

1946-47.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

REPORT

RELATING TO THE PROPOSED

PERMANENT ADMINISTRATION OFFICES,
CANBERRA.

Presented pursuant to Statute, ordered to be printed, 29th October, 1947.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.
(TWELFTH COMMITTEE.)

SENATOR CHARLES ADCOCK LAMP, Chairman.

Senate.

Senator CHARLES HENRY BRAND.†
Senator RICHARD HARRY NASH.

House of Representatives.

WILLIAM PATRICK CONELAN, ESQUIRE, M.P.
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* Resigned 6th June, 1947.

† Appointed 6th June, 1947.

‡ Ceased to be a Member of the Senate, 30th June, 1947.

EXTRACT FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
No. 54, DATED 16TH MAY, 1947.

6. PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS—REFERENCE OF WORK—ERECTION OF PERMANENT ADMINISTRATION OFFICES, CANBERRA.—Mr. Lemmon (Minister for Works and Housing) moved, pursuant to notice, That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1936*, the following work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report thereon, namely :—The erection of Permanent Administration Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

Mr. Lemmon having laid on the Table plans in connexion with the proposed work—
Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

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PERMANENT ADMINISTRATION OFFICES, 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 Permanent Administration Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, has the honour to report as follows :—

SECTION I.

HISTORICAL.

Introductory.

1. The question of the provision of office accommodation for the administrative sections of the various branches of the Commonwealth Public Service in Canberra has been the subject of investigation on a number of occasions during a period of many years past, and it has become increasingly urgent with the passage of the years. Various proposals have been referred to this Committee and reports have been made to Parliament in due course. Up to the present, however, every effort made towards the establishment of a large, permanent administrative block has ended in postponement or compromise, owing to circumstances which arose in each case to prevent the expenditure of the necessary money and time on a monumental building. A brief history of previous proposals which have been referred to the Committee, concerning the provision of office accommodation in Canberra, will serve to emphasize the need which has existed, and the action which has been taken in the past to meet the requirements.

Provisional Office Buildings.

2. The original proposal, made in 1923, was for the construction of twelve separate office buildings, and a refectory and recreation building of light timber-frame construction ; also two buildings of brick or concrete construction to accommodate departments and records whose preservation from fire was deemed specially important. These buildings were to be on a site north of that proposed for the Provisional Parliament House, and were estimated to cost £135,000.

3. The Committee, in that case, considered that under no circumstances would it be justified in recommending that Government officials and important public documents be housed in wood and iron buildings. As an alternative it recommended that two units of permanent buildings be erected as early as possible to provide accommodation required in the early stages of the city's development. It also recommended that competitive designs should be invited for a permanent administrative block.

Competitive Designs.

4. Competitive designs were then invited for the first of the two Permanent Administrative Offices projected in the plan for Canberra, and 94 designs were submitted by architects from all States. The premium was awarded to Mr. George Sydney Jones, of Sydney, who, in accordance with the conditions of the competition, was instructed to proceed with drawings of the building, to the extent of being able to sufficiently illustrate his scheme for submission to the Public Works Committee.

First Permanent Administrative Offices.

5. In 1925 the question was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report.

The proposal was for a building 430 feet long and 54 feet high, comprising five floors, and capable of accommodating eight Departments of State with office space sufficient for about 1,100 officials. After a great deal of investigation and consideration, the Committee recommended the buildings at a revised estimate of £842,618.

Secretariats.

6. The Federal Capital Commission, which was then in charge of construction in the Territory, reported that Parliament House would be completed in 1926, but that it was improbable that the administrative offices could be made ready for occupation before 1929, and requested approval for the erection of two Secretariat buildings, which could house skeleton staffs for about three years, and later be used as rooms for Members of Parliament, or such other purposes as might be determined. This approval was given and resulted in the erection of the buildings now known as " East Block " and " West Block ".

Stoppage of Work.

7. In 1928 the erection of the Permanent Administrative Offices was commenced on a site to the north-east of Parliament House. This was in conformity with the idea of the designer, who had made provision that it should be followed at a later date by a complementary building of similar design in a relative position to the north-west of Parliament House.

