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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

REPATRIATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES,
PERTH.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

By Authority:
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REPATRIATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES, PERTH.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

MONDAY, 26TH MAY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMP (Chairman).

Senator Nash.	Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Conelan.	Mr. Rankin.
Mr. Howse.	Mr. Russell.

Hampden Wendell Phillips, Director of Architecture, Department of Works and Housing, sworn and examined.

1. *To the Chairman.*—I am aware that the Committee is inquiring into the proposal to construct administrative offices for the Department of Repatriation at Perth. The building will be on Commonwealth-owned land at the corner of William-street and Bazaar-terrace—called Mounts Bay-road on drawings—which is now occupied by a wood and iron building used as a laboratory by the Department of Trade and Customs. This corner block is quadrant-shaped, the building line being a curve of 130 ft. 9 in. radius. The northern boundary, 148 ft. 8 in., adjoins the customs building and on the western boundary of the main area, approximately 142 feet, is a drill hall. At the rear of the customs building is an additional area, approximately 68 feet by 59 feet, on which will be erected a garage, the balance of the space being open yard area. Fronting this yard will be an electric substation which will occupy an area at the rear of the drill hall.

2. *To Senator Nash.*—The purpose of the substation is to supply power required in this area. It is necessary to install transformers purely to serve our own requirements, which are fairly high. The local supply could not meet our demands. We examined the possibility of installing transformers on the premises but we had to resort to an outbuilding.

3. *To the Chairman.*—The site around the proposed building will generally be graded and paved to allow vehicles access throughout, and a galvanized pipe and wire mesh fence erected at the rear of the customs building to divide that building from the repatriation area. Gates capable of being locked will be provided at the William-street and Bazaar-terrace entrances to the paved lanes between the new building and the customs building and drill hall respectively.

The proposed building is required to accommodate the administrative offices of the Department of Repatriation.

Present accommodation consists of wood and iron premises in Riverside-drive, situated on land held under rental from the State Government, being part of an "A" class reserve. The existing buildings cannot be extended as the site is fully occupied and the State Government and Perth City Council are unwilling to make available additional land in the area. In addition, the department is now occupying temporary premises at 108 Murray-street for war pensions staff, other premises at 547 Murray-street for the Artificial Limb Factory and a portion of the former Air Force camp on the opposite side of Bazaar-terrace as an out-patients' clinic.

Before commencing the final design extensive tests were made to determine the bearing capacity of the site. Boring tests revealed alternate bands of sand, clay, sand and gravel down to 78 feet. The tests indicated the necessity of confining the maximum load to not more than 3 tons per square foot and reinforced concrete foundations have been designed accordingly.

4. *To Mr. Russell.*—Piles will not be necessary. The engineers examined the position thoroughly and are of the opinion that it would be more economical to design a reinforced concrete foundation. The relevant drawings which I supply to the Committee are as follows:—

W.A./A8310—

Sheet

No.

1. Site plan.
2. Ground floor.
3. First floor.
4. Second floor.
5. Third floor.
6. Fourth floor.
7. Fifth floor.
8. Sixth floor.

W.A./8200—

11. William-street elevation.

5. *To the Chairman.*—The office floor space provided will total 45,000 square feet; not including the area of lavatories, plant rooms, &c. The total area of the various floors is subdivided as follows:—

Ground floor: Accommodation for typists, rest room, lavatories, general stationery store, telephone switch room, boiler room and incinerator, air-conditioning compressor room, meter room, switch room, pneumatic tube power room. The balance of the floor will be occupied by the artificial limb factory.

First floor: Assessment Appeal Tribunal room, Entitlement Appeal Tribunal room, board room, ancillary offices, out-patients' clinic, including a small operating theatre and suite, and physiotherapy room. Situated also at this level, but reached from the compressor rooms on the ground floor, is the evaporated cooling unit of the air-conditioning system.

Second floor: Senior medical officer's room, various medical officers' examination rooms, medical and general clerical section, interviewing rooms and social workers rooms. On this floor is also provided a room for officers of the staff of the Commonwealth Auditor-General.

Third floor: Offices for Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, Chief Clerk, Staff Clerk, general accounts, pensions, clerical staffs, with interviewing rooms.

Fourth floor: Will be occupied by the permanent Customs Department laboratory and the records section of the Department of Repatriation.

6. *To Mr. Rankin.*—We have had to remove the temporary laboratories, and by arrangement with the Customs and Repatriation Departments we have embodied them in this scheme. We have had to find temporary accommodation for them in the interim.

7. *To the Chairman.*—The fifth floor is over the front main section of building only. It contains kitchen, dining and cafeteria facilities for the occupants of the building, together with amenities for the departmental staffs, comprising library, women's recreation room,

men's recreation room and women's rest room. Cafeteria and dining accommodation has been designed in accordance with the notes of the Department of Labour and National Service. Approximately one-third of this floor area comprises roof deck over the fourth floor.

Sixth floor: Store, plant and machinery rooms for the three lifts, air-conditioning plant room, film store and refrigerating plant room. The balance of the area is taken up with a roof deck to the main building.

8. *To Senator Nash.*—The building will be constructed of reinforced concrete throughout with external hollow panel walls of brick. Partition walls will be constructed of 4½-in. brick. External walls will be of selected, light-face brick, with a dark plinth and stone string courses and window surrounds. Window frames will be of steel sections.

Roof surface: Covered with bituminous felt and asbestos paving tiles. Penthouse roof covered with asphalt.

Floor finishes: Main entrance hall, main eastern and western stair halls, main eastern and western stairs, and toilets—Terrazzo paving, in designs to be arranged, with inset brass strips; cafeteria and kitchen—paved with non-slip tiles of selected design; rear stair halls and stairs, plant rooms, switch rooms, stores—granolithic paving, coloured to suit purpose of rooms; all corridors and other rooms throughout—jarrah wood-block, wax polished.

Wall finishes: Main entrance hall, main stairs to first floor, and main stair and lift hall on first floor—selected marble panelling carried up to full height; entrance porch—sawn stone carried up to full height; toilets, operating theatre, dispensary, plaster room, dressing room, dishwashing space—selected 6-in. by 6-in. glazed tiles to 7 feet high; all other walls—plaster, painted; ceilings generally—fibrous plaster, except the following:—lift walls and store—plaster and concrete; workshop on ground floor—asbestos cement sheeting.

Joinery: Generally, to be carried out in West Australian jarrah, kiln-dried and reconditioned and finished with wax polish.

Elevators: Two passenger, each of 13-passenger capacity; one goods lift of 23-passenger capacity capable of taking stretcher cases. All three run from ground floor to fifth floor level. One files lift serving first to fourth floor only.

Electric light and power: Lighting generally by incandescent bulbs, except fluorescent light to entrance hall, artificial limb factory and typists' room on ground floor, medical and general rooms, also waiting room, on second floor, accounts and pensions waiting rooms on third floor. Power points in all rooms and passages for book-keeping and other machines, fans, vacuum cleaners or radiators.

Watchmen's clocks, fire alarms, buzzer and paging systems: Provided throughout.

Air-conditioning: Generally throughout. Supplying full temperature and humidity control during summer and winter with central refrigeration and unit floor control. Artificial limb factory on ground floor and ancillary rooms on fourth floor on separate zones. Main laboratory room 15, fume and combustion rooms Nos. 20 and 21 on the fourth floor, also all lavatories, are not included in the air-conditioning system. Separate mechanical ventilation, not air-conditioning, to cafeteria, kitchen, sterilizer rooms and all fume cupboards.

Hot water: To all lavatory basins, sinks, showers, baths, sterilizers and laboratory sinks.

Chilled water: For drinking purposes supplied to ten points throughout building.

Pneumatic tube system: Between medical officers' room and dispensary, first floor.

Compressed air lines: To artificial limb factory.

Incinerator: At ground level served by chute from each floor.

Service mains: Pipe trenches below ground floor for electric, gas and water mains.

Sewer drain: Pipe trench below ground floor for sewer main which will discharge into State Government's sewer in Bazaar-terrace. This is necessary owing to large number of fittings requiring connexion which it is not possible to collect in any one spot principally owing to situation of doctors' rooms and laboratory fittings.

Terrazzo paving will be used in preference to parquetry floors mainly because the paving would suffer less from wear.

9. *To Mr. Conelan.*—There is only a slight difference between the cost of terrazzo and parquetry. I do not know what the figures would be for Western Australia. However, we are trying to avoid running across timber for housing. There will be very heavy traffic on these floors and we must put something there to stand up to usage. I shall supply the Committee with figures of comparative costs.

10. *To Senator Nash.*—The non-slip tiles will not have a glazed surface.

11. *To the Chairman.*—We have tried out fluorescent lighting in the bank premises, and found it satisfactory.

12. *To Senator Nash.*—No complaint has been received from staffs working under fluorescent lights. Fluorescent lighting has not yet been fully used. A special light will be provided in the operating theatre. Fluorescent lighting is much softer than incandescent lighting. It is a little more expensive, but is infinitely less costly to maintain. Over a period of years fluorescent lighting would pay for itself as compared with incandescent lighting.

13. *To the Chairman.*—Whilst the building is in course of erection, temporary accommodation will be required for the Customs laboratory. Provision has been made to rent land at the corner of Mill-street and Bazaar-terrace, about 300 yards distant, to accommodate a temporary building which may be obtained from the Disposals Commission.

14. *To Mr. Russell.*—The cost of this proposal was in 1945 estimated at £162,000, but post-war experience has revealed that this estimate is low. A revision of the figures has resulted in a fresh estimate of £222,750 which is made up as follows—

	£
Main building	108,230
Garage	958
Electricity sub-station	745
Foundations tunnel subsoil drainage, stormwater drainage	18,000
Sewerage, water supply, gas, &c.	15,000
Hot water including reticulation	2,500
Electric light and power electric lifts	30,800
Air-conditioning	22,000
Other mechanical services	5,500
Roads and paving	1,000
General contingency	5,500
	<hr/> 210,233

	£
Provision of temporary laboratory for Customs Department during erection of new building	4,500
Transfer of Repatriation Department artificial limb factory equipment from existing temporary premises in Murray-street to new building	2,000 5,500
Grand total	<hr/> 222,733
Say	222,750

The only fittings and fixtures allowed for in this estimate are those of a permanent nature. Moveable furniture is not included other than is included in the transfer of the artificial limb factory.

15. *To Senator Nash.*—The increase of the estimates from £162,000 in 1945 to £222,750 is due to present-day building costs. In the intervening period we have not carried out many structures of this kind. We have no actual data upon which to base these estimates on a percentage basis. There has been a considerable increase in wages cost and also in the cost of materials. Our estimate may prove to be low when we obtain tenders. Our estimates were gauged in the light of the knowledge we possess. In the absence of tenders for permanent structures during recent years we have no actual data on which to work.

16. *To Mr. McLeod.*—There will be a part basement for ducts.

17. *To Mr. Conelan.*—You ask me whether, in view of the slope of the site, it would not be better to put in a complete basement. I do not know at what depth we would reach water. I think we would strike water at a shallow depth. This difficulty has forced us to put some rooms on the top floor which we would normally have put in the basement.

18. *To the Chairman.*—The temporary laboratory for the Customs Department, which is estimated to cost £4,500, will not be very large. We still need to obtain a building for that purpose from the Disposals Commission. We know the requirements from the existing buildings and we will have to provide equal accommodation in the temporary structure. When we please the temporary structure it will be sold for disposal.

19. *To Mr. Howse.*—We visualize that this structure will take a considerable time to erect, and the small quantities of bricks required will not seriously affect supplies for housing. The same applies to labour. It may take two years to complete this structure. It depends on housing, and what labour the successful tenderer can obtain. The new building will be considerably larger than the existing premises. I cannot say how many officers will be working in the new building, but that requirement would be known to our Western Australia branch.

20. *To Mr. Conelan.*—You ask me why we do not utilize all the space available on the fifth and sixth floors, where we provide a flat roof. All I can say is that the design provides for all the known and anticipated requirements of the Repatriation Department.

21. *To the Chairman.*—It is possible that we could save rent elsewhere by utilizing all of that space. I shall examine that proposal further.

22. *To Mr. Russell.*—The Commonwealth's requirements for office accommodation at Perth are far in excess of anything that will be provided in this scheme, and we are now examining the necessity for Commonwealth offices in Perth. That proposal is now under consideration.

23. *To the Chairman.*—I think that the plan will meet all the needs of the Repatriation Department. However, I will have a close look at Mr. Conelan's suggestion to utilize fully the fifth and sixth floors. It may be that the other proposal to provide office accommodation in Perth will give us adequate space. However, I shall look into the matter further, and I shall ask the Works Director at Perth to examine it.

24. *To Mr. Howse.*—As this land is Commonwealth-owned, no other site at all was considered for this building. With the exception of the main Repatriation Hospital, this building will centralize repatriation activities. Most of the offices now occupied in this area by the Commonwealth may revert to the State Government, which owns the land.

25. *To the Chairman.*—The roof is one of the modern type for this kind of structure. It will be of concrete with bitumen and then tiles, which will be grouted round with an impervious bitumen compound. That is a standard specification.

26. *To Senator Nash.*—We have not considered estimating the cost of day labour. Most of our works go to tender, and we base our estimate as nearly as we can on the anticipated tender. We would put the estimate on the day labour basis at the same figure as I have submitted to the Committee.

The witness withdrew.

Joseph Sydney Smith, Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer, Department of Works and Housing, sworn and examined.

27. *To the Chairman.*—I am aware that this Committee is investigating the proposal to erect offices for the Repatriation Department at Perth. The mechanical services to be provided will be as follows:—

Air-conditioning:—(a) General: Air-conditioning is to be provided for the whole building excepting all lavatories, passages and staircases; on the fourth floor, the main laboratory, fume and combustion rooms, and, on the fifth floor, the kitchen, will have unconditioned mechanical exhaust ventilation only.

(b) Type of installation:—(1) Summer conditioning: Chilled water is used as a cooling medium. A number of reciprocating Freon compressors with one evaporative condenser each will be housed on the ground and first floor of an annexe of the northern wing at the south-west end. The chilled water is to be circulated by a pump from refrigerant-water heat exchangers through a balanced piping system to the cooling coils of each floor conditioner.

(2) Winter conditioning: Water is to be heated in a colonial type, fully automatic, oil fired boiler, installed on the ground floor at the western end of the north wing. The hot water will be circulated in a separate balanced piping system in a similar manner to the chilled water described above. All circulating pumps are to be duplicated.

(3) Conditioned air: Fresh air will be taken at each floor from a central shaft, the supply being obtained at roof level through a filter bank on the sixth floor. The first, second, third and fifth floors will each be treated as one separate zone, while the ground and fourth floor will each consist of two zones, the artificial limb factory on the ground floor and the Records Office on the fourth floor being treated as separate zones. For each zone a mixture of fresh air and return air will be passed through filters, chilled water and hot water coils and distributed by a centrifugal fan through insulated metal ducts running wherever possible above lowered ceiling levels in the passages. The outlets will be of the "universal" type with individually adjustable horizontal and vertical vanes, with induction type ceiling outlets in a few cases where the first type is unsuitable. Return air will be taken where possible through registers at skirting board level, with ducts leading into false ceiling space in the passages; this space will be insulated to make it suitable for use as main return air duct.

28. *To Mr. Conelan.*—The reason for not installing the high-pressure system in this building is that here you have a straight-out general office, whereas in the proposed permanent administrative building for Canberra there will be hundreds of small offices. This is the standard practice for a general office system involving large rooms.

29. *To the Chairman.*—Winter heating in each zone will be effected similarly to summer cooling except that humidification by water sprays will be required in addition to the air being heated in passing through heating coils.

Controls: Temperature and humidity control will be fully automatic on each floor, and will permit temperature and humidity levels to be adjusted within limits on each floor. The control of the refrigeration plant will also be automatic and arranged in such a manner that sequence of operations will be correct

and so that no damage can result from low temperatures or high pressures. The operation of the heating plant will also be automatic giving protection against excessive water temperatures and failure of the oil burners.

(c) Technical data: The capacity of the refrigeration plant is estimated at approximately 110 A.C. tons, and that of the heating plant approximately 1,000,000 B.T.U./h. The conditioners would handle approximately 2,320,000 cubic feet of air per hour.

30. *To Mr. Larkin.*—Mechanical exhaust ventilation will be provided on the first floor for the sterilizer room, which receives conditioned supply air but from which no return air is taken at any time. The adjoining operating theatre has manual controls so arranged that normally conditioned air is supplied and 70 per cent. of it taken back through a return grille. However, while operations are being performed the return grille is closed off and simultaneously an exhaust air grille opened connecting to sterilizer room exhaust fan. On the fourth floor exhaust fans will be installed in all fume cupboards in the laboratories and taken eventually through two vents on the roof. On the fifth floor exhaust ventilation is provided with a hood over the stores and stockpots, &c., and allowed to escape at roof level.

31. *To the Chairman.*—Arrangements have been made for lighting the operating theatre.

32. *To Senator Nash.*—Hot water is provided for all basins, sinks, showers, &c., from a fully automatic oil-fired boiler and copper calorifier. The calorifier is fed with cold water from a tank on the roof and hot water reticulation is provided throughout the building, with fittings on the down-feed piping. All hot water piping to be of copper, suitably insulated. Service points include 50 basins, 42 sinks, 10 showers, 1 bath, 4 sterilizers and kitchen cooking equipment.

Pneumate tube system: This is to be installed on the first floor with points in the four Medical Officers' rooms, all leading to the dispensary. Automatic switching is included to start the blower on opening any despatching door, and to shut it down when no tube is in use.

Iced water: Ten iced drinking water units are provided for, to be installed at suitable points throughout the building.

Workshop equipment: All existing workshop plant and machinery now in use at repatriation buildings will be re-installed on the ground floor.

Kitchen and cafeteria equipment.—The following will be supplied and installed on the fifth floor:—24 cubic feet vertical refrigerator, 17 cubic feet horizontal refrigerator, 3 hole ice-cream cabinet, cool chamber complete, boiling top, two ovens, stockpot, steam oven, two Bain maries, 15-gallon urn, electric bread slicer, and pie warmer.

33. *To the Chairman.*—Provision is made for receiving electrical and telephone cables. You ask whether it is not the usual practice for a State government, or supplier of electricity, to supply the transformers. They are always supplied to any commercial undertaking, but they always try to make the Commonwealth Government pay; that seems to be a habit. I am speaking of war-time conditions. We always had to pay for them in the Army.

34. *To Senator Nash.*—The peculiar shape of the building will not involve any difficulties in the installation of the machinery. We may have to alter duct work and piping a little, but that is all. I understand that air-conditioning is being installed at the request of the Repatriation Department. I think that air-conditioning is desirable in Perth. The outside conditions there are 92 degrees dry bulb, 72 degrees wet bulb and 62 per cent. relative humidity. We propose to provide 75 degrees dry bulb in the building, with 50 per cent. humidity. Brisbane has a slightly

higher wet bulb figure than Perth, and about March Perth becomes slightly more dry and a little less humid; but Brisbane and Perth have fairly similar curves and I think that this provision is desirable.

35. *To Mr. Rankin.*—The cost of a high-pressure system in this building would be about 10 per cent. higher than the standard system we propose. In this building you will have far fewer offices than in the permanent administrative building in Canberra, and the conduit system has limitations where large floor areas are involved. This is a normal system applied as standard throughout the Commonwealth in a building of this kind. I should say that it would serve quite well.

36. *To Mr. McLeod.*—We installed this system about twenty years ago in the Post Office for the purpose of protecting equipment, but it has not been done yet for the benefit of personnel in general offices. The Postal Department's first concern is the equipment. We have not done very much air conditioning yet in the Commonwealth offices for the benefit of personnel. The Post Office has really been our major client so far as air-conditioning is concerned.

37. *To Mr. Conlan.*—The standard air-conditioning system we propose here is a universal system here and in colder countries. Dr. Carrier originated the high-pressure system and it is getting a lot of supporters. It is widely used in America. We will probably take up that system only in certain buildings rather than generally. Much will depend upon the type of work estimated.

38. *To Mr. McLeod.*—It will be very much more costly to install these systems after a building has been erected. The best idea is to install them when the building is being constructed. In most buildings we are doing to-day we are proposing full air-conditioning or mechanical ventilation. The same machinery is used for humidifying and heating. The additional machinery is the refrigerating machinery and heat exchange equipment.

39. *To Mr. Rankin.*—In ventilating and air-conditioning the thing that counts most is the number of changes you make per hour. If you have equipment to pump a sufficient number of changes per hour on the basis of a certain number of people coming into a building, everything will be all right; but when more people use the building than was anticipated when the equipment was installed you strike trouble. You must then increase the capacity of your equipment. You have to increase the size of your plant and duct work, which involves structural alterations. Unless you allow sufficiently large ducts in the first instance, it is difficult to push through additional air. The result is that you get a blast instead of a comfortable zephyr.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

WEDNESDAY, 11TH JULY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMR (Chairman).

