

1954.

(TWENTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT.)

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

TWENTY-THIRD GENERAL
REPORT.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(FOURTEENTH COMMITTEE.)

(Senators appointed 21st June, 1951, Members of the House of Representatives appointed 28th June, 1951.)

(Ceased to exist on dissolution of House of Representatives on 21st April, 1954.)

HON. ALLAN MCKENZIE McDONALD (Chairman).⁽¹⁾

DAVID OLIVER WATKINS, ESQUIRE, M.P. (Chairman).⁽⁵⁾

Senate.

Senator NORMAN HENRY DENHAM HENTY.

Senator EDMUND BEDE MAHER⁽³⁾

Senator JUSTIN HILARY O'BYRNE.

Senator the HON. ALBERT DAVID REID.⁽²⁾

House of Representatives.

ALLAN CHARLES BIRD, ESQUIRE, M.P.

GEORGE JAMES BOWDEN, ESQUIRE, M.P.

JOHN OSCAR CRAMER, ESQUIRE, M.P.

WILLIAM ROBERT LAWRENCE, ESQUIRE, M.P.⁽⁴⁾

WILLIAM PAUL O'CONNOR, ESQUIRE, M.P.

⁽¹⁾ Deceased, 10th June, 1953. ⁽²⁾ Resigned, 10th September, 1953. ⁽³⁾ Appointed, 10th September, 1953. ⁽⁴⁾ Appointed, 18th September, 1953. ⁽⁵⁾ Appointed Chairman, 15th February, 1954.

(FIFTEENTH COMMITTEE.)

(Senators appointed 10th August, 1954, Members of the House of Representatives appointed 11th August, 1954.)

JOHN OSCAR CRAMER, ESQUIRE, M.P. (Chairman).

Senator JUSTIN HILARY O'BYRNE (Vice-Chairman).

Senate.

Senator NORMAN HENRY DENHAM HENTY.

Senator EDMUND BEDE MAHER.

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DAVID OLIVER WATKINS, ESQUIRE, M.P.

CONTENTS.

	Paragraph in Report.
The Fourteenth Committee	1
References dealt with—	
Inquiries incomplete	4
Completed investigations	5
Summary of Inquiries—	
Refreshment Rooms Alterations, Parliament House, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory	7
Telephone Exchange, Launceston, Tasmania	10
Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, Southport, Queensland	18
Dairy Research Laboratory, Highett, Victoria	26
National Library and Roosevelt Memorial, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory	36
Taxation Office Building, Brisbane, Queensland	44
Commonwealth Administration Centre, Melbourne, Victoria	52
Commonwealth Offices, Phillip-street, Sydney, New South Wales	59
Public Works Committee Regulations	68
Death of Chairman	69
Public Works Committee Act—Amendments	70
Movements of the Committee	71
Staff	72
Record of Inquiries	page 26

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

TWENTY-THIRD GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency Field Marshall Sir William Slim, the Governor-General in and over the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

In pursuance of the requirements of section 11 of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1953*, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has the honour to submit the following report of its proceedings:—

FOURTEENTH COMMITTEE.

1. The members of the Fourteenth Committee were appointed in the Senate on 21st June, 1951, and in the House of Representatives on 28th June, 1951. The following were the members appointed to the Committee:—Senators N. H. D. Henty, J. H. O'Byrne, and Hon. A. D. Reid, and Messrs. A. C. Bird, G. J. Bowden, J. O. Cramer, Hon. A. McK. McDonald, W. P. O'Connor, and D. O. Watkins. At its first meeting the Committee elected Hon. A. McK. McDonald as Chairman, and Mr. D. O. Watkins was elected as Vice-Chairman.

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL.

2. Following the death of Hon. A. McK. McDonald, on 10th June, 1953, the vacancy on the Committee was filled by the appointment of Mr. W. R. Lawrence, on 18th September, 1953. The resignation of Senator Hon. A. D. Reid on 10th September, 1953, left a vacancy which was filled on the same day by the appointment of Senator E. B. Maher. The election of Mr. D. O. Watkins as Chairman, and Senator N. H. D. Henty as Vice-Chairman, took place some time after the death of the original Chairman, and further reference will be made to the circumstances of the election later in this Report.

REFERENCES DEALT WITH.

3. This General Report, the twenty-third in the history of the Public Works Committee, is made at the commencement of the present session of Parliament to cover the activities of the Committee during the previous session.

INQUIRIES INCOMPLETE.

4. When the Twenty-second Report was presented inquiries in respect of the following work were incomplete:—

	Estimated cost.
Automatic telephone exchange at Launceston, Tasmania	£ 657,700

There are no inquiries incomplete at this date, all references having been reported upon by the end of the session.

COMPLETE INVESTIGATIONS.

5. The works referred to the Committee during its term of office, and upon which investigations were completed, comprise—

	£
(1) Refreshment Rooms alterations, Parliament House, Canberra	—
(2) Telephone exchange, Launceston, Tasmania	710,150
(3) Telephone exchange and postal building, Southport, Queensland	124,600
(4) Dairy Research Laboratory, Highett, Victoria	152,100
(5) National Library and Roosevelt Memorial, Canberra, A.C.T. (Re-submission)	1,298,800
(6) Taxation Office Building, Brisbane	1,687,500
(7) Commonwealth Administration Centre, first stage, Melbourne	1,197,300
(8) Commonwealth Offices, Phillip-street, Sydney	3,050,000

SUMMARY OF INQUIRIES.