8. On completion of the foundations, however, after an expenditure of approximately £79,000 on materials, labour, competition costs, architects' fees, &c., the work was abandoned.

Extension of Secretariats.

9. With the growth of Departments, and the increase in the number of officials accommodated in the Secretariats, these buildings, originally intended only for skeleton staffs for a limited period, proved quite inadequate, and resort was made to various expedients to meet the difficulty. Corridors and balconies were converted into small offices, small additions were made, and private premises were leased in various parts of the city.

Further Temporary Secretariats.

10. In 1941, a proposal to erect two new secretariat buildings of a temporary nature, in line with the present Secretariats, was referred to the Committee. It was planned to erect two buildings of brick comprising two storeys, with wooden floors and concrete foundations, to accommodate 300 to 400 officials, and to cost approximately £80,000.

11. The Committee investigated the question from all angles in order to find an alternative to the erection of further temporary buildings, especially as it was considered that the site chosen would create an infringement of the Griffin Plan. Several methods of relieving the difficult position were suggested by the Committee. Briefly summarized they were: (a) use of the existing foundations for the Permanent Administrative Offices to erect thereon a section of that building sufficient for present purposes, and later to be incorporated in the permanent structure; and (b) completion of the Melbourne block of shops at Civic Centre for immediate use as offices, and subsequent conversion to shops when the officials could be transferred to the permanent building. The latter alternative was adopted.

Additions to "West Block".

12. In 1943, it became necessary to plan the extension of West Block offices and a proposal for the addition of a brick wing to the building, to cost £54,000, was referred to the Public Works Committee. The Committee, recognizing the extreme urgency of the position, recommended the immediate addition of the proposed wing to the West Block building, but stressed the necessity of proceeding with the erection of the Permanent Administrative Offices at the earliest possible moment.

SECTION II.

THE PRESENT PROPOSAL.

Post-war Plans.

13. With the realization that plans for post-war works must be ready for use when the war terminated, many proposals were considered by the Government and, as men became available, a certain amount of planning was begun.

Amongst the post-war works decided upon was the completion of the Permanent Administrative Offices at Canberra, and plans were brought to a stage when they could be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

14. In May, 1947, the proposed work was referred to the Committee for investigation and report to Parliament, and the Committee's investigation has been carried out as expeditiously as possible, in order that the conclusions reached may be put into effect without delay.

Details of the Proposal.

(a) The Building.

15. *Dimensions.*—The proposed building is planned to be 425 feet long and 212 feet wide, with a total height of about 100 feet above ground level. The length of the building is approximately 50 feet greater than the present Parliament House, and the structure will contain a basement, lower ground floor, ground floor, and first, second, third and fourth floors. There will also be two additional minor floors in the centre of the building for recreational and other purposes.

16. *Partitions.*—The building has not been subdivided into offices, but is designed practically without any internal partitions beyond the main corridor running from east to west. A provision will be made in the specifications for the erection of demountable partitions as required. They will be soundproof, but easily demounted and moved from place to place.

17. *Construction.*—The construction of the building will be reinforced concrete, with concrete floors throughout, while the external face of the building will be covered with stone. The base will have a red granite veneer face, and above that the walls will be covered with sandstone of a light colour.

18. *Walls, &c.*—Internal walls to light areas, &c., will be in brick and terra cotta lumber. Window frames will be carried out in aluminium, while the same material will be used for the spandrels between windows, and for the main entrance doorways. Australian marble will be used at the western entrance and at the surrounds to the lifts.

19. *Accommodation.*—There will be approximately 450,000 square feet of gross floor area in the building, with net office accommodation of 250,000 square feet, providing for an approximate population of 3,000. The office accommodation is calculated on the basis of about 80 square feet per officer, though generally there is elasticity with regard to the accommodation.

