men. While the department provides facilities for making tea in the various branches where the officers are employed, I do not think that if we provided tea or coffee or hot water for tea and served it over the counter we should get more of the staff to come to the luncheon room. I am not prepared to suggest that if the lines on which our café was inaugurated were adopted in the Commonwealth offices a café would be a success. We went in for a too elaborate scheme in the beginning. The fittings of the café are the property of the Postal Institute. The institute's property is vested in three trustees appointed by the Government.

58. *To Mr. Lacey.*—I do not know what proportion of the officers of the Post Office patronize the counter in the café. It is not nearly half the number of employees. When I go to my lunch at 1 o'clock I always see fifteen or twenty round the counter clamouring to be served. They all want to be served at once. Of those who do not patronize the café some go out for lunch; but I think the majority bring their lunch with them. We have given consideration to the matter of providing a better lunch, but we do not think it would be profitable business. We could not do as is done in the Commonwealth Bank premises in Sydney, because we have not the necessary facilities for cooking a hot lunch. In any case I do not think the majority of our officers would patronize a heavy meal. They do not look for it in this climate, especially in the summer months. As a rule, people have their dinner at night, and do not look for much at the lunch hour. In the winter months, however, they like to get a little hot dish occasionally; for instance, soup is provided in our café practically every day in the winter, and every Friday is fish day.

59. *To Mr. Cook.*—I favour the idea of providing accommodation in the Commonwealth offices for a luncheon room. If there are 400 officers in the building a small luncheon room should be provided. I do not wish to be misunderstood about the number who patronize our café. We may have 150 patrons of the café for lunch, but not more than 50 for a sit-down lunch. We have not the accommodation for 800 to sit down and take their lunch at the tables. If it came to a pinch we could accommodate the most part of 400. But I do not think lack of accommodation is the cause of the lack of patronage. We have many vacant seats at lunch hour. Our room does not compare with the luncheon room in the Commonwealth Bank, Sydney. I have often thought that the place where our café is established is a detriment. It is in the basement, in a place which was once used as a strong room for the storage of old records. It is very hot in summer, although we have electric fans installed. When the automatic exchange is opened we shall get better accommodation for our café. I think that if we had a large room we should get better results. We sell tobacco and soft drinks, sweets, cakes, and scones, and all that sort of thing. Tobacco is sold by the steward in the institute. After the café closes at 7.30 p.m., officers desiring to purchase soft drinks or tobacco get them from the steward in the

recreation room. We have an orchestra that plays in the café once or twice a week between 1 o'clock and 2 o'clock. Our officers can go into the institute and listen to the music without going into the café.

(Taken at Brisbane.)

THURSDAY, 10TH MAY, 1927.

Present:

Mr. MACKAY, Chairman;	Mr. Cook
Senator Barnes	Mr. Lacey
Senator Payne	Mr. McGrath
Senator Reid	Mr. Seabrook
Mr. M. Cameron	

Michael Timothy Keely, Deputy Federal Commissioner of Taxation, Queensland, sworn and examined.

60. *To the Chairman.*—My department deals with Federal land tax, entertainments tax, and estate duties. When I was previously before the committee, it also dealt with income tax, but that work has now been transferred to the State. Although our activities have been considerably curtailed, I think it advisable that a department of the size of this department, and others of similar importance, should be housed in the same building. I am thinking mainly of the convenience of the public. Our present surroundings are inconvenient. There is also a risk of fire. We should have separate storing conveniences where the risk of fire would be less. It need not be strong-room accommodation, but I suppose it would be practically equivalent to it. We need for our records steel frames, surrounded by a brick or stone wall, with steel doors. No amount of fire insurance would protect them. It is mostly the risk of fire that I am thinking of. We have records for ten years back. They are occasionally in demand. The very fact that they are occasionally in demand makes it necessary that they should be preserved against fire. We should require about 900 feet of space for these records. We have 42 officers in the Taxation Branch, and seven in the sub-Treasury. In addition, we have to provide accommodation for two audit officers who are engaged in auditing the accounts of this office. We thus require accommodation for 51 officers. At present we occupy 6,218 feet, and, without being extravagant, I estimate that we would require in the new building 4,850 feet for taxation officers, 900 feet for taxation records, and 1,391 feet for the sub-Treasury, making in all 6,151 feet for the staff, and 900 feet for the storage, or a total of 7,051 feet. The storage should be convenient for the staff. The future outlook for the Commonwealth taxation department depends upon a conference shortly to be held in Melbourne. The Commonwealth offices should be built on a site which would prove convenient to the public. The Taxation Branch has a good deal to do with the public. Many people are obliged to interview our officers. In the busy time we have about 100 callers a day. I should say that the Deputy Commissioner, the chief clerk, the cashier, and inquiry officer would need to be on the ground floor. In addition to storage, accommodation for records, we would want at least one strong-room for the priced accounts and ledgers. The assessing officers, who have to stick closely to their desks, would find no difficulty in being situated on a higher floor. I think that the Old-age Pensions Department should be situated on the ground floor for the sake of the old pensioners, who are slow in getting in and out of lifts.

