

1940.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

RECORD

343

Go Green
Clerk.

PRESENTED

20 AUG. 1940.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

R E P O R T

relating to the proposed erection of a

REPATRIATION HOSPITAL

at

RAFDWICK, NEW SOUTH WALES.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(Ninth Committee.)

The Honorable Josiah Francis, M.P., Chairman.

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|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Senate. | . | House of Representatives. |
| Senator Charles Henry Brand. | . | Thomas Joseph Collins, Esq., M.P. |
| Senator Gordon Brown. | . | Charles William Frost, Esq., M.P. |
| Senator Walter Jackson Cooper. | . | The Hon. Edward James Holloway, M.P. |
| | . | Walter Maxwell Nairn, Esq., M.P. |
| | . | John Lloyd Price, Esq., M.P. |

EXTRACT FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, No.72,
DATED 8th. DECEMBER, 1938.

11. PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.- REFERENCE OF WORK - REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL, RANDWICK, NEW SOUTH WALES.- Mr.Thorby (Minister for Works) moved, by leave, That, in accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1936, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report:- Repatriation General Hospital, Randwick, New South Wales - The erection of a new Hospital. Mr. Thorby having laid on the Table an estimate of cost of the projected work -
Question - put and passed.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

- Darby, Surgeon-Captain L., Principal Naval Medical Officer, H.M.A. Ships and Naval Establishments, Sydney.
- Downes, Dr.R.M., Director-General of Medical Services, Army & Air Forces.
- Hart, Miss J.M., Matron, Prince of Wales Repatriation General Hospital, Randwick. New South Wales.
- Irwin, L., Hospital Architect, Melbourne.
- Matthews, H., District Valuer of the Eastern Suburbs, Valuer-General's Department, Sydney.
- McKeffey, E.W., Commonwealth Director-General of Works.
- Nighell, W.R., Chairman Repatriation Commission.
- Percival, A., Commonwealth Surveyor-General, and Chief Property Officer of the Commonwealth, Department of the Interior.
- Robertson, A.S., Acting Commonwealth Works Director, Sydney.
- Rowe, F.H., Deputy Chairman, Repatriation Commission.
- Rutledge, Dr.E.H., Medical Superintendent, Prince of Wales Repatriation General Hospital, Randwick. N.S.W.
- Scriven, Major E.G.B., Deputy Director Works, Army, Department of Defence, Melbourne.
- Smith. Dr. K., Principal Medical Officer, Repatriation Commission.

ERECTION OF REPATRIATION HOSPITAL, RANDWICK, N.S.W.

R E P O R T .

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which the House of Representatives referred, for investigation and report, the question of the Erection of a new Hospital to replace the Repatriation General Hospital at Randwick, New South Wales, has the honour to report as follows:-

HISTORICAL.

1. The institution known as the Prince of Wales Repatriation General Hospital at Randwick, New South Wales, occupies portion of an area of $18\frac{3}{4}$ acres at the corner of Avoca and High- Streets, Randwick. This area was originally granted on trust for use as an asylum for destitute children. In 1852, a Society for the Relief of Destitute Children had been formed in Sydney, and in 1853 the activities of this society were removed to the area above referred to. A freestone building was erected thereon in 1858, and other buildings were added from time to time.

2. In September, 1915, the land and buildings then being used by the society were acquired by the Commonwealth in pursuance of powers vested in it by the Defence Act and under War Precautions Regulations, for use as a hospital and convalescent accommodation in connection with the return of wounded soldiers.

3. Just prior to the taking of this action, a movement had been commenced by the State Government of New South Wales, to take over the institution, but it was not until 1916, by Act No.22 of that year, that the State actually acquired the property, and section 2 of the Act in question provides that -

" All land including any buildings thereon held by or on behalf of, or vested in the Society for the Relief of Destitute Children, are hereby transferred and vested in the Crown to be used as a hospital home for invalid and wounded soldiers and sailors, or for such other purposes as the Governor may determine, freed and discharged from all other trusts and conditions attaching thereto!"