Mr. Beale.
Mr. Howse.

Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Rankin.

William Keays, member of the Repatriation Commission, sworn and examined.

40. *To The Chairman.*—I understand that the Public Works Committee has already been informed of the details of the proposed repatriation building in Perth. On behalf of the Repatriation Commission, I should like to outline the early history of the Western Australian branch office of repatriation, and then lead up to the present unsatisfactory position in which the

department finds itself from causes over which it has had no control. On the 20th March, 1919, the then Premier of Western Australia, Sir Henry Lefroy, in a letter to the then Minister for Repatriation, agreed to grant a permissive occupancy of certain park land vested in the Western Australian Government fronting Riverside-drive, at a rental of £100 per annum, and for a period of seven years. That approval was subject to the condition that the Commonwealth Government would remove the buildings on the termination of the tenancy. The Minister for Repatriation wrote accepting these terms. By correspondence, the tenancy has been extended from time to time, and the rent raised. It is now £300 per annum. All efforts to get permission to extend the buildings on or adjacent to the existing site were without avail, both the Government and the Perth City Council strenuously opposing any proposal for extension. It then became necessary to look around for other premises as lack of office space was seriously interfering with the department's increasing activities. From time to time, representations have been made by soldier organizations, members of Parliament, and others urging better facilities for ex-members of the forces.

The staff employed by the Western Australian branch, including Branch Office, Out-patient Clinic, Repatriation General Hospital and Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory, is as stated hereunder:—

	30th June, 1935.	31st March, 1947.
Branch Office	58	310
Out-patient Clinic (Perth Hospital) (mainly medical officers and specialists) ..	14*	23*
Repatriation General Hospital, Hollywood	550
Repatriation Sanatorium	23	9
Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory ..	6	17‡

* Part time † Full time. ‡ Now 21 and likely to increase.

Prior to the commencement of the 1939-45 war, the Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory was located in the branch office building at Riverside-drive, Perth. The area occupied by the factory was approximately 700 square feet (35 feet by 20 feet), and the building housed the following staff:—working manager, senior limb and appliance maker, limb and appliance makers (2), bootmaker, and temporary limb and appliance maker. During the war years, the amount of defence and departmental work necessitated provision being made to increase the staff. The then existing accommodation proved to be totally inadequate. Expansion of the factory to other parts of the branch office was not practicable because of the cramped conditions already experienced by that section of repatriation. Dressing and fitting rooms were not provided for, and the walking rack was placed in a separate annex. Working under such conditions, clients were afforded very little privacy. During March, 1943, an approach was made to the Perth City Council for permission to extend the portion occupied by the factory to vacant land adjoining, but the council suggested that the Commission endeavour to secure other city premises and refused permission to extend the existing premises. The accumulation of work had increased greatly during that intervening period, and it was feared that unless additional accommodation was provided urgently to house additional staff and equipment, serious repercussions would result. On the return of the Commission's limb factory experts, Messrs. Greenaway and Durston, from overseas, it was recommended that many of the new ideas, as studied by them during their investigations abroad, be incorporated throughout the various repatriation artificial limb factories in the Commonwealth, and it could readily be seen that the existing accommodation at the Perth factory would

impede the necessary improvements to be incorporated immediately. The urgency of the matter necessitated the Commission making other temporary arrangements and, after lengthy negotiations, a proposal was made in respect of premises situated at 547 Murray-street, Perth, and the Commission was subsequently advised that a transfer of the limb factory to those premises could be effected. The space thus made available, approximately 3,370 square feet (76 ft. 6 in. by 44 feet) was a vast improvement over the former premises, but very soon it was found necessary to expand further. Accordingly, approval was subsequently granted for the erection of a temporary structure on privately owned land adjacent to the factory. This proposal, however, is at present held up, pending an arrangement with the owner of the land by which he will pay for the building by progress payments while it is being erected.

The volume of departmental work carried out in the factory has increased considerably since the termination of hostilities, and with the large increase of work for ex-servicemen from the 1939-45 war, as well as acceptance of social service and civilian orders for limbs, the existing staff of 21 and all the factory machinery cannot satisfactorily and efficiently cope with the increase. The present premises are now found to be inadequate. Removal to larger, modern and permanent premises is urgently desirable in order that the rehabilitation programme may be carried out to the complete satisfaction of all concerned. It is the Commission's considered opinion that, as far as possible, all its activities for the State of Western Australia, except, of course, the Repatriation General Hospital which is situated at Hollywood, should be housed in one building in Perth. One section of the Western Australian Branch Office is situated at Riverside-drive, Perth, on land vested in the State Government. The buildings are of a temporary nature and, because they are on park lands, the State authorities refuse to permit of extensions. The remaining section of the Branch Office is housed in temporary premises situated at 103 Murray-street, Perth. The out-patient clinic is accommodated in temporary hutments recently occupied by the 5th Technical School of the Royal Australian Air Force and situated on the Esplanade, Perth, whilst the Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory is, at present, housed in rented premises. Plans for a new multi-story building to house the whole of the various activities of the Repatriation Commission (except the General Hospital) were, with the approval of the Surveyor-General, Department of Interior, prepared by the Department of Works and Housing at an estimated cost of £162,000. This building was to be built on a vacant block of land owned by the Commonwealth, at the corner of William-street and Bazaar-terrace, and was to include the Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory, the staff of which was steadily expanding in order to meet the needs of amputees and seriously incapacitated ex-servicemen of the 1939 war. There were many difficulties which prevented a start being made on the proposed premises; one was that war projects receive first priority, and another was the scarcity of man-power and materials.

It was not until May, 1945, that the Works Priorities Sub-Committee issued a priority and the Treasury approved funds being made available, subject to the concurrence of the Board of Business Administration. On the 4th September, 1945, the project was placed before the Board of Business Administration for consideration, but it appears that the Commission's proposals were thwarted by the board, as, without notice to the Commission, a special meeting was convened in Perth by the Business Board for the purpose of examining the matter, and the board made certain recommendations which, in effect, meant that tenders were not to be called before January, 1947. The

Board of Business Administration subsequently considered the matter and approved the following recommendation:—

In view of the pressure upon labour and materials for other urgent purposes, that temporary accommodation be obtained by Repatriation by means of rented premises and transfer of the hutting from No. 5 School of Technical Training.

The board considered that, as it would be two and a half years before the new building could be completed, even if it were then started, another twelve months' delay would not be prejudicial. From the Commission's point of view, this reasoning is quite unsound, because, whilst it must be admitted that the department is actually carrying on, it is only doing so under very adverse conditions. It must be obvious that any extension of the period during which this unsatisfactory state of affairs exists will cause unnecessary inconvenience and bring about justifiable complaints from ex-members of the forces, many of whom are not in the physical condition to traverse the City of Perth, which, incidentally, is not well off for transport facilities, before their cases can be finalized. On the 14th March, 1946, the Commission again approached the Board of Business Administration relative to the deferment of the project until January, 1947, and sought approval for the preparation of plans and specifications, pointing out that by so doing much valuable time would be saved when the time arrived for the calling of tenders. The board replied, on the 22nd March, 1946, inviting attention to the fact that the proposed structure had not yet received the board's endorsement, but that no objection was seen to the proposal that plans and specifications be brought to a stage where tenders could be called. The board also requested that plans be submitted for its consideration before approval was obtained to call tenders.

On the 29th October, 1946, a further approach was made to the Board of Business Administration with a request that the board give consideration to endorsing the project for immediate commencement. Under date 8th November, 1946, the board advised that it had endorsed the project and approved the calling of tenders with a view to proceeding immediately with the erection of the proposed branch office. The Commission is of the opinion that, owing to the dearth of office accommodation in Perth, no buildings having been erected over a period of six years during the war, the only practical solution is the erection of a new building on Commonwealth land at the corner of William-street and Bazaar-terrace, Perth. The proposed building provides accommodation for the Customs Laboratory, the Repatriation Branch Office, Out-patients Clinic and Artificial Limb Factory with all amenities. With the branch office divided and located in different parts of the City of Perth, the facilities for the handling of applicants and the conditions relating to the treatment of out-patients in Western Australia are far from satisfactory, and although temporary administrative and treatment arrangements have been given effect, only a comparatively small measure of relief has been obtained. With the huge task of rehabilitation, it is obvious that some increase of staff accommodation is a matter of urgency, and as the requirements of ex-service men and women are urgent, whether it be in relation to the provision of medical treatment, pensions or other benefits, it will be seen that unless and until the proposal is given effect cases cannot be treated with the despatch that is essential in order that the discharged members may receive, expeditiously, the assistance that has been provided for them by the Government under the various acts and regulations. The activities of the Perth branch office of the Commission will increase still further and will be maintained at the increased level for some years. With regard to housing, it is pointed

out that the State Government is responsible for housing in Western Australia, and will be anxious to divert all resources to this problem, both because of its urgency and on political grounds. Housing is admittedly urgent, but with some 90,000 demobilised members in Western Australia, most of them being the responsibility of this Commission in some way or other, it is felt that the erection of premises for this department is just as urgent as housing itself, and the Commission is anxious that an early commencement be made with the erection of the proposed branch office.

The proposed site for the building is the only one that has been suggested. I do not think that any other site is available. It is a valuable site, as it is situated on the Esplanade. The original proposal was for a building solely for repatriation purposes except that portion of one floor would be used for a laboratory for the Department of Trade and Customs. The design originally submitted to the Public Works Committee was for a building for repatriation purposes only. It would be reasonable to suggest that full advantage be taken of the site to provide the maximum accommodation because of the shortage of office accommodation in Perth, but there would be some objections to that being done. The Repatriation Commission desires to have a building provided for its needs as early as possible. If it were decided to utilize the land on which the drill hall is situated there may be considerable delays through negotiations with the Army Department having to take place. The present plan would not lend itself to a building of great height. I think that the maximum building height in Perth is 132 feet, but I am not sure. The proposal is for a building of six stories, which would not reach the maximum height allowed. The Commission would have no objection to other departments occupying a portion of the building. The temperature of Perth is similar to that of Sydney and I think that full air-conditioning of the building is essential. The only operations which would be performed in the operating theatre would be minor operations in connexion with the out-patients' clinic. Major operations would be performed at the Hollywood Hospital. I suggest that the building should be carried to its full height over the whole area proposed to be built on; in other words, I suggest that the roof should not stop at the fifth floor at any part of the building. Another story may now be necessary to accommodate the staff. The original plans were prepared to accommodate a much smaller staff than we now have. I do not know how many stories the Commission would require, but we could make good use of one additional story immediately. What the position might be in another three years I do not know. The land on which the proposed building would be erected consists of gravel, sand, shells, and rubbish. There is mud and slush to a depth of 78 feet. That was found as the result of sinking bores at four different places. A building could be erected on the site if floated on concrete foundations.

41. *To Mr. Rankin.*—Transport facilities in the area are satisfactory. Buses and trains serve the locality. The proposed building would enable all repatriation activities excepting the hospital to be situated in one building.

42. *To Mr. House.*—After some time there would be a falling-off of certain activities, but it must be remembered that there is no time limit on pensions. After the war of 1914-18 it was thought that repatriation activities would dwindle quickly and would disappear almost entirely after about seven years. That was the reason why permissive occupancy of the present administrative offices was granted for only seven years. That period expired a long time ago. We are now in occupation without any definite term. We may expect similar conditions to follow the war of 1939-45.

Numbers of men from that war have yet to be discharged and they will be a responsibility of the Commission. Moreover, the Commission deals also with pensioners from the United Kingdom and New Zealand. A number of its activities will continue almost indefinitely.

43. *To The Chairman.*—I think that staff requirements have already reached their peak. In my opinion, they will remain stationary for two or three years, after which there should be a slight decrease because some of the benefits have a time limit of five years from the date of discharge, and, of course, some men will leave their applications till the last day. In 1945, when plans for a new building were prepared, the staff was much smaller than it now is. At that time also there were not so many men employed in the artificial limb factory. That factory would require a portion of the first floor as well as all the accommodation on the ground floor.

44. *To Mr. Beale.*—It is a fact that after the war of 1914-18 latent defects revealed themselves, and there was an increase of application, for pensions from men of middle age. Statistics show clearly that as men grow older the effect of war strain becomes more and more evident. I expect the same thing will happen after the recent war. Many men claim that their disabilities are due to war service even though they expect only to get a free diagnosis and report as well as the benefit of a specialist's advice. When I mentioned 80,000 demobilised members of the forces in Western Australia I desired mainly to indicate the field of potential applicants. That would be the maximum number. It would be safe to say that a majority of that number will become the responsibility of the Commission in some form or other in the years ahead. Statistics show that about 50 per cent. of the men rehabilitate themselves.

45. *To The Chairman.*—The position of the Commission in regard to accommodation is worse in Perth than in any of the other capital cities.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

SATURDAY, 12TH JULY, 1947.

Present:

SENATOR LAMIE (Chairman).

Mr. Beale.
Mr. Howse.

Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Rankin.

Hampden Wendell Phillips, Director of Architecture, Department of Works and Housing, recalled and further examined.

46. *To the Chairman.*—Since I gave evidence before the Committee on a previous occasion, the whole position in relation to the proposed repatriation administrative offices, Perth, has been re-examined. I have prepared answers to a number of questions which were then asked. The cost of terrazzo flooring in the main entrance would be about 27s. 6d. a square yard, compared with 25s. a square yard for wood blocks laid, sanded and polished. The department recommends that the main entrance be floored with terrazzo. The Director of Works, Perth, informs me that the full-time staff would number approximately 300, with a possible increase to 350 at rush periods. There would be a part-time staff of two or three doctors, who would be on duty three or four times a week. Provision will have to be made to accommodate the War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal and the War Pensions Assessment Appeal Tribunal, which will visit Perth three or four times a year. Each tribunal consists of about six persons, and it is possible that both tribunals will be in Perth at the same time.

If the fifth floor were extended over the whole of the building area, the additional office space provided would be 2,000 square feet. That would increase the over-all space from 45,000 square feet to 47,000 square feet. The extra cost would be about £7,500, thus increasing the total cost to £230,250. The kitchen and dining room will occupy about 2,700 square feet of space. There is no special reason why they should not be placed on the sixth floor, in which event the extra cost would be about £9,000. That would make about 2,700 square feet of additional floor space available on the lower floor. If the building had the sixth floor constructed wholly for office purposes, the extra area would be 6,800 square feet. The cost is estimated at £20,750. The extra area would increase the total space in the building from 45,000 square feet to 54,400 square feet. The rent houses and other ancillary rooms would, of course, be placed on the roof of this extra floor.

The original design would provide 45,000 square feet of effective office space, but if the building were constructed to the maximum height allowed an additional 29,000 square feet of effective office space would be provided, thus providing a total of 74,000 square feet of accommodation. The cost of the additional floors would be approximately £159,705, thus increasing the total cost of the building to £382,455.

The provision of additional office space for Commonwealth departments in Perth has been the subject of investigation recently. The present requirements are 45,000 square feet for the Repatriation Department and 100,700 square feet for other departments, or a total of 145,700 square feet. To provide that accommodation new buildings will have to be erected. There is a proposal to construct new Commonwealth offices in Forrest-place, Perth, but they would have to be similar in design to the existing Commonwealth Bank building. Such a building would provide only 88,000 square feet of additional office space. Even were such a building constructed there would still be a shortage of 12,000 square feet. That estimate does not take into consideration further requirements which may become necessary in the future. The problem of office accommodation could be solved by providing additional space in the new repatriation building. The department does not consider that any of the alternatives suggested for increasing the original area would provide ideal office space. The original design was prepared to meet the needs of one department. Additions to that plan to meet the needs of other departments would be unsatisfactory, particularly in respect of vertical transportation and natural lighting.

The need for office accommodation in Perth is so great as to justify a building erected to the maximum height allowed. Accordingly, I have had an alternative design prepared for a building which could be erected in three stages. The plan envisages several points of entry to the building to meet the needs of various departments. The alternative scheme is shown in drawing C.D.1575. Although the drawings indicate a building with a ground floor and seven additional floors, the frame would be designed to permit of a building to the limit height with three additional floors. That would increase the area given in the tabulated analysis by about 30,000 square feet of space. Stage 1 comprises the centre portion of the building. Transportation and major engineering services, such as boiler and air-conditioning plant, would be located in this portion of the building. No existing permanent buildings would be affected. Stage 2 envisages the demolition of the existing Customs House, which is a single-storied building, and the erection of a small wing extending as far as William-street. Stage 2 could conveniently be arranged as part of Stage 1 when tenders are called to ensure continuity of construction. Stage 3 would complete the full development of the

project by the erection of three wings extending over the area at present occupied by Army buildings. The final development would raise the question of providing equivalent alternative accommodation for the Department of the Army on a suitable site.

The acute shortage of Commonwealth office space in Perth, as revealed by the recent survey carried out by the Department of the Interior, definitely indicates that all city building sites in Perth should be occupied by buildings which exploit the sites to the maximum extent. By so doing it will be possible to overcome the space requirements. In respect of the site in question, at the corner of Bazaar-terrace and William-street, it is suggested that the full development along these lines is possible only by the erection of a building of the kind illustrated in the alternative design. The design originally submitted was prepared several years ago. It embodies principles of design and standards of accommodation which do not conform to those standards of economy and design regarded as necessary in modern city buildings, and which have been incorporated in the alternative design. Attention is directed to this matter because examination of the comparative estimates for the two schemes reveals marked differences which are to the advantage of the alternative. Briefly, it will be seen that the 54,400 square feet office space provided in the first design has been estimated at £251,000. The alternative plan provides approximately 61,000 square feet of space for about the same cost.

The chief factors bringing about such a result are; firstly, the elimination of the more expensive curved form of plan and the substitution of a straight-forward structural form on both plan and elevation; secondly, considerable advances have been made in the methods of providing buildings with air-conditioning. It is now possible to reduce the height from floor to floor, thus reducing the cubic contents of the building upon which preliminary estimates are based. It is, therefore, suggested that consideration be given to the adoption of a proposal to carry out Stages 1 and 2 of this alternative design. That would provide approximately 61,000 square feet of office space, 16,000 square feet more than in the smaller building designed for the Repatriation Department. The two stages should be made part of one building contract, Stage 2 being proceeded with when temporary accommodation for the Customs Department could be provided in the Stage 1 section, thus allowing for the demolition of its old building facing William-street. The following statement shows the areas and costs of various alternatives of the original and new designs:—

ANALYSIS OF AREAS AND COSTS FOR VARIATIONS TO DESIGN ALREADY SUBMITTED.

Suggestions embodied in Question 2.

	sq. ft. effective area.	£
(a) Design submitted	45,000 =	222,750
Additions to fifth floor	2,900 =	7,500
	47,900 =	230,250
(c) Design submitted	45,000 =	222,750
Addition of a complete new floor	6,800 =	20,750
Additions to fifth floor to make complete sixth floor possible	2,600 =	7,500
Totals	54,400 =	251,000
<i>Building raised to limit height.</i>		
Design submitted	45,000 =	222,750
Additions extending to limit height, four and one-third extra floors	28,900 =	159,705
Totals	74,900 =	382,455

NEW ALTERNATIVE DESIGN. DRAWINGS CD. 1647 TO 1653 INCLUSIVE AND CD. 1574 TO 1576 INCLUSIVE.

	sq. ft. effective area.	
<i>Stage 1.</i>		
Ground and seven floors	47,520 =	100,000
(Repatriation requirement equivalent to Perth design—45,000 sq. ft. is obtained on Ground and six and one-half floors of this stage)		
<i>Stage 2.</i>		
Ground and four floors	13,440 =	60,000
<i>Stage 3.</i>		
Three wings of ground and seven floors ..	51,950 =	220,000
Totals	112,910 =	470,000

If other buildings were erected to flank the building as originally designed various aspects of the plan would have to be reconsidered, particularly natural lighting. In the alternative suggestion a building to the maximum height allowed is not proposed initially. That is because it would fit in better with existing buildings in the locality and also because the planning of the alternative scheme is simple and directly adaptable to the use of more than one department. It would not be necessary to provide at once all the lifts that would ultimately be required.

47. *To Mr. Rankin.*—We have been assured by the engineers that the building proposed could be safely erected on the soil formation of this site. The plan provides for separate entrances for the various departments which would be housed on different floors in the building.

48. *To the Chairman.*—One of the reasons for the alternative proposal is that the proposed building to be erected in Forrest-place would still leave the departments 12,000 feet short of the office space needed.