20. *The Basement.*—The basement will provide 25,000 square feet of storage accommodation, and parking space for 30 departmental cars and 1,000 bicycles which will enter the building by ramps. The basement will also provide space for eight air-conditioning plant rooms, and other areas for telephone equipment and mechanical plant.

21. *Lower Ground Floor.*—This floor will provide an area of 43,000 square feet of office accommodation, and also the telephone exchange.

22. *Ground, First, Second and Third Floors.*—These floor areas each provide approximately 51,000 square feet of office accommodation, and in each case ministerial suites will be provided as required, with conference and committee rooms as necessary.

23. *Fourth Floor.*—On the fourth floor an up-to-date cafeteria will be provided with a seating capacity of 600 per sitting, with complete electrically heated cooking equipment and necessary refrigerators.

24. *Fifth and Sixth Floors.*—The minor floors on the fifth and sixth floor levels cover only sections of the building area, and add architectural features which give height and variety to the design. The space on the fifth floor level will provide for recreation rooms, cleaners' rooms, and fan room, while the sixth floor comprises space for lift motors and tank rooms.

25. *Floor Construction.*—The office floors will be timber, covered with linoleum, while the main corridors will have rubber flooring over timber flooring. All the main floors will be made of reinforced concrete.

(b) *Site.*

26. The building is to be constructed on the site of the existing foundations, which are to the north-east of Parliament House, and the old foundations are to be partly demolished to allow for the basement. A site for a similar building at a later date is reserved in a corresponding position west of the city central axis, where it will be possible to use the present plans when it is decided to erect the second administrative block.

(c) *Estimated Cost.*

27. The estimated cost of the building is set down at £1,425,128, although it is stated that difficulty is experienced in submitting an accurate estimate under present conditions.

(d) *Time for Completion.*

28. The time set down for completion of the building is four years, but any difficulties encountered in securing labour or materials will extend the time required for construction.

SECTION III.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION.

Scope of the Inquiries.

29. The Committee visited the site and, accompanied by the Director of Works, made a detailed inspection of the existing foundations. A careful examination was made of the plans and estimated cost of the building, and evidence was taken from the Architectural Adviser to the Department of Works and Housing, the Director of Works, the Chairman of the National Capital Planning and Development Committee, the Public Service Commissioner, and other officials, architects and persons interested in the proposal and likely to possess information which would assist the Committee in its work.

Architecture.

30. The plans referred to the Committee represented the culmination of the efforts of a team of professional officers of the Department of Works and Housing who had been working in close co-operation for a considerable time. With the benefit of the designs prepared for the competition, and accepted as suitable for the original proposal, the officers concerned have been able to produce plans for a monumental building—modified in comparison with the original plans in some respects, and added to in others—which will undoubtedly be a worthy edifice for the capital city as well as a useful block of offices. Private architects and others who have given evidence regarding the proposal have expressed the opinion that the building has been brilliantly planned to meet the requirements of an administrative block; it is economically planned, well lighted and, from an aesthetic point of view, splendidly massed. The design is considered to reflect credit on those responsible for it, and the building will compare favourably with those in other parts of the world, while it maintains a certain harmony with other large buildings already erected in Canberra. The Committee therefore considers that the architecture and building arrangements are satisfactory and should be adopted.

Need for the Building.

31. There has never been any doubt that an urgent need exists for a building such as the one planned, and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has repeatedly emphasized, at every opportunity for many years past, that a permanent administrative building should be erected with all possible speed. In order to inform itself of the extent of the necessity for office accommodation at the present time the Committee sought details of the number of officials likely to require space in the near future, and the conditions existing in the departments. The Committee is not only impressed with the urgency of providing accommodation, but is more than ever convinced that, if recommendations by the Committee in this regard in the past had been implemented, a great deal of disorganization and expense could have been averted.

The Foundations.

32. One of the most difficult problems connected with this proposal was concerned with the best treatment of the foundations, and the Committee felt it necessary to investigate this matter thoroughly. It therefore obtained evidence regarding the original preparation and laying of the foundations, their subsequent tests, and the proposal to blow them up to make way for the new building.