6. The following is a summary of the reports presented to Parliament in connexion with the completed inquiries:—

REFRESHMENT ROOMS ALTERATIONS, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

7. The Joint House Committee addressed a request to the Public Works Committee, asking if it could undertake an inquiry into a number of proposals for alterations to the Parliamentary Refreshment Rooms, considered as likely to be necessary in preparation for the projected Royal Visit. The proposals were divided into eight separate works upon which decisions were required.

8. The Committee considered the matter and decided to carry out the investigation to assist the Joint House Committee, though the Public Works Committee Act covers only references made by the House of Representatives. Officials concerned with the Refreshment Rooms alterations were interviewed, though evidence on oath was not taken from them, and inspections of the proposed works were made by the Committee, in company with the Manager of the Refreshment Rooms and the Chief Engineer.

9. After consideration of the various alterations and alternatives put forward the Committee recommended a number of alterations considered reasonable for the purpose, and advised the Joint House Committee by letter.

TELEPHONE EXCHANGE, LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA.

10. This proposal had been referred to the Committee during the life of the Thirteenth Committee, but the evidence was not prepared in time for the Committee to begin taking it before Parliament was dissolved. The matter was therefore referred to the Committee on 12th July, 1951, and the investigation was conducted in the usual manner.

11. It was stated that the existing exchange is a manually operated one, of the common battery multiple type, and was put into service as long ago as 1910. The increasing demands for telephone facilities have been met to the present time by extending the apparatus and making alterations to the Post Office building at the corner of Cameron and St. John Streets, where the exchange is situated.

The Proposal.

12. The present proposal is to erect a telephone exchange building of six stories above ground level and two basement floors, with a total gross area of approximately 81,500 square feet. The height of the building will be approximately 95 feet, with top storey set back from the main facade. The structure is to be steel framed, with walls and roof of reinforced concrete. The facade to St. John's Street is to be faced to the level of the ground floor ceiling with approved Tasmanian granite, while the remainder of this elevation is to be faced with Launceston bricks and terra cotta trim to windows. The total staff expected to use the building is 335, while a maximum shift of 280 persons will be on duty at one time. The estimated cost of the proposal, including all contingencies was set down at £710,150.

Reasons for the Building.

13. Amongst the many reasons advanced to emphasize the pressing necessity which exists for the new building, the most urgent was probably the need for more space to satisfy the existing demand for the essential services of the post office and telephone exchange, while very strong reasons were advanced to demonstrate the need to provide for the expanding volume of business which is certain to develop in the very near future.

14. Much of the original equipment, installed in 1910, is still in use, and the age of the apparatus is such that the maintenance effort required to keep the plant in service is very heavy, making a new exchange necessary for that reason alone. In addition the equipment, designed for an ultimate capacity of 3,214 lines, will shortly reach the practical limit and relief will be essential.

15. Launceston is the largest manual telephone exchange in Australia for which arrangements have not yet been made for conversion to automatic working. The present building does not provide space for installation of the necessary equipment, and a new building will be required for this purpose. Trunk line services are also inadequately provided for at the present time and there is no space to increase the number of switching positions required.

16. Mailhandling and other postal activities are carried on in space which is severely congested, and additional space is essential. Office accommodation for Inspectors, Engineers, and buildings staff is at present being provided by using space in different localities, and it is necessary to group them in the main buildings.

Recommendations.

17. (1) There is an urgent necessity for the new exchange building.
- (2) The architecture is eminently satisfactory for the purpose.

- (3) The plans have been well carried out and should adequately provide for the requirements of the new exchange and postal services.
- (4) The height of the building shown on the plans should be maintained.
- (5) The site is suitable for the proposed building.
- (6) When the plans are being completed special consideration should be given to the facing material, with a view to improving upon the local bricks proposed.
- (7) The City Council should be approached at an early stage in order to arrange for a reserve of blue metal for use in the concrete.
- (8) A great deal is to be gained by seeking the co-operation of the unions concerned, when plans are being formed for future major buildings.

TELEPHONE EXCHANGE AND POSTAL BUILDING, SOUTHPORT, QUEENSLAND.

18. Southport is the administrative centre of a number of flourishing and popular seaside resorts on the South Coast of Queensland, including Surfers' Paradise, Broadbeach, Mermaid's Beach, Burleigh Heads, Miami, Tallebudgera, Palm Beach, Currumbin, Tugun, Bilinga, Kirra and Coolangatta. During the summer months the population increases threefold, and in the winter months visitors come in large numbers from the southern States of Australia, attracted by the ideal winter climate. The demands on telephone and allied services are therefore heavy and constantly increasing.

19. The present post office was erected in 1909, and an extension was added in 1949 to provide for special long line equipment, pending the provision of a new telephone exchange building. Southport and the surrounding areas have been served for many years by a magneto manual exchange, the switch room for which measures 22 ft. by 39 ft., and is filled to capacity with equipment of various kinds. Since the war development has been particularly rapid, and further space will have to be provided within three years.

The Present Proposal.

20. It is proposed to erect a building constructed of local bricks, faced with textured wire cut bricks, and the architectural trim to windows and column facings will be of terra cotta. The ground floor will occupy an area of 12,525 sq. ft., and it will be subdivided to provide telephone hall, exchange room, air-conditioning room, power room, battery room, subscribers' installations room, cable room, female rest room, first aid room, and store, as well as certain other service rooms. It is anticipated that the building will be erected in two stages, so that existing services may be maintained during the building operations. The estimated cost of the proposal is £193,000, but stage 1 now proposed will cover the exchange building at an estimated cost of £124,600.