49. *To Mr. Beale.*—Even if the alternative proposal were adopted and a building to the full height were erected, we would still be short of the accommodation required. The total area of office space envisaged in Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the alternative proposal would be about 112,910 square feet. That would be inadequate for the needs of Commonwealth departments in Perth. The original proposal was for only one department, and would have provided accommodation far short of requirements for government departments generally. The alternative proposal means that, instead of a building for repatriation purposes only, a building to house additional government departments is proposed.

50. *To the Chairman.*—The additional 12,000 square feet is approximately the amount of space required to provide the estimated deficiency of office space remaining after the erection of the Forrest-place building. The foundations of the proposed alternative building would provide for additional stories. All designs provide for a considerable margin of safety. The building will be fire-proof, but it is not thought necessary to instal sprinklers. The estimated cost of the original design in 1945 was £102,000; it is now £222,750. The increase is due mainly to higher building costs.

51. *To Mr. Rankin.*—The proposed air-conditioning system is new to Australia, but it has been in operation overseas. It is the same system as is proposed for the new administrative building at Canberra. Although not all the lifts would be necessary at first, space would have to be provided for them.

52. *To Mr. McLeod.*—The original proposal provided for a building constructed of reinforced concrete, but we may be forced to use structural steel. That would not necessarily increase the cost.

53. *To the Chairman.*—The Director of Works, Perth, has seen the new plans. We have been in consultation with him. The original proposal would not have provided sufficient accommodation for the needs

of Commonwealth offices at Perth. The alternative proposal submitted indicates how the accommodation can be obtained.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

FRIDAY, 18TH JULY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMP (Chairman).

Senator Nash.	Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Beale.	Mr. Rankin.
Mr. Conelan.	Mr. Russell.
Mr. Howse.	

Harold Beresford Sturtevant, Director of Works, Department of Works and Housing, Perth, sworn and examined.

54. *To the Chairman.*—I do not know how many officials are housed in rented premises in Perth. I thought that the Public Service Inspector would be asked for that information. The cost of rented premises in Perth is £21,300 per annum. Tests have been made on the site to determine the bearing capacity of the soil. The conclusion arrived at was that the maximum load was 3 tons to the square foot. We have designed a building on the basis of a little over 2 tons to the square foot. Three bores were sunk, one to a depth of 78 feet and another to the depth of 40 feet. The soil was shown to be the same in each bore. The soil consists of alternative bands of sand, clay and gravel. I have also discussed the matter of foundations with the town clerk of the City of Perth, who told me that further up the river, nearer the Causeway, the same type of country was found to a depth of 1,350 feet. The use of piles would be of no advantage, because they would not reach firmer soil. We could only consider skin friction on the piles. We can get 2 tons to the square foot without piles. That is sufficient for a building of eight stories. We would use what is known as a spread foundation. The term is applied particularly to columns in a building. The proposed structure will be of frame construction, either of steel or reinforced concrete. The frame carries the whole structure, the spaces in between being filled in to keep out the weather. A spread foundation is designed to take the load that each column must carry and spread it over a certain area of ground so that the pressure will not exceed, in this case, 2 tons to the square foot. We expect to encounter water almost anywhere on the site. There is water on the site at a depth of about 5 or 6 feet below ground level. There appears to be another clay band about 10 feet lower. I think that we shall find that each band will carry water. That has been proved further along the same road. At the top end of the building the ground floor would be about 4 feet below ground level. We must allow for water there when providing for sewerage, electricity and water tunnels.

55. *To Mr. Conelan.*—There will probably be an increased flow of underground water after heavy rain. That would not affect the cables in the tunnels because we propose to make the tunnels waterproof.

56. *To the Chairman.*—Jarrah is plentiful in Western Australia and is used extensively in the building of homes. Karri is another timber which is used in building construction, but it is not so white ant resisting as jarrah. It is difficult to say to what degree the construction of this building would affect the erection of homes. Cement, sand, gravel or crushed stone are used in foundation concrete work for houses. The proposed building would affect house construction mainly in connexion with cement; but, as the production of cement is improving, no shortage of cement is

expected. The bricks required for a building of the original design would be sufficient for about 25 cottages. Labour requirements would include carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, painters and plasterers, all of whom would have to be taken from the pool of labour available for house building. There may be a little interference with house construction. Knowing the condition of the Repatriation Department in regard to accommodation of officers, I think that the new building should be proceeded with at once. We may not be able to start actual building operations until the middle of next year, as a good deal of preparatory work will have to be done. I could not say that the construction of office accommodation for Commonwealth departments should be delayed any longer.

A full air-conditioning system would be of great advantage to the department and its staff. The climate of Perth is not generally humid, but the summer is long and dry and the temperature is often as high as 103 degrees. In my opinion, air-conditioning will become almost a necessity in any building that will be let for office accommodation. The world is becoming more air-conditioning-conscious than ever. Buildings of any size in the United States of America and Great Britain are installing air-conditioning. A similar tendency is apparent in Australia. Air-conditioning obviates other means of heating in winter. Individual radiators are not very satisfactory for big offices. The estimated cost of the building does not include furniture. The Repatriation Department has not mentioned that it will require additional furniture. So far, we have been concerned with the building itself. I do not know what the furnishing of the building will cost, but a good deal of the furniture will come from the present Repatriation Department building. No provision has been made for an alternative lighting system. The operating theatre will not be a full operating theatre as in a hospital. We do not envisage using it at night. We do not think that an alternative lighting scheme is necessary. Bazaar-terrace is 8 ft. 4 in. above low water, Fremantle. That means that it is about 6 feet above high water. There is no fear of high water entering the building in times of flood. Flood waters have not come over the bank at that portion of the river, although they have overflowed the banks where the present repatriation offices are situated. The present buildings occupied by the Repatriation Department are on A class land, which is reserved for recreational purposes. There is no likelihood of other buildings being erected on the land in front of the proposed new building, because such land also is an A class reserve. The Repatriation Department has a number of hutments on the terrace. Previously there was a garage and parking area on the site. There are proposals to construct sporting grounds, swimming pools, &c., along the river frontage. That is a matter for the City Council. An electrical sub-station will be necessary, and provision for such station is made in the State legislation relating to electricity supplies. The City Council may demand space on which to erect a sub-station, and owners of buildings have to provide space for sub-stations and give access to them.

57. *To Mr. Conelan.*—The act applies to property belonging to the Commonwealth Government. The position is similar to that in connexion with water and sewerage. If we want the service we must comply with the requirements of the authorities that supply them. Almost every big building in Perth has its own sub-station and has to comply with the conditions set down.

58. *To the Chairman.*—The proposed building has not been discussed with the City Council as a body, but it has been discussed with individual officers, including the town clerk and the building surveyor.

Such matters as storm-water drainage and boundaries have been discussed. No alternative site has been considered. When the Repatriation Department applied for better accommodation I told them that this land was available. No other site was discussed with them. The cafeteria will cater for about 120 persons. Whether outsiders or officers of other departments should have access to the cafeteria is a matter for the Repatriation Department. Our discussions have been on the basis of the cafeteria serving repatriation officers only. No decision has been made as to who will run the cafeteria.

I am familiar with the various alternatives to the original proposal as well as the proposal for an entirely new building. The proposal first came before me in 1941. The Repatriation Department then had in mind a building for its own use. They desired to have it completed before the war ended. I considered a building for the whole site from the drill hall and including the Customs House, but at the time, owing to the urgency of the Repatriation Department requirements, I did not think that we should cover the Customs House. Consequently, the plan was developed as a purely repatriation building. Now, however, other departments' requirements have been included in the proposal. In my opinion, the best building would be the long narrow one with a wing over the Customs House site. That would mean replanning the whole structure and working out all the details.

59. *To Senator Nash.*—There has not yet been time to prepare estimates of cost.

60. *To the Chairman.*—I have not yet been able to check the figures relating to the alternative proposal and cannot say whether it would provide more accommodation at a lower cost than under the original proposal. I should say that Mr. Phillips prepared his estimates carefully. At least six months would be required to prepare the necessary working drawings for stages 1 and 2 of the proposed new building. We cannot get additional staff for that class of work. There will be some delay in obtaining steel for the building. The Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited is far behind with its orders. After tenders have been called, three or four months will elapse before steel will be required. As soon as we know what our requirements will be we can make application for the steel.

61. *To Mr. Conlan.*—I understand that the Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited is booking orders two years ahead.

62. *To the Chairman.*—When the building was first designed we had about 400 tons of steel at Fremantle suitable for reinforced concrete. We could not store it and we could not hold it because it became rusty and was not suitable. It would have had to be sand-blasted before it could have been used. In its final condition, it was so rusted that, for design purposes, the allowable diameter of a $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. rod, for instance, had to be taken as $\frac{5}{8}$ inch.

Additional stories could be added to Padbury Building in Forrest-place, but I have not investigated that proposal. The original lease provided that the foundations should be strong enough to carry an additional three stories, but I do not know whether they were carried out. Additions to Padbury Building would not provide a satisfactory alternative to the present proposal. The addition of three stories to that building would give between 36,000 and 42,000 square feet of office space. The Repatriation Department alone requires 45,000 square feet. The building is long and shallow, and would not provide a great deal of accommodation. The design would have to harmonize with other Commonwealth Government buildings in Forrest-place.

63. *To Mr. Rankin.*—Existing Commonwealth Government buildings in Forrest-place are faced with stone. Our estimate is that an extra £15,000 would

be required to face the building in the original scheme with Donnybrook stone instead of brick. I do not know whether the department inspected Padbury Building when it was being constructed to ensure that the foundations would carry three additional stories. I have not been able to find any records on that point. The building was constructed before I came to Perth. The air-conditioning of the building originally proposed would cost about £22,000. The cost of plant to air-condition a bigger building would be greater, but the proposed alternative would be a more straightforward building. The air-conditioning scheme now proposed differs from that originally planned. Instead of ducts about 24 inches by 18 inches, the new pressure system uses 4-in. pipes. That may affect the estimate of the cost. In my opinion, proper air-conditioning increases efficiency and justifies the installation.

64. *To Mr. Conlan.*—I do not handle any housing projects in this State. Housing is under the control of the State Housing Commission, which acts as agent for the Commonwealth Government. Bricks are manufactured locally, chiefly at Guilford, Maylands and Cardup. The last-mentioned place is about 20 miles from Perth. For the original scheme about 700,000 bricks would be required. I do not know how many bricks would be required for the new project, but the number would be slightly more. I doubt whether the housing position in Western Australia will be greatly eased within twelve months, but probably by the end of this year the production of bricks will exceed the number of bricks which can be handled by the bricklayers available. In my opinion, there is no need to worry about bricks, because by the time they are required they should be available. Aesthetically I think a brick building would be better. The present design is for bricks and brick construction. The site is as good as is available in the City of Perth. Doctors say that it is satisfactory, but some incapacitated men may experience difficulty in negotiating the hill. Estate agents with whom I have discussed the proposal consider that the hill makes the locality unsuitable for certain classes of business. They regard the hill as a disadvantage. I have not considered the needs of the Taxation Department for additional accommodation. I know the conditions in the Taxation Department. They are probably a little better than in the Repatriation Department building. The Taxation Department requires 4,500 square feet of additional space. If accommodated in the proposed new building, the Taxation Department will probably swamp it. The site of the proposed sub-station has not yet been decided. Its location matters little so long as it is a certain distance above ground level. It will probably be situated on the back portion of the block.

65. *To Mr. Rankin.*—The sub-station will have an area of about 200 square feet.

66. *To Mr. Howse.*—There will be no shortage of sand or stone and the position in regard to supplies of bricks and cement is improving. There will be shortages of imported materials such as water piping, galvanized iron, copper goods and hardware. The position depends largely on shipping. Some of those difficulties would not arise in the early stages of construction. It should be possible to get the materials by the time they are needed. Much of the piping would be of copper and would have to come from the eastern States. At the moment, private house building would not be jeopardized by the supply of materials for this building. Excepting for labour, I cannot see that private building would be greatly interfered with. Labour, rather than materials, will be our difficulty.

67. *To Mr. Beale.*—I am familiar with the original proposal and the suggested variations that have been proposed. In broad outline, the alternative proposal

submitted by Mr. Phillips appears workable, but a straight building differs greatly from one containing curves. I am not in a position to compare the latest proposal with the original scheme in matters of great detail. The proposal to add additional floors to Padbury Building came from the owners of the building. Their lease still has 27 years to run. The addition of three floors to that building would give only 40,000 square feet extra space. I do not think that the Padbury Building would suit the Repatriation Department. Particularly do I think that the artificial limb factory should not be situated in Forrest-place. The Repatriation Department building is frequented by out-patients in various stages of health, and in addition there will be amputees about the factory. They should be accommodated on the ground floor, if possible. If the ground floor of Padbury Building is retained as shops the Repatriation Department's premises will have to be at least one floor up. That would not be satisfactory. On occasions, stretcher cases would have to be brought into the building. I shall give the Committee my views on the subject, but at the moment I do not think Padbury Building a suitable place for the Repatriation Department.

68. *To Mr. Russell.*—I have no serious objection to the artificial limb factory being included in the proposed building at Bazaar-terrace. Any fumes from the factory could be dealt with by the air-conditioning system. The factory may be a little noisy, but it is proposed to place the factory at the back of the building, where the noise would be least troublesome. There is a fair amount of noise in any factory, especially where there is hammering, but I think we can overcome it. I am rather doubtful about the wisdom of having a factory in an office building, but the Repatriation Department is keen on having only one centre in Perth for all its activities. I do not think that a building on that site should have a basement. In a report which I sent to Melbourne I said that twelve months would probably elapse before work could be started on the building. However, I hope soon to have a permanent quantity surveyor, and it may be possible to reduce fairly considerably the time required for the preparation of quantities. Six months might elapse before copper piping would be available in quantities sufficient to meet requirements. Some time would elapse before the building had progressed to a stage where the copper piping would be required. After the contract was let steel would probably be required within three months.

69. *To Mr. McLeod.*—I have not a list of the departments to be housed in the building and the office space required by them. No consideration has been given to the needs of the Taxation Department. I have not considered other departments than the Repatriation Department, but a schedule of rents paid for office accommodation has been prepared. The following statement shows the permanent office accommodation required by Commonwealth departments in Perth:—

REPATRIATION DEPARTMENT—NEW OFFICES.

On the question of permanent office accommodation required in Perth:—

Present tenancies	Square feet.
Less Royal Australian Air Force ..	131,280
	8,000

Plus requests held by surveyor and property officer for additional accommodation ..

115,280

18,500

131,780

Less departments which may not be classed as permanent (including Post-War Reconstruction (expected to expire in five years—9,000, and Prices Commission—10,000 square feet) ..

41,080

90,100

Add tenant departments in G.P.O. where Postmaster-General's Department requires more space ..	Square feet.
Add Customs House displaced if new alternative scheme, Part 2, is carried out ..	26,000
Add Customs Laboratory, displaced by new repatriation building ..	4,600
Add Repatriation Department requirements ..	4,770
Add Munitions Department requirements (to remove from Bazaar-terrace Drill Hall) ..	47,500
	5,680
Less Parts 1 and 2 of building on Repatriation Department site ..	178,750
	61,000
Leaves (still required) ..	117,750
of which in Forrest-place Commonwealth offices would be available ..	88,000
Leaving further requirements ..	29,750
Four floors in "Irwin" exchange would provide ..	21,000

70. *To the Chairman.*—If all the buildings proposed to be erected were constructed, we would still be short of accommodation.

71. *To Senator Nash.*—The estimate of 30,000 square feet of accommodation still required does not include the requirements of the Taxation Department. In the requisitions for additional accommodation there is 4,500 square feet for the Taxation Department. The government would have to build the sub-station for electricity supplies. That is provided for in the original scheme. It will be provided for in any scheme. There are practically unlimited supplies of stone at Donnybrook. There are four or five quarries there, but they are not operating at present. There may be trouble in obtaining masons to form and lay the stones. The additional cost of £15,000 if a stone face is placed on the building is due to the difference between 5s. and 12s. 6d. a square foot, for brick and stone respectively. Those prices cover the cost of laying. Bricks are laid for from 4s. 6d. to 5s. a square yard. The use of stone would not reduce the cost of the structural steel required. On the contrary, the added weight may require more steel. I do not know a great deal about the lasting qualities of Donnybrook stone, but I know that some stone buildings in Perth show no signs of deterioration after twenty years. Sandstone has been used throughout the world for centuries. Bricks are a baked product and will last for centuries. Stone may be affected by local atmospheric conditions. Certain fumes, such as sulphuric acid, may affect stone buildings. It is difficult to say whether a building of brick would last any longer than one of stone. We have not had sufficient experience of Donnybrook sandstone to say that it would last for centuries. There is no evidence of weathering of stone buildings in Perth except on certain parapets where stones have been laid incorrectly. There may be trouble in obtaining sufficient labour, but by the end of the present year I expect there will be a surplus of bricks. The quarrying of stone is not such highly skilled labour as is stone dressing. Inexperienced quarry men could work under a good quarry foreman.

72. *To Mr. Conelan.*—There is doubt whether sufficient stone masons would be available for this work. Limestone used in foundations is different from sandstone used to face buildings. In my opinion, the aesthetic effect of a brick building of the right colour is better than that of a building constructed of stone. The Commonwealth Bank Building in Forrest-place is a different style of architecture. The building was designed to be constructed of stone. Most modern buildings are designed to be constructed of bricks or concrete instead of stone, largely on the ground of expense. If a stone facing were decided on, the plans would have to be revised. Bricks are 4½ inches deep, whereas a stone facing would be 6 inches

deep. In each case there would be a hollow wall. A stone facing would require stronger supports. The additional cost of stone would be about £15,000. Labour is available for laying the main entrance with a terrazzo floor. There are several firms in Perth able to undertake the work. Some of the workmen may be Yugoslavs. Terrazzo is favored for the main entrance as being more lasting than jarrah. There is not much danger of accident with terrazzo floors. A good deal depends upon how they are maintained. Terrazzo should be kept clean and it should not be polished. A wood floor would use timber which could be used for building houses. Jarrah will be used for the floors except in the main entrance. We favour terrazzo there on the ground of its better appearance and greater durability.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

SATURDAY, 19TH JULY, 1947.

Present:

SENATOR LAMP (Chairman).

Senator Nash.	Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Beale.	Mr. Rankin.
Mr. Conelan.	Mr. Russell.
Mr. Howse.	

William Carl Robertson, 58A Leake-street, Perth, Director of Padbury Buildings Limited, and a member of the firm of Robertson Brothers, managing agents for the buildings, sworn and examined.

73. *To the Chairman.*—The proposal which I submit to the Committee in respect of Padbury Buildings, Forrest-place, Perth, is as set out in a letter from my firm to Mr. J. Youle Dean, of the Department of the Interior, dated the 30th August, 1946. The letter is as follows:—

30th August, 1946.

J. Youle Dean, Esq.,
Surveyor and Property Officer,
Property and Survey Branch,
Department of the Interior,
General Post Office Buildings,
Perth,
Dear Sir,

Re PADBURY BUILDINGS, FORREST-PLACE.

Referring to our recent conversations, we have been authorized by the Directors of Padbury Buildings Limited, to negotiate with you regarding the erection of additional floors to the building.

The lease of the land to William Padbury from the Commonwealth Government is for a period of 50 years from the 7th day of May, 1925, at a rental of £5,200 per annum, and one of the conditions of the lease is that a building of at least two floors was to be erected, but that the building was to be of such construction that it would carry a least five floors. Mr. Padbury transferred his lease to Padbury Buildings Limited and a building containing ground floor and first floor only was erected.

The rentals received from the property are as follows:—

	£
Ground floor shops	9,243
First floor, offices and work rooms	2,724
	<hr/>
	11,967

The suggestion is that the Commonwealth Government should at its own expense erect three more floors on the present building and instal two lifts, for which provision was made in the original design, the Commonwealth Government to have complete control of such three floors to use for the housing of its various departments or for letting purposes.

The buildings at present on the land revert to the Commonwealth Government at the termination of the lease in 1975, without any compensation being paid, and of course the money spent by the Government would be upon its own freehold land.

The rental value of each of the three floors with the convenience of lifts should be equal to the rentals we are receiving for the first floor without lift accommodation, namely £2,724

per annum, which would give a total rental value of the whole of the five floors, of £20,189 per annum.

We suggest that the ground rental of £5,200 per annum should be allocated proportionately, as follows:—

	£
Ground floor	2,870
First floor	850
Three upper floors	2,640
	<hr/>
Total	6,280

thus reducing the rent payable by Padbury Buildings Limited to £3,720 per annum.

