

1943-44.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

REPORT

RELATING TO THE PROPOSED ERECTION OF A

HOSTEL AT CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY.

By Authority :

L. F. JOHNSTON, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra.
(Printed in Australia.)

F.3328.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(Eleventh Committee.)

ROWLAND JAMES, Esq., M.P. (Chairman).

Senate.

Senator William Edward Aylett.
Senator Charles Henry Brand.
Senator Charles Adcock Lamp.

House of Representatives.

William Patrick Conelan, Esq., M.P.
Hon. Eric John Harrison, M.P.
Daniel Mulcahy, Esq., M.P.
George James Rankin, Esq., M.P.
Hon. Sir Frederick Harold Stewart, M.P.

EXTRACT FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, No. 37.

DATED 30TH MARCH, 1944.

3. PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE—REFERENCE OF WORK—ERECTION OF HOSTEL AT CANBERRA.—Mr. Lazzarini (Minister representing the Minister for the Interior) moved, pursuant to notice, 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 :—Canberra, Australian Capital Territory—Erection of a new Hostel.

Mr. Lazzarini having laid on the Table plans in connexion with the proposed work—

Question—put and passed.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

Dunbar, William .. ..	..	Director, Canberra Tourist Bureau.
Edwards, Albert William ..	..	Commissioner for Housing and Officer in Charge of Housing, Department of the Interior.
Fry, Eric Victor .. ..	..	Representing Lessee of Barton House.
Robertson, Alexander Smeaton ..	..	Works Director, Canberra.
Sheaffe, Percy Lempriere ..	..	Development Surveyor and Acting Chief Surveyor and Property Officer, Department of the Interior.
Traynor, William John .. ..	..	Traffic Inspector, Canberra.
Waterhouse, Bertrand James ..	..	Chairman, National Capital Planning and Development Committee.
Woodger, William George ..	..	President, Canberra Chamber of Commerce.

an A2 priority, there is some difficulty there with regard to man-power and the contractor is not getting all the men he requires. Most men prefer to work on jobs close to their homes rather than come to Canberra. It was suggested that if the Allied Works Council could release men whose homes are in Canberra, it would help not only with the work itself but also in providing accommodation for the workmen.

31. As the accommodation to be provided in the proposed Hostel is a matter of moment to Canberra, it is urged that arrangements be made to obtain for the work as high a priority as practicable.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

32. Briefly summarized, the recommendations of the Committee are as follow:—

- (a) That urgent necessity exists for more accommodation of the nature indicated, and that steps be taken to give effect to the proposal as early as practicable (paragraph 13);
- (b) That the site in the vicinity of Barton House, fronting Brisbane-avenue be adopted (paragraph 17);
- (c) That the plan of the building submitted, as amended, be adopted (paragraph 20);

- (d) That for any future hostel accommodation projected, alternative plans showing a radical departure from conventional lines, and further, that plans showing how similar accommodation desired might be provided in smaller detached units be submitted for consideration (paragraph 20);
- (e) That the walls of the kitchen be tiled to the full height of the room (paragraph 24);
- (f) That a complete central heating system be installed (paragraph 26);
- (g) That arrangements be made to obtain for the work as high a priority as practicable (paragraph 31).

R. JAMES, Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee
on Public Works,

Parliament House,

Canberra, A.C.T.

13th June, 1944.

ERECTION OF A HOSTEL AT CANBERRA.

REPORT.

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 Hostel at Barton, Australian Capital Territory, has the honour to report as follows:—

PROPOSAL.

1. The proposal submitted for the consideration of the Committee is for the erection of a Hostel on a site in the vicinity of Barton House, Brisbane-avenue, designed to house approximately 190 guests.

REASON FOR THE PROPOSAL.

2. It is represented that there is urgent need for an establishment to cater for lower-paid public servants, other residents and visitors who require accommodation at a medium tariff.

SITE.

3. The area on which the Hostel is proposed to be erected is an island site bounded on the north by Brisbane-avenue, on the east by King-street, on the south by Darling-street and on the west by Young-street. The area has a frontage to Brisbane-avenue of 469.6 feet and a depth of 250 feet and contains an area of 2 acres 3 roods 5½ perches. The area is valued at about £2,400.