33. The Committee was considerably disturbed at the proposal to discard the existing foundations, which have been in position since 1928, and which were stated in evidence to have cost approximately £55,000, less £4,000 subsequently deducted for the reduced quantity of cement incorporated in the foundation work. Evidence regarding the exhaustive tests, which have been carried out on the foundations at various times during the passage of the years, was carefully examined, and the Committee realizes that, although so much money has been spent and unsatisfactory work is now plainly evident in the foundations, the question paramount at present is whether or not they can be utilized in any future operations.

34. Although a statement regarding early tests, made at a number of points, asserted that the foundations were sufficiently strong to carry the original building safely, the subsequent tests, carried out thoroughly in a great number of positions in the foundations, indicate that grave doubt exists as to the possibility of using them with safety.

35. As it is now proposed to add an extra floor and a basement, it is obviously necessary to take action regarding the foundations to ensure that they will be adequate for the enlarged structure. Calculations made concerning the possibility of strengthening the present piers to take the additional weight were made, but it was found that, although this would be possible, the extra material necessary would take up so much space that there would be little use in adding the basement.

36. In the original building no provision had been made for a basement, but more recent consideration has shown that a great deal of valuable office floor space would be occupied by storage of files and other material. Another problem which has become increasingly serious is the growing number of bicycles and cars in use in Canberra, and the difficulty experienced in other buildings in providing parking space both for bicycles and cars. As it is considered essential to provide space for these various purposes the question of disposing of the old foundations and providing a basement in the new building was investigated.

37. The original piers had been planned to be of solid concrete, without reinforcement, and this accounted for the large sized columns necessary to take the weight of the building. It is now planned to take out the old piers and replace them with reinforced concrete ones which can be of smaller dimensions, leaving more space for storage in the proposed basement.

38. Strangely enough it appears that the discarding of the old foundations and the inclusion of the basement will result in a considerable saving in cost, when the expenditure on alternative storage space is offset against the loss on the old foundations. The following statement, submitted in evidence, indicates that, as storage space in the basement can be provided at a very much smaller cost than equivalent storage above ground, the introduction of the basement for purposes of storage and parking will result in a saving of £24,177.

(a) Cost of Old Foundations—				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Contract amount	..	..	..	..	50,783	0	0		
Less adjustments	..	..	..	..	681	1	6		
					50,101	18	6		
Deduction re Cement	..	..	..	..	4,263	18	6		
					45,838	0	0		
Fees, tests and strengthening of foundations	..			..	3,027	13	5	48,865	13 5
(b) Estimated Cost of Excavation and Removal of Old Foundations—									
				£					
(1) Excavation	..	..	..	5,770					
(2) Demolition	..	..	..	4,194	9,964	0	0		
(c) Estimated Cost of New Foundations, Walls and Floor									
E.L. Ventilation, lifts, &c.	..	..	..	35,473					
				6,563	42,036	0	0		
(d) Estimated Cost of Basement at 1s. 2½d. c. ft.—									
				..	52,000	0	0	52,000	0 0
Total cost of old foundations and estimated cost of proposed basement	..	..		..				100,865	13 5
(e) Estimated Cost of Storage and Plant Accommodation, if provided on upper floors at 3s. 6d. c. ft...									
				..	71,043	0	0		
(f) Estimated Cost of Strengthening Old Foundations to take Additional Loading but not Basement									
				..	17,000	0	0		
Add Estimated cost of providing capacity for car and bicycle parking, similar to that in basement					37,000	0	0	125,043	0 0
(g) Amount of Saving if Basement Provided									
	..	..		..				24,177	6 7

39. The above reasoning is accepted as a good method of making the best of a bad job, and it is fortunate that such a solution is available. However, the Committee does not attempt to offer any excuse for the fact that bad workmanship and insufficient cement were put into the old foundations. This should have been settled years ago, and is not the Committee's function now. It recognizes that, had satisfactory foundations been laid and the building proceeded with, many years' use of the building would have provided financial factors which would have materially altered the conclusions now reached, and, in addition, much anxiety over shortage of accommodation could have been avoided.