Whilst building operations are in progress the tenants would doubtless have to suffer a certain amount of inconvenience from noise and dust, and we would more than likely have demands made on us for a reduction of rentals during the building period. We suggest that if such reductions are necessitated, the Commonwealth Government should make a corresponding temporary reduction in the ground rental.

Our architects estimate that under present conditions it would cost about £80,000 to erect the three floors and instal the lifts, the floors could then be partitioned off to suit the requirements of your various departments. Copy of their letter enclosed herewith.

If this building scheme is adopted the Commonwealth Government would have roughly 50,700 square feet of office accommodation in the centre of the city opposite the General Post Office, at a rental value of £8,172 per annum, which would only cost them—

	£
Interest at say 4 per cent. on the cost of the work £80,000	3,200
Remission of ground rental	2,540
	<hr/>
	5,740

showing a profit of £2,432 per annum.

The Government would simply be accelerating their original plan to build the additional floors at the termination of the lease, as this was obviously intended when it was made a condition of the lease that foundations were to be put down to carry five floors.

This would be an excellent opportunity for the Government to increase office accommodation without demolishing buildings which are in short supply, or causing discontent by ejecting tenants.

It should also be borne in mind that all this extra accommodation would be secured without the very heavy expense of further building foundations.

We trust that this proposal will meet with your favorable consideration and await your advice,

Yours faithfully,

ROBERTSON BROS. LTD.

(Sgd.) Wm. Robertson, Managing Director.

The rentals received from tenants occupying the first floor of the building have not altered since the letter was written. The rentals of some of the ground floor shops have been increased slightly since then to bring into line with pre-war rentals. Under the terms of the lease, the buildings were to revert to the Commonwealth Government at the end of 50 years. The lease provided for foundations to carry a building of five stories. I understand that the foundations were laid to the satisfaction of the company's architect and also to the satisfaction of the Public Works Department. The suggestion now is that the Commonwealth Government should, at its own expense, erect three additional floors, thus bringing the building to the height provided for when the lease was signed and the foundations laid. The construction of additional floors would necessitate lifts being installed. The new floors of the building would be under the complete control of the Commonwealth Government. The proposal also envisages a certain reduction of rentals due to interference with business during building alterations. The letter suggests that rentals be allocated to the different floors on the basis of present rentals. The ground floor would be assessed at present rentals and the first floor also. The rentals for the second, third and fourth floors should, it is suggested, be the same as for the first floor, as the installation of lifts would give them equal value with the present rentals of the first floor. My firm

will probably have to reduce the rentals of certain occupants of the building during the construction period, and it is thought fair that that loss should be borne by the Commonwealth Government. There would be no necessity to take the concrete roof off the first floor. The proposal would confer certain advantages on the Commonwealth Government. It would be building on its own property, and on foundations designed for a building of five floors. The construction of the building now instead of after another 27 years would be advantageous to the Government. The additional floors would provide accommodation for Government departments without demolishing any existing building or ejecting tenants from any building. The present G.P.O. buildings opposite are erected on piles. The site was previously a swamp. The Government would be saved the expense of costly foundations. The additional accommodation on the three floors I estimate at 37,500 square feet after making allowance for lavatory blocks, lift well, stairs and passages. The overall accommodation would be approximately 50,000 square feet. The lease provides that we must paint the property externally every three years and internally every five years. That work has just been completed.

74. *To Mr. Conelan.*—We had to get consent to do the work. Had not the building belonged to the Commonwealth Government, consent might not have been granted. The painting cost over £1,000. Our rents charged to tenants were reduced during the war. The company paid a dividend of only 1 per cent. per annum for the five years ended 30th June, 1945.

75. *To the Chairman.*—I do not think that the present structure would need to be altered greatly to carry an additional three floors, as the building was erected with that intention. The plans provided for a building of three stories, but a contract was let for only two floors. Building operations would cause some dislocation of business in the building, and I feel sure that tenants would ask for a reduction of rentals. I think that the addition of three stories to the building would eventually bring increased business to other tenants. Nevertheless, I think that present tenants would ask for a reduction of rentals during the alterations, and, if so, it would have to be granted. Even if additional floors were added, rentals could not be increased whilst rentals are pegged. If the restrictions were removed it might be possible to increase rentals. The ground floor rentals were higher in past years than they are now; the gross rentals have been 50 per cent. higher. Part of our proposal is based on the belief that building operations would cause some disorganization of business.

76. *To Senator Nash.*—Ground floor rentals were reduced during the financial depression and they have never been completely restored. Reductions were made voluntarily in the first instance and later by State legislation. There has been some increase since the depression, but they have not gone back to the original amounts.

77. *To Mr. Russell.*—To the best of my knowledge, only three leases are now current. Our present policy is not to grant leases. We contemplate charging more when the restrictions are lifted if conditions warrant it. Under the terms of our main lease no lease may be for more than five years. I do not think that any present lease has more than three years to run. I do not know of any agitation on the part of lessees for a reduction of rentals.

78. *To Mr. Beale.*—Under State legislation rentals were pegged in 1939. Application can be made to the court for variations. My company believes that additions to the building would benefit it as well as the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth Government would benefit by not having to provide foundations for a new building and, also, by not having

to demolish any existing building. Moreover, it would not have to eject any tenants, and it would be building on its own land in what would become a Commonwealth Government centre. In addition, the site is more convenient than one on the Esplanade. I have no knowledge of Commonwealth Government requirements for office space, but I know that Commonwealth activities are growing. I have not seen plans of the proposed building on the Esplanade. My company's clients would benefit by a reduction of rentals. My company would make a claim on the Commonwealth for a reduction of rental if additional floors were erected, on the ground that the Government would be building on a property leased to us. The letter to which I have already referred sets out what we consider would be a fair reduction. The addition of three floors to the building would probably bring increased business to tenants. That should justify a slight increase of rentals. If additional floors were added, the maintenance of the upper part of the building, including the roof, would become the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. We have not prepared designs for additional stories. There is already in existence a plan providing for a third floor, but our proposal is that three additional floors should be added.

79. *To Mr. House.*—The tenants on the first floor are engaged in various activities; they include solicitors, accountants, tailors, merchants and a dentist.

80. *To Mr. Russell.*—We have a long waiting list of persons seeking office space.

81. *To Mr. Conelan.*—We would increase rentals, when permitted, to the amount which tenants can economically afford, but I do not think that we shall get back to pre-depression rates for some time. In my opinion, every tenant would benefit from the extension of the building, but the benefits to tenants would not be due entirely to extension of the building; we expect good years in the future. Even if the Government had to make concessions in regard to rentals, it would benefit from the erection of a building on the site.

82. *To Mr. Rankin.*—I think that the lease provided that the foundations should be inspected and approved by the Public Works Department, and I assume that the building was erected to the satisfaction of the department. I do not think that the increased business of tenants on the lower floors would be considerable as the result of adding three stories.

83. *To Mr. Conelan.*—Some additional business would result to them.

84. *To the Chairman.*—There would be no greater outcry against erecting additions to this building than against any other proposal. The public might object to any Government building project at the present time. It would be the responsibility of the Government to show that the building was necessary. My company is aware that the Government requires additional office space and would have to deal with public opinion.

85. *To Mr. Beale.*—The proposal contained in the letter was a suggestion but it could be made a firm offer. That is a matter for the shareholders, but I do not think that they would refuse to do so. We would not have made the proposal if we did not think that it would benefit us. I regard the proposal as a definite one now. It was submitted to the Government last year. The proposal was made on behalf of the company although the shareholders had not been consulted.

86. *To Mr. House.*—I think that it would be a good investment on the part of the Government to retain shops on the ground floor after the present lease expires. Some government departments might occupy space on the ground floor and that would require some alteration of the building.

87. *To Mr. Russell.*—Our returns have been as low as 1 per cent. per annum. They are now a little higher. In making our offer we were actuated by a desire to assist our shareholders by obtaining a reduction of the ground rental. The proposal is a business proposition.

88. *To the Chairman.*—I think that the existing building cost between £60,000 and £70,000. I do not know how much has been written off. The building was transferred from the original lessee to a company at an increased figure.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

MONDAY, 21st JULY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMP (Chairman).

Senator Nash.	Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Conelan.	Mr. Rankin.
Mr. Howse.	Mr. Russell.

Charles Taylor, Deputy Commissioner for Repatriation, Perth, sworn and examined.

89. *To the Chairman.*—As the representative of the Repatriation Commission in this State, I wish to place before the Committee my views and experience in administering the department's activities over the past several years under adverse conditions due to the lack of adequate office accommodation. The existing shortage of office space makes it difficult to cope with the increased activities following the 1939-45 war, and has necessitated the transfer of sections of the staff to three distant locations in the city. This not only inconveniences ex-servicemen and women, but is also the cause for irritation on their part. The division of offices is a serious handicap in every way to proper and efficient administration. The present branch office is situated on Riverside-drive, Perth, on what is known as an "A" reserve, for which the Commonwealth Government pays a ground rental of £300 to the State Government, which in 1919 gave permission for the occupancy of the land for a period of seven years with a proviso that, at the expiration of that period, the buildings should be removed by the Commonwealth Government. There is no lease governing our occupancy of this land, the tenancy resting on correspondence which passed between the first Minister for Repatriation, Senator Millen, and the then Premier of the State of Western Australia. Throughout the intervening years, the department has remained in occupation on sufferance, it being stressed from time to time that the State Government was anxious to have the site vacated. Representations have been made on several occasions by the Perth City Council that the site revert to the State because of the fact that the buildings are erected on park lands and this precludes the City Council from implementing its scheme for beautifying the entire river foreshore. Public opinion supported the views of both the State Government and the City Council, and demanded that no further reserve land be built on. There was some relaxation by the State Government, however, when war broke out in 1939, and reserve lands were temporarily made available for war purposes, but I believe that action will be taken at an early date to terminate these short period leases.

The original branch office was built to accommodate a staff of approximately 80 with appropriate appointments. The Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory occupied an out-building of temporary construction, formerly used for a clerical class of the first vocational training scheme. Later, an additional building was erected on the site to accommodate medical officers. With the outbreak of World War II. and subsequent

legislation to provide new and additional benefits for members of the forces, the staff began to increase with the demobilization of approximately 90,000 service personnel, to such a degree that we were compelled to move the factory from branch office premises for the purpose of—(1) providing working space for the factory which was required to meet increased demands; and (2) providing accommodation for the increasing clerical staff of the branch office. At that stage, plans were prepared to reconstruct the existing branch office by extending the floor space to the boundary fence. The Perth City Council learned of the proposal, and protested so vehemently that the scheme was dropped. However, being forced by dire necessity, we did erect a room to accommodate twenty typists. In order to cope with increasing activities, army tents were erected in the front and on the eastern side of the building for overflow staff, and the front verandah was also utilized for the transaction of business. Both improvisations were distinctly detrimental to the servicing of ex-members of the services, and the staff operated at a great disadvantage.

An impossible situation arose, and I was forced to divide the administration. After spending much time and energy scouring the city, I secured premises then occupied by the Army, situated at 108 Murray-street, Perth, to which approximately 90 administrative staff were transferred in February, 1946. During November, 1945, an endeavour was made to secure portion of the buildings occupied during the war period by the Royal Australian Air Force and used as No. 5 School of Technical Training. These buildings were desired to accommodate an out-patient clinic, which instrumentality was at that time housed at the Royal Perth Hospital under adverse conditions. It was not until May, 1947, that it became possible to occupy these premises, when about twenty members of the branch office administration staff were transferred there, and on the 30th June, 1947, the present out-patient clinic was opened. It will be seen from the foregoing that my administration is divided into four distinct sections, all of which should be under the one roof.

Despite the desire of the Commonwealth Government that amenities be provided in all government offices, such facilities are quite impossible of implementation, owing to lack of space at repatriation branch office, and only to a limited extent at 108 Murray-street. At branch office, there is a totally inadequate retiring room for the number of typists, and no form of recreation is possible. Many of the typists have their morning and afternoon teas and luncheons at the tables where they work all day, and the same conditions apply to the clerical staff, who have no retiring room. There is no such thing as a cloak room for males or females in the branch office. Absence of space allows a small number only of the male staff to indulge in a game of darts in the main office in the luncheon hour. At 108 Murray-street, the female retiring room is used as a cloak and a luncheon room, and allows of a limited number only occupying the room at the same time. The same conditions apply to the male staff. Ping-pong tables have been installed in both rooms, but only a limited number of staff can be accommodated. Dart boards are installed in the main office for those who wish to participate in this form of recreation after lunch.

The medical officers' quarters are not equal to the increased number of doctors, and to meet the situation some are posted for duty away from the branch office. What was set apart as a waiting room for patients awaiting medical examination is occupied conjointly by patients and medical officers' clerks. Although inappropriate, that is unavoidable owing to lack of accommodation. Difficulties are experienced regarding the inadequacy and unreliability of toilet appointments for both female and male officers; these have

not been increased since 1919. The Commission, however, has approved the erection of an additional toilet for the females.

Owing to the low-lying nature of the land, the premises are frequently surrounded by water in the winter, as the result of the overflowing of the Swan River. On two occasions the office was unapproachable, clients and staff alike being transported by means of trucks and other improvised methods, their exit from the office being facilitated at the rear of the building through the Government Gardens by means of duck-boards. As the land on which the premises rest is about 1 foot above river level, the flood waters remain on the surface for days on the water-logged soil. Meanwhile, slack lime is spread over the surface to keep down the odour arising from the deposited debris. Pumping the water away is the latest method employed. A subsidence of portion of the western end of the building resulted owing to the annual flood waters surrounding the building. The result of this flooding has a bad effect on the attitude of the staff and produces a depressing effect, and is the cause of a great deal of absences from duty owing to colds. The present site on which the branch office stands is not capable of any further extension to the existing buildings. I am of the opinion that were the health regulations of the State Government enforced, the branch office and 103 Murray-street, would not be permitted to accommodate any more than half the present staff occupying these two premises.

Recently, owing to lack of accommodation, the out-patient clinic staff was transferred from the Royal Perth Hospital to the Bazaar-terrace site, formerly occupied by the Royal Australian Air Force trainees. The clinic is reasonably well provided for to meet present purposes only, but it will soon be inadequate to meet the needs of additional out-patients. There are two large reconducted hutments in the locality. One houses the clinic clerical staff and dispensary, and the other accommodates an overflow from the still overcrowded branch office. The proposed set-up of an out-patient clinic on modern lines in a new building is long overdue, and is highly desirable.

The Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory was situated at the branch office, but any extensions were impracticable owing to the cramped area. As already mentioned, it was transferred during the 1939-45 war to its present location in Murray-street. Despite the department's efforts to cater for the special comfort of those whose disabilities necessitate artificial limbs, surgical aids, and surgical boots, the department is handicapped greatly by lack of suitable appointments within the factory, owing to the existing congestion. The specially trained artificers employed in the factory are ex-servicemen who have suffered the amputation of a limb, and their working conditions are not up to the standard of the Commission. Facilities for amputees are out of the question, because of the limited space available. The Commission expended a great deal of money in acquiring the latest improvements in this activity by despatching two experts to America and Britain recently, whilst a research section has been created to keep contact with these countries for the latest information regarding this activity, in order that ex-members may benefit by up-to-date improvements. When the time arrives for the inclusion of a factory in the new office the Commission will be in a position to provide one on modern lines to cope with the demand for artificial limbs, surgical appliances, surgical boots, &c., which is increasing owing to the supply of these articles, under certain conditions, to civilian cases referred to the factory by the Social Services Department.

From an administrative point of view, it will be seen that the chief executive officers at the branch office

are at a distinct disadvantage in administering a staff of 304 in three parts of the city. Both 103 Murray-street and Bazaar-terrace offices are half a mile in different directions from the head office, whilst the Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory is about 1 mile distant. The Repatriation General Hospital, Hollywood, situated about 3½ miles distant from the branch office, is another administrative responsibility. Files and documents are conveyed at all times daily by car to these points. The Deputy Commissioner is subjected to official interference and disadvantages in his duties owing to conferences and meetings having to be held in his office because the board room is occupied for nine months of the year by a tribunal, the nature of which makes it impossible to procure any premises in the city. In summing up the foregoing, I submit that new administrative offices, including an out-patient clinic and artificial limb factory, are unquestionably necessary and vitally urgent. The necessity for such a building was envisaged with the outbreak of war in 1939, and the matter was first represented to the responsible authorities in March, 1941.

The department has approximately 117,000 files, of which about 51,000 relate to the 1914-18 war and approximately 66,000 to the 1939-45 war. Each man has a treatment file, a pensions file, and an assistance file. Men who served in the 1914-18 war have a new file if they served also in the more recent war. The filing room has been added to on three occasions, and it is now very cramped. "Dead" files are extracted from time to time. That is the only way in which the number of working files in the room can be reduced. The room is not altogether fireproof, but we have an arrangement with the fire brigade. There are two watchmen on duty at night. The destruction of files would be a serious matter. At the branch office the staff consists of 151 males and 37 females, a total of 188. The respective figures for the building in Murray-street are 61 males and 30 females, a total of 91. At the out-patients' clinic there are 19 males and 3 females, a total of 22, and at Bazaar-terrace there are 13 more officers overflow from branch office. There are 22 males at the Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory. The total staff is therefore 264 males and 70 females in four separate locations.

90. *To Senator Nash.*—At the Hollywood Hospital the medical superintendent is in charge, but the responsibility for the administration and care of patients rests with the administration under my control. There are about 480 patients and a staff of about 520. The total staff is therefore about 850. The actual figures vary from time to time. I should say that we have practically reached the peak in regard to staff. In three years' time there may be some diminution of activities. On the other hand, we have to be prepared to deal with members of the Interim Army. Any amending legislation will, of course, affect the staff. We have to comply with industrial awards, and if a 40-hour week is granted additional nurses and other staff will be necessary. We may have to deal also with migrants as there is a reciprocal arrangement with the United Kingdom Government and governments of Allied countries providing for certain benefits to migrants. We accept certain departmental responsibility for immigrants from the United Kingdom and if they come in great numbers our activities will increase.

91. *To the Chairman.*—I have studied the alternative plan. I would be happy to accept any plan which will provide additional accommodation most quickly. The site of the proposed building is suitable and transport arrangements are satisfactory. We do not get many ambulance cases; most of them go to the hospital. Not many men in wheel chairs come to the department. I cannot say whether the inclusion of other departments in the building will increase the fire risk. That would depend on what departments were

situated there. I do not think that the inclusion of our factory will make any difference as there are no chimney stacks and no danger from chemicals. The noise from the factory will not be great and should not cause much trouble. I have not heard any objection by the public to noise by printing presses of the *West Australian* newspaper in an adjoining building. In my opinion, the building should be proceeded with immediately. Members of the staff work a lot of overtime and a great portion of their lives are spent in the building. In new offices their working conditions should be satisfactory. There are sufficient tables and chairs in the present building to meet the needs of the new building, at least, temporarily. The casualty theatre would be used only for emergency cases. Major operations are performed at Hollywood. We have an ambulance which connects with Hollywood. I think that air-conditioning is essential in Perth.

92. *To Mr. Connelan.*—Reasonable comfort should be provided for persons requiring treatment. At present, there are no arrangements for dealing with female patients at the branch office. We shall get them under social service legislation, if not accepted as a result of the war service.

93. *To the Chairman.*—We have discussed with the Public Service Inspector the management of the cafeteria. We propose to let it under contract or as the Repatriation Commission directs. It is not intended that persons receiving treatment shall use the cafeteria. There are tea-rooms and restaurants in the vicinity. The proposal is that meals, similar to those served in the General Post Office cafeteria, shall be available to officers. My chief concern is that the additional accommodation required shall be provided as quickly as possible. There is no better site than the one proposed. Forrest-place would not be a better site, particularly for an out-patients' clinic and factory. There are parklands opposite the proposed site where patients could rest. The existing temporary building on the Bazaar-terrace site must eventually be removed.

94. *To Mr. Russell.*—The premises at 108 Murray-street were obtained only after a thorough search for additional accommodation. About £3,000 was expended on the building to suit our requirements, but even then the accommodation is not satisfactory.

95. *To Senator Nash.*—The rental and rates are about £15 a week. Already there are applications for the building from persons who would occupy it when vacated. There is no other building available although attempts have been made to get other accommodation.

96. *To Mr. Russell.*—The staff has protested against the unsatisfactory conditions under which they work. They have been hoping for better conditions. There is a nurse on the premises, as well as a first-aid post. Most of the staff keep at work very well, but lately numbers of them have required medical attention. At times, the building is surrounded by water for several weeks, and that causes a number of ailments.

97. *To Senator Nash.*—The office accommodation is far short of our reasonable requirements, but I cannot give figures showing the actual square feet of accommodation provided in the building. Almost every table seats two officers. From time to time requests are made for information contained in "dead" files as, for instance, in connexion with a proposal to place name on a war memorial. Consequently, files are never destroyed. Every serviceman is a potential responsibility of the department.