61. *To Mr. McGrath.*—If there are a fair number of Federal officers in the building, I think a café would be a success. I think the officers could be depended on to take sufficient interest in it if it were built of a type

67. *To Mr. Lacey.*—I think a 25 per cent. increase in accommodation is quite sufficient for the Electoral Department. It has fairly good accommodation at the present time. We have conferred with the Chief Electoral Officer as to what he thought would be a reasonably accurate. The departments have told me exactly what their experience tells them they will need. I have set down what is regarded as the minimum amount required in ten years. It is quite likely that more will be needed. We cannot gauge what space may be required for housing, national insurance, and aviation. I think that the proposed building will provide sufficient accommodation for them, but I do not think there would be very much left over. I think that the Immigration Office at Kangaroo Point is governed by the State. The space occupied would not have any material effect on the figures I have given.

68. *To Senator Barnes.*—Men doing different work require a varying amount of space. The space for which provision is made in the new building is based on what is now occupied. It could hardly be possible to have a recognized standard amount of space for each officer. A man at a drawing-board in a draughting office wants a considerable space. Very often, in addition to the drawing-board, he wants a desk. A supervising architect needs not only a drawing-board, but also a large desk about the size of a table. A typist requires only a small space at a typing machine. We want much more accommodation for a surveyor than we require for an ordinary clerk, or, in fact, for a draughtsman. He must keep his instruments in his office, and these take up a great deal of space. They could not be kept in an ordinary store, because they must be available at any hour of the day. Furthermore, they are valuable. There are recognized space standards for schools and hospitals, but not for offices.

69. *To the Chairman.*—It is proposed to effect some alterations, repairs, and reconditioning to the present General Post Office. I understand that the erection of a new building is to remain in abeyance for the next five or ten years. If the Postal Department require further accommodation, I do not think it would entertain the idea of going to Adelaide-street. It would be too far away. The department is still paying rent for its storage, but the proposal to erect postal stores and workshops in Wickham-street will clear up that trouble. The class of construction of the proposed Commonwealth offices meets with my approval. I do not think it would be advisable to reduce the floor space. I think it would be better to put up the full seven stories, because if the Repatriation Commission comes in, there would be only 10,000 feet thereof. If you reduced the floor space by 10,000 feet, it would mean two stories in one of the three sections of the building. If these had to be built up at some future time, quite apart from the inconvenience to the occupants, it would be a more costly operation than to build them at the present time. If a reduction in the size of the building were considered necessary, I think it would be better to build two sections to the full height, and allow the reduction to be effected on one section. If you left out one section entirely, I do not see how it could be done except at the expense of height. It might cripple the formation of the Anzac Square. If the Anzac-street section of the building were cut out, and if the Commonwealth Bank is occupying the ground floor with a frontage to Adelaide-street, I do not see how you can do otherwise than build on to Adelaide-street.

