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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

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R E P O R T

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES, PHILLIP STREET,

SYDNEY.

(1955 Reference)

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COMMONWEALTH OFFICES, PHILLIP STREET, SYDNEY.

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R E P O R T.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred, for investigation and Report thereon to the House of Representatives, the question of the proposed erection of Commonwealth Offices, Phillip Street, Sydney, New South Wales, has the honour to report as follows:-

S E C T I O N ' I.

History.

1. Several attempts have been made in past years to plan comprehensive schemes to accommodate officials of the Commonwealth departments in Sydney. In both 1921 and 1927 the Committee reported that there was an urgent need for such a building in Sydney, but circumstances arose to prevent completion of the schemes.

2. In 1954 a further investigation was commenced and the Committee was required to have special regard to the accommodation needs of all Commonwealth office activities in Sydney. Owing to the fact that the likely requirements would be greatly in excess of the space available on the Phillip Street site, the question of alternative or additional sites was involved in the proposal, and the investigation was intended principally to establish the advisability of using this site and building upon it the type of structure suggested. No detailed plans of buildings for the site were submitted, but a suggested method of developing the area by the erection of a multi-storied structure was prepared.

3. The proposal was developed with a view to commencing the first stage by building on the southern end of the site, leaving the rather substantially built Wembley Chambers until the end of their economic life. The retention of Wembley Chambers in the scheme was the cause of considerable difficulty from the planning point of view, but it was felt that, on economic grounds, the building should be used while it was possible to do so.

4. An obstacle to the immediate planning and construction of a building on this site was the fact that the present frontage of Phillip Street is to be altered to conform to the City Council's scheme for the Elizabeth Street extension. This provides for a new alignment for the Commonwealth offices site, and delay has been experienced for some years, pending a solution of the problems connected with the new street frontage.

5. Owing to the urgency of the demand for office accommodation a second suggestion was placed before the Committee, with a view to providing some relief while the question of the Phillip street site was being settled. It was proposed that the Palladium, an old, Commonwealth-owned building, at present housing about 250 officials, should be replaced by a modern structure to accommodate 1,350 persons without delay.

6. After study of the subject the Committee recommended that development of the Phillip Street 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 the Elizabeth Street extension. It was also recommended that, to alleviate the immediate demand, a building should be erected on the Palladium site, and that the plans for both the Phillip Street building and the Palladium building should be referred to the Committee as soon as they were advanced to the appropriate stage.

## S E C T I O N    I I .

### THE    P R E S E N T    P R O P O S A L .

#### The Phillip Street Offices Reference.

7. Plans were prepared for development of the Phillip Street site, and made the subject of this reference to the Committee. Those drawn up for the Palladium site were referred separately to the Committee, and will be dealt with in its own Report. It is pointed out, however, that the evidence submitted by several witnesses on these two subjects dealt largely with points common to both, and it is necessary to refer to the combined evidence to obtain complete information of the factors studied by the Committee.

### The Building as Referred.

8. The First Stage.- The first stage of the planned building used about half of the site, and comprised a main multi-storey block with a limit height structure of basement, ground and 11 upper floors; a smaller block of the re-modelled Wembly Chambers building extended to 5 stories; and a comparatively narrow link on the Eastern boundary join<sup>ing</sup> those two blocks. The link<sup>was</sup> used to adjust the difference in the floor levels of the two blocks, and a two-storey colonnaded entrance Portico linked the Wembly Chambers' block with the main multi-storey block.

9. The Second Stage.- The Second stage of the building programme was not submitted in planned form, but perspex models were produced to demonstrate two alternatives for possible development of the site at a later date, while the evidence dealt with the likely accommodation which could be provided on the area. As the proposal was linked with the construction of the building on the Palladium site, the Department did not consider that the second stage would be required for some time, and it would be an advantage not to put forward a fixed design at this stage.

### Accommodation.

10. In the first stage the total net usable area provided, including Wembly Chambers, amounted to 191,570 sq.ft., of which 160,170 sq.ft. would be usable office space. This would give accommodation for 2,052 persons, while the area available in the second stage would provide for an additional 1,588 persons, bringing the total for the whole site to 3,640 officials.

### Part one of the First Stage.

11. Following suggestions by the Committee that a section of the construction could be proceeded with immediately, even if delay occurred in the implementation by the City Council of the street widening proposals, a scheme was submitted to the Committee in which part I of the proposed Stage 1 could be erected at once. This part comprised a section from the present Philip Street alignment, including Wembly Chambers, to the Eastern boundary of the site. It would use 1.45 acres of the site and provide accommodation for 710 persons. This would allow construction to be commenced on the site at once, and would provide some relief in addition to the space projected on the Palladium site (1,350 persons).