Reasons for the Building.

21. It was explained that the new accommodation was essential to meet development in four main sections of the services. Local subscribers' lines are serviced by equipment of a very old pattern, nearing the end of its useful life, while the space is so cramped that the working conditions of the telephonists and technicians are most uncomfortable. In addition there is no space to meet anticipated growth of the demands beyond the end of 1953.

22. Trunk lines in Southport, which is the main trunk switching centre for the district, are serviced by 40 terminating channels and 30 passing through to centres beyond. These numbers are expected to rise to 135 trunk channels by 1974, and the position is so acute at the present time that a radio trunk line has been installed for the time being to give a measure of relief.

23. Long line equipment must also be provided for, as the present carrier equipment is installed in a small wooden structure, where space is unsuitable and inadequate.

24. Automatic trunk switching Equipment is another feature arising from the installation of the automatic exchange now necessary for this area, and to allow for distant trunk line operators to obtain direct connection to subscribers' lines.

Recommendations.

25. (1) There is an urgent necessity for the exchange.
- (2) The plans generally make suitable provision for the services envisaged as necessary for the next twenty years.
- (3) As the exchange fronts the main business street of the town, some treatment, by the provision of a few feet of garden and shrubs, similar to that adopted for the Commonwealth Bank in the same street, would add considerably to the general appearance.
- (4) The site is suitable for the purpose.

- (5) Special attention should be given to the possibility of seepage on this site, as difficulty has been experienced on other land on the same side of the street.
- (6) Some extra space in which to provide vehicular access to the rear of the building is desirable.
- (7) Negotiations should be initiated with the State Government with a view to obtaining a few feet of additional land out of the adjoining block at the rear, intended to be used later as a clinic.
- (8) When the foundations are being planned in detail consideration should be given to providing some additional strength to the footings, so that the foundations will be sufficiently strong to carry more floors if the rapid development of the town makes it desirable in future years.
- (9) The amenities provided are satisfactory, but, as the library constitutes the major part of the Postal Institute activities, suitable book cupboards should be provided in the welfare room.
- (10) As the number of staff in the building in future will probably require the addition of showers, provision for this facility in the drying room section might be considered now.
- (11) The Committee is satisfied that the effect on local house building will not be sufficient to warrant any delay in proceeding with this project.

DAIRY RESEARCH LABORATORY, HIGHETT, VICTORIA.

26. The establishment of the Dairy Research Section was one of the earliest projects considered by the Executive Committee of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research shortly after the foundation of that body in 1926, and it was recommended that there should be a Dairy Research Institute.

27. The State Departments of Agriculture have been concerned with the dairying industry from the very earliest times, particularly in connection with quality of production, nutrition, hygiene, and general dairy practice. An agreement was made with the States that the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, in all aspects of its research programme, would deal principally with the more fundamental long-range problems of a regional rather than a local character.

28. The Dairy Research Section of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, deals specifically with problems which arise in the industrial rather than the agricultural end of the industry: it is concerned with the products rather than the production, and many difficulties are encountered by the scientists handling this research. The war brought rapid increase in the number of problems for investigation, and the Dairy Research section was able to anticipate to some extent the major difficulties which arose in the dairy industry as a result of the war.

29. During the war the officers of the Section were provided with accommodation in the Division of Industrial Chemistry at Fishermen's Bend. After the war it became necessary to plan for special accommodation, not only because the space being occupied at Fishermen's Bend was now required by the Division of Industrial Chemistry for its own use, but also because of the necessity to provide for additional staff and laboratories to cope with the growth of the work planned for the Section.

30. In 1947, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research was faced with the urgent demand for accommodation in other sections in addition to that for the Dairy Research Section, and it was decided to obtain an area of 15 acres at Highett on which there was already in existence a building which, with some alteration, could provide accommodation immediately for two of the sections requiring it. It was decided to allot four acres of this area for the use of the Dairy Research Section, and plans have been drawn up during a period of about four years, for the buildings needed immediately for the work of this Section.

The Proposal.

31. The building group consists of two buildings, one comprising the laboratory and the other a Plant and Services Building. They are to be located in close proximity to the other Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization buildings in that area.

32. A laboratory will be constructed of brick and is to measure 172 ft. long by 43 ft. wide. Owing to the use made of the contour of the ground the building will consist of a ground floor giving a net area of 5,612 sq. ft., and a lower ground floor giving 2,324 sq. ft. A Plant and Services Building will be of single storey height, and will be 111 feet long by 57 feet wide, giving a net floor area of 5,702 sq. ft. The cost of the proposal as referred to the Committee was set down as £152,100.

Reasons for the Proposal.

33. Owing to the necessity to hand back to the Division of Industrial Chemistry at Fishermen's Bend the premises now being used as laboratories by the Dairy Research Section there is an urgent necessity for the erection of buildings to house this Section. The extent to which such buildings should be provided for this work was affected to some degree by the fact that similar work is carried out in other States. The Committee therefore studied the question to ensure that the buildings proposed in the plans submitted were justified. Past experience has shown that, in the main, the State and Commonwealth research officers have carried out investigations which have been clearly defined and related closely to the respective spheres determined upon. However, the evidence shows that it is sometimes difficult to define what is fundamental research, and a number of problems have been investigated by both State and Commonwealth scientists.