70. *To Mr. Seabrook.*—It might meet the case if the first two stories were built to the level of Ann-street, and right through to the Adelaide-street frontage, leaving the balance of the Ann-street section to be completed at a later date. That would give the Commonwealth Bank the full floor from Adelaide-street to Ann-street. There are slightly over 4,500 feet on

each section of each floor, and the omission of three floors of the Ann-street section would mean a reduction of nearly 15,000 feet of space, which would not be enough if the Repatriation Department came into the building. If the Commission occupied any portion of the new building, you could not reduce it by more than two stories in one section. I do not think it advisable to adopt that plan for the sake of avoiding a little surplus space. The possibility is that if the Repatriation Commission comes into the building, and provision is made for recreation rooms, and so forth, there will not be more than 10,000 feet available for future activities.

The witness withdrew.

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

71. *To the Chairman.*—When I came to Brisbane with the committee to look into the probability of local occupation of the proposed offices by State departments, and got fuller information about the occupation of them by Commonwealth departments, I had the idea that the building would be one that would probably take some years to completely fill, but after hearing the bulk of the evidence given to the committee, my views have undergone a good deal of change. If I had the responsibility of having to come to a decision as to whether to erect the whole building, or only part of it, I would, on thinking over the matter, conclude that it would be economy to build the whole structure, even supposing it were not fully occupied at the time of its completion. It is impossible to say how nearly that will be accomplished, because, in the next few years, there are other Federal activities that will be created, of which we have little knowledge at the present time. But even if there is some vacant space in the building, I do not think it will be very much, and, of course, space is very readily let to utilities outside the Government service. I do not think there would be any objection to letting it in this way. I do not know the law on the subject; ethnically I do not think the Commonwealth Government should compete with private enterprise in matters like this; but the competition would amount to so little in this building that no one would object to it. That, however, is all on the supposition that the building would not be fully occupied at the beginning. The committee has a serious duty in coming to a conclusion on this matter, and, after hearing the evidence, the best advice I can give it is that if it proposes to advise that only portion of the building be erected, it should not adopt the advice of the Mayor of Brisbane to build over the whole site, and omit a couple of stories, or even one story. I think that we should build at least two-thirds of the structure; that is to say, two of the blocks up to the full height, and omit either the whole of the third block, or the upper three stories of it. Neither expedient would leave enough space to accommodate the departments that are in sight; and I think it would be wise to decide to build the whole structure. When I came here, I did not think so, but I have now come to the conclusion that the whole scheme would be justifiable from the public point of view. I do not know that I ought to say much about the State offices. I always had the view that they must necessarily be a scheme covering 30, 40, or 50 years. As they would comprise a very large building, I thought they would be built in sections. For instance, the State Treasury building at the top of Queen-street was erected in sections extending over 40 years. The last section has just been completed. The offices in Anzac Square would be a much larger building, and its development probably would occupy a long period. In that respect, I was

impressed by what the Mayor of Brisbane said, when he expressed his anxiety to clean up the centre of Brisbane. I was also impressed by a remark made by Mr. McGrath. He asked where would lie the economy in leaving unused for a long period a portion of the city owned by the State Government. The Commonwealth had a very similar experience in Perth. It acquired for postal purposes an area of land in the centre of the city quite beyond Commonwealth requirements for many years to come, and it utilized it by building on it to meet requirements for 40 or 50 years, and by letting the remainder on a building lease. Once the Anzac Square is developed, building sites in the locality will increase in value, and it would be bad business for the State to leave its area unoccupied. However, that is a matter for the State Government, and I am rather exceeding my function in referring to it, but thought that if I mentioned what the Commonwealth had done in Perth, it might be some guide as to what might be done in Brisbane. If Anzac Square is to have any sort of appearance at all, the municipal part of it should unite with the Commonwealth building straight away. In those circumstances, I should prefer to start our building from the Ann-street end. In a growing country like this, an unfinished building, so long as minds are able to realize that it is a structure in course of extension, does not present an unsatisfactory appearance. For the purpose of the square, if State offices or Commonwealth offices have to be erected one before the other, the Commonwealth building should be the first to be put up. It is more material that the Commonwealth offices should be built to enable the work in the square to be commenced. The State building could be omitted for the present with less detriment to the appearance of the square than could the Commonwealth building, because when the existing State buildings on the site are removed, it will leave an open space, whereas looking down the square towards the Commonwealth side, you have a very unsightly aspect presented by the existing private buildings. The Mayor has undertaken that the omission of the State to erect its offices will not deter the construction of the square. There is no reason why the square should not be formed, even if the commencement of the State building was deferred for years. Work on the square could be commenced without any interference six months after the Federal building has commenced.