#### The Estimated Cost.

12. The estimated cost of Part 1. of Stage 1 was stated to be £759,000, while the total estimated cost of the whole of Stage 1, including the land was £2,345,000.

### SECTION III.

#### THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

##### General.

13. The Committee studied the plans in the light of the previous preliminary inquiry in 1954, took evidence from a number of witnesses in Sydney and inspected the site and existing buildings.

##### Need for the Building.

14. The evidence taken in the 1954 inquiry established without doubt the urgent need for accommodation to house Commonwealth staffs in Sydney, as most of them are at present occupying valuable space required for commercial purposes. They are in buildings which are not suitable, having been constructed for other purposes, with the result that the accommodation is inefficient and uneconomical. The various investigations made by the Committee over the past years have all emphasized the urgent necessity for proper office accommodation and each year that passes makes the position more difficult. A good deal of evidence was submitted indicating to the Committee the steps which had had to be taken to satisfy the immediate requirements of the service from time to time, and there is no doubt that the distribution of the various functions in many buildings scattered over the City is causing serious concern to the Public Service Board as well as to the Departments in Sydney, and the public dealing with the various offices.

15. Very comprehensive evidence, supported by schedules of figures and graphs to demonstrate the present and projected position regarding essential accommodation to house the Commonwealth staffs, was presented to the Committee and studied in this connection. Statistics were produced to demonstrate the number of persons which would have to be accommodated, on the basis of the present number of total staffs plus an increase of 2.7 per annum, which is the actual rate of increase at the present time. It is also assumed, for the purpose of these calculations, that we could obtain possession of all space occupied

by private tenants in Commonwealth owned buildings, and relinquish accommodation leased by the Commonwealth from private owners. It was shown that the need for new Commonwealth owned space by 1961 would be an amount sufficient to house 3,200 officers. It was reckoned that the proposed Palladium building would accommodate 1,350, leaving an unsatisfied need of 1850 at the end of 1961. It was hoped that the whole of Stage 1 of the Elizabeth Street building could be constructed by 1962, by which time the unsatisfied needs would be 2,127. With space for approximately 2,000 in stage 1 of the Elizabeth Street building there would still be 100 officers to be accommodated by 1962.

16. It was also explained to the Committee that, in regard to the future needs, space would have to be provided for P.M.G. staff from 1965 onwards, as that Department would not be able to provide its accommodation after that time. The total of overall requirements were therefore shown to be 4,979 by 1967, and the projection of the graph indicated a requirement of over 11,000 by 1980.

#### Availability of Site.

17. At this stage of the inquiry, when the protracted delays in securing possession of the whole of the new Elizabeth Street site provided problems which showed little immediate prospect of solution, the Committee sought a means by which some portion of the building might be constructed without further delay, and attention was given to the possibility of commencing a section of Stage 1 comprising the land from the present Phillip Street alignment to the Eastern boundary of the site. This section of the plan would only provide accommodation for 710 persons, but was looked upon as a possibility in relieving the present difficulty, when combined with the 1,350 possible on the Palladium site. This alternative did not appeal very much to the Committee, and other considerations caused it to be discarded later in the course of the inquiry.

18. The Qantas Building.— It was felt by the Committee at this juncture that a considerable influence might be expected by the progress being made towards the construction of the new Qantas building on the opposite side of the street, where it was becoming increasingly necessary for the City Council to provide their new alignment and allow Qantas the entrance required to their site from the proposed Elizabeth Street extension. Although the demand by Qantas has become more urgent there is at the moment very little indication of real action in the matter.

19. The City Council's Action.- It has been previously explained that the Commonwealth Offices site will ultimately face on to the proposed new Elizabeth Street extension, when the present section of Phillip Street in this locality will disappear, and the building site will extend over the present roadway to the frontage of the new extension of Elizabeth Street. The fact that a new road has to be built by the City Council, over land at present occupied by various buildings including a small number of residences, presents legal difficulties to the Council which have not yet been overcome, and have been the basic cause of the delay for many years.

20. Although the eviction of tenants is repugnant to Commonwealth and City Council alike, it is recognised that this very important development of the City area can not proceed until possession is gained of all the properties involved. Considerable pressure is no doubt being exerted to resist the necessity to vacate the present premises, and the whole question possesses a political angle which is probably as insistent as it is intangible. There is no doubt a great reluctance on the part of the Council to take the firm legal action which lies in its power. The number of tenancies concerned with actual residences, and forming the most difficult legal problem, is very small, and it would be possible for the City Council to seek the approval of the Governor for an exemption which would give all the authority required to gain possession of the land. The City Council has definitely decided not to take this action, but has recently suggested calling a conference of the parties concerned in the new street alignment and the Housing Commission, with a view to canvassing the possibility of securing alternative accommodation for the tenants concerned. The Committee notes with satisfaction that this Conference is to be called and hopes for great success from it.