98. *To Mr. Connelan.*—Only a casualty theatre of a first-aid nature for emergency cases will be necessary on the premises. I think that the inclusion of such a theatre is wise, because ex-servicemen may require emergency treatment at any time. The casualty theatre would not occupy much space. Persons dealt with there would be sent to the Hollywood Hospital as soon as possible.

99. *To the Chairman.*—The staff of the department numbered only 250 when we again urged for a new building. The staff now is much greater.

100. *To Mr. Connelan.*—The present artificial limb factory buildings will probably be taken over, at a valuation, by a city doctor who owns the land, when no longer required by the department. I think the need for a new building is as great as the need for homes. Numerous verbal complaints against our working conditions have been made from time to time. The staff is working under conditions which are not in accordance with the State health laws. The regulations were relaxed during the war. The department caters for people who have impaired hearing. We now refer repatriation cases to the Commonwealth clinic established in each capital city. The arrangement is working well. The administration of the department is seriously affected by the total lay-out of our premises and the distribution of the staff. Originally, the canteen service was to occupy the top floor of the building. The Red Cross Society could not cope with the work associated with the canteen. The voluntary help which was available during the war cannot be obtained now. It may be better to lease the canteen, but this is a matter for the Commission to consider. I think that the public would object if the department provided a canteen service for persons other than departmental officers using the building. There are cafés and restaurants in the vicinity.

101. *To Mr. Howse.*—There is some demand by the public for the removal of the present administrative buildings. Although the public would welcome a change, they will not force us out. The building is a blot on the landscape.

102. *To Mr. Rankin.*—We shall have to treat personnel of the fighting services who may require treatment in the future. The demand for medical attention will exist for a long time. I think that the Repatriation Department will require all the space set out in the first proposal, although it is possible that it will not need one floor of the building.

The witness withdrew.

Andrew Gordon Sloane, City Building Surveyor, Perth, sworn and examined.

103. *To the Chairman.*—I am aware that this Committee is inquiring into the proposal to erect a repatriation administrative building in Perth, and I have seen the plans of the proposed building. I have discussed with officers of the Public Works Department only the original proposal. To the best of my knowledge the plans conform to the requirements of the Perth City Council. It is difficult to say whether the proposed foundations are suitable for such a building. Tests were carried out by the Public Works Department about two years ago. I have not seen the results of those tests, but other buildings erected in the vicinity are standing satisfactorily. It is possible to design foundations for such buildings in that locality. Some years ago there was a proposal to erect a town hall on the Esplanade. The site was not ruled out solely on the ground that the foundation might be unsatisfactory. A special committee investigated various sites. That on the Esplanade was one of several sites that were considered. The land on the Esplanade is lower than on the higher side of William-street and it is liable to flooding as it is just above river level. The site is several feet lower than the site of the proposed repatriation building. I do not know the exact level of the proposed building, but it is above flood level. I have never known the street to be flooded in the vicinity. A reduced level of 9 feet is the minimum that we provide for. As far as I know the

ground floor of the proposed building would be 2 feet above that. There would be no danger of flooding. Building costs have increased by from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. since 1938. There is a shortage of skilled labour in Perth. Skilled tradesmen are hard to obtain. Materials also are difficult to get. There is a shortage at the present time. Many dwellings are being held up through shortages of materials. Bricks and cement are in short supply. The position is improving in relation to cement. Seasoned timber is hard to obtain and clear glass is particularly difficult to get. Fittings, such as sinks, baths and basins are in short supply. In some instances, buildings in the locality are erected on foundations built on piles. The Emu Brewery is built on jarrah piles, which carry a column load of from 250 to 420 tons. They are in groups of up to fourteen piles. The Emu Brewery is situated on lower ground than the site of the proposed building. The Lawson Flats are built on a concrete raft. It is a building of eleven stories and is designed to carry a weight of $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons to the square foot. It is on approximately the same level as the proposed repatriation building. I do not know of any office buildings in Perth which are air-conditioned. In my opinion, air-conditioning is not necessary in Perth, where there is adequate light and ventilation. Air-conditioning would be very desirable, but it is probably not essential. The upper floors of buildings are frequently very hot in summer. I regard a cafeteria as necessary in a large building. It is frequently difficult to obtain meals in the city at lunchtime. The nearest cafeterias would be situated in St. George's-terrace, but cafés could be opened in the vicinity of the building should the need exist. I do not think that the construction of the proposed building would create any traffic difficulties. The parking of cars in the vicinity of the building might become a problem. It is a good location compared with many other sites. A parking area under the building would be a good arrangement. There has been talk of a bus terminal in the vicinity. That would mean a big change in that area. I think that the proposed alternative building would be particularly suitable for that site. It would conform with the architecture in the locality and would not clash with existing buildings although it might dominate them. It would be a good treatment for the corner. The alternative design has much to commend it compared with the original. That remark applies to more than appearance. The original plan presented difficulties because of the curve of the building. The alternative proposal would give better light and ventilation. The stairs and escapes in it are good and are well placed. The alternative building would be easier to construct than a curved building, and that would probably effect some saving, but not much. Temple Court is built on a curve and there might be some opposition to a straight building on the proposed site.

104. *To Mr. Rankin.*—Tests were made of the foundations some time ago and much would depend on the result of them. The Lawson Flats, which are in the same locality, are quite satisfactory. So long as the foundations are properly designed, they should be all right. Persons visiting the building on foot would have to walk up and down a fairly steep slope. Buses serve the locality. The traffic problem will rectify itself in time. William-street trams do not pass St. George's-terrace at present, but a trolley bus service might serve the area, thus providing buses right to the door.

105. *To Mr. House.*—A basement below the street level would be below river level and would involve considerable expense in water-proofing. The water difficulty could be overcome but it may not be

economically justified. I understand the basement in the Commonwealth Bank and General Post Office buildings may be below water level.

106. *To Mr. Conelan.*—I think the site is a good one, but various factors may affect the growth of the city. It is possible that the present railway will be removed, and that might change the course of the city's development. I cannot say what will happen in the future. Existing shortages of building materials and manpower for house construction may improve during the next twelve months, but I cannot say that conditions will be satisfactory then. There is a shortage of materials at present. A stone-faced building is superior to any other form of construction from the point of view of appearance. I prefer stone to brick.

107. *To Mr. Russell.*—Most of the cement used in Perth is produced locally, but certain quick-setting cements have been imported. It is difficult to say whether engineering difficulties will be experienced in connexion with the foundations. Any big building on such a site will present problems, but they can be overcome. I am confident that the proposed building could be erected on the site. I do not know whether any portion of the Commonwealth Bank Building is below water level, but I do know that the site was formerly a swamp and that the building is erected on piles.

108. *To Mr. Conelan.*—I did not know until this morning that Padbury Buildings had been designed for more than two stories; but I have assumed from what I know of these buildings that it was so designed.

109. *To the Chairman.*—The provision of land on which to erect an electricity sub-station is a matter for the electricity authorities, but it is usual to incorporate a transformer station in all large buildings. For instance, the Colonial Mutual Life building in St. George's-terrace has its own transformer station. I understand that the general manager, Mr. Edmondson, has supplied the information of his department's requirements to the Works Inspector.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

TUESDAY, 22ND JULY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMP (Chairman).

Senator Nash.	Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Beale.	Mr. Rankin.
Mr. Conelan.	Mr. Russell.
Mr. Howse.	

John Millett Winter Anderson, State President of the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia, and John Berkley Fitzhardinge, architect, member of the State Executive of the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia, sworn and examined.

110. *To the Chairman.*—Mr. Anderson.—The State executive of the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League in Western Australia has given a good deal of consideration to the erection of a building to house the Repatriation Department and has endeavoured to weigh the requirements for the building in comparison to the interference with the building of homes for ex-servicemen. It is recognized that the Repatriation Department requires proper accommodation and is functioning in various buildings spread over the city. This has had the effect of creating difficulties in administration, and no doubt has not allowed the department to meet the needs of the ex-servicemen as

fully and as quickly as it would like. The Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League has been closely in contact with the department during the important rehabilitation period, and realizes the bad conditions under which some of the staff are working. It should also be mentioned that over the years the league has been pressing for, and has been promised, improved facilities for tuberculosis patients. A special hospital was contemplated. Various reasons, including the difficulties of building, have been given for the lack of special facilities for our tuberculosis men. The league has no complaints with the Repatriation Department and considers that the growth of the department, despite the accommodation difficulties, has been met very efficiently. Almost every section of the community has been disorganized by the war, and the league in considering the need for priority for the Repatriation Department building, must bear this in mind, and cannot overlook the appalling conditions under which many ex-servicemen, their wives and children are living. There is a direct responsibility on the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League to further the claims of these ex-servicemen. It is the greatest problem the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's League has to deal with. The disabilities under which children are brought up, with several families living in one house is dreadful, whilst many ex-servicemen have to commence their married life living with relatives. We cannot hope for contented family life under such conditions. The Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League is in close liaison with the Housing Commission. All complaints and cases of hardship from ex-servicemen received by the league are discussed with the Commission, and a liaison officer from the Housing Commission attends the meeting of the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League War Service Homes Committee weekly. The impossibility of helping many of these distressing cases is well known to the league, and it would be wrong, we believe, to go on with this project while such a position exists. Since March, 1947, no permits have been issued for brick houses for war service homes or private building; indeed, very few have issued since January. Cement is very limited and labour is short. The commencement of the building of the Repatriation Department would mean that many homes would be held up either through shortage of bricks, timber, cement or labour. There are only a few builders who are capable of accepting a contract of this magnitude, and if one was employed on this building it is certain that he would have to either close down all his housing projects or curtail them to a very large extent. The builders who would tender are at present erecting up to 200 houses a year and the successful one would have to take his personnel off housing. Although the building is a concrete one and it would appear that no timber would be required, a large amount of timber would be used up as form work for the concrete. It is considered that if the same effort was put into building flats it would be possible to provide housing for 250 families. We feel that firstly the responsibility of the Government is to further the building of houses and to find homes for the many homeless families because this outweighs the need for public buildings. Secondly, buildings for industrial expansion to meet the shortages of materials and goods and provide stability of employment in industry are most important, and thirdly, when the leeway on housing has been alleviated the repatriation building should be given priority over the public buildings. Professional advice received by the league indicates that at least 800,000 bricks would be needed for the proposed building. That number of bricks would be sufficient for from 30 to 40 homes. The figures were supplied by the league's architect.

I am familiar with the conditions existing at the repatriation offices, Riverside-drive. I am of the opinion that working conditions are just as important as the need for houses and that officers working in a building for eight or more hours a day in all seasons should be properly catered for. The staff is working under bad conditions. The building has been there since 1919 and every winter since then conditions have been bad. The league, however, has had to decide whether improved conditions for officers or more homes for ex-servicemen and their families are the more important. I am aware that the building is to be of concrete and steel construction.

111. *Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Although the building is to be of concrete and steel construction the panel walls will be of brick construction, double thickness. I have studied the plans and specifications. Without allowing for partitions 800,000 bricks would be required to enclose the shell. Partitions would require extra bricks.

112. *To Senator Nash.*—*Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Although my statement as to the number of bricks may not agree with figures previously supplied I can easily prove that my figures are correct. As I have said, I have seen the sketch plans and read the draft specifications for both the original proposal and the alternative building. The latter, I understand, will be of the same kind of construction. The fact that the alternative building is to be faced with bricks indicates that the structure will have a concrete frame, and it is usual in such buildings to have panel walls of double thickness brickwork. It is on that basis that I have estimated the number of bricks required to be about 800,000. Roughly, the building will be 180 feet long and 100 feet high. There would be about 18,000 square feet of space work on one wall alone. Each square foot of face work requires ten bricks. That means that on one of the long walls there would be about 180,000 bricks. As there will be two such walls and also end and intermediate walls obviously 80,000 bricks would not be sufficient.

113. *To Mr. Rankin.*—*Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—That estimate is based on the first stage of the building.

114. *To Mr. Howse.*—*Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Although supplies of bricks are improving there is still a great shortage. I do not think that the shortage will be overtaken by the end of the year, but if it were, the problem would then be to find bricklayers.

115. *To Senator Nash.*—*Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—No war service homes of brick construction are now being erected in this State. No permits for such homes have been granted since March last. Indeed, very few permits have been issued since January. The authorities are concentrating on Commonwealth and State homes.

116. *To Mr. Beale.*—*Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—I rang Mr. Sturtevant on the telephone about the number of bricks required, but the only comment he made was to say that I should give my own evidence to the Committee. When I asked him whether he had himself prepared the estimate of the number of bricks required, he answered "No". I have seen the plan of the proposed building. I did not discuss with Mr. Sturtevant how many bricks would be required for one of the long walls.

117. *To the Chairman.*—*Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Of the homes built in this State, about 60 per cent. are allotted to ex-servicemen.

118. *To the Chairman.*—*Mr. Anderson.*—I am aware of a proposal to construct a luxury hotel in West Perth to cost £150,000. The league would oppose its construction. I understand that it will not be built until the housing situation has improved. In my opinion, the proposed building for the Repatriation Department should have priority over a luxury hotel.

We ask only that the construction of the proposed building for the Repatriation Department be deferred until the housing situation has improved. On the figures given in this morning's newspapers, that situation will not be reached for at least two years. That is probably an optimistic view. I do not think that there is any possibility of the hotel being built for many years. Under this State's licensing laws, it is necessary to submit plans and specifications in order to obtain a provisional licence. That does not give authority to build, nor does it release building material.

119. *To Mr. Rankin.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—I have assumed that the outside walls will be 11-in. panel walls and that the internal walls will be 4½ inches thick. That is the normal type of construction for a building on a concrete frame. Even if bricks were used only to face the building, 80,000 bricks would be required for the external face work. It would be uneconomical to use concrete for the internal walls. That being so, 80,000 bricks would not be enough. *Mr. Anderson.*—Even if it were possible to obtain tradesmen, and if the production of bricks improved greatly, we would still object to the construction of the proposed building if it would retard the housing programme. Our objection is based on our belief that the erection of the proposed building would affect housing. If the ice-way in respect of materials and labour can be overtaken so that the housing programme will not be affected, we would have no objection. We agree that conditions in the Repatriation Department are bad, but we also believe that efforts should be made to obtain other premises before erecting a new building. We agree also that it is uneconomical to have a staff of the department spread throughout the city in different buildings, but we cannot see any alternative unless the housing programme is interfered with. The league believes in encouraging family life, and is of the opinion that the present shortage of homes is adversely affecting home life. I do not know of any suitable buildings which are available for the Repatriation Department to move into. During the war, various buildings were used for war purposes, and probably some of them are available. The present Repatriation Department offices have been in existence for 28 years and the league recognizes that working conditions there are bad. It seems strange that after so many years, particularly when housing conditions are worse than ever before, a proposal should be put forward to construct a new building.

120. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Anderson.*—I admit that the buildings were not so crowded in former years, but each winter they have been surrounded by water. I also agree that the demand on the officers there is greater than ever before. Even if stonework were substituted for brickwork, thus relieving the situation in respect of bricks, the availability of labour would have to be considered. The league has been unsuccessful in its efforts to have more men trained in building trades. Two years ago the league pointed out that there would be a shortage of artisans in the building industry. If the erection of a stone building would not interfere with the housing programme the league would not object to its construction. I know that for many years the State Government has been urging the Commonwealth Government to vacate the building now occupied by the Repatriation Department, but I know also that numbers of people are still living in houses which have been condemned. They have not been turned out. I doubt whether the State Government would force the Commonwealth Government to vacate the site. It is not a matter of preferring to see the health of officers undermined but a matter of providing as many homes as possible for people needing them. The health of families living in unsuitable premises

is also important. I believe that other buildings could be obtained. I do not think that it is my job to find such buildings. If other accommodation cannot be provided for the Repatriation Department I am of the opinion that the health of families is more important than the comfort of officers working in the department.

121. *Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—I disagree with those who say that there is no shortage of cement in Western Australia. I have endeavoured to obtain cement from Tasmania, but cannot get it. I understand that the reason is that shipping is not available to bring it here.

122. *Mr. Anderson.*—I am aware that the Commonwealth Government has power over goods in short supply, and if sufficient stone and cement were available as well as stonemasons, I would have no objection to the proposed building.

123. *Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Even if the building had a stone face the number of bricks required would still be reduced by only about one-third. There would still be an inner wall composed of bricks. The use of stone might cause the quarries to be re-opened. The league has pressed for that on a number of occasions. If a terrazzo floor were placed in the main entrance no timber for flooring would be required.

124. *To the Chairman.—Mr. Anderson.*—I do not think that the league would raise any objection to the compulsory acquirement of a building occupied by a big insurance company in this city.

125. *To Mr. Howse.—Mr. Anderson.*—I realize that the Repatriation Department deals with ex-servicemen and that the construction of a new building would help ex-servicemen. In my opinion, at least two years will elapse before the housing situation has been appreciably improved. Should such a position be reached that the construction of new offices would not interfere with the housing of ex-servicemen, the league would raise no objection to their erection. The league is not opposed to a new building, but it thinks that the housing of ex-servicemen should come first. It realizes that both are necessary.

126. *To Mr. Howse.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—I think that the league would want to see the position in relation to housing very much better than it now is before withdrawing its objection. It is impossible to say now what will happen in the future. In order that there may be no undue delay, I recommend that plans and specifications be prepared to the stage at which tenders could be invited, so that the work could be proceeded with immediately it was decided to go ahead.

127. *To Mr. Beale.—Mr. Anderson.*—The view of the league is that there is urgent need for this building and also for homes, particularly for ex-servicemen. The executive is of the opinion that the provision of homes should come first. The architect discussed with the executive of the league the details of the proposed building including the alternative building. I would not say that the executive decided that evidence should be submitted to this Committee solely because its expert adviser said that 800,000 bricks would be required for the building—sufficient to build 30 or 40 homes. Other factors such as shortages of labour, cement and timber, were considered. The Director of Employment says that there is a shortage of labour in the timber industry. The shortage of bricks was not the only consideration. I am aware that the Premier of Western Australia has stated that the position in respect of the supply of bricks has improved so much that outstanding orders should be fulfilled within two months, but I have not seen any great improvement. I am also aware of his statement in relation to cement and I hope that he was correct when he said that the arrears were being overtaken. There is a shortage of 10,000 homes in this State.

The executive was informed at its meeting that the proposed building would not be started for twelve months or two years.

128. *Mr. Fitzhardinge*.—My estimate of the number of bricks required related only to the first stage of the proposed building. Even if tenders were invited throughout Australia, builders in other States have a lot of work to do there. In some of the eastern States contracts are being entered into two years ahead. I assume that a local builder will get the contract even though tenders may be called throughout Australia. You may call that guesswork, but it is my opinion based on knowledge I have of conditions in the other States. Mr. Kenys, a member of the Repatriation Commission is of the opinion that the successful tenderer will most likely be a local builder.

129. *Mr. Anderson*.—The league is not opposed to this Committee recommending the construction of the new building; it is only opposed to the building being erected while so many homes are needed. We do not think that the housing situation will be so improved in twelve months' time as to justify the Repatriation Department being housed in a new building.

130. *Mr. Fitzhardinge*.—An average home requires from 20,000 to 25,000 bricks. Mr. Anderson has stated that the successful tenderer would have to transfer his personnel from housing construction and that that would represent a loss of about 200 houses a year. The position would improve as materials became available and men were trained in the building trade.

131. *To Mr. Russell*.—*Mr. Anderson*.—The executive of the league consists of 28 members, of whom about 24 were present when its decision in regard to the proposed building was made. They were unanimous in their opinion. During the war buildings could be commandeered, and the Commonwealth Government might consider taking similar action to meet the needs of the Repatriation Department. I do not suggest that other occupants of buildings should be displaced because I think that it would be advisable to ascertain whether other buildings are fully occupied. It may be possible for tenants of such buildings to obtain accommodation elsewhere. I have no particular building in mind and I do not think that it is my job to find out whether buildings are fully occupied. I do not think that the shortage of bricks will be overcome by Christmas, but the situation may be better then.

132. *Mr. Fitzhardinge*.—Although Western Australian factories met the local demand for cement prior to the war, breakdowns of machinery and the difficulty of obtaining new parts has altered the position. Some of the kilns have been burned out because of the difficulty of maintaining them in good condition. We have been promised better supplies of cement for a long time. Our experience does not encourage us to believe all the reports about things being better in the near future. Not every contractor in Western Australia is fully employed, but those in the country are fully employed. Some contractors cannot get permits to undertake certain jobs. The smaller contractors are not in a position to tender for a batch of homes. They are accustomed to building single unit homes, but no permits for such homes are now being granted. Their men are fully employed.