72. *To Mr. Seabrook.*—Seeing that the lower floors are to be in stone, and all the floors above that in plaster, I would suggest that if the building is to be reduced by a certain number of stories in one block, the line of demarcation should be two floors instead of three to Adelaide-street. But that would mean cutting out too much space, and not allowing enough for requirements. The estimated cost of the full building is £170,500. To omit the five upper floors on the Adelaide-street section would reduce the estimate by £40,359, making the total cost £130,145. In the whole building, we would have 96,700 feet. To omit the five upper floors on the Adelaide-street section would reduce the total floor space available to 73,700 feet, which would be about the amount of space required, but would leave nothing for unforeseen future requirements. I consider that although the building when completed, it will be better to finish the whole building at the present time. I think it is the idea of the Mayor of Brisbane that the square will take the form of a very much required resting-place for people in the centre of the city, and that vehicles will be kept out of it. In those circumstances, no provision should be made in the square for a vehicular traffic entrance to the Commonwealth offices. While our building is in progress, there will be a boarding-along-side. I think that the city could go on with the

gardening of the square, when the State buildings now on the site are removed, as they will be towards the end of the year. The Mayor's attitude has been very fair towards the whole project.

73. *To Mr. Cameron.*—A start could be made with the building of the Commonwealth offices at the end of this year, if the building is approved. I think the maximum time for completing it would be three years; but, given a good contractor, it might, perhaps, be finished in two and a half years.

(Taken at Brisbane.)

FRIDAY, 20th MAY, 1927.

Present:

Mr. MACKAY, Chairman;

Senator Barnes	Mr. Cook
Senator Payne	Mr. Lacey
Senator Reid	Mr. McGrath
Mr. M. Cameron	Mr. Seabrook

George Lawson, Secretary of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, Brisbane branch, sworn and examined.

74. *To the Chairman.*—Since 1919 the returned soldiers have been anxious that Anzac Square should be built. I am here this morning at the request of the annual meeting of the Brisbane branch held last week. From the inception there has been a long series of delays and disappointments in connexion with this square. So confident were we in 1920 that it would be realized in a year or two that an organizer was appointed to gather funds for the erection of a memorial, and about £2,000 has been thus collected. After a while we could see no hope of the project eventuating in the near future, and we did not think it correct to collect funds from the public when the realization of the scheme was so far ahead. It was a matter of grave concern to the returned soldiers that they had to welcome the Duke of York in the Toowong cemetery. We were hopeful that His Royal Highness could have paid his homage at a national memorial for Queensland. It was reported by our delegates that when the federal executive had the honour of entertaining the Duke and Duchess at Chaulera, His Royal Highness remarked that he was very pleased to see the wonderful memorials that had been erected at Albany, Bendigo, and Ballarat. It was a matter of regret for us that it was not possible for him to include the capital of Queensland in his commendation. As possibly the committee may be aware, the principal plank of the platform of the present city council was the completion of Anzac Square, and we had no doubt that in one or two years at least we would have been able to gather in that square around a national memorial on such notable days as Anzac Day, and occasions like the visit of a royal prince. We are much perturbed to read that the Mayor of Brisbane in giving evidence declared that it will be at least two or three years from the commencement of the Commonwealth offices before Anzac Square will be completed. The Anzac Square committee, the Anzac Day Commemoration Committee and the Returned Soldiers' League are all concerned in the project, and estimate that it will be necessary to raise approximately £20,000 for the cenotaph and memorial to be put up in the centre of the square. We are now hanging fire in the collection of funds, because the whole scheme seems to be in the air. I appeal to this committee