21. Other action which the Council could have taken, and should have proceeded to take, to comply with the terms of the Agreement with the Commonwealth in this matter, is the issue of definite notices to quit to the tenants. Only courtesy notices to quit have been issued, and practically no notice has been taken of them.

22. The Commonwealth's Action.- Some time ago the Commonwealth issued to the tenants on its properties courtesy notices to quit, and these have recently been followed by definite notices to all tenants that their premises



will be required by June, 1956, and that actual legal notices to this end are in course of preparation at this time.

23. Steps were also taken to inform the City Council definitely by authority of the Minister for the Interior, that the Commonwealth intended to proceed with construction of a building on the site, and was prepared to take all the required steps to comply with the Agreement referred to, with a view to securing possession of the whole of the site to the new alignment for its purposes. Certain indications were given to the City Council that actual construction schedules would not be proceeded with immediately, but as a considerable time will be required for the detailed planning, immediate action is needed by the City Council if the new road is to be constructed and the alignment made available for the Commonwealth building in time for commencement of work when the plans are ready.

24. Commonwealth Assistance.- The Committee is of opinion that a great many years have been wasted in pressing ahead with this urgent project for Commonwealth offices in Sydney, and so little real difficulty stands in the way of very early development of the whole of this site, that every effort should be made to sweep away the remaining obstacles and provide a satisfactory Commonwealth centre, together with all the important improvements to the area which are connected with the Elizabeth Street extension. With this in view it is suggested that if the projected Conference fails, and the Council can not gain possession of its land, early action might be taken to vary the present Agreement, so that provision can be made for the Commonwealth to acquire all the land concerned, and take the necessary action to obtain possession of it under the authority possessed by the Commonwealth, without the restrictions which operate under the authority of the City Council. If all legal formalities to this end were reduced to the absolute minimum, and a real effort made to condense the required action into the shortest possible time, there is little doubt that the goal which has proved so elusive for so many years could soon be attained, to the great benefit of the City of Sydney as well as to the Commonwealth.

25. The availability of the site for complete use by the Commonwealth, and the possibility of securing possession of the area within a reasonable time, became a consideration of prime importance in the Committee's investigations.

Whereas the protracted delays of the past had presented so many obstacles to securing the site that it appeared essential to recommend the construction of the Palladium building as an immediate relief measure at the beginning of this inquiry, the trend of events has altered the general outlook, and there is a strong desire to make a special effort to create a really effective structure and achieve an outstanding improvement of this locality. Temporary expedients are likely to prove unsatisfactory, and all the factors involved point to the advisability of proceeding with the erection of a suitable building on this site as soon as possible.

#### Wembley Chambers.

26. Another factor which affected the trend of the investigation was the presence of Wembley Chambers building on the site, and the original efforts to make use of the building in the plans. Because of its rather substantial construction and relatively good state of repair it had been looked upon as too valuable to discard, and it had proved a considerable difficulty through many years of planning to the architects creating the various schemes. The plan as presented to the Committee with this reference incorporated the Wembley Chambers building in it, and was, in effect, built round the old structure. The result was never a completely happy one, and some doubt grew in the minds of the Committee Members about the wisdom and advisability of accepting the plan, while the question of its real durability and economic life seemed open to question. The Committee therefore obtained the services of expert independent engineers to make a technical survey of the building to assist in deciding what should be done at this important point. The result of the independent advice, together with the figures from the departmental officials showing the costs involved in reconstructing the building to fit into the new plan, left the Committee with no doubt that the Wembley Chambers building should be demolished at the appropriate stage, and the overall plan suitably altered.

27. The architects of the Department of Works had requested that, if the Wembley Chambers Building had to be demolished they should be given the opportunity to replan the complete scheme and achieve a comprehensive design more suited to the important position it is to occupy. The Committee readily

agreed to this suggestion and called for a replanning of the scheme, with the object of including at the same time other features such as additional accommodation to provide for all needs for some years, with the possibility of eliminating the necessity to build at present on the Palladium site.

#### The Re-planned Scheme.

28. By the beginning of October, 1955, the Committee received evidence submitting an amended design, on the basis of an increased floor space index, making more efficient use of the site, and presenting plans for an impressive structure to form a complete Commonwealth Centre.