The land in question is thus vested in the Government of New South Wales. It was from time to time leased to the Repatriation Commission, and the last written lease expired on 31st. December, 1937. The Commonwealth now uses the land under a permissive occupancy.

To provide accommodation for the increasing influx of patients to be treated, a number of detached wards of timber

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and fibro walls and corrugated fibro roofing were erected, together with laboratory, nurses' quarters, operating theatre, laundry, and a great many other subsidiary buildings - all of a light construction and of a temporary nature.

4. On 1 July, 1921, the Repatriation Commission took over the institution from the Department of Defence. In 1927, the number of patients having diminished, about one-half of the accommodation which had been erected by the Commonwealth, was handed over to the State, and is today known as the Randwick Auxiliary Hospital, and is administered by the office of the Director-General of Public Health of the State of New South Wales. The position now is that on the area occupied by the Repatriation Commission, the permanent buildings, mainly of stone construction and comprising the Main Administrative Block, Kitchen Block, X-Ray Department, Sisters' quarters and Medical Superintendent's quarters, are still owned by the State, whilst the remainder, comprising detached hospital wards, operating theatre, dispensary, some nurses' quarters, laundry, mortuary &c., mostly of a temporary nature, are the property of the Commonwealth.

PRESENT PROPOSAL.

5. The proposal submitted for the consideration of the Committee is that owing to the inadequacy of the present hospital, a new hospital should be erected to contain a total of 450 beds.

ESTIMATED COST.

6. The approximate estimated cost of the proposal, prepared in 1936, was £166,000, but it was explained that owing to the rise in building costs since then, that estimate might require to be increased by 15% i.e. to £189,750.

It was stated that if the work were carried out departmentally, sketch plans could be drawn in 3 months, the work would be sufficiently advanced in 6 months to permit of the calling of tenders and it was estimated that the building could be completed within about two years from date of commencement.

COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

7. In order to acquaint itself with the responsibilities of the Repatriation Commission, and to obtain an insight into how those responsibilities are being shouldered, the Committee inspected the existing Repatriation Hospital at Randwick, the Lady Davidson Convalescent Home, Turramurra, and the Repatriation Blocks in the Callan Park Mental Hospital, in New South Wales; visits were also made to the Repatriation General Hospital, Caulfield, the Repatriation Clinic, St.Kilda Road, Melbourne, the Macleod Sanatorium, Mont Park, and the Bundoora Mental Hospital, Victoria in all of which institutions activities are being carried out on behalf of invalid returned soldiers.

8. In addition, evidence was taken from the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Principal Medical Officer of the Repatriation Commission, the Medical Superintendent and the Matron of the Randwick Hospital, from officials of the Department of the Interior, representatives of the Navy, Army and Air Force, and others, and the Committee in every way endeavoured to arrive at a realization of the necessity for the proposed work.

9. It was ascertained that the Commission provides medical treatment for all accepted disabilities, and for all ex-soldiers suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. Treatment is given to an in- or out-patient as may be required. The vast majority of the patients treated are thus returned soldiers, but in addition, the Commission provides accommodation and all necessary treatment for members of the naval, military, and air forces of the Commonwealth, permanent or trainees. Naval patients are treated in a separate ward, and the Navy provides medical officers and naval ratings to staff such ward; the Commission providing all special services. Military and air force cases are not treated in separate wards, but are accommodated in such of the remaining wards as the nature of the disability and circumstances of the time may dictate. The Commission also provides all facilities on behalf of other Dominions for pensioned soldiers of those Dominions who require treatment.