to expedite, if possible, the erection of the Commonwealth offices so that the City Council may be enabled to lay out the square, and the various patriotic committees may erect a national memorial. In 1920 Mr. Maxwell, M.L.A., a former Mayor of Brisbane, remarked when standing on the steps of the South African War Memorial, near the central station, "The South African memorial was erected seventeen years after the South African War. Thank God we will not have to wait that long before a national memorial is erected for the heroes who fell in the Great War." It shows that in 1910 it was never conceived that ten years would elapse, and yet matters in connexion with this memorial are as far off as ever. Our belief that delay in connexion with the Commonwealth buildings would necessarily delay the work on the square is based on the statement that the Mayor of Brisbane made in giving evidence before the committee the other day. He said that the square could not be commenced until the Commonwealth offices had been erected to the second floor. We accept the statement of Mr. Murdoch that the construction of the Commonwealth offices does not necessarily mean a delay in the laying out of the square. But we want to make every post a winning post. We would not say anything that would be likely to delay the construction of the Commonwealth buildings, because we realize that it would have a good architectural effect, and add to the beauty of the square. However, we are quite accustomed to disappointment in connexion with this project. First of all, it was mentioned that we would have a 200-ft. frontage for the square. We were then led to expect that we would have the whole of the area through to Creek-street. Then we were told that the Commonwealth offices would face Creek-street. After that we reverted to the original 200-ft. frontage. Finally we have a 225-ft. frontage. Twelve months ago we carried the following resolution at our annual meeting:—

That the action of the managing council of the league in agreeing to the approval of the new scheme for Anzac Square with a frontage of 225 feet be accepted under protest.

That resolution represents the feeling of the league in the matter. The project has been delayed now for twelve years. We have finally accepted the 225-ft. frontage; all parties are agreeable to it, and the returned soldiers are anxious to have the square commenced at the earliest possible moment, and that no obstacle should be put in the way of its completion.

75. *To Mr. M. Cameron.*—Hitherto no national war memorial has been erected in Brisbane.

76. *To Senator Reid.*—With the removal of the girls' school there will be room for the erection of a memorial, and if the city council will lay out the ground the memorial can be erected.

77. *To Mr. Lacey.*—Even if the State offices were not erected, we could still go on with the building of the memorial.

78. *To Mr. McGrath.*—We are not proposing that the Commonwealth Government should erect a building if the evidence shows that it is not warranted. I have noticed references in the press to inadequate accommodation in Brisbane for Federal members at the General Post Office. Many of our league members have had occasion to visit Federal members, and sometimes I have seen as many as twenty persons in a queue waiting to see Colonel Cameron. Other Queensland representatives have been put to great inconvenience in the same way.

79. *To Senator Payne.*—The Returned Soldiers' League owns its own building, and although its position is not very central, I do not think that it would require any space in the Commonwealth building. We have to engage in commercial pursuits in order to keep going.

The witness withdrew.

Archibald John Christie, Deputy Director of Posts and Telegraphs, Queensland, sworn and examined.

80. *To the Chairman.*—So far as I know, it is not intended to erect any building on the postal block except the new automatic exchange which is now in course of construction. I have not been in Brisbane more than two years, but when I came here I arranged the working accommodation in the whole building and I find no lack of space. We are now rearranging the activities to co-ordinate them more closely, and tenders have been called for certain renovations. These will include the painting of internal walls and improvement of the lighting, the tilting of walls to a certain height, the pulling down of a balcony between us and the Commonwealth Bank in order to provide a lane, the provision of a telephone pay station at the rear of the telephone counter, and an extension of the existing money order office through to the lane proposed to be provided. I hardly know that it was ever decided to put up a new post office. Just May a committee met in Brisbane and it was then found that additional accommodation and working space were not needed. When the Postmaster-General was here in September last he stated that the Department would not build at the present time. The decision, therefore, was arrived at between last May and last September. It is expected that £24,300 will be spent on improvements, together with \$900 which the Commonwealth Bank is paying towards its share of the alteration on the wing. The total floor space available in the General Post Office block is 94,365 square feet. In the Parcel Post Office we have 9,490 feet. The total space available is therefore 103,755 feet. The area of the café is 1,809 feet. The billiard room space is 2,871 feet. The library occupies 350 feet and the class rooms 266 feet. The Postal Institute thus occupies 5,990 feet. We are working shifts throughout the 24 hours, and the number of officers on duty at any one time would be a little more than 600 in the postal, telegraph, and telephone services. The increase in the number employed in all branches from June, 1922, to June, 1925, was only 27. When we have the new automatic exchange in operation the 110 officers of the telephone exchange who may be on duty at the one time will disappear from our building. The Correspondence Branch may increase by one during the next few years, but the Accounts Branch may increase by three or four. The development of Brisbane, as in the case of most cities, is mainly in the suburbs, and from a postal point of view it means new postal buildings in the suburbs, and only to a slight extent calls for additional accommodation at head-quarters. Quite a lot of people do their business at the General Post Office. There is no congestion now in the General Post Office. The worst part of it is in the telephone exchange, where the girls are certainly very close together; but that difficulty is being remedied by the erection of a new automatic exchange. The contract time for the completion of the building is next August, but it will probably be a year later before the work is completed. There is no congestion in any other part of the Post Office. The building is convenient and economical to work. We have largely overcome its rambling nature by a rearrangement of the various activities. Those officers who come more closely in contact with the public are placed in more accessible places; those who do not come into contact with the public are in the least accessible places. In a general way the convenience of working in this building is not too bad, but it is not ideal, because it is an old building. The inconvenience is not oppressive. At the present time I have between 2,000 and 2,500 square feet not occupied. The room in which the committee is now sitting is unoccupied space. There is also a very big room available alongside the counter in the cashier's office. There is also a spare room upstairs. There is a good deal of spare