34. As production of dairy commodities must be rapidly increased, and it was shown that this Section is carrying out most important work in the research field, the building of laboratories should be commenced as planned as soon as possible.

Recommendations.

35. (1) The plans will provide a structure suitable for the dairy research work projected.
- (2) The site proposed at Highett is the most suitable under the circumstances.
- (3) Further consideration should be given to the desirability of providing internal access from the lower ground floor to the ground floor.
- (4) Construction of the building is not likely to seriously affect home building to any considerable extent.
- (5) The work at the new laboratories will not duplicate that being carried out elsewhere in Australia, provided proper action is taken to co-ordinate the research activities in this sphere.
- (6) Special action should be taken to effect co-ordination of all activities connected with dairy research projects in Australia, if provision of large laboratories is to be thoroughly justified.
- (7) Complete co-ordination of all activities could be obtained if special steps were taken by the Standing Committee on Agriculture to have the plans and activities of this section of their responsibilities regularly surveyed and controlled.
- (8) The Dairy Research Section will be able to do its most effective work if located at Highett, and therefore the proposed laboratories should be constructed there, in accordance with the plans referred to the Committee.
- (9) As production of dairy commodities must be rapidly increased there is an urgent necessity to extend the work of the Dairy Research Section. The building of laboratories should, therefore, be commenced as soon as possible.
- (10) It is desirable to explore the possibility of making arrangements by which those who will directly benefit by the success of research projects should be asked to pay, or to make donations, to funds which would further the work.

NATIONAL LIBRARY AND ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL, CANBERRA.

36. In 1949 sketch plans for a new National Library building were submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. They represented plans drawn up after a good deal of consideration and study, and took the place of old proposals for extending the present National Library building. The Committee as a result of its investigations, rejected these plans on the grounds of economy, particularly in regard to labour and materials, and the necessity to provide a structure with attractive elevations from all angles on the island site proposed, and it was recommended that further plans should be prepared.

37. The urgent needs of the Library were at the same time recognized, and temporary accommodation was recommended to ease the accommodation difficulty while the ultimate building was being further planned and constructed.

38. While the plans were being revised, valuable assistance was obtained through the timely visit to Australia of Dr. John E. Burchard, a noted authority on the design of Library buildings in the United States of America. His co-operation materially assisted in moulding the practical essentials and modern trends with the architectural and aesthetic requirements of a major public building for the capital city of the Commonwealth. Plans for the National Library and Roosevelt Memorial building were completed, and the proposal was re-submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on the 22nd May, 1952.

The Present Proposal.

39. The present proposal is to provide a building of modular construction, built of concrete and faced with pre-cast stone. The building is to consist of a basement and three main floors supplemented with mezzanine levels between the various floors. Accommodation is to be provided for mechanical equipment, theatrette, newspaper rooms, film section and stack below ground level in the basement and basement mezzanine floors.

40. The ground floor and its mezzanine will provide space for exhibitions, Roosevelt Memorial, lending collection, general reading room, cataloguing, and stack area. The upper floors will contain administration, special collections, archives, stack areas, and other various functions of the National Library. The estimated cost of the building and services was set down at £1,298,800, including the engineering and other services.

Reasons for the Building.

41. In addition to the weight of evidence supplied in 1949 to indicate the necessity for the proposal a great deal of information was supplied to indicate that the position that was then represented as urgent, has become more serious still. It was demonstrated that so long as the present unsatisfactory accommodation has to be utilized, there is a constant danger to the many large and very valuable collections at present stored away. The position in Parliament House is continuously becoming more acute, and it has been necessary to stack piles of material in the corridors on the lower floor, while there are more persistent demands for the Library to vacate space urgently needed for Parliamentary use.

42. The rate of increase in accession of material, estimated during the 1949 inquiry, is being realized, and, in fact the stock of books is now increasing by the equivalent of 25,000 bound volumes a year. In addition, the National Library has rapidly growing collections of pictures, films, and micro films, while the growth of services is indicated by the fact that the staff has increased from 12 in 1927 to 113 to-day. It was also demonstrated to the Committee that space is urgently required for archives, theatrette and film unit, the Roosevelt Memorial, and the various other Library functions.

Recommendations.

43. (1) There is an urgent necessity for a new National Library building.
- (2) The building should be erected in accordance with the referred plans, subject to elevational treatment suggested during the inquiry.
- (3) Emphasis should be given to vertical lines, particularly in the side elevations.
- (4) Provision of the kitchenette is appropriate for this building.
- (5) A small theatrette should be provided in the basement as planned.
- (6) Space is necessary for the growing film section.
- (7) Pre-cast stone slabs should be suitable for facing the building.
- (8) The site is suitable, and the orientation should enhance the appearance of the building.
- (9) Credit is due to the architects for their success in resolving the difficulties involved in the change from the old plans to the new conception of the building.
- (10) The Roosevelt Memorial should be available for use as soon as possible.
- (11) Owing to the many factors pointing to the urgent necessity for accommodation all measures should be taken to speed up the work.
- (12) If necessary the assistance of private architects should be enlisted to avoid delay in the final planning stage.
- (13) Special study of the evidence is recommended in view of the number of valuable suggestions advanced by witnesses, particularly in regard to policy and development.
- (14) Conferences of State and Commonwealth library officials should be continued.
- (15) Decision regarding the amount of accommodation essential at the present time would have been easier if existing differences had been resolved before the plans were referred to the Committee.
- (16) No efforts should be spared in an endeavour to achieve complete co-ordination of library facilities in Australia.
- (17) Those responsible for co-ordination of the policies of the various Australian libraries might obtain valuable advice from discussions by suitable representatives of bodies not directly in charge of local library administration,

TAXATION OFFICE BUILDING, BRISBANE.