10. It was given in evidence that at the 31 December, 1938, there were 28,006 ex-soldiers resident in New South Wales eligible for medical treatment by the Repatriation Commission. The daily average number of in-patients treated for the past seven years was given as:-

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|------|--------|
| 1932 | 248.2 |
| 1933 | 269.7 |
| 1934 | 278.2 |
| 1935 | 344.06 |
| 1936 | 386.1 |
| 1937 | 407.4 |
| 1938 | 428.4 |

and the daily average number of out-patients for the same years:-

| | |
|------|--------|
| 1932 | 189.32 |
| 1933 | 203.88 |
| 1934 | 202.42 |
| 1935 | 211.98 |
| 1936 | 223.4 |
| 1937 | 236.86 |
| 1938 | 234.85 |

Instead of the average diminishing, as might be expected, it will be noted that it has increased in recent years. This is explained by the fact that the average age of returned soldiers is now about 49, and that as their ages increase more are applying for admission to hospital. Also, as their ages increase there is an increase of the length of their stay in hospital.

11. It was stated in evidence that the correct capacity of the Randwick Hospital is 359, but that use has been made of verandahs, and the accepted establishment is 477. At the date of the Committee's visit the number of patients in hospital was 509. The Committee was impressed with the efforts made to cater for the treatment and comfort of the patients, but it was apparent that the lay-out of the institution necessitated the staff being much in the open in all weathers, besides being inconvenient in other ways.

12. It must be realized that most of the buildings occupied are of a temporary nature, were erected hurriedly and at a time when it was not expected that treatment for so large a number would have to be continued for such a lengthy period as now seems possible.

They are now in the 25th. year of their life and maintenance charges are considerable. It was stated in evidence that in 1937 an amount of £5,827 was expended on maintenance and in 1938 £4,139. From the point of view of economy, therefore, as well as

convenience, it would be an advantage to have a permanent building complete with modern hospital equipment and amenities.

13. An endeavour was made to ascertain what should be the amount of accommodation to be provided in such a building, and information was obtained from the Director-General of the Medical Services (Army & Air Forces) that his probable requirements, apart from those of the Repatriation Commission would be about 130 beds. The peak requirements of the Repatriation Commission was set down at 500 beds, and a hospital was visualized providing for an ultimate capacity of 1,000 patients all told. The cost of such a building might approximate £500,000.

14. It was urged that the site should be chosen and a sketch plan prepared to provide for progressive development to this ultimate capacity, and that the first section to accommodate 200 beds be approved to provide for immediate requirements. It was suggested that as funds could be made available later, sections should be progressively added towards the ultimate objective, and a proportionate amount of the accommodation in the temporary wards abandoned as permanent quarters were made available.

15. The efforts of the Committee to arrive at a decision in regard to the building were hampered by the fact that no plan was submitted to indicate the size and class of building proposed. Moreover, it was ascertained that because the old buildings were the property of the State there was a reluctance to spend large sums on remodelling them, and no authority existed to permit of their demolition, which might be desirable if it were decided to embark upon a comprehensive scheme.

Site.

16. At the outset of its investigations the Committee was faced with the fact that the site of the proposed hospital was not Commonwealth property, and there was general objection to embarking upon an expensive building project unless the Commonwealth could obtain the freehold of the land. It was explained in evidence that as a result of representations made by the Repatriation Commission to the New South Wales Government in 1936 that a lease be granted

covering such period as the site might be required for repatriation hospital purposes or a minimum term of 20 years, that Government in March 1937, advised that it was prepared to let the Commission remain in occupation for 25 years subject to a condition that within 5 years from that date the Commonwealth Government should erect modern hospital buildings to the amount of £250,000, the type of buildings to be subject to the approval of the Minister of Health for New South Wales. The whole question was brought before the Commonwealth Cabinet on 11 March 1937, when it was decided that further consideration of the matter be deferred.

17. Later the Repatriation Commission was instructed to ascertain whether the Commonwealth owned any lands in suburban areas in Sydney which might be suitable for consideration as an exchange to the State for a title to the land upon which the Randwick Hospital is built. The most suitable land of this type appeared to be that known as the Randwick Rifle Range, and preliminary details of the relative valuations of both sites were then prepared.