space in the corner of the telegraph branch. In the new automatic exchange there will be altogether 53,000 feet of effective floor space. In addition to the automatic equipment and all necessary appliances there will be ample room in it for the administrative staff of the telephone branch, and for the engineering branch, which is now located in Perry House. I do not think there will be very much space available in that building for other postal activities, and I am not aware of any proposal to place any other personnel in it. It is certain that the staffs which I have already mentioned as likely to occupy it will have ample room, but I do not think any space will be available for others. I am now laying out the building to occupy the whole seven stories. When the new building is occupied the whole of the existing exchange block containing approximately 17,000 feet will become vacant. Consideration is being given to a proposal to locate the Postal Institute on one of the floors of that building. I do not think that any space could be provided in the old exchange for other Commonwealth Departments. The possibility is that an extension of our own activities may absorb the whole of the space available in the old exchange as well as the 2,500 feet space we now have in the General Post Office. If space in the old exchange were made available for other Commonwealth Departments, some alterations would be necessary. It would be accessible to the public. It has a frontage to Elizabeth-street, and can be reached from the Post Office lane. After the completion of the new exchange building it will take at least another year to install the new equipment; in other words, if everything went well, it would be at least two and a half years before space in the old exchange could be made available for other Commonwealth Departments.

81. *To Mr. Seabrook.*—The renovations and alterations will not apply to the exchange wing, which will very shortly be dismantled. The painting of the internal walls will apply to the public hall, the telegraph and mail branches and the administrative offices. It is really a re-arranging act, and will not afford any extra working space. When I mentioned that 17,000 feet would be available in the old exchange, I had given no thought to the possibility of making it available for other Commonwealth Departments. As far as I know, it is a possibility that has never been considered. I do not know the requirements of the other Commonwealth Departments. I think it very desirable for all governmental activities not to be segregated. It is a much better idea to have them all in the one building. It would be more convenient for the public. We have not yet discussed the question of what we shall do with the exchange wing. I should like to see the Postal Institute better situated than it is now, and I should like to see some of the space in the old exchange made available for it. I am hoping that our educational facilities will be increased. That would mean more classes and more class rooms. We have a splendid opportunity for expanding in that direction. At present the class rooms are somewhat scattered. We would still have space space in the old exchange after providing for the institute. I do not think it should remain idle, and I think some use will be made of it, but at the present time the matter has not been discussed. The new automatic building will not be wholly occupied, but I do not think it would be advisable to put any one else in the small area that will be available. As a matter of fact we are allowing for a pretty liberal expansion in allotting space for the engineers. They might not occupy it wholly at first, but very soon they may. In the circumstances it would not be advisable to house any other department there.