133. *Mr. Anderson*.—I think that the league would object to building artisans being brought here from Italy and Germany. The league did not oppose a proposal to bring indentured labour from Italy to obtain wood for the Kalgoorlie mines, but it is of the opinion that such persons should be brought only for specific jobs. The league fears that, if aliens came out in large numbers, they would eventually displace Australian building tradesmen. The league has not been opposed to the introduction of tradesmen from

the United Kingdom and it has strenuously opposed the restrictions placed on the training of Australian ex-servicemen in various trades.

134. *To Senator Nash*.—*Mr. Anderson*.—The league does not think that Australian ex-servicemen are being trained to the maximum capacity to absorb them.

135. *To Mr. Russell*.—*Mr. Anderson*.—If the ex-service men and women in the Repatriation Department are working under unhealthy conditions they should be placed somewhere else. To say that the proposed new building should therefore be erected is to suggest that that is the only way to improve their working conditions.

136. *Mr. Fitzhardinge*.—The league agrees that the health of these officers is important, but it is more concerned about the health of women and children living in tents and sheds.

137. *Mr. Anderson*.—When I said on 17th July that that Repatriation Department building should have a high priority over other public buildings, I had in mind the time when public buildings would again be constructed. A new office for the Repatriation Department should be the first public building to be constructed. I do not know how many ex-servicemen have applied for permits to build homes in this State. I could obtain the figures from the Housing Commission. I know that many of them have been refused permits. A number of families are living in a caravan park at South Perth.

138. *To the Chairman*.—*Mr. Fitzhardinge*.—Numbers of families are living in tents in outlying districts. At the caravan park at Como there are some tents which are the only homes the occupants have. I could arrange to take the committee to some of these places.

139. *To Mr. McLeod*.—*Mr. Anderson*.—In many parts of the metropolitan area there are "brick areas" in which brick homes only can be built. About 70 per cent. of houses in the metropolitan area are of brick. The average ex-serviceman can afford a brick house. Even in what are called working-class suburbs, most of the houses are constructed of brick. In certain areas there are some houses of weatherboard and fibre-cement.

140. *Mr. Fitzhardinge*.—Most of the timber areas are in country districts. There is very little difference between the cost of brick and timber houses. A brick veneer house is regarded as having been built of bricks. Last year about 2,000 houses were erected in Western Australia. We have got back to the pre-war number, but we are still 10,000 houses short. Before the war 2,000 houses were built each year. Some of them were sub-standard and it was proposed to remove them. Nothing has been done, however, in view of the general housing situation. In pre-war days, the league did not take any more action to improve housing conditions than the authorities took to improve the accommodation provided for officers of the Repatriation Department.

141. *Mr. Anderson*.—We have not had many complaints of loss of time because of inability of officers of the department to deal with the public. Complaints have not been so numerous as they were after World War I. We agree that conditions at the office are far from satisfactory. We do not say that the construction of the proposed building would cause housing operations to cease but that it would affect the housing programme.

142. *To Mr. Beale*.—*Mr. Anderson*.—The construction of any big building at this time must affect the housing situation.

143. *To Senator Nash*.—*Mr. Anderson*.—I do not know of any big industrial building now in the course of construction in Perth, but I understand that a number of industries are to be established in this State.

It is true that Harris Scarfe and Sandover Limited are extending their building.

144. *To Senator Nash.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—The building under construction is of four or five stories. I have not seen the plans of the building, and could not say how many bricks will be required for it. The league did not object to that building being constructed. Its erection would have some effect on the housing situation. I am on the war service homes sub-committee of the executive of the league. We work in close liaison with the Housing Commission. When permits are granted for buildings, a percentage represents permits for industrial buildings. The league has not objected to the erection of industrial buildings which have been sanctioned by the State authority.

145. *Mr. Anderson.*—If a number of industrial buildings were constructed the effect would be the same as if the proposed building for the Repatriation Department were erected because materials used in building houses would be required.

146. *Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Permits are allotted on a *pro rata* basis. There is no reason why government buildings should not be allowed a quota.

147. *Mr. Anderson.*—Between the two wars the staff of the department fell off, but during recent years it has grown considerably. I could not give the figures. The staff is divided into four different sections working in different parts of the metropolitan area. That is a disadvantage to ex-servicemen, but as things are it cannot be avoided. I do not know what amount is paid by the Government for the rental of buildings occupied by government departments. I agree that any reduction of rentals paid by the Commonwealth is of interest to taxpayers. I do not know how many houses have been erected in this State under the Commonwealth and State housing scheme. Some figures were published in this morning's newspaper. The league knows that there are people without homes but I cannot off hand give statistics to support its statement. Figures can be obtained. The league is not criticizing the Housing Commission which has built a number of houses. The league believes that the construction of the proposed building would affect the housing situation and is of the opinion that homes should come first. The league does not say that no government buildings should be constructed so long as housing problems remain. It has endeavoured to weigh the claims of the Repatriation Department against the needs of ex-servicemen for homes. I am aware that ex-servicemen are allotted more than half the houses erected.

148. *Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Probably only four or five builders construct as many as 200 houses a year. A number of smaller builders erect fewer houses each year.

149. *To Mr. Beale.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—There are over 500 registered builders in this State.

150. *To Senator Nash.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—I do not know how many marriages take place in Western Australia each year, but the number is considerable. Newly married couples are included in the number of persons requiring houses each year to maintain normal conditions.

151. *Mr. Anderson.*—I understand that the Premier of Western Australia has endeavoured to obtain temporary accommodation for a medical school. It may be possible to make temporary arrangements for the Repatriation Department also.

152. *To the Chairman.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—The reason why some small building contractors in Perth build brick houses. Up to the end of 1946 more permits were issued than should have been issued.

Accordingly the Commission recently decided not to issue any more permits until existing permits were fulfilled. Labour has already drifted away from the small contractors to the big contractors.

153. *Mr. Anderson.*—There has always been a fire risk in connexion with the Repatriation Department's offices. The risk is greater now because of the greater number of files. There is a night watchman on the premises. If a fire occurred the result would be disastrous.

154. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—The executive of the league has raised no objection to the percentage of building permits to various sections. In my opinion the Government would be entitled to a certain percentage. If the Commonwealth Government said that it would not undertake any other work than the proposed repatriation building that would be a reasonable attitude to adopt. On that basis the proposed building would be justified.

155. *To Mr. Russell.—Mr. Anderson.*—We consider that before aliens are brought here to engage in building construction ex-servicemen should be trained in the work. The position is different in respect of some classes of unskilled labour, such as timber-getting. The league raised no objection to a proposal to bring indentured labour to Australia for certain specific classes of work.

156. *To the Chairman.—Mr. Anderson.*—The nation is much more home conscious to-day than it has ever been. Probably there is more organization of public opinion on the subject than ever before because the need is greater. I do not know what was done in Western Australia after the Commonwealth Government in 1926 made £20,000,000 available for the building of homes.

157. *To Mr. House.—Mr. Anderson.*—There has been considerable drift of population from the country to the city during recent years, mainly because of opportunities to obtain war work. Enlistments in Western Australia were numerous and many women who came to the city to work have not yet returned to the country.

158. *To Mr. Russell.—Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—Six men should build a cottage of average size in three months, so that 300 building tradesmen from the United Kingdom should construct about 200 homes a year.

159. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Anderson.*—I think that the purchasing power of the people is decreasing. One result may be a lessening of the demand for homes.

160. *Mr. Fitzhardinge.*—The league would like plans and specifications for a new building to be ready so that the building operations could be commenced at any time it was decided to go ahead.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

WEDNESDAY, 23rd JULY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMB (Chairman).

Senator Nash.

Mr. Beale.

Mr. Conelan.

Mr. Howse.

Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Rankin.

Mr. Russell.

James Mitchell, stonemason, and secretary of the Stonemasons Union, Perth, sworn and examined.

161. *To the Chairman.*—There is plenty of suitable stone available in Western Australia for building purposes. The quarries at Donnybrook are not working at present and it might take some time to get them working. If the first story were constructed of granite,

the Donnybrook quarries could be brought into operation before the first story was reached. The quarries are owned by Alexander & Sons and A. T. Bryan & Sons Ltd.

162. *To Senator Nash.*—I do not think that Mr. Alexander is a contractor, but Mr. Bryan is a contractor. I believe that the State Government owns some of the quarries.

163. *To the Chairman.*—I do not think that there will be any difficulty about obtaining labour to work the quarries. That work would be general labouring work. There are plenty of masons available. There are 30 operative stonemasons on our books, and, if necessary, another 10 or 20 men could be obtained in this State. They are now working in monumental yards, and are at present permanently employed. Perhaps they should be classed as casual workers, because their employment depends upon the state of business in the trade. There are no stonemasons unemployed at present.

164. *To Senator Nash.*—There are five apprentices, and also eight trainees under the rehabilitation scheme. If this job is done in stone we could find room for some trainees in the industry. No buildings with stone facings are being erected in Perth at present. Consequently, about 20 members of the union have taken up other occupations. They would be unemployed if there were not plenty of work in other industries. About 10 of them would come back to the trade if there was a guarantee of continuity of work. The durability of Donnybrook stone can be tested by examining the General Post Office building, the Commonwealth Bank building, and the Cathedral in Murray-street. The Colonial Mutual Life building has a synthetic face on a concrete frame. The pointing has already deteriorated and it has been found necessary to employ a different kind of putty to make it weatherproof.

165. *To Mr. Beale.*—Members of my union regard that building as a failure.

166. *To Mr. Conelan.*—It has been erected about ten years.

167. *To Mr. Rankin.*—I do not know the reason for the deterioration. Similar trouble has been met at Shell House. The building absorbs damp, which shows on the inside. That happens with most concrete jobs.

168. *To the Chairman.*—Granite, equal to the best in the world, is available, but it would cost more. Granite is not necessary if there is a space between the building and the street, but for a building on the street frontage I think that granite is necessary for a certain distance from ground level. Donnybrook stone could be used from the first floor upwards. Donnybrook stone is rather soft and is inclined to wear at the corners.

169. *To Senator Nash.*—The Commonwealth Bank building is built of granite for one story.

170. *To the Chairman.*—I do not know what the extra cost of using granite would be. That information could probably be obtained from Mr. Sturtevant.

171. *To Senator Nash.*—There is very little work in our trade in Australia, and it has been the custom for masons to follow the work wherever it offers. Machinists are available in sufficient numbers to carry out the job.

172. *To Mr. Russell.*—If it were decided to use stone for the proposed building, members of my organization would leave their present employment to work on it. Sufficient masons would be available to carry out the work. Our idea is that, if granite is used for the first floor, some of the work would be done in yards where our men are now employed. If necessary, masons could be obtained from other States. I suggest that granite be used until the first floor is reached.

173. *To Mr. Beale.*—Granite would cost at least twice as much as Donnybrook stone. There are about 50 stonemasons in this State and most of them would be available for this job. A stone building could be erected in less time than one of brick. A stone veneer is light and it is available in larger blocks than bricks. It could be put in the wall more quickly. The average stone on the face of the Commonwealth Bank building is about 2 feet or 3 feet long and 18 inches high. Work would be speeded up if stone were used.

174. *To Mr. Howse.*—The art of the stonemason is being lost in this country. There is very little detailed work in modern buildings and consequently machines are able to do most of the work that is called for. Skilled masons would be needed for this job. Wherever stone is used the Stonemasons Union demands the right to work it. We do not control machinists, but we are trying to get them into the union. Eventually machinists will do the masons out of their job. It will be necessary to have masons working on the wall, but in the yards machines will take the place of masons. That is already the position in South Australia, where on several buildings there were twice as many machinists as masons. The tendency is more and more in that direction. The plain face used in modern buildings lends itself to machine work.

175. *To Mr. Conelan.*—I do not think that hand-hewn stone is more lasting than machine-cut stone. The use of a steel hammer instead of a wood mallet affects Donnybrook stone; it causes the stone to fret. Donnybrook stone should not be treated roughly. A machine can treat Donnybrook stone as lightly as it would be treated by hand. We consider that fine work on machines necessitates a stonemason, but where a carborundum saw is used a man with little experience can work it.

176. *To Mr. Beale.*—The real skill of the operative mason is shown when carved work is called for.

177. *To Mr. Conelan.*—If granite and stone were used for the building, about 22,000 bricks would be saved.

178. *To Mr. Rankin.*—The last big job carried out in Donnybrook stone was the Commonwealth Bank Building, which was erected nearly fifteen years ago. Since then, no large quantities of stone have been used. With modern machinery about 30 masons would be sufficient. I think that they would be available. There would still be enough left for monumental work.

179. *To Mr. Conelan.*—Whether all government buildings in Perth should be constructed of stone is a matter for the architects. I am concerned only with stone. The cost of a stone building could be reduced if the stone did not have to be handled so often. A spur railway line to the quarries would reduce the number of times the stone is handled. The line would be from three to five miles long.

180. *To the Chairman.*—Stone jobs do not require much upkeep. The experience of the owners of the Colonial Mutual Life building would not be repeated if granite and Donnybrook stone were used.

The witness withdrew.

Harold Boas, architect, vice-president of the Australian Institute of Architects, and vice-president of the Western Australia Chapter of the Institute, sworn and examined.

181. *To the Chairman.*—I have seen the original and alternative plans of the proposed repatriation administrative building. I have not studied the alternative plan. I regard the external design and planning of the original scheme as good. There are, however, certain aspects of the proposal generally on which I hold certain views. I have not given sufficient thought to the alternative proposal to express a worthwhile

opinion. I understand that the original lay-out has been altered and that it is proposed to increase the height of the building. In view of the extreme shortage of labour and materials required for housing, I do not think that the job should be proceeded with immediately; that is, within two or three years. That view is strengthened by my belief that it is necessary for industry to be established on a sound basis which will enable it to increase production. I think that the first call on labour and materials should be for the construction of houses, and also that before new government buildings are erected essential industries should have an opportunity to expand their works in order to cope with demands that will be made on them. I know the conditions under which the repatriation staff works. I was a member of the City Council which gave the department authority to build on the original site. As a councillor for twenty years, I have tried to get rid of the department's present building. I am still of the opinion that the building should be removed at the proper time. When permission to erect the existing buildings was granted, a second world war was not visualized and we did not foresee the great housing shortage. Decent homes are important in the training and development of children. To-day, children are being reared under conditions which do not tend to make good citizens of them. The psychological factor is important and, therefore, housing must come first. The statement that only sufficient bricks would be used in the building as would construct ten or twenty houses merely begs the question. Other building materials also are in short supply. Such a building would be a drain on labour resources and would affect the provision of homes. I am a practising architect and have essential work running into hundreds of thousands of pounds awaiting attention. Factories and industries which will produce needed goods are required. In addition to building houses we must develop our primary and secondary industries. Large sums of money and labour and materials required for homes and industrial expansion should not be used at this time to erect public buildings. Another two years will elapse before conditions are anything like normal. Present-day costs of building are high. One reason is that it takes twice as long to construct a building as when conditions were normal. Although no greater quantity of materials may be required, wages represent a bigger outlay because contractors cannot afford to put workmen off just because materials are not on hand when required. The supply of bricks is improving, but it is not nearly equal to requirements. I do not think that the site of the proposed building is good. It is of limited area, is situated on a corner, and is on one of the busiest traffic routes leading into the city. It is also at the foot of a hill and parking facilities for cars are limited. It would be a mistake to have the Repatriation Commission's offices where incapacitated men would have difficulty in reaching them.

182. *To Mr. Conelan.*—I have seen numbers of cars parked opposite the site in the daytime, but provision should be made for persons with cars to reach the building easily in order to do business there. All sorts of people will do business with the department and there is danger that their vehicles will cause traffic congestion. I understand also that a certain amount of rehabilitation treatment and hospitalization will be carried out in the building. A building used for such purposes should not be situated in a congested city block, but should be erected outside the city area where there is room for expansion. In my opinion, the building should not necessarily be of nine or ten stories; it would be preferable to have a building of only two or three stories. I suggest that the building

should be erected near the Hollywood Hospital and the University and that a more simple building be erected. That would be a more suitable site. A simple building in addition to costing less, would make for greater efficiency. Moreover, no parking problem would arise. The site suggested is proposed because the Government owns it. I think that it would be a mistake to put a large departmental building of the kind proposed on the suggested site. There is land in Forrest-place which was purchased for Commonwealth Government purposes. It is possible that the existing railway will be removed from its present site, thus allowing the city to expand northwards. That was recommended some time ago by the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission. If the railway were removed, Forrest-place could be developed as a governmental and civic centre. We should keep in mind possible developments in city planning. It would be better to concentrate government offices in Forrest-place than to have them scattered throughout the city. Forrest-place is an ideal centre for government offices. I do not think that tradespeople generally would object to such development of Forrest-place. We shall be wise if we adopt a long view in regard to city planning.

183. *To the Chairman.*—If it is decided to use the proposed site for the building, I prefer the second proposal of the first. I also suggest that the building, if erected on the proposed site, should have its front constructed of Dornbrook freestone, which is good stone and has been used in the General Post Office and Commonwealth Bank buildings. There is also excellent granite close to Perth. Many returned soldiers are employed in the stonemasons' trade, which is languishing at the present time. A building of granite and Dornbrook stone would look well and would give a dignified and cultural aspect to the building. Moreover, it would stimulate a useful trade. I do not know how many bricks would be saved if stone were used, but I estimate that the building could be faced with Dornbrook stone at an extra cost of about £10,000 or £12,000.

184. *To Mr. Conelan.*—Large tall buildings are difficult to alter, whereas simpler buildings of fewer stories allow for alterations being made more easily. In the long run they are less costly.

185. *To the Chairman.*—Piles are used on many buildings along the river front. There are 1,200 piles under the General Post Office building. The site may present difficulties in respect of foundations; it is also too small. The difference between pre-war values and present values for a building of this kind is about 100 per cent. I believe in sane and sensible air-conditioning. In Western Australia weather conditions are reasonable for about nine months of the year and only for the rest of the year do buildings need to be warmed or cooled. In my opinion, a simpler form of air-conditioning could be adopted. Effective ventilation is better than artificial heating and cooling. Fire risks in a reinforced concrete building are at a minimum. I favour flat roofs because they give staffs an opportunity to get into the open air. They can be made waterproof. Jarrah is the best timber in Australia so long as it is well seasoned. We have not been able to maintain stocks of dried and seasoned timber. The position in regard to timber is most difficult.

186. *To Mr. House.*—I believe that a repatriation building should be accessible to injured men. The erection of a building in the locality suggested by me would not make it inaccessible in these days. There is a good transport system to the locality. In my opinion, it would be better to get these men out of the city.

187. *To the Chairman.*—I have not considered an alternative site, but a building of this kind should be the subject of the most careful planning. A good

situation for the building would be near the Hollywood Hospital. The land is flat and would present no building difficulties, and the site is accessible.

188. *To Mr. Beale.*—The Hollywood Hospital is about 3 miles from Perth, and is well served by motor buses and trolley buses.

189. *To Mr. Conelan.*—Some passengers would have to change from one bus to another.

190. *To Mr. House.*—I do not think that bricks would be more aesthetically suitable than stone for a building of such severe lines as is proposed. Certain kinds of bricks which are not made here would be satisfactory. West Australian bricks are good but they are not face bricks. I do not see any possibility of brick-makers making special bricks for this job. The bricks used in London Court are tapestry bricks which are not now made in this State.

191. *To Mr. Conelan.*—I have seen an article in the press by the Premier of Western Australia regarding the materials used in housing. My experience does not coincide with the views expressed by the Premier regarding the supply of bricks or cement. I have had the greatest difficulty in obtaining twenty tons of cement for essential works. I understand that a quota system in regard to building materials is in operation but I have not seen any evidence of it. I know that houses and industrial undertakings are held up through shortages of materials. I also know that some industrial undertakings which should not have been allowed have been proceeded with. I regard the expansion of the premises of Harris, Scarfo and Sandovers as an essential work for the rehabilitation of industry, but I object to such non-essential works as picture shows being built at this time. One picture show building has been reconstructed in Hay-street, Perth, within the last twelve months. Between £6,000 and £10,000 was expended on it.

192. *To the Chairman.*—The construction of a luxury hotel at West Perth will depend entirely on the Housing Commission. A licence has been granted on the basis of the completion of the building by 1950 or any extended term decided by the Licensing Court. There has not been any agitation to remove the Swan Brewery which was erected on land held by the company for 100 years, but there have been comments from time to time about having such a building on the waterfront. I do not agree with much of the criticism regarding the use of the waterfront. In my opinion, the repatriation building, which is partly a hospital building, should be in a quiet situation. There is no need for tall buildings in Australia. They are erected only because of high land values.