44. When uniform taxation was introduced in 1942 as a war time measure, the staff, equipment and accommodation of the State Taxation Department in Queensland were taken over by the Commonwealth. Prior to that time no thought was given to the acquisition of a special building for the Taxation Department because the Commonwealth Taxation Office was accommodated in the Commonwealth Offices in Adelaide-street.

45. In 1946, when uniform taxation became a permanent feature, unsuccessful attempts were made to purchase the State Taxation Building from the Government of Queensland. It was not possible to obtain further space in the Taxation Building when the continual growth in the number of taxpayers made further accommodation essential. Space was eventually found in other buildings to bridge the gap for the time being. When it became evident that the growing Taxation Branch could not be accommodated in the proposed new Commonwealth Offices without giving it priority over other numerous smaller Commonwealth Departments housed in privately owned buildings, the site now proposed for a new building was acquired in 1949. Steps were taken to plan a suitable building to house the different sections of the Taxation Branch which had become scattered through a number of buildings, offering very indifferent accommodation in various parts of Brisbane.

The Proposal.

46. It is now proposed to erect, on a site at the corner of Adelaide and Wharf Streets, Brisbane, a rigid steel frame construction building consisting of two basements, ground and eleven upper floors, giving a net office space of 148,050 square feet. Space for use by the public on the ground floor will be architecturally treated to give comfort and a satisfactory appearance. The upper floors will provide office space arranged to conform to the requirements of the work of the Taxation Department, as well as a suitable area for dining-room, cafeteria, and other staff amenity areas. The estimated cost of the work, including provision for contingencies, is £1,687,500, and it is expected to take upwards of four years, from the time of letting the contract to complete the construction of the building.

Reasons for the Building.

47. There are two branches of the Taxation Department in Brisbane, one engaged in the assessment and collection of income tax, and the other in the assessment and collection of sales tax, pay-roll tax, land tax, estate duty, gift duty, &c. The various premises used as accommodation for the several sections of the Taxation Branch are held on conditions of insecure tenure. The State-owned buildings are occupied with no formal agreement of tenure, and for the last six years the State Government has been pressing for the return of their buildings for urgent State purposes, while National House is held under a lease which expires at the end of 1953 with no right of renewal.

48. The Taxation Branch is at present occupying space in seven buildings throughout the city and annual compensation and rentals paid amount to over £36,000, the accommodation being both uncomfortable and costly, while there is a strong desire for the Commonwealth Departments to vacate offices in commercial buildings as soon as possible.

49. It soon became apparent to the Committee that the accommodation needs of the Taxation Department in Brisbane must bear some relationship to the needs of the many other smaller departments housed in various kinds of accommodation in the city. In addition, the Committee was aware of its recommendations, made in connexion with its Report on the proposed Commonwealth Offices, Brisbane, in 1948, when space was planned to cover the needs of all the various Departments, including Taxation but excluding the Repatriation Department at that time. The building then approved for the Commonwealth Offices has not yet been actually commenced. A re-arrangement has now been made providing for Repatriation Department to be included in the Commonwealth Offices Building, and for the Taxation Branch to seek approval for a building of its own in accordance with the present plan.

50. The Committee called for figures covering a complete survey of the space used by all departments in Brisbane at the present time, and details of all the buildings occupied, and it was found that, if the proposed new Taxation Building were approved, in addition to that previously recommended for the Commonwealth Offices, there would be considerably more space than is considered reasonable for the overall accommodation for some years to come.

Recommendations.

51. (1) It is necessary, as soon as possible, to provide a building to house the Taxation Branch in Brisbane.
- (2) The site is suitable for the purpose.
- (3) The average accommodation provided in the plans is approximately double that required for normal office space.

- (4) Provision of a building for Taxation Department instead of Repatriation Department, recommended by the Committee in 1948, is satisfactory.
- (5) Proposed building can only be justified if considered in relation to total requirements of all departments in Brisbane.
- (6) Survey of requirements of all departments shows that, if Taxation building is erected, the Commonwealth Offices building, recommended by the Committee in 1948 but not yet commenced, should be limited to stage 1, for the present.
- (7) Stages 2 and 3 of Commonwealth Offices project should be deferred until definite demands require it in the future, thus saving £1,771,422.
- (8) The cafeteria should be moved to the basement and the resulting space used for office accommodation.
- (9) Provision of three-course meals, with equipment costing £4,000, is unnecessary in Brisbane and should be eliminated.
- (10) Adequate lift service is essential.
- (11) The departmental basis of costs should be carefully revised so that estimates for large works will be as close as possible, and control of expenditure adequately checked.
- (12) The ratio of services areas to total floor space should be reduced to a minimum, consistent with provision of adequate staff facilities.
- (13) Full air-conditioning is essential for the Brisbane climate but should be confined to essential areas.
- (14) In view of the disparity between the evidence of the Department and the private architects, the Committee is not prepared to agree to the plans as submitted by the Department, but recommends that, before the building is proceeded with, it should be the subject of open competition for the design, preparation of plans, and estimate of costs.