82. *To Senator Reid.*—We have sufficient room in the General Post Office for the classes in connexion with the institute, but the room for expansion on the educational side, and I hope that when we get into

the exchange wing we shall have a few more class rooms than we have now. Classes which are now running give instruction in the following branches of our work—telegraphy, postal sorting, accountancy, postal accountancy, typewriting, and adding and calculating machines. Engineering instruction is given at the technical school, where the necessary equipment is available. In some States this equipment is available in the Postal Institutes. I know of no proposal at the present time to do any further building at the General Post Office.

83. *To Mr. Lacey.*—I have not seen it stated that the Post Office in Brisbane is so obsolete that it ought to be pulled down. We have sufficient room for all our requirements. Some of the old partitions in the old exchange building would need to be taken down, but I think that the rooms in the building could be made to suit the requirements of Commonwealth offices. The café is situated in almost the worst part of the General Post Office for that particular purpose. I think that when it is moved into the old exchange the institute will be more availed of from an educational point of view, but I doubt whether it will be more sought after from a recreation point of view. The takings in the café run from £340 to £250 a month. A great many persons buy their lunch at the counter. Quite a lot of persons bring their lunches from home. I do not think that we will use more space in the old exchange for a café. I think we would lay out the café in a different way, so that those who have lunches in the rooms throughout the building could eat them in the institute instead of in their rooms.

84. *To Mr. Cook.*—I think that the renovations we are carrying out will make the General Post Office perfectly habitable. But they will not give us more room. If it were my own money that had to be spent, I would not build a new Post Office.

85. *To Senator Payne.*—Portion of the 17,000 feet that will be available in the old exchange will be required for the installation of an up-to-date café. That would leave 12,000 feet unoccupied. I do not think that owing to the expansion of postal and telegraph business the department would need to use that space during the next ten years. We shall have a considerable amount of spare space in the new exchange to provide for the expansion of the telephone and engineering departments. I would prefer to see the spare space occupied, but the matter has not been discussed. In any case it will probably be two and a half years before it is vacant.

86. *To Mr. M. Cameron.*—The 2,500 feet of space in the main block will be absorbed by our own activities later on. There will be 17,000 feet available in the old exchange, and the only visible occupant of that space is the institute, which we hope to remove from the basement of the main building. A certain portion of the new exchange will be unoccupied for the moment, but it would not be safe to let it to other activities. I think we shall require the whole of the space in that building. At present we have all the room we want, except in the manual exchange.

87. *To Mr. McGrath.*—In addition to Perry House we are renting space for the stores branch in Mary-street and for workshops in Margaret-street. It is proposed to build workshops and stores in Wickham-street on a block now owned by the department. No portion of the basement of the General Post Office could very well be used for stores. We should have no difficulty in letting the 17,000 feet of space in the old exchange. It is in a very desirable position.

The witness withdrew.

James Orwin, Federal Works Director for Queensland, recalled and further examined.

88. *To the Chairman.*—For a considerable time past it has been brought very forcibly under notice that the existing manual telephone exchange, which Mr.

Christie says will be available later on, is very unsuitable and practically unhealthy. If it is unhealthy for one Commonwealth activity, I think it is unreasonable to assume that it will be healthy for another. It would not be a good proposition to house any Commonwealth officers in that building. It would mean breaking up the departments. Some departments might be housed in it, while the others would have to go to Adelaide-street. The effect of such an arrangement would not be beneficial. It would mean that half of the Commonwealth activities were housed in one building and half in another.