193. *To Mr. Conelan.*—If there were a proper allocation of building materials, it would be only reasonable that government buildings should get their share. Difficulty is experienced in getting homes built privately because of the demand on materials for houses built by government bodies. I have no complaint, so long as houses are being built. I do not think that the lag in housing will be overcome within two years, but by that time we shall have reached a more normal state of affairs. There are not many builders or building artisans in this State. Men are being attracted to other States. I agree that a new repatriation building is needed, but, in my opinion, it should not be built for the next two years. There is no doubt as to the need for a new building.

194. *To the Chairman.*—Summing up, I would say that the proposed building should not be built on Bazaar-terrace but in a more open area. However, if it must be built in the city, I recommend that it have a stone face and that it be made a noble structure which

will do credit to the city. I also think that the housing programme should not be interfered with for a year or two by the construction of such a building.

195. *To Mr. Rankin.*—My objection to the immediate erection of the building would be removed if building artisans were brought here from other countries. If the building were erected near the Hollywood Hospital better amenities could be provided there than in the city. Perth has a chance to avoid the traffic problems of Sydney. We should not try to concentrate all activities in one small area. We should look ahead and avoid troubles in the future.

196. *To Mr. McLeod.*—I would not advocate the decentralization of such essential services as the Post Office, but the proposed building is in a different category. There will be certain hospitalization which should not be provided in a building erected in the centre of a city. I suggest a simple building on another site—one which could be altered and improved from time to time.

197. *To Mr. Rankin.*—I agree that the officers of the department should have better accommodation at the first opportunity but not so as to interfere with housing.

198. *To Mr. Russell.*—There has been no public outcry against work being done on Harris Scarfo's building or the Colonial Mutual Life building, but there has been some criticism in regard to the former. I should say that most contractors in Western Australia are in employment. I find it practically impossible to get work carried out in country districts. Many buildings take twice as long to erect as formerly because of delays in getting materials. Much of the timber now being used is too green, and is most unsuitable. Tiles and glass are also difficult to obtain. I think that there is more home building now than before the war. I understand that the pre-war rate of building has been reached but that arrears are not being overtaken. If I called for tenders by advertisement I would not get an offer. I have to employ men to work for me. Yet they all say they cannot get materials.

199. *To the Chairman.*—I do not say that more building is going on than before the war but there may be as many houses built as in pre-war days. I do not know how many of the houses being built are for newly married couples.

200. *To Mr. Russell.*—I do not think that the State Government has any building project in mind to be gone on with immediately, although plans have been prepared for some work. Ex-servicemen working in the Repatriation Department are entitled to healthy working conditions. I do not advocate that the proposed building should not be constructed but that the work should not be undertaken within the next eighteen months. By that time the housing situation should have improved.

201. *To Mr. McLeod.*—Industry is expanding in this State. I do not know what the situation will be in respect of labour and materials within the next eighteen months. My staff difficulties are such that I am glad that certain restrictions still remain. We have not the contractors or the men to undertake a greatly accelerated building programme. A building in which a limited amount of hospitalization is provided, and which contains an artificial limb factory, would be better in a more open area. If the building were constructed of stone and reinforced concrete it would have a less serious effect on the brick situation. It is easier to get labour for reinforced concrete construction than to get bricklayers. The stone industry should be revived. I do not think that any public building should have a brick front. Our public buildings should be noble structures in which we can take pride. The cost should not be the chief consideration.

202. *To the Chairman.*—The inner walls between the columns need not necessarily be of brick. Fire-proof partitioned walls may be of concrete, brick, tiles or other material. Reinforced concrete, instead of bricks, could be used between the columns.

203. *To Mr. Conelan.*—If it is decided to go on with the building and the site and type of building are fixed, there is no reason why plans and specifications should not be prepared so that tenders could be called at any time.

204. *To Senator Nash.*—I prefer jarrah for the floor of the main entrance. There is movement in all buildings in Perth because of the nature of the land here. That movement causes cracks to appear in terrazzo floors. I doubt, however, whether seasoned jarrah could be obtained. Although terrazzo work was formerly done mainly by foreigners, Australian tradesmen can be obtained for such work. Wall tiles are not made in Western Australia, but several firms make roofing tiles. I understand that supplies of roofing tiles are improving. Not many industrial buildings are being constructed in Perth at present. There are some being erected at Fremantle. Comparatively few commercial projects are in hand at the present time. I, myself, have no major works in hand. I do not build many private homes. For some time I have not undertaken any job costing more than £10,000.

205. *To Mr. Russell.*—There is only one company making cement in this State. I understand that it now has three kilns in operation continuously. Previously, only two kilns were working. I have had to obtain cement from the eastern States. There has been little mechanization of their plants during recent years. It is important that they be enabled to increase their output, otherwise the housing problems will not be overcome.

206. *To Mr. Rankin.*—The problem of obtaining cement has been accentuated by shipping difficulties and coal shortages.

207. *To Mr. Conelan.*—If the building were not commenced for another eighteen months much of my objection to it would be removed. I favour a building of granite and stone if it is erected on the proposed site.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

THURSDAY, 24TH JULY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMP (Chairman).

Senator Nash.	Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Beale.	Mr. Rankin.
Mr. Conelan.	Mr. Russell.
Mr. Howse.	

Montford David Mears, Deputy Commissioner of Taxation, Perth, and Victor Lewis Steffanoni, Senior Valuer, Taxation Department, sworn and examined.

208. *To the Chairman.*—*Mr. Mears.*—I propose that the department's views be submitted to the Committee in two parts—the first part by myself, and the second part by the department's senior valuer, Mr. Steffanoni, whose evidence will be largely technical. My points are—

- (a) The building occupied by the department was purchased in 1940 in an extreme emergency. It was never contemplated as a permanent home for the Taxation Department. Already it is insufficient in space. It has never been satisfactory to the staff and apparently never can be.

(b) The building is not designed for office chambers. It was built to be, and until adapted for occupancy by the Taxation Department was never, used except as a softgoods warehouse by the owners, D. & W. Murray Limited.

(c) The present floor space could be substantially increased if—(i) two additional stories were added to the building; or (ii) an adjoining privately owned building were acquired.

(d) The taxation organization in Perth is unique in Australia.

(e) Forrest-place.—The Taxation Department is eminently a proper department to be used in any substantial development of Forrest-place. Its claims on that ground are submitted to be greater than that of any Commonwealth department or authority in Perth with the exception of the Commonwealth Bank and the Postal Department.

As to (a), 1940 Emergency: For many years prior to 1940 the Taxation Department was more or less suitably housed in the General Post Office, Forrest-place. In 1940 the department was collecting not only the Commonwealth taxes, but also the State land taxes, as now, and the State income taxes (since abolished). Commencing in August, 1940, the State legislation provided for income tax deductions at the source to be made from wages by a procedure generally known as the tax stamp system. This legislation was not passed until December, 1939—only seven months earlier. For this system it was imperative that a large banking chamber be available to deal with the inevitable tremendous increase of public attendances. More office space was also generally necessary. The General Post Office was no longer suitable. The accommodation question in early 1940 was to say the least most serious. After consideration of various plans, including the building of temporary structures it was decided that the present building which had been vacant for years, was the only reasonably suitable one available. It was immediately purchased—perhaps it should have been leased—as to which Mr. Steffanoni will give evidence. Similarly he will tell the Committee that various experts considered the building as unsuitable as a Commonwealth acquisition and as a permanent place for housing a large staff. Personally, I am at this date not quite sure of the long-term attitude of the then Commissioner of Taxation, Mr. L. S. Jackson, but I am sure that he regarded the Commonwealth contractual obligation to the State to collect their taxes as a paramount factor and, there being no other building available, this one had to be acquired without consideration of present cost or future problems.

As to (b): The Committee has already inspected the building and I think that it will accept my suggestion that the building might fairly be described as a "big barn". Internally it has, of course, been extensively changed for office purposes by the erection of numerous partitions; nevertheless, it still falls far short of modern ideas for the proper lay-out of office chambers. The working conditions for the staff are much below those provided in the Commonwealth Bank or the General Post Office. The building does not conform to approved Commonwealth standards, nor does it compare favorably with private buildings housing large numbers of office workers. The Committee has seen that the floor space is so much taken up for office purposes that there is little or no opportunity to provide reasonable amenities let alone amenities on the standard laid down by the Commonwealth. On this point Mr. Steffanoni will speak in detail, and will provide plans and statistical data. He will also speak on the economic value of the building and the prospect

of a profitable sale. If necessary, he will give evidence as to the possibility of adapting the building to departments having a smaller number of staff and a much less volume of callers.

As to (c), (i) Additional stories: A good deal of investigation has already been made by the Works Director, Mr. Sturtevant, as to this possibility. I suggest that he be called to speak on this point. I understand that he is very doubtful whether the building is structurally able to take any further floors. (ii) Acquiring adjoining building: Mr. Steffanoni will deal with this point in his evidence.

As to (d), Special Taxation set-up in Western Australia: In this State, the Taxation Department is organized differently from that in any other State. Here, there is only one taxation office where all Commonwealth taxes, and some State taxes, are administered. The department's policy is strongly adverse to breaking down that advantageous position. In Perth, the public have the great advantage of being able to conduct all their taxation affairs at one place and this facility is commented upon very favorably by the public. To house a part of the staff and their furniture, fittings and records in another building, possibly somewhat distant, would add to administrative difficulties by reason of remote control. I would not say that, as a temporary measure, some such action is not practicable, but I submit that it should be adopted only as the last expedient.

Although prior to 1922 the Commonwealth Income Tax Assessment Act authorized the Commonwealth to collect taxes on behalf of the States, that legislation was not availed of until that year, when the Western Australian Government agreed that the Commonwealth Government would collect State taxes. Since 1923, the department has assisted the State Government in many ways, particularly in regard to valuations. Our valuations are accepted by local-governing bodies for rating purposes. We value for fifteen different authorities. A similar state of affairs does not exist in any other State.

As to (e), Forrester-place: I understand that the Commonwealth has a long-term policy of developing Forrester-place as something in the nature of a Commonwealth civic centre. If that be so, I strongly suggest that the Taxation Department is eminently one to be included in any such civic project. Its claims on that ground are submitted to be greater than that of any other Commonwealth department or authority in Perth, with the exception of the Commonwealth Bank or the Postmaster-General's Department. Obviously, the Taxation Department has a tremendous number of callers—greater, I suggest, than any Commonwealth department, with the exception of the Postmaster-General's Department. With growth of populations, the attendances of the public will, of course, increase. I submit that for public convenience it is desirable that their most numerous Commonwealth contacts be provided for in the Commonwealth civic centre. I suggest that many persons might well have business with the bank, the General Post Office and the Taxation Department at one and the same time. Failure to accept this view and provide accordingly would, I submit, be objected to by the general public. By reason of its number, 500 to-day and increasing annually, the taxation staff I consider should have priority of modern housing as against other staffs of much lesser number.

209. To the Chairman.—Mr. Steffanoni.—My object is—

- (a) to submit evidence to the Committee to prove that—(i) the building does not, at the moment, provide sufficient space for the present staff for working conditions; (ii) there is no provision for a recreation room;

(iii) the area set aside for the cafeteria is too small; (iv) the lavatory accommodation is insufficient; and (v) there is no provision for expansion;

- (b) to suggest that the action required is not additional temporary accommodation, but rather the long-range view of the provision of a building to house the Taxation Department in an appropriate Commonwealth building, with the usual amenities and room for expansion.

The Taxation Department was previously housed in the General Post Office buildings and moved to the present building in July, 1940. This building was purchased from D. & W. Murray Limited, warehousemen, by the Commonwealth, for about £50,000 early in 1940, and an amount of approximately £30,000 was spent on necessary alterations. Such items as floor strengthening and outside painting were omitted, and not carried out owing to the necessity for economy, due to war conditions.

When the Federal and State taxation staffs amalgamated in 1921 the staff was 109. In June, 1940, on transfer to the new building, the staff was 311 (216 males, 95 females). The staff at present consists of 537 (317 males, 210 females). I submit schedules which give details of the floor space per person on the various floors, and also details of the lavatory and cafeteria accommodation.

From the details submitted, the following are the present difficulties:—

- (1) Accommodation for staff has practically reached saturation point.
- (2) There are no recreational facilities.
- (3) Extra filing space is not available.
- (4) Besides many minor disadvantages, such as open floor spaces, bad ventilation and noise, the lighting under which many employees are working is much below normal.
- (5) The lavatory accommodation is over-taxed.

With regard to (1) and (2), it is possible that the work of the department can be carried on for the next few years. An amount of £4,926 is at present being expended to strengthen the third floor, which should provide additional filing space for about another three to five years. An expenditure of £3,724 has been approved to provide fluorescent lighting to the poorly-lighted parts of the building. Although the lavatory accommodation is over-taxed, this is not considered to be a very serious matter, but it is not possible to increase the accommodation. Therefore, when the work in hand is completed, it is possible that the department will be able to carry on under difficulties for say, the next three years.

As to future accommodation, the alternatives appear to be—

- (1) Expand the accommodation on the present site.
- (2) Divide the department and shift some part or parts to another site.
- (3) Obtain more suitable and up-to-date accommodation.

To expand on the present site would mean either additional floors or acquiring additional area on the east or south of the present site. The Works Department does not report favorably on additional floors. Expansion to the east is almost impossible on account of an emporium, and expansion southerly would be expensive. The whole of the Taxation Department is under one head, the Deputy Commissioner. To have the staff in two buildings would create many difficulties and would, no doubt, lead to unsatisfactory administration and inefficiency, and would be uneconomical. The third alternative appears to be the obvious satisfactory

solution to the problem. Assuming that the Commonwealth intends, one day, to develop the land on the corner of Forrest-place and Wellington-street, at present occupied by temporary structure, this site appears the ideal one for the Taxation Department. The site appears to have the following advantages—

- (1) Its area is sufficient to accommodate the Taxation Department as well as provide floor space for other departments.
- (2) The three major Commonwealth Departments—the bank, General Post Office and Taxation Department—would be grouped in a civic centre.
- (3) The area is a good office area.

In the event of the Taxation Department moving to another building, it is submitted that the present building could be used to accommodate a number of smaller Commonwealth departments. The lavatory accommodation in the building is inadequate. For a staff of 210 females there are eight lavatories, and for 317 male officers there are thirteen lavatories. In other words, there is one pedestal for every 26 females and every 24 males. The area of the cafeteria is 1,122 square feet for a staff of 527 officers. The Public Works Department does not report favorably on erecting additional floors.

210. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—The third floor is being strengthened, but that does not provide for the upper floors. The Works Director will not undertake any further strengthening of the building without a complete examination of the foundations.

211. *To Mr. Rankin.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—The staff may still increase in the near future.

212. *To Mr. Russell.—Mr. Mears.*—We are fully staffed at the present time, but many factors may lead to an increase of staff within the next five years.

213. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Mears.*—The raising of the income tax exemption does not necessarily mean that persons in receipt of small incomes need not lodge returns. My experience is that the number of taxpayers tends to increase, rather than decrease. In the near future the staff may be considerably increased.

214. *To the Chairman.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—The Committee will have noticed during its inspection of the building this morning that the lighting is bad in portions of the building away from the windows.

215. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—It should be possible to carry on in the present building for another three years. I do not think that it would be possible to improve the building to meet our requirements.

216. *To Mr. Rankin.—Mr. Mears.*—Most files are kept for ten years but some business returns, and returns from companies may be kept longer. Files are destroyed periodically, but the number of new files exceeds the number of files destroyed. I do not think that the sales tax will be entirely removed.

217. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Mears.*—The removal of a number of items from sales tax would not affect the staff greatly. The staff of that branch is not great. Changes may even increase the work of the staff.

218. *To Mr. House.—Mr. Mears.*—Our department must necessarily accumulate papers. We are afraid to destroy them.

219. *To Mr. Russell.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—The buildings in Wellington-street, near Forrest-place, are only temporary and are in a dilapidated condition. I think that the leases run from year to year and can be terminated at short notice.

220. *To Mr. MacLeod.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—The alterations being made to the present building will only improve the position in regard to filing, but not as

regards the staff. Should the filing cabinets be increased in height, that would affect the lighting and ventilation of the floors. When we came into the building it was decided not to do any unnecessary work at the time. We have had to keep all heavy furniture close to the girders. Already the danger margin has been passed. It has been found necessary to strengthen the building. The staff has complained of hot temperatures in the summer. If the windows are left open valuable papers are blown about. There is no proper circulation of air. The roof of the building could be raised and temporary accommodation provided, but that would be expensive. I have no knowledge of what it would cost. The Commonwealth Works Director will make further investigations if we provide the money.

221. *To the Chairman.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—I submit letters from the Works Director, Mr. Sturtevant, relating to lighting and accommodation in the Taxation building.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Allied Works Council,
Department of Works,
General Post Office Bldgs.,
Perth, W.A.

14th May, 1945.

Memorandum to:—
Deputy Commissioner of Taxation,
Box A16, G.P.O.,
Perth.

LIGHTING, TAXATION BUILDING.

In reply to your memorandum M.26/4, dated 23/4/45, we desire to advise having made a complete survey of the lighting conditions as requested.

The general lighting conditions on all three floors are very poor. Daylight illumination varied from a maximum of 15 foot candles to a minimum of 2 foot candles, except in the immediate vicinity of windows. Night illumination varied from a maximum of 10 foot candles to a minimum of 5 foot candles in all parts of the building.

The above readings may be compared with a minimum of 15 foot candles required for efficient work.

We noted that on a dull morning although the majority of the lights were turned on, your officers complained of difficulty in seeing their work and of eye strain.

In the matter of lighting improvement the remarks contained in our memorandum of 18/4/45 apply.

We would recommend that daylight type fluorescent lighting units be installed where necessary on all three floors. The estimated cost is—

	£
Ground Floor	210
First Floor	808
Second Floor	810
Third Floor	400

The above estimate is in addition to our estimate of 18/4/45.

H. B. STURTEVANT, Works Director.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

General Post Office Buildings,
Perth, W.A.
9th December, 1946.

9th December, 1946.

Memorandum to:—
Deputy Commissioner,
Taxation Department,
Box A16, G.P.O.,
Perth.

ACCOMMODATION TAXATION DEPARTMENT— YOUR M.7/5.

Referring to your memorandum of 25th October, 1946, I advise that investigations have been made into the proposal that a further two stories be added to this building. It has not been possible to prepare an estimate for this work as I have been unable to obtain any information as regards column foundations. Investigations so far made reveal that it will be necessary to strengthen most of the columns to carry the additional load. This may mean also extensions to the foundations and these columns concerning the construction of which, as pointed out above, I am unable to obtain any information.

From this short description it will be realized that a great deal of inconvenience will be occasioned to your staff on all floors, let alone the 2nd and 3rd floors which would be affected by the proposed strengthening of the 3rd floor covered by your requisition of the 8th August.

Should you desire a detailed estimate of the proposed work, I would request that you provide a sum of, say, £250 to allow complete investigation of the foundations of the building with a view to determining what work will be necessary.

(Sgd.) H. B. STURTEVANT, Director of Works.

222. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—More modern furniture would not increase the area available for each officer. The tables used by the assessors are ordinary office tables, but some of the others are used for sorting papers. The building does not lend itself to air-conditioning. We can carry on under difficulties for two or three years, but after that we shall have to get other premises.

223. *To Mr. Rankin.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—Padbury Buildings have foundations suitable for a building of five stories.

224. *Mr. Mears.*—It would be possible to house some of our officers in Padbury buildings if they were increased in height, but that would be inconvenient. Only as a short term proposal could it be entertained. At present all taxation matters are dealt with in the one building.

225. *To the Chairman.—Mr. Mears.*—During February and March, 1947, the highest temperatures in the building were 91, 92, 93 and 94 degrees. On one day the temperature was 90 degrees at 10 a.m., 93 degrees at 2 p.m. and 92 degrees at 4 p.m. The temperature had not fallen much by 10 p.m. Conditions are hot and uncomfortable all day on many occasions. We have not considered using the micro-film method of storing films. I do not think that it would suit our purpose.

226. *To Mr. Beale.—Mr. Mears.*—If the system were applied only to "dead" files that might remove some of my objection. Our files go back ten years.

227. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—At times, the ground floor is full of people having business with the department.

228. *Mr. Mears.*—Payments of taxes are staggered to avoid congestion. In Brisbane, two separate offices deal with taxes, whereas in Perth all taxation matters are dealt with in one building.

229. *To Mr. House.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—It would be possible to extend the mezzanine floor, but it would not be suitable in summer.