18. Subsequently the matter was remitted to a sub-committee of Cabinet to negotiate with the appropriate Minister of the State Government, but, largely owing to the preoccupation of Ministers with other duties, to the re-allocation of Commonwealth portfolios, and the departure of the New South Wales Minister abroad, no material progress in the negotiations had been made when the Committee commenced its inquiries.

19. As a result of the evidence received, and following discussion on the subject in Committee, the Chairman of the Committee, on 2 May 1939, addressed to the Minister for Repatriation a letter in the following terms:-

" Dear Sir,

With reference to the resolution carried in the House of Representatives on the 8th. December, 1938, requesting this Committee to investigate and report upon a proposal to provide a new hospital at the Repatriation General Hospital Randwick, - I am desired by the Committee to inform you that after visiting the existing institution and hearing the views of the various witnesses examined it is apparent that if the present and prospective needs of patients and staff are to be catered for in a satisfactory manner then additional and more convenient accommodation will be essential.

" It was represented to the Committee that in addition to returned soldiers all necessary accommodation and treatment is provided for members of the naval, military and air forces of the Commonwealth, permanent or trainees. With the advance in age of ex A.I.F. men and the enlarged Defence programme it is anticipated that the numbers requiring treatment will progressively increase so that the question becomes one of increasing urgency.

The Committee, however, feels unable to submit to Parliament a comprehensive report in this matter until it has satisfactory information in regard to the Commonwealth's rights in respect to the land upon which it is proposed to erect a new hospital and fuller details of the building it is proposed to construct.

Site.

In respect of the site it has been adduced in evidence that the Commonwealth is now in enjoyment of a permissive occupancy only, the terms and conditions of occupation being based mainly on letters which passed between the Prime Minister and the Premier of New South Wales in 1923, covering "terms of agreement". One clause provides for the renewal "as occasion requires", and it has been urged on the Committee that as between Governments this might be interpreted as giving the Commonwealth the right to occupy the land as long as it might be required for the treatment of repatriation cases, and that the Commonwealth might safely proceed.

It is within the knowledge of the Committee, however, that in former years one of the State Governments agreed to the Commonwealth erecting a building on State land and just when the Commonwealth was about to commence operations there was a change of Government in the State, and the new Government demanded a sum of £60,000 for the land which led to the abandonment of the project.

As a basis of title of the Randwick Hospital area my Committee regards the existing arrangements as uncertain and precarious and does not feel disposed to recommend the expenditure of some hundreds of thousands of pounds in permanent improvements on land held under a doubtful right. Moreover, the most effective use of the property might necessitate the demolition or remodelling of certain buildings on the land - a course obviously impracticable while these buildings are State property.

In view of the uncertainty as to the Commonwealth's right to the permanent occupation of the property my Committee considers that it cannot proceed further with the consideration of this urgent project until all doubts as to the site are definitely settled.

About 18 months ago a sub-committee of the Commonwealth Cabinet was empowered to enter into negotiations with the State Government for the acquisition of the fee simple of the hospital area by the exchange of portion of the old Randwick Rifle Range, but various circumstances have conspired to prevent these negotiations reaching finality. At the present time the State Minister who was engaged in the early negotiations is abroad and the corresponding Commonwealth Ministers have either relinquished office or are engaged on other duties, so that to continue the negotiations on the former basis would probably necessitate opening the business de novo. For this reason the Committee recommends for your consideration that the State Government be invited to nominate appropriate State Officials who in conference with corresponding Commonwealth Officials might arrive at a basis of exchange which could be recommended to the respective Governments for adoption.

Buildings.

As regards the building proposed to be erected, no plans have been submitted to the Committee to show the class of

structure contemplated and no detailed estimates of cost are available. To enable this Committee to furnish Parliament with a report sufficient to so acquaint Members with all the circumstances of the case as to ensure that the Government may rely upon its adoption without adverse criticism, it is urged that instructions be issued to the Department for the preparation forthwith of sketch plans showing:-

- (1) Elevation and ground plan of the complete building projected;
- (2) Elevation and ground plan of the section of that building which is desired should be provided at once;
- (3) Lay-out of the Randwick area showing the position on the site the completed building will occupy and an indication of the first section to be erected.