4. The surface of the area is of an even grade with a fall of 2 ft. 7 in. across the front of the proposed building and a maximum fall of about 3 ft. 5 in. between diagonal corners.

BUILDING.

5. The building as designed has two floors, ground and first floor, and is to be constructed of brick with 11-in. hollow external walls and 9-in. and 4½-in. internal brick partitions, rendered plaster internal walls with fibrous plaster ceilings, hard-wood roof and floor timbers and mountain ash joinery.

6. The building is to have a tile roof and external walls of light coloured face bricks so as to harmonize generally in appearance with Barton House adjoining.

Ceiling heights on the ground floor will be 13 feet in the public rooms and 9 feet 6 inches in other rooms; on the first floor the ceiling height will be 9 ft. 6 in. throughout.

7. The plan of the proposed Hostel has been governed by the desire to make the following provisions:—

- (a) As many bedrooms as possible away from noise which might come from the public rooms, the kitchen and services;
- (b) Access from all bedrooms to public rooms under cover;
- (c) Public rooms and kitchen to receive morning sun and to be protected from the afternoon sun;
- (d) Verandahs to receive morning sun. The verandahs adjacent to the dining-room and the main entrance face east and north, and are protected from the afternoon sun and from the prevailing winds in winter;
- (e) To avoid as far as possible any suggestion of a back to the building.

ACCOMMODATION.

8. The accommodation is grouped round two courts, the services court and the garden court. Around the services court are grouped on the ground floor the public rooms—that is the entrance hall, lounge and writing-room, small radio-room and dining-room—the kitchen and service boiler-room, staff dining-room, six (6) garages, cycle-room for 50 cycles and male staff quarters. Round the garden court on both the ground and first floors, are arranged guests' bedroom accommodation.

Accommodation will be available for 190 persons in 22 double rooms and 146 single rooms.

TELEPHONES.

9. There is provision for four (4) public telephones off the entrance hall on the ground floor. In addition to these, telephones for outward calls are provided at two other points on the ground floor and four points on the first floor.

MANAGER'S SUITE.

10. A self-contained suite shut off from the rest of the Hostel is provided for the Manager. It consists of a Manager's office with direct access to the booking office and the main corridor; a living-room 17 feet by 13 feet; one double bedroom 12 feet by 17 feet; and one bedroom 12 ft. 6 in. by 9 feet. If additional bedroom accommodation is required for the suite, an adjacent Hostel bedroom could be utilized.

ESTIMATED COST.

11. The estimated cost of the proposal as submitted to the Committee is:—

	£
Building structure (including electrical services, blinds and linoleum floor coverings)	73,000
Mechanical services, including kitchen	9,145
Hotwater supply	2,750
Entrance drive, paths, service court in concrete	1,750
Garden treatment	1,000
	<hr/>
	87,645
Furniture	12,000
	<hr/>
	99,645

COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

12. The Committee visited the site proposed, carefully scrutinized the plans submitted and took evidence from the Works Director, Canberra, the Developmental Surveyor, the Chairman of the National Capital Planning and Development Committee, the President of the Canberra Chamber of Commerce, the Director, Canberra Tourist Bureau and a representative of the lessee of Barton House, and endeavoured to obtain a general grasp of the whole problem associated with the provision of accommodation in Canberra.

13. After duly considering the evidence tendered, the Committee is satisfied that urgent necessity exists for the provision of more accommodation of the nature indicated and recommends that steps be taken to give effect to the proposal as early as practicable.

SITE.

14. In addition to the site suggested by the Department, the Committee inspected several other areas which might be considered suitable, but which from their nature and situation would call for a different treatment of the building to be erected upon them.

15. The Committee was informed that the building proposed is one of two hostels which were originally included in the post-war programme for Canberra—one in the southern portion of the city and the other north of the river.

16. The site in Brisbane-avenue was selected by the National Capital Planning and Development Committee in conjunction with a sub-committee of departmental officers. It is reported to be good building land with water, sewerage, and electrical services in the vicinity, and is conveniently situated from a transport point of view.

17. It was represented that following a plan of progressive development, it would be an advantage to have the proposed Hostel in the vicinity of Barton House fronting Brisbane-avenue, and in view of all the circumstances, the Committee agrees to the adoption of this site.

BUILDING.