COMMONWEALTH ADMINISTRATION CENTRE, MELBOURNE, FIRST STAGE.

52. Until the project now under review was proposed, no orderly plan for the adequate and effective accommodation of Commonwealth administrative activities in Melbourne had been seriously considered. Only one Commonwealth administrative building—the Commonwealth Offices, Treasury Gardens—had been erected in Melbourne since the establishment of Federation in 1901. The Commonwealth has been content over the years to become the tenant of private landlords who have erected city buildings designed for professional or small commercial offices, and most of them are unsuitable for Commonwealth purposes. The increased demand by the Commonwealth for additional accommodation during the war coincided with the recession in activity in many commercial concerns, which were only too happy at that time to rent the space not required by them, and large areas of accommodation were requisitioned compulsorily under war-time regulations. The stage has now been reached when the Commonwealth, forced to accept many emergency activities as part of the permanent Commonwealth administrative structure, still occupies many unsuitable premises built by industry for its own needs, and now required again for commercial purposes. This unsatisfactory state of affairs can be corrected only by the erection of a Commonwealth administration centre, designed on modern lines to house large staffs under adequate supervision, and with suitable amenities for the welfare of the employees.

The Present Proposal.

53. The full project now envisaged comprises long-term planning for buildings to cover the whole of the site of $9\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land, in order to establish an administration centre for the whole of the Victorian staffs of the various Commonwealth Departments in Melbourne, and to allow for expansion on a scale which has been carefully estimated for the next 40 years or so.

54. The reference to the Committee deals specifically with the first stage of the project, comprising a building of limit height on the Spring-street frontage of the northern half of the site. The building, designated Block No. 1, comprises a "slab" type structure with rigid steel frame supporting precast concrete slabs and a suspended ceiling, erected in accordance with recent methods of construction, in use overseas, designed to effect considerable improvements in regard to economy of steel, floor loads, speed of erection, and maximum use of factory-produced units. The building will consist of basement, ground floor and eleven upper floors, plus a wing designed to form a future connecting link to Block No. 2. The building is regarded as a basic prototype for the future development of the site, and its dimensions are to be 196 feet long to Spring-street by 66 feet to Latrobe-street.

55. The Committee paid special attention to the many factors involved in the first stage of construction, and particularly studied its effect upon the whole scheme, as the determination to proceed with this block will set the standard for the future work on the area. The estimated cost of the proposal was set down at £1,197,300.

Necessity for the Building.

56. The Committee sought evidence to establish the necessity for erecting buildings to house Commonwealth public servants in Melbourne, and in particular for this building which is the immediate subject of reference. There is no lack of evidence that the premises at present occupied by Commonwealth officials in Melbourne are largely of unsuitable character for the work carried on in them, and space which is urgently required for commercial purposes in the busy sections of the city is being taken up by the governmental activities. Commonwealth offices are located at 75 points throughout the city, causing considerable difficulty in efficient administration and much inconvenience to members of the public who have to visit various departments. Overcrowding and poor working conditions are said to have reduced efficiency and affected staff morale. It was emphasized that the buildings were planned to house the Victorian staffs necessary to deal with the particular problem of the people in that State, while those on the central staffs were assumed to be only temporarily housed in Melbourne awaiting their ultimate transfer to Canberra when conditions made that possible.

57. It was originally thought that the projected five buildings on the northern half of the site would accommodate all those requiring accommodation now, and the southern half of the site would be reserved for use in future years, as the anticipated growth of the city population made it necessary to employ additional staffs to serve them. As the Committee felt that it would be undesirable for the southern half to be left undeveloped for many years, it might be preferable to dispose of that portion of the site for development by commercial enterprise. The Committee therefore called for a more detailed estimate of future requirements, and a more mature conception of the way in which the southern half of the site could be developed in the years to come. After consideration of the present needs and reasonable estimates for the future, as well as from study of sketch plans and models produced to illustrate possible development of the site, the Committee was satisfied that there is an immediate necessity for the first building proposed, and it is reasonably clear that the whole site may be required for office accommodation in the relatively near future.

Recommendations.

58. (1) There is an immediate necessity for the first building.
- (2) The whole site as resumed should be retained.
- (3) Full co-ordination with city planning authorities should be practised in future projects.
- (4) It is not desirable to regard the Western Market site as an alternative to the Spring-street site.
- (5) The site proposed is the best for the purpose.
- (6) Special measures should be taken to check the new methods being used, and to observe their effect during the progress of construction.
- (7) Population density of 3.5 proposed is desirable for this proposal.
- (8) The departmental view that orientation is satisfactory is accepted.
- (9) The first building should be constructed as planned.
- (10) Departmental officials should be complimented upon the thorough character of the planning and the vision of more rapid planning and construction.
- (11) The limited cafeteria suggested should be included in the link at first floor level.
- (12) Consideration of payment to City Council in lieu of rates is suggested.
- (13) Planning the building with large open floor spaces for flexibility in future use is not in itself an adequate method of designing for maximum ultimate space allocation.
- (14) Specialized planning and use of modern furniture are essential for optimum use of the space.
- (15) It should be possible to determine the departments to use the building and plan for best use of areas allotted.
- (16) Results of surveys by Department of Labour and National Service should be carefully applied.
- (17) Authority for final disposition of space should be given to experts responsible for housing departments, in collaboration with the client departments.
- (18) Necessity for the building is urgent, but approval should be conditional on use exclusively by Victorian administrations, with vacation of present city premises as soon as possible.
- (19) Suggested parking for first stage should be provided, but adequate future provision should be determined by special consideration during the progress of the construction programme.
- (20) Early announcement should be made of the Government's intentions regarding use of the site, and fixed term leases arranged for tenants on portions of site to remain undeveloped.