It is also desired that an Estimate be furnished of the cost of the completed building and of the section now recommended.

The Committee was informed in evidence that Ministerial approval had been given to utilize the services of Mr. Leighton Irwin, a well known hospital architect of Melbourne and Sydney, to assist the Repatriation Commission in its preliminary study of the subject.

The Committee, in view of the statements made that the departmental officials are working to capacity on the large number of defence and other works in prospect agrees with the recommendation of the Repatriation Commission that it would be of advantage to the Commonwealth to retain the services of Mr. Irwin as Consultant. He has specialized in hospital architecture and equipment and he might with advantage be engaged as Consultant in connection with the planning and lay-out of this hospital.

It is respectfully urged that you give this matter your careful and immediate attention with a view to plans and estimates of cost being prepared and transmitted to this Committee as early as possible.

(Sgd.) Jos. Francis, Chairman.

20. Later, on 11 August, 1939, representatives of the Committee formed a deputation to the Minister to urge expedition in the matter and were informed that the question of site had been referred to the Department of Defence to ascertain the views of that Department to the proposal to part with a substantial portion of the Randwick Rifle Range. The Minister intimated that he had requested that Department to expedite a decision in the matter, would make further representations to the Minister for Defence, and inform the Committee as soon as he received a reply from Mr. Street.

He informed the Committee that in the meantime he had authorised the Repatriation Commission to obtain from Mr. Leighton Irwin sketch plans of the proposed building.

21. On the declaration of war, in September, the Chairman of

the Repatriation Commission received Ministerial instructions that further action in the direction of obtaining sketch plans should be delayed for the present.

22. In an effort to expedite action a letter was addressed by the Chairman to the Minister for Repatriation (Hon. E. J. Harrison) on the 8th. December 1939 as follows:-

" Dear Sir,

Repatriation General Hospital, Randwick, N.S.W.

I refer to my letter to you of End. May last, and to the interview which representatives of this Committee had with you in Sydney on 11th. August, 1939, seeking your good offices in an effort to arrive at finality on the question of a title to the site on which the above building stands.

After exhaustive inquiries the Committee is satisfied that a new hospital is necessary, and that a commencement should be made as early as practicable in the provision of a permanent section of say 200 beds. The existing situation is suitable, but the Committee is not able to present its report to Parliament until the question of the tenure of the site is settled, and the Committee has had an opportunity of scrutinizing the plans of the building proposed - both of which matters are awaiting decision by the Government.

In August, negotiations were proceeding with the State Government of New South Wales for the exchange of the fee simple of the hospital site for part of the Randwick Rifle Range area, but no intimation has yet been received from you, as promised, as to the result of such negotiations. From other sources the Committee has learned that, owing to the fact that Australia is now at war, it is unlikely that the Defence Department will part with any of its lands, and it is assumed that the exchange proposal must be regarded as abandoned. To acquire the fee simple of the Randwick Hospital site the Commonwealth could resort to compulsory acquisition under the lands Acquisition Act, but that course would probably evoke a claim for something like £70,000.

The weight of evidence obtained by the Committee is to the effect that Randwick is the most suitable and convenient site for a Repatriation Hospital, and while the fee simple of the land is to be preferred, still, having regard to present urgent needs, and to the fact that the outcome of the present war will assuredly ultimately mean a definite increase in the number of patients to be treated by the Repatriation Commission, the Committee is of the opinion that the Commonwealth Government might properly proceed with the erection of necessary hospital accommodation if it could obtain a tenure of the land which, although short of freehold, would give reasonable security.

It is therefore recommended that the Commonwealth Government should approach the State Government of New South Wales with a request that the State Government agree to lease to the Commonwealth the whole of the land now occupied by the Repatriation Commission and utilised for hospital

purposes, for a period of 25 years, with the right of renewal for such further period as the Commonwealth may need same for the purpose of providing medical treatment for members of the Commonwealth Forces who served in the present or any previous war.