18. Some discussion took place as to whether the building might not have been planned in a less conventional style and with a more attractive façade. It was also suggested that greater diversity of design and perhaps more attractive leasing propositions might have been obtained by providing the accommodation required in two or three smaller buildings.

It was explained in evidence, however, that the general plan of Canberra with its extensive areas made it more desirable to have a number of buildings of this description of some magnitude; moreover, one large building could be erected more expeditiously and cheaply than several smaller buildings providing similar accommodation; and that further, it was desired that the Hostel to be erected in the vicinity of Barton House should be in architectural harmony with that structure.

19. During the course of the Committee's investigation, certain suggestions were made and adopted by the architect which the Committee considers will improve the appearance and amenities of the Hostel: the main ones being an alteration of the northern and southern façades and the entrance of the building, and also the provision of more lounge and writing-room space.

20. After due consideration the Committee, in view of the urgency of providing more accommodation, recommends that the plan submitted as amended, be adopted. It feels, however, that its inquiries are unnecessarily restricted by having to consider one plan only for the accommodation required and urges that for any future hostel accommodation projected alternative plans showing a radical departure from conventional lines, and further that plans showing how similar accommodation desired might be provided in smaller detached units, be submitted for consideration.

SIZE OF ROOMS.

21. The standard size of single bedrooms in the proposed Hostel is to be 12 ft. 6 in. by 9 feet as compared with 12 feet by 9 feet at Barton House, 12 ft. 6 in. by 9 feet at Hotel Canberra, and 13 feet by 9 feet at Hotel Kurrajong.

22. The standard size of double bedrooms varies, but is not less than 15 feet by 10 feet, compared with a minimum of 13 feet by 12 feet at Barton House, 13 feet by 11 feet at Hotel Canberra, and 13 feet by 12 ft. 6 in. at Hotel Kurrajong.

23. A basin with hot and cold water is fitted in all bedrooms and a wardrobe as an article of furniture. Passages will be 5 feet wide.

KITCHEN.

24. The kitchen proposed is 40 feet by 30 feet with non-slip tiled floor; walls tiled to height of 6 feet. A coke-burning central stove and the usual accessories are provided, also separate areas for food preparation, wash-up, pastry-room, vegetable store, and general bulk store. There is separate refrigeration for: (1) meat; (2) fish; and (3) dairy and other foods. During its investigations, the Committee inspected kitchens in other Canberra guest houses and hotels and is satisfied that from the point of view of hygiene and facility in keeping the premises clean, the walls should be tiled to the full height of the room.

HEATING.

25. It was stated in evidence that in the proposal submitted provision was included for central heating in the public rooms only at an estimated cost of £2,180. There is provision for an electric meter and a power point in every room thus allowing the use of a radiator in each room. It was ascertained that central heating for the whole building including bedrooms and corridors would cost £7,090.

26. In the opinion of the Committee, it would be economical to put in the complete central heating. It is certainly essential in a climate like Canberra, would raise the standard of the establishment to the rank of a first class hotel and would be definitely worth the extra capital cost of £4,910.

MANAGEMENT AND TARIFF.

27. The Committee was somewhat hesitant to make recommendations in regard to details because of the lack of an authoritative official statement as to whether the proposed Hostel is to be controlled by the Government or to be under private management; also whether it is to be run on similar lines to Barton House with a fixed tariff and if so, what that tariff is to be.

28. Barton House is held by a private individual on a ten-years' lease and the fixed tariff is £1 16s. per week. In the opinion of the Committee, it would be manifestly unfair to the lessee of Barton House to establish a more up to date and better equipped hostel in the vicinity and charge the same tariff as Barton House, as it would be difficult for him to hold his guests while better accommodation was available nearby at the same rate.

29. If the new Hostel is to be run by the Government, the Committee is convinced that if a tariff of £1 16s. per week is charged, the Commonwealth will be involved in an annual loss; while if the establishment is to be offered to a private investor and the Commonwealth is to receive a reasonable percentage on its capital outlay, a variable tariff would have to be allowed.

TIME FOR COMPLETION.

30. The Committee endeavoured to ascertain when this Hostel would be ready for occupation but was informed that it is hard to say how long the construction of the building is likely to take because of the difficulty associated with man-power and material. In normal times, a reasonable period for the completion of the building would be twelve months. Although the work being carried out to West Block, Canberra, has