- (21) Civil defence precautions have been reasonably considered, and concentration of staffs in this area of the city is agreed to.
- (22) Stage 1 should be given a high priority, but future stages of the construction programme should be subject to further references to the Committee.
- (23) Refusal of State to give evidence is regretted by the Committee.
- (24) Land acquired by the Commonwealth should be fully utilized having regard to the value of the land and the importance of the sites.

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES, PHILLIP-STREET, SYDNEY.

59. Attempts have been made several times in past years to develop a scheme to provide accommodation for officials of Commonwealth Departments in Sydney. Two schemes were brought to the stages when they could be referred to this Committee, one in 1921 and one in 1927, but circumstances arose in each case to delay progress on the work, with the result that no substantial building has been constructed for the purpose up till the present time. In the case of the 1921 reference the site recommended could not be obtained on favourable terms, and, as the transfer of tax collection to the State rendered the necessity for a building less urgent, the project was postponed. In 1927 following its inquiry into the matter, the Committee reported to Parliament that an urgent necessity existed for the provision of office accommodation for Commonwealth purposes in Sydney, and recommended the erection of a building on half of the site proposed, the site being approximately the same as that now referred to the Committee.

The Present Proposal.

60. On the submission of the Minister for Works the Executive Council approved of the reference to this Committee of the proposal to erect Commonwealth Offices in Phillip-street, Sydney. The Committee was also required, in the reference, to have special regard to and report on the accommodation requirements of all Commonwealth Departments in Sydney. The proposal to erect the Commonwealth Offices therefore became dependent upon the suitability of the site to accommodate those sections of the Commonwealth officials requiring to be provided for, both in the immediate future, and also during the period of some years ahead, when the trends of population increases will have made further office space essential.

61. As a consequence of future likely requirements being greatly in excess of the space available on the proposed site, the question of alternative or additional suitable sites was involved in the proposal, and this investigation was intended to establish the advisability of using this site, and building on it the type of structure suggested.

62. Owing to the nature of the proposal, no plans for office buildings on the site had been prepared, but a suggested method of developing the area by the erection of a multi-storey steel framed structure, was prepared. The building would be erected in two stages, and the preliminary estimate was approximately 4½ million pounds. The site is bounded at present by Hunter-street, Phillip-street, Bent-street, and by the adjoining properties, but it is to be increased when the Elizabeth-street extension is proceeded with by the City Council, altering the present Phillip-street frontage.

63. The second part of the reference, dealing with the overall requirements of Commonwealth Departments in Sydney, made it necessary for a complete survey of present space and future needs, as well as presentation of suggestions for possible additional or alternative sites within reasonable distance of the city centre.

Reasons for the Proposal.

64. In view of the recommendations of the Committee in its 1927 Report, stressing the urgent need for a Commonwealth Offices building for Sydney, and the fact that the Customs House is the only Commonwealth office building erected in Sydney up till the present time, it is plainly evident there is an added urgency for the building to-day, while estimates of the growth of population and consequent government staffs in the future emphasize the essential nature of the proposal. Commonwealth departments are dispersed over various parts of the city in 26 different buildings, many of them leased and in the very busiest parts of the city, preventing their use by private enterprise, while some premises are unsuitable for use as offices. At the present time there is great pressure on the departments to vacate space and return it to be used for its original purposes.

65. It is not anticipated that the building to be erected on the proposed site will provide sufficient accommodation for the Commonwealth officials in Sydney, and it was recognized that additional space would have to be selected to provide for immediate relief and future requirements. Amongst a number of other sites particular attention was paid to the old Palladium building, a Commonwealth owned building at present housing a staff of about 250. It was represented that the use of this area to provide

space for about 1,350 persons would be the quickest and most satisfactory method of alleviating the present position. After a good deal of study on the matter, and some division of opinion amongst the members of the Committee, it was resolved to recommend the use of this site.

66. In order to make reasonable provision for the future it was considered necessary to develop the idea of a Commonwealth Centre, and the Committee studied the possibility of other properties likely to become available in the area, and in the direction of Circular Quay.

Recommendations.

67. (1) There is an urgent necessity for a building to house Commonwealth officials, only one building—the Customs House—having been erected for Commonwealth office purposes in Sydney.
- (2) The site is most favourable for Commonwealth offices, and a building on the lines suggested should be erected with all speed to house the maximum number of staff possible in relation to the floor space index.
- (3) The staff survey shows that the proposed site is not large enough to provide accommodation for all the Commonwealth officials to be housed.
- (4) For the remaining staff the Committee believes that additional land in close proximity to the proposed site can be obtained, and the appropriate Departments should endeavour to negotiate purchase of a suitable property, with a view to establishing a Commonwealth Centre in this area, or in the area between this site and Circular Quay.
- (5) Development of the proposed site should proceed in two stages, along the lines suggested, as soon as action by the City Council allows use of the new frontage to Elizabeth-street extension.
- (6) In order to alleviate the immediate demand for space it is recommended that a building should be erected on the site of the Commonwealth owned Palladium building.
- (7) It is calculated that the foregoing provisions can cope with Commonwealth requirements until approximately 1970. Early action should be taken to plan for further expansion after that date with buildings on a site in the same area or towards Circular Quay, or on one of the other alternate sites indicated in the evidence.
- (8) Plans for the actual buildings on the Phillip-street and Palladium sites should be referred to the Committee as soon as they are advanced to the appropriate stage.
- (9) If there is any legal action which could be taken by the Commonwealth to assist the City Council in overcoming delays to the Elizabeth-street extension work, it should be initiated as soon as possible.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REGULATIONS.