40. The Committee considered the advisability of using the present plans on the site to the north-west of Parliament House, set aside for the second administrative building, as an alternative to destroying the old foundations, which, it was suggested, might be put to some other use. However, it was asserted that delay would be caused in re-orientating the plans, and the time would eventually arrive when a decision would have to be reached concerning the old foundations. The Committee therefore recommends that so much of the old foundations as will interfere with the proposed plans shall be removed, and that new foundations, strong enough to take the suggested building, be laid.

Liability under Original Contract.

41. One of the conditions of the competition for designs for the original building was that the successful competitor should be entrusted with the supervision of the building work, and this condition was adhered to in connexion with the old foundations. The present plan is drawn up on the basis of the winning design and the Committee therefore made inquiries concerning the liability, if any, which might exist when the proposed building is erected. It was stated in evidence, however, that the Commonwealth is completely absolved from any liability in proceeding with the present plans, which have been produced by officers of the department.

The Basement.

42. Although the original building did not include any provision for a basement, the suggestion to include such a provision in the present proposal offers an attractive method of providing storage space for official files, thus economizing in office space on the upper floors. It also allows for adequate housing of mechanical equipment for which space would have been necessary elsewhere. Considerable space will also be available for parking of motor cars and bicycles, which will enter the building by ramps provided for the purpose. It is shown, moreover, that the provision of space in the basement can be made at a much lower cost than similar areas in other parts of the building, and the Committee therefore agrees that inclusion of the basement is desirable, and will ensure that maximum space for office purposes is available.

Accommodation.

43. *Canberra Departments.*—In considering the need for the accommodation to be provided in the building the Committee secured figures regarding the Departments domiciled in Canberra and the buildings used to house them. It was pointed out, in evidence, that a considerable portion of the departments in Canberra are housed in rented and sub-standard premises, and that, in order to place the officials already in Canberra in reasonable accommodation, the whole of the proposed building would be needed.

44. It is also emphasized that the use of large sections of the shopping areas for office space is seriously retarding the development of the business life of the capital, while some of the temporary wooden buildings at present in use are obstructing the growth of other permanent buildings planned for the city.

45. *Metropolitan Transfers.*—In addition to the necessity for space for officials already badly housed in Canberra, it is essential to transfer to Canberra as soon as possible a number of departments at present in Melbourne and Sydney. These departments are in rented premises in the cities, and it is necessary to move them to Canberra for administrative efficiency, while the saving in rental would offset the interest on the capital required for the new building and make the proposal financially attractive. City business houses are also desperately in need of the premises at present used by the Commonwealth departments and no time should be lost in vacating city offices.

46. It was put to the Committee, therefore, that, as present requirements are greater than the accommodation proposed in this project, it is not only essential to build this administrative block immediately, but it is also necessary to consider the erection of the second block without delay. The Committee therefore recommends that, as plans for such buildings take some time to prepare, consideration should be given, as soon as staff is available, to planning the second administrative building.

47. *Committee Rooms*—It was stated that the accommodation planned in the proposed building had not been allocated to specific departments, but the areas, provided to accommodate the total number of officials estimated, would be subdivided by demountable partitions to allow for the expansion or contraction of departments as required. No space had been set aside specifically for Committee rooms or conference rooms, but it was recognized that these would be required in the various departments and the necessary areas could be sub-divided at a later date.

48. The provision of Committee rooms and conference rooms is essential in any large administrative building, but it is especially necessary in Canberra where there is a growing tendency to hold important conferences. The Committee therefore recommends that, as the building proceeds, and the position of the partitions is being decided, the question of adequate provision for special conference rooms be given early consideration.

Construction.

49. Although it had been decided, for the original building, to change the form of construction from reinforced concrete to steel, the plans have now been made for a fully reinforced concrete structure with concrete floors throughout. This has been done mainly on the score of economy, and the form of the structure reverts to that originally decided upon in 1926. It is also considered desirable that the construction of the building shall proceed in such a manner that each section of it shall be made available for occupation as early as possible. The Committee therefore recommends that the building be erected in the three sections suggested, and that after the foundations are laid, each section shall be completed for occupation before the succeeding section is proceeded with.