230. *To the Chairman.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—When accommodation was required for the Taxation Department I submitted a report on the suitability of the building now occupied by the department. I had in mind acquiring it on a rental basis, but the owners preferred to sell it. After negotiations, they reduced the price to £50,000 at which it was eventually purchased.

231. *To Mr. Conelan.—Mr. Steffanoni.*—The property may bring £100,000.

232. *To Mr. Russell.—Mr. Mears.*—The distribution of the staff in various buildings would be a retrograde step and should be adopted only as a temporary measure, if at all. Some papers were destroyed after the 1914-18 war, but we greatly regretted doing so.

The witness withdrew.

Harold Beresford Sturtevant, Director of Works, Department of Works and Housing, Perth, recalled and further examined.

233. *To the Chairman.*—I desire to make a correction of my evidence given on the 18th July, 1947, regarding bricks required for this building. I had the figures checked on the 21st July and the total appeared to be approximately 700,000 for the original scheme.

In explanation, I can only say that I was confusing in my account the replacement of the facing in stone with the total for the whole building. I was speaking without my notes or file. The brick proposed to be used for the external face work would be a salmon-coloured brick, which is not much used for cottage work at the present time.

Since Friday last, it has been impossible to prepare in all detail a plan of the new scheme showing every office, but I submit plans showing allocation of areas to various sections of the Repatriation Department's staff and covering stages 1 and 2 of the latest scheme. The allocations compared with the original scheme are shown in the accompanying schedule. These are, of course, gross areas only, partitions and passages not having been deducted. Due to the fall of the land, the ground floor, now called the lower ground floor, has only been taken as covering, perhaps, half the total length of stage 1 to avoid heavy excavation and the necessity of a heavy retaining wall at the northern boundary of the site. From these plans it will be seen that on certain floors it has become necessary to extend the repatriation offices into portion of stage 2 on the first, second, third and fourth floors. This is required as it does not appear advisable to subdivide such portions of the repatriation activities as the artificial limb factory, out-patients' clinic, medical and general staff and pensions staff: The cafeteria has now been placed on the sixth floor instead of the top floor, which has been allocated to the Customs Department laboratory with a view to reducing the possibility of laboratory smells entering other parts of the building. It was found impossible to put this laboratory in the stage 2 wing without spreading it over two floors, which would not tend to such simple working as would be possible with the whole on a single floor. After further reflection, I also decided not to house it on the highest floor of stage 2, again with a view to reducing possible complaints of offensive odours.

234. *To Mr. Conelan.*—In the area provided for the artificial limb factory, provision is made for places where men obtaining artificial limbs can exercise. The Repatriation Department would like to have the artificial limb factory on a lower floor, preferably the ground floor. An area of 7,600 square feet is provided in the plan. In order to accommodate these sections I have had to extend a little into stage 2. The smells from the laboratory will not interfere with the cafeteria. It is difficult to say where the artificial limb factory should be placed. Odours tend to rise, and so I do not expect any trouble from that source. With a good lift service, these sections could be placed on a higher floor.

235. *To the Chairman.*—The plans now submitted have been estimated on a cube basis covering stages 1 and 2 together, and based on the estimate for the original scheme. The expected cost would be £270,000 allowing for the necessary lift and other pent-houses on the main roof, much as on the original scheme. This differs from estimates submitted by Mr. Phillips due to the stage 1 now being taken as eight and a half floors instead of eight floors as apparently intended by Mr. Phillips and, as previously stated, required by the fall of the land. There is a fall of 14 feet from the northern boundary to Bazaar-terrace.

The question of finding other existing premises for the Department of Repatriation or any other department in Perth without the necessity of building has been investigated frequently by the property officer of the Department of the Interior in Perth, but without any success. In a schedule of space considered necessary for Commonwealth departments in Perth submitted by me in my evidence on 18th July, it is shown that 18,500 square feet of office space is required by various departments now, but the property officer assures me

that he cannot find such accommodation, let alone the 50,000 odd feet required for the Repatriation Department.

Forrest-place Commonwealth Offices.—I understand evidence is being given regarding the use of this new building. In this matter I would like to bring to your notice the necessity of grouping, if possible, certain activities of the Postmaster-General's Department, Department of Social Services and Health Department (Commonwealth Medical Officer) particularly. When these new offices in Forrest-place were first being considered, the matter arose over the necessity of the Postmaster-General's Department extending its accommodation in the present General Post Office building owing to over-crowding and expansion of its activities. At that time it was stressed particularly by the Deputy Commissioner, Department of Social Services, that he considered it not advisable to place his department very far from the Post Office, pointing out that invalid and old-age pensioners are paid at the main counter of the General Post Office and frequent queries are raised which necessitate reference of the pensioner concerned direct to the Department of Social Services. In the present set-up of the two departments this has been very easily possible, pensioners taking the lift to the fifth floor of the General Post Office. The Deputy Commissioner agreed that, if he could be accommodated on the ground floor of these new Commonwealth offices, this would be equally suitable. Consequently, the plans allowed for that department to occupy the ground and mezzanine floors and possibly something of the first floor. At the same time, for similar reasons, and for regular medical examination, the Commonwealth Medical Officer was also requested by the Deputy Commissioner of Social Services to be placed as handy as possible to his department.

Fadbury Buildings.—The present structure is two stories high, comprising shops on the ground floor and offices on the first; covers an area of 373 feet to Forrest-place, 56 ft. 9 in. to Murray-street and 63 ft. 2 in. to Wellington-street. The gross area of the first floor is 16,415 square feet; allowing the usual margin for lifts, passages, staircases, lavatories, &c., this would make a net floor area of 10,809 square feet per floor. Assuming that the Commonwealth Government is called upon to build the remaining three stories and would take over the present first floor as Commonwealth offices, the net floor area available to the Commonwealth would be 43,250 square feet approximately. This space could be eventually divided as there are two sets of staircases in the building, surrounding a well which could be easily made available for a lift, thus having two lifts to take passengers to upper floors. If the Commonwealth Government builds three floors and occupies only those three floors the available space would therefore be 10,000 square feet less.

Natural lighting would be available from Forrest-place and from a light area at the rear, 321 feet long by 12 feet deep. There is also a vehicle entrance to this light area from Forrest-place, in the centre of the front of the building. The building is not entirely suitable for office use, as it is not of a construction at present classed as "fire-proof", having timber floors but brick external walls and internal partitions surrounding a steel frame. The original lease allowed for the erection of two stories on the basis that all construction would be capable of carrying a further three stories. This I have not been able to check completely as I have not the details of steel construction; nor have I been able to ascertain whether the Works Director of that time did satisfy himself that the construction was in order. This quite likely was done but the relevant papers are not in my possession at present. The present space available for lifts is designed on the basis of enclosing these with a steel

mesh in a steel-framed enclosure. This would not constitute a fire-proof lift which is really essential under fire underwriters' rules. The construction of the necessary fire-proof walls would greatly reduce the area available for passengers. Stairs are of concrete, and consequently fire-proof. Generally I do not think it would be wise for the Commonwealth Government to construct these offices, on the assumption that it is the desire of that Government to erect fire-proof buildings only. The building now occupied by the Taxation Department is of similar construction, but it has a fire sprinkler service throughout.

The following statement shows the allocation of space in the original building and in the alternative building now proposed:—

PERTH—REPATRIATION DEPARTMENT OFFICES.
APPROXIMATE GROSS AREAS PROVIDED FOR THE VARIOUS SECTIONS (IN SQUARE FEET).

Section.	Original Building.	New Scheme.
	Sq. ft. Gross area.	Sq. ft. Gross area.
Repatriation—		
Typists	1,511	1,800
Stationery	565	529
Artificial Limb Factory	5,893	7,625
Out-patient's Clinic	7,640	7,029
Tribunals and Board	2,006	2,816
Medical Examiner	4,220	3,804
Medical and General Staff	4,350	3,330
Accounts Staff	2,838	2,816
Deputy Commissioner's suite	1,056	920
Pensions Staff	4,550	3,900
Records	3,784	3,880
Apentics	2,630	2,816
Cafeteria	3,900	3,880
Plant and Equipment Room	1,320	2,408
Sub-station	560	728
Lifts, Stairs, &c.	10,000	21,346
Customs—		
General Office	Nil	5,216
Laboratory	4,830	5,000
Unallocated space	Nil	8,500
	61,000	80,520

The bricks regularly used in Perth are machine-made and are used for face work. We propose to use salmon bricks made at the State Brickworks. Similar bricks are used in the Hollywood Hospital, two telephone exchanges, and certain post offices. They are good bricks. Salmon bricks are more costly than ordinary bricks used for cottages. The Royal Perth Hospital is built of cream State bricks. Salmon bricks are in short supply. It is proposed to use bricks between the columns. The proposal is for a steel frame building which will be surrounded by brick walls. We may use bricks for the internal partitions, but I prefer terracotta blocks. Enclosures to the staircases would have to be in brick.

236. To Mr. Rankin.—The external walls would be hollow.

237. To the Chairman.—I could not say offhand how many bricks would be saved if stone were used to face the building. If stone were used, the building would look better with a granite base, but that is not essential. Granite would be more expensive. I could not give an estimate of the extra cost. The additional cost of stone compared with brick is about 7s. 6d. or 8s. a square foot.

238. To Senator Nash.—If sandstone were used, people leaning or rubbing against the building would tend to fill the pores of the stone rather than wear it away. Where a pathway is provided for, something stronger than sandstone is desirable. Aesthetically, I prefer brick to stone because of the colour. Donnybrook sandstone has not as much colour as Sydney

sandstone. So far as I know, Western Australian sandstone does not vary much in colour. All stone buildings in Perth are light in colour. It is my opinion that there are at present not sufficient masons available to carry out the work in stone. There are stone masons doing monumental work, but usually they are working full time. We have not surveyed that field, and I do not know how many stone masons there are in Perth.

239. *To Mr. Conelan.*—The type of architecture shown in the design lends itself to brickwork. In all countries bricks are being used more and more. I should like the building to be constructed of salmon brick. The use of stone would interfere less with the supply of bricks for houses, but some bricks would still be required. The inner skins would have to be in brick. They could be done in cement but that would add to the cost.

240. *To the Chairman.*—The bricks required would be the same kind as are used in homes. The Padbury buildings were not included in my previous statement. I think there was still an area of 21,000 square feet not provided for in the buildings which we were considering. I mentioned that Padbury Buildings would give from 30,000 to 40,000 square feet of space, but they have not been included. When we took into consideration parts 1 and 2 of the proposed repatriation building and the office buildings in Forrest-place, we were still 29,750 square feet short of the space required to replace rented premises. The proposal to utilize 21,000 square feet in the Irwin exchange would still leave us 8,000 square feet short. The Padbury Buildings would give about 32,000 square feet of space. We have examined the taxation building, but cannot decide what its foundations are. A close investigation would be necessary before we could say whether additional stories could be added. It would be possible to construct a temporary cafeteria on the roof of the taxation building. Girders are now being erected to strengthen the third floor. That has meant putting one new column right down to the ground.

241. *To Mr. Russell.*—If stone were used for the building, stonemasons would begin work early in order to have the stones ready when required. It would be necessary to re-open the quarry. I do not know how much machinery is used there. It is possible to design the building for stone and for stonemasons to prepare all the stones in advance.

242. *To Mr. Rankin.*—I do not favour the proposal to erect the building in the vicinity of the Hollywood Hospital. Transport facilities are not so good there as in the city. I think the situation would be inconvenient to those doing business with the department. There is a small shopping area about half a mile from the hospital. There is only one small café there. The only available land alongside the hospital is university endowment land.

243. *To Senator Nash.*—The university authorities are not willing to grant any more land for Hollywood Hospital purposes. I do not know the value of land in that locality. I must accept the responsibility for selecting the proposed site for a building for repatriation purposes. I could not say whether Colonel Collett had anything to do with the choice of the site.

The witness withdrew.

(Taken at Perth.)

FRIDAY, 25th JULY, 1947.

Present:

Senator LAMR (Chairman).

Senator Nash.	Mr. McLeod.
Mr. Beale.	Mr. Rankin.
Mr. Conelan.	Mr. Russell.
Mr. Howse.	

Gordon William Akeroyd, Chairman of the Appeal Board for Punishment of Commonwealth Public Servants, Perth, sworn and examined.

244. *To the Chairman.*—For several weeks I have been Acting Public Service Inspector, and I give evidence in that capacity to-day. I have seen the plans of the proposed repatriation administrative offices. According to advice received from the Department of Works and Housing, various Commonwealth departments will soon require the following additional accommodation:—

Department.	Accommodation required. (Square feet.)
Public Service Inspector	1,000
Civil Aviation	6,000
Emergency Road Transport	1,000
Royal Australian Air Force	4,000
Munitions	5,689
Taxation	4,500
Investigation Branch, Attorney-General's ..	1,900
Property and Survey Section, Department of the Interior	1,000
General Post Office	26,000
Total	50,189

The present requirements of the General Post Office are 30,000 square feet so that the total accommodation required is about 55,000 square feet. That is in addition to what is already in occupation. The Patent Office in Perth must have sufficient area to house plans for scrutiny by interested people. The Departments need approximately the same amount of space in Perth as in Melbourne.

245. *To Mr. Howse.*—The Road Transport Branch is expanding. Every new Act of Parliament requires officers to administer it, and those officers require office accommodation. One reason for the additional accommodation required by the General Post Office is the increasing postal-mindedness of the public. The number of postal articles dealt with each year is increasing at a greater rate than the population increases. For instance, the Sydney mail branch dealt with about 850,000 postal articles daily thirteen years ago compared with 1,750,000 articles every day now. It is estimated that in 1957 there will be in Perth five telephones to every two telephones in operation in 1937. The officers handling that additional volume of work have to be accommodated. There are three factors to be taken into account—new legislation, more complex legislation, and a greater public demand for facilities. Consequently, the Public Service must increase in numbers and that will mean additional accommodation.

246. *To Senator Nash.*—Some departments established in war-time will decrease in importance and some will eventually go out of existence, but the increased dependence of the public on public facilities will more than compensate. I have seen the revised plans but I do not fully comprehend what is intended. I would favour the revised plan on the ground that it would provide more accommodation for officers. Conditions in Commonwealth offices in Perth are most unsatisfactory, making effective supervision most difficult. Efficient administration is almost impossible when staffs are scattered in different buildings throughout the city. The only cafeteria with which I am familiar in government offices is that in the Perth General Post Office. There is not sufficient space to meet requirements. The meal facilities provided in the Commonwealth Bank building are reserved for Commonwealth Bank officers. The General Post Office building is not well equipped with amenities. The cafeteria in the General Post Office is conducted by the department. I do not know how other cafeterias are run. In most States the cafeterias make profits, and therefore they must be satisfactorily conducted. I should prefer the cafeteria to be conducted by the department. In some States cafeterias have been run

at a loss, but in other States profits have been made. The cafeteria in the General Post Office building, Perth, made a profit of £400 last year.

247. *To Mr. Rankin.*—It is run by the Postal Institute.

248. *To the Chairman.*—In addition to erecting a building at Bazaar-terrace, I favour adding three stories to Padbury Buildings in Forrest-place. The Commonwealth Government is short of suitable office space. The improvement of office accommodation in Perth is a matter for experts, but I am aware of the urgent need for more accommodation. Before the war, the Postmaster-General's Department occupied practically the whole of the General Post Office building, but during the war other departments were accommodated there. Now the Postmaster-General's Department requires the whole of the building.

249. *To Mr. Rankin.*—In my opinion, the growth of social services will more than counter-balance the few departments which may go out of existence. I foresee a boom in this State, and I believe that Perth will go ahead rapidly. That will mean additional public servants and more office accommodation for them. I would not care to express an opinion as to the suitability of land near the hospital at Hollywood for the proposed offices. It may be desirable to have some departments in outlying places, but I think that social service departments must be near the centre of the city and easily accessible to the public.

250. *To Mr. Conelan.*—I do not know well the site of the proposed building. I am convinced that additional accommodation for Commonwealth departments is absolutely necessary. At present, there is ineffective supervision, and conditions in some offices are distinctly unhealthy. Many offices are forced to work under artificial lighting all day. I am not acquainted with fluorescent lighting.

251. *To Mr. Russell.*—The following letter sets out the position regarding office accommodation in the Perth General Post Office:—

Postmaster-General's Department.
Treasury Gardens,
Melbourne, C.2.
16th July, 1947.

Deputy Director,
Posts and Telegraphs,
Perth.

PERTH, G.P.O.—OFFICE ACCOMMODATION.

The following is an extract of a communication dated 6th July, 1947 from Mr. N. J. Higgins, General Secretary, Professional Officers' Association, 14 Rungview Grove, North Balwyn, Victoria, addressed to the Director-General.

"Representations have been made by the West Australian Branch of my Association concerning office accommodation for professional officers located in the General Post Office, Perth, W.A.

The position in this regard is very serious as 5 Divisional Engineers and 14 Engineers are required to share an area of 2,764 square feet with 42 clerical and other officers, the average floor space per officer being approximately 45 square feet, an area much below the minimum recommended for professional officers by recognized authorities. In addition there is no privacy for Engineers, and conditions are such that the carrying out of professional duties becomes extremely difficult. Due to occupation of portion of the building by other Commonwealth Departments, it is apparent that no relief can be gained for staff in the G.P.O. until these Departments vacate the premises.

My executive, therefore, recommends that immediate action be taken by your Department to secure improvements in accommodation at G.P.O., Perth by terminating the occupancy of other Departments located in the building, or alternately, securing suitable accommodation elsewhere."

Your comments on the foregoing would be appreciated in order that a reply might be prepared in this office.

E. M. DOWNE, for the Director-General.

To that letter the following reply was sent:—
18th July, 1947.

The Director-General,
Posts and Telegraphs,
Treasury Gardens,
Melbourne, C.2.

G.47/0867. G.P.O., PERTH—ACCOMMODATION FOR MACHINISTS.

With reference to your memorandum G.47/0867 received on 23rd June, 1947, relating to representations from the General Secretary, Federated Public Service Assistants' Association of Australia, regarding the conditions under which Machinists in the Accounts and Engineering Branches are required to work, due to alleged overcrowding in the sections concerned, an investigation of the position in this respect discloses that the Machinists are not unduly crowded and that there is very little justification for complaint when consideration is given to the fact that an additional 40,000 square feet of floor space is required to satisfactorily accommodate the various Branches of the Department in the G.P.O. Building.

2. In the Accounts Branch the construction of the Battery Room referred to resulted in a reduction in the space occupied by clerical staff, but Machinists were adequately catered for and additional light points were installed to provide lighting of the desired standard in accordance with the provisions of your Circular Memorandum G.44/2562 of 29th April, 1944.

3. The creation of an additional section in the Engineering Branch recently increased the staff in that Branch from 74 to 90. Re-arrangement of space was necessary but again the Machinists were provided for by the allocation of 400 sq. ft. of floor space to 8 Machinists and 1 female assistant—an average of 44 sq. ft. per machinist.

4. The space occupied by other Departments in the G.P.O. is approximately 80,000 sq. ft., and until these Departments can be moved to other premises the existing congestion in various sections cannot be remedied. This feature is being represented to the Parliamentary Works Committee now sitting in Perth, in connexion with the erection of a new building for the Repatriation Department.

5. The prospects of obtaining accommodation for the various Departments in existing city premises is remote.

J. G. KILPATRICK,

Deputy Director, Posts and Telegraphs.

In a number of cases working conditions must be detrimental to the health of officers. That is the position in the General Post Office where, on several floors, the air is heavy and ventilation is inadequate. The building is over-crowded. I expect a continuous expansion of post office activities. There has been a 30 per cent. increase of staff in the last eight years. In another fifteen years the increase will probably be 45 per cent. Officers have complained of the unhygienic conditions of their offices. A deputation waited on the Chairman of the Public Service Board in that connexion. The complaint is fairly universal.

252. *To Senator Nash.*—The Commonwealth pays £21,357 per annum for rented premises in Perth. I am unable to say how much sickness there is among Commonwealth officers. The information could be obtained from the sick leave records. I shall supply the information.

253. *To Mr. House.*—Conditions in public offices in Perth are worse than in any other State that I have seen.

254. *To Mr. Rankin.*—In all capital cities the transfer from manual to automatic telephone exchanges has practically been completed. Trunk line operators will always be required. Reductions of personnel have taken place over a number of years following the conversion to automatic working. Automatic exchanges require a good deal of space. All Perth exchanges are automatic, so that no relief can be looked for in that direction.

255. *To Mr. Conelan.*—The Deputy Commissioner for Taxation has reported that he requires additional staff. We can provide officers, but not accommodation. I could not say that there is any unused floor space on the ground floor of the taxation building. I am unable to relieve the situation in regard to office accommodation, even for officers of my own department.

The witness withdrew.