80. *To Mr. Seabrook.*—It is not because of the unhealthy condition of the old exchange that a new building was erected, but the poor conditions under which the telephonists work has been often pointed out. The Works and Railways Department would not be at any great disadvantage if it were housed in the old exchange, but in order to make the building suitable for officers a great deal of money would have to be spent. It would be necessary to provide reasonable approaches without going through the Post Office. If the Works and Railways Department were transferred to this building it would only be in close contact with the Postal Department. But that is not the only department with which we have to confer. Elizabeth-street is not as central as Adelaide-street. The same remarks would apply to the Taxation Branch. They would be better situated in Adelaide-street, which is much more suited for business purposes, and much more central for officers. Elizabeth-street is not what could be called a main thoroughfare. It will probably be two or three years before the new Commonwealth offices are completed. I have allotted space to the different departments, and provided for expansion for the next ten years. But one cannot tell what new branches and other departments may crop up. By the time the building is erected the Commonwealth departments may occupy more than we have allotted at the present time. If all the departments in sight and the Repatriation Commission occupy space in the building we shall only have 10,000 feet left, and I think it a sound proposition to provide that 10,000 feet straight away rather than wait until we know for certain that it will be occupied. It will cost considerably more to build at a later date than if the 10,000 feet is provided when the whole building is being erected. I do not think that Mr. Christie has made proper allowance for the expansion of postal business in Queensland. We have under consideration now a proposal to build workshops and stores in Wickham-street. They will be extensive buildings, but we may possibly be able to cut down the workshops and stores, and utilize some of the space that Mr. Christie says he has available at the General Post Office. I do not think that any space in the government offices will be unoccupied for any length of time. My experience in New South Wales and in Queensland with regard to departmental building, and more particularly post offices, is that sufficient accommodation has not been provided. There are many post offices in which we have no sooner provided extra accommodation than we have had to start out on another extension job. At Lismore we spent £1,500 to secure extra accommodation; we had hardly got that contract completed when we had to spend another £1,000, and we had hardly completed that before we had to spend more money on the office. It is true that this bears out the statement of Mr. Christie that postal activities are greater outside the city; but at the same time if country activities expand it follows that they also expand in the city. Australia is one of the few countries in the world that can take much immigration. Within the

next few years there will be a big increase of the population in Queensland. If it were my building I would build the whole thing, and run the little risk there would be of having space empty for any length of time.

90. *To Senator Reid.*—I would not say that the rooms in the old telephone exchange were decent enough for clerical work. I do not think they are worth altering for the purpose; but of course a great deal can be done with money. It is my experience that the Commonwealth has never over-built, that whatever space has been provided has very soon been fully occupied, and that there has been a clamour for more.

The witness withdrew.

Francis Harry Rowe, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, Queensland, sworn and examined.

91. *To the Chairman.*—The premises occupied by the Repatriation Commission are situated in Mary-street. The locality is undesirable for Commonwealth purposes, and unsuitable for returned soldiers who suffer from the loss of limbs or tuberculosis. It is difficult of access because of its distance from the trams and trains. Furthermore, the building is unsuitable for good administration. It is of two floors. It is a very old structure. It was purchased in 1920 at a cost of £9,500, and remodelled to meet our requirements. A position in Adelaide-street would be infinitely more suitable for our activities. We are now occupying 10,000 feet of space. Our activities have been diminishing rather rapidly so far, but from now on I think the decrease will be very gradual. I do not think there will be any difficulty in disposing of our present building; it is ideally situated for a warehouse, and there are several firms who would probably be only too eager to acquire it. There are 58 officers employed in the building. A smaller area than 10,000 feet would suit us, but I am not prepared to say exactly what we would need, because at the present time we are very much pressed for suitable filing space. We should need a strong room and fire-proof rooms for the main files, and smaller rooms for smaller files. I think that we could do with 7,500 feet. It would not matter which floor we occupied in the new building, but it is undesirable that men who have lost legs or suffer from tuberculosis should be obliged to make use of stairways. We have no lift in our present building, and to meet the convenience of this class of men the staff go downstairs to talk to them. That occasions waste of time.

92. *To Mr. M. Cameron.*—It cost us £4,000 to reconstruct our present building and make it suitable for our requirements, and the whole affair stands on our books to-day at £10,500. I think that the Commonwealth would realize something near that amount if it sold the building. My staff is not under the control of the Public Service Board, and I do not know whether or not there would be any difficulty from an administrative point of view in mixing it with officers who are under the Public Service Board. Our present building is very awkwardly situated for returned soldiers. My department is one that comes into constant daily contact with the Treasury, the Works and Railways Department, and various other Commonwealth activities. The consequence is that where matters cannot be arranged by telephone there is a waste of time in officers having to walk from Mary-street to the public offices. For that reason I say there would be a great deal of time saved if we were all in the one building.

The witness withdrew.

The Committee adjourned.