Services.

50. *Air Conditioning.*—The question of air-conditioning is becoming increasingly important in the construction of large buildings and, whereas it was formerly deemed necessary only for special purposes where delicate mechanism was concerned, it is now being looked upon as a normal adjunct to office accommodation. It is still realized, however, that the degree to which air-conditioning is necessary depends upon the climate of the locality in which the building is situated, and, in this regard, the Committee has considered the proposals submitted.

51. It is recognized that the climate of Canberra demands heating of office buildings in the winter, and some form of central heating is employed in practically all the buildings now in use. It is now submitted, however, that air-conditioning is superior to the present method of central heating and it is proposed to instal the latest Carrier high pressure system in the new building. This system allows the use of small pipes instead of the large ducts formerly employed, and, while it is more expensive in itself to install, it will save 15 inches in height on each floor, and consequently will reduce the overall cost of the building construction. Moreover, the proposed system allows for individual control, and will give ventilating as well as heating.

52. As the climate of Canberra is not extremely humid in the summer it is not proposed to install the refrigeration portion of the air-conditioning system at present, though provision will be made for it to be added at some future time if it is deemed necessary. It will therefore be seen that full air-conditioning is not proposed, and the Committee agrees that the Carrier system without refrigeration at present, as suggested, shall be installed.

53. *Lifts and Other Engineering Services.*—The building will be served by three banks of lifts, consisting of two lifts at each end, and three in the centre of the building, with an additional goods lift. Special high-speed lifts in the centre of the building will allow the cafeteria to be served in a very short time.

54. Special experiments were conducted to determine the most satisfactory method of lighting to be employed in the building. Owing to the fact that large areas are to be fitted with demountable partitions, necessitating the removal from time to time of the lighting units, incandescent lighting is considered to be the most flexible, and fluorescent lighting is not included in the general planning.

55. It was stated that a scheme for the reticulation of steam from the power house at Kingston for heating purposes was under consideration. If this scheme is adopted before the completion of the building there will be a certain amount of alteration in the cost and description of the equipment required. However, as the suggestion is still in the preliminary stage, provision will have to be made for standard equipment for the building.

Cafeteria.

56. In modern buildings it is the practice to install cafeterias for the use of the staff employed in the building, and provision is being made on the fourth floor of this building for an efficient cafeteria to seat 600 persons at a time. The Committee made inquiries regarding the likely demand for such facilities, and it was informed that there are at present no cafeterias available in the office buildings in Canberra. A proposal was considered some time ago, and certain departments were circularized with a view to ascertaining whether a considerable demand by officials existed for a cafeteria in the present buildings. From replies received it has been estimated that approximately 40 per cent. of employees in the vicinity of a cafeteria would be likely to patronize such a service, though reliable data cannot be obtained in the absence of practical experience in Canberra.

57. It appears likely that, if a cafeteria is to be provided in the new building, there will be a demand by the staff of other government offices for similar provision, and the question of permitting staff from other buildings to use the cafeteria would then have to be considered, or alternatively, it might become necessary to provide a cafeteria in some other suitable locality.

58. The Committee recommends that the cafeteria, as planned, be included in the building, but, as the demand for it in Canberra has yet to be proved by experience, the extent to which it is used should be closely watched, so that steps may be taken to use the space provided to the best advantage.

Recreational Facilities.

59. Provision has been made on the fifth floor level for rooms which will be set aside for recreational facilities. It is considered that such space is necessary in such a building, and the possibility of including it as an architectural feature on this level should prove most suitable. The fact that it is isolated from the remainder of the office accommodation should eliminate

the risk of interference with the normal office work. It should also ensure that the space provided for this purpose will not be reduced in times when crowding tends to encroach on all areas not actually filled with officials.

Stone Facing.