Upon a satisfactory solution of the site question being secured, the Committee would reiterate its request of 2nd. May, 1939, that it be furnished, as early as practicable, with sketch plans showing:-

1. Elevation and Ground Plan of the complete building projected;
2. Elevation and Ground Plan of the section of that building which it is desired should be provided at once;
3. Layout of the Randwick area showing the position on the site the completed building will occupy, and an indication of the first section to be erected;

and that an estimate be furnished of the cost of the completed building, and of a section to accommodate 200 beds, which, it has been represented, would be sufficient to meet present urgent needs.

As the completion of its work on this project has been considerably delayed through the inability of the respective Governments to arrive at agreement in respect of the site, I should be grateful if you would give this matter your careful and early attention.

(Sgd.) Jos. Francis, Chairman. "

23. A further letter asking to be informed of the position was addressed to Mr. Harrison on 6th. March 1940. The portfolio of Repatriation had, however, passed to the Hon. G.A. Street during the second week of March, and on the 1st. May, 1940, a communication was received from the Assistant Minister for Repatriation (Senator Collett) as follows:-

" Dear Mr. Francis,

REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL, RANDWICK. N.S.W.

With further reference to your letter of 18th. April, 1940, on the above subject, I have to advise that I have now ascertained the following facts with regard to the proposal in question.

Negotiations with the New South Wales Government for the transfer to the Commonwealth of the fee simple title to the land on which Randwick Hospital is erected, in exchange for certain Commonwealth land, had to be abandoned on the outbreak of the war owing to the necessity of conserving Commonwealth lands in the Sydney metropolitan area for emergent defence purposes.

Negotiations were then commenced with the view of securing a lengthy renewal of the leasehold tenure on which Randwick was previously held by the Repatriation Commission, but whilst these negotiations were in progress the Government realised that the state of war would make it necessary to provide hospital accommodation in New South Wales for the treatment of Defence personnel in large numbers.

" I am informed that the Director-General of Medical Services estimates that he will require approximately 1,200 beds for the treatment of Defence cases in that State.

The Government was thus faced with the possibility of having to construct a large hospital for Defence purposes, and a new hospital at Randwick, and in order to assist it in its deliberations the War Cabinet appointed a special Committee to investigate and report on all aspects of the matter, and particularly as to the possibility of constructing one hospital on an appropriate site in New South Wales which could be used for Defence purposes during the war and for Repatriation purposes after the war. If this can be done you will appreciate that a very considerable saving in Commonwealth funds will result.

I am informed that the Committee appointed by War Cabinet has furnished a report on the matter, and that the whole question will be determined by the Government just as soon as possible. Once that decision has been reached I shall again communicate with you and advise you of it.

(Sgd.) Herbt. B. Collett.
Assistant Minister for Repatriation. "

24. On 3rd. May, 1940, Mr. Street, in answer to questions in the House of Representatives, stated that for a period of years difficulty had been experienced with regard to the tenure of the land on which the Repatriation Hospital at Randwick stands, and, after careful consideration, the Government had decided to erect a new Repatriation Hospital at Yaralla, Concord, New South Wales.

25. On 12th. August, 1940, the Chairman, Repatriation Commission, in accordance with Ministerial instructions advised the Committee of the War Cabinet's decision to acquire about 40 acres of land at Yaralla, Concord, New South Wales, for the sum of £10,000, and to erect thereon a permanent hospital of 600 beds, together with hutments to accommodate 240 patients. It was added that the intention of the War Cabinet is that as soon as possible after the war the Repatriation Hospital at Randwick be moved to Yaralla.

RECOMMENDATION.

26. Under the circumstances the Committee is satisfied that the necessity for the provision of extensive permanent accommodation for Repatriation purposes at Randwick no longer exists.


JOS. FRANCIS CHAIRMAN.