68. Regulations to implement the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1913-1951, in connexion with the rates of payment of allowances to members, witnesses and others, were promulgated in November, 1953, to become effective from the 8th January, 1952. Statutory Rules 1953, No. 90, issued on the 4th November, 1953, set out the rates to be paid to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Members of the Committee during meetings, and in various circumstances of travelling. Payments to witnesses and assessors likely to be engaged by the Committee were also provided for in the new regulations.

DEATH OF CHAIRMAN.

69. News of the death of the Hon. A. McK. McDonald on the 10th June, 1953, while still in office as Chairman of the Committee, was received with deep regret by the Members of the Committee who passed a resolution of sympathy with Mrs. McDonald. The death of a Chairman of the Committee while in office was unprecedented in the history of the Committee, and it was found that no provision existed in the Act for appointing a new Chairman in his place. The Vice-Chairman (Mr. D. O. Watkins) was therefore authorized to act until a suitable amendment was passed in Parliament. The necessary amendment was assented to on the 11th December, 1953, and it provides power for the Committee to elect its Chairman from time to time, and also includes a section validating the actions of the Vice-Chairman from the date of the previous Chairman's death.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE ACT—AMENDMENTS.

70. Members of the Committee were strongly of the opinion that the occasion of the amendment to the Act was a suitable time to include several important amendments which had been advocated for many years, the main object of which was to restore to the Act the mandatory clause deleted in 1936. Appropriate additional amendments were drafted with a view to having them introduced into the Bill by one of the Committee members during its passage through the Senate. They were ultimately held in abeyance, however, on the request of the Prime Minister who wished to avoid delay in the Bill, but promised to include them in a Bill to be introduced during the next Session of Parliament. In the

meantime the Minister for Works has expressed appreciation of the Committee's recent work in connexion with the Brisbane Taxation Office building, and has offered to co-operate fully with the Committee. He has intimated that construction works are now being based upon a two-year programme in an effort to bring to finality as many planned works as possible. The lists of these works being planned will be discussed by the Minister with the representatives of the Committee, in order to determine which works shall be referred to the Committee for investigation during the year. The Committee regards this as an important step, and it promises to make the work of the Committee a great deal more effective, pending the desired amendment to the Act.

MOVEMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE.

71. During its term of office the Committee travelled to Sydney, Melbourne, Launceston, Southport, Highett, and Brisbane. Numerous local inspections in connexion with the investigations involved a considerable amount of car travelling also. The official distances travelled by the 14th Committee totalled 9,750 miles not including the distances covered by individual members while travelling to and from their homes in connexion with the work of the Committee.

STAFF.

72. The secretarial work was continued throughout the period by the permanent Secretary of the Committee (Mr. W. R. Blackman). Changes occurred in the occupancy of the position of Secretarial Assistant, first through the marriage of Miss B. F. Horniblow, who was followed in the work by Miss M. M. Gates on the 30th July, 1951. Owing to her impending marriage she resigned from the position on the 15th October, 1953, when Miss D. R. Cantwell was appointed and has continued in her place since that date.

J. O. CRAMER,
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Parliament House, Canberra.
19th August, 1954.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.—RECORD OF INQUIRIES.

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure Proposed when Referred by the Government.	Expenditure Recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that Proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that Proposed.	Remarks.
		£	£	£	£	
1951-54. (See 23RD GENERAL REPORT.)						
12th July, 1951 to 18th October, 1951	Telephone Exchange, Launceston, Tasmania	710,150	710,150	..	..	Recommended as proposed
12th July, 1951 to 25th October, 1951	Telephone Exchange, Southport, Queensland	124,600	124,600	..	..	Recommended as proposed, with further investigations <i>re</i> footings
23rd November, 1951 to 22nd May, 1952	Dairy Research Laboratory, Highett, Victoria	152,100	152,100	..	..	Recommended with minor alterations to plans
22nd May, 1952 to 11th September, 1952	Re-submission, National Library, Canberra	1,298,800	1,298,800	..	..	Recommended with alterations to elevational treatment
4th September, 1952 to 19th March, 1953	Taxation Office Building, Brisbane	1,687,500	1,683,500	..	4,000 (1,771,422)	Three course meals equipment eliminated. Recommended conditional on deferring two stages of Commonwealth Offices building, thus saving £1,771,422
19th May, 1953 to 2nd December, 1953	Commonwealth Administration Centre, First Stage, Melbourne, Victoria	1,197,300	1,197,300	..	..	Recommended as proposed, with special attention to allocation of space
19th January, 1954 to 13th April, 1954	Commonwealth Offices, Phillip-street, Sydney	3,050,000	3,050,000	..	..	Site recommended as proposed, building plans to be referred later