60. The Committee is satisfied that Hawkesbury sandstone is the most suitable facing material so long as adequate supervision is employed at the quarries and when the stone is laid. This stone has good lasting qualities only when it is cut from the quarries in such a manner that it may be laid on its natural bed. It is therefore imperative that no stone should be allowed to leave the quarries unless it has been cut with this characteristic in view, and the cost of supervision at the quarries will be amply repaid by the lasting results achieved. If the stone is then laid correctly its ability to withstand severe weather conditions will be ensured.

Supervision.

61. In addition to special supervision in respect of the sandstone facing it is of course essential that adequate safeguards shall be taken during the erection of the frame of the building. It is hardly necessary to point out that the bad workmanship in the old foundations must have been avoidable if proper measures had been taken to impose strict supervision of the work. The Committee therefore recommends that rigid inspection of quantities shall be made at all stages to ensure that a repetition of the conditions now evident in the old foundations will be prevented in this proposal.

Estimate of Cost.

62. In considering the estimate of cost for the proposed building the Committee has been faced with the fact that really accurate estimates in these times are impossible. However, it has investigated the position as far as it is possible to do so, and is satisfied that the building has been planned with due regard to economy. The cost is high, and the difficulty and delays in procuring materials and labour may easily cause the completed cost to be even higher, but those responsible for the work have used all the knowledge available under the circumstances, and the amount quoted is looked upon by all the experts as reasonable. It was submitted in evidence that, on the basis of cost of rental of present office accommodation in the capital cities, the proposed building would pay for itself in about 25 years. The Committee therefore recommends that it is expedient to carry out the work at the estimated figure of £1,425,128, but emphasizes the necessity for keeping a close check on expenditure as the work progresses. In order that this may be effective, it is also recommended that any material alterations in the items of expenditure to be made should be submitted to the Minister for his consideration and approval.

Housing.

63. The question of housing in relation to the supply of materials and labour was prominent in the Committee's deliberations, but it anticipated that considerable improvement will be evident before it is necessary to employ in the building those items which are likely to affect the housing programme. Every effort has been made to apply materials which will not be used in the building of homes, and for this reason aluminium and concrete have been used in the proposal to reduce the number of bricks required. It is recognized that certain government buildings are necessary and must be erected while homes are being provided, and this building, which will take some years to complete, should be proceeded with as the materials and labour become available.

SECTION IV.

THE COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS.

64. The following is a brief summary of the conclusions reached by the Committee after consideration of the evidence :—

	Paragraph.
(1) It is necessary to remove so much of the foundations as will interfere with the proposed plans	40
(2) The architecture and building arrangements are satisfactory and should be adopted	30
(3) It is essential that rigid inspection of quantities shall be made at all stages to ensure that a repetition of the conditions now evident in the old foundations will be prevented in this proposal	61
(4) Hawkesbury sandstone is the most suitable facing material for use on this building, above the base, so long as adequate supervision is employed at the quarries and when the stone is laid	60

	Paragraph.
(5) The provision suggested for air-conditioning without refrigeration is satisfactory at the present time	52
(6) Erection of the building in three stages is desirable in order to permit the early occupation of the first section of the building ..	49
(7) The inclusion of the basement proposed is desirable and will ensure that maximum space for office purposes is available	42
(8) The cafeteria should be included in the building as proposed, but, as the demand for it in Canberra has yet to be proved by experience, the extent to which it is used should be closely watched so that steps may be taken to use the space provided to the best advantage ..	58
(9) As plans for monumental buildings take a great deal of time to elaborate, it is desirable that consideration should be given, as soon as staff is available, to planning the second administrative building	46
(10) When the position of the demountable partitions is being decided the question of adequate provision for special Conference rooms should be given early consideration	48
(11) It is expedient to carry out the work at the approximate figure of £1,500,000	62
(12) Owing to the difficulty in providing thoroughly reliable estimates it is recommended that, before any material alterations in the above items of expenditure are made, each should be submitted to the Minister for his consideration and approval	62

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