29. The architects had worked on various schemes with the object of providing space for the total number of persons previously planned for in both the Palladium and the Elizabeth Street projects, - approximately 5,000. After working upon a number of solutions one was finally produced which made available the required amount of accommodation, and also took into account the irregular site boundaries and relations with adjoining properties.

30. The Building.- The building comprises an East-West slab-type unit rising to approximately 230 feet, facing on to the proposed Place, and supported by wings on the North and South sides. The plan shows that the building will occupy little more than half the available site area, and a sense of openness from the surrounding streets and buildings is achieved. It will include off-street car parking, garden treatment about the building, and large pedestrian concourses off the normal street pavements which will assist in alleviating traffic congestion.

31. Slab Structure.- In the past office areas have faced on to depressing inner light courts which have been used because of the necessity to obtain the maximum economic use of the site within prescribed height limits. Modern practice, with somewhat taller buildings has made it possible to provide accommodation for increased population, with the advantages of better light, ventilation, and superior outlook within the structure. Another important advantage from this type of planning is the greatly increased isolation from adjoining buildings and the diminution of fire risk.

32. Height of the building.- It is possible in the proposed plan to design within the By-laws, except in regard to height, and to eliminate internal

light courts. The Committee took evidence in regard to the height of the building from several witnesses concerned in the matter, and finds that, while the present By-laws prescribe a limit of 150 ft., this plan for a building 80 ft. higher than the limit has the support and approbation of the various authorities and architects contacted in Melbourne and Sydney. Because of the set-back from the street alignment most of the disabilities associated with very high buildings, such as risk of fire to adjoining properties, angles of light from the street and close buildings, and poor ventilation, will disappear, and it is understood that amendments to the Building Regulations, to cover this building and other modern proposals, are being considered.

33. The proposal has been referred to the various authorities concerned in the matter, and it has been received with favour. The Committee therefore recommends that as the proposal to construct the main wing of this building above the present height limit appears to provide for all the precautions and safeguards generally deemed necessary in relation to the surrounding streets and properties, no objection should be raised in this case.

34. Comparison with limit height structure.- The following table sets out the characteristics of two designs to afford a comparison between a building constructed in conformity with the City By-Laws, and one of the slab type conforming with the By-laws in all regards except height, thus emphasizing the benefits to be gained in the slab type building.

| <u>Item.</u>                | <u>By-laws<br/>Building.</u> | <u>Proposed Slab<br/>Building.</u> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Site area                | 60,400 sq.ft.                | 60,400 sq.ft.                      |
| 2. Set back from            |                              |                                    |
| (a) Hunter St.              | Nil                          | Nil                                |
| (b) Place                   | Average 24ft.                | Average 24ft.                      |
| (c) Elizabeth St.           | " 6ft.                       | " 30ft.                            |
| (d) Bent St.                | Nil                          | " 93ft.                            |
| 3. Site coverage            | 96%                          | 57.6%                              |
| 4. Ground Floor Occupation  | 96%                          | 46%                                |
| 5. First class office areas | 66%                          | 73%                                |
| 6. Surface car parking      | Nil                          | 35 cars                            |
| 7. Garden treatment         | Nil                          | 15% of site                        |
| 8. Population               | 4,600                        | 4,600                              |

35. Car Parking.- A feature of the design is the provision made for the parking of official and visitors' cars. Vehicular access has been provided from Bent Street and Elizabeth Street to three levels of car parking. The lower and middle levels will provide covered parking, and the upper level partly surface and partly covered parking. The total parking areas will

accommodate 150 cars for visiting officials and business men.

36. Some differences of opinion were expressed by witnesses on the advisability of providing expensive car parking for officials or for the public, and difficulty was foreseen in controlling the use of the parking space. The Public Service Inspector expressed the opinion that very little parking space was required for officials, as they are encouraged to use the public transport as much as possible. Where officers have to use other than public transport Commonwealth cars are provided for official duties. Only a very few officials are required to use their cars regularly on official work, and, generally speaking, the view is held that Government officials should not be encouraged to add to the city's traffic problems.

37. The opinion is held, however, that casual parking space for persons needing to transact business in the building would be a considerable assistance in keeping cars off the street, and a system could be devised for control of those using the facilities.

38. The planning of a high building has made it possible to provide <sup>limited</sup> space in basement and adjacent sections for the purpose of car parking, and the Committee agrees that it is necessary. It is recommended, however, that particular attention be given to evolving a system of priority and control which will make the greatest use of the area and facilitate traffic to and from the building in peak periods.

39. Floor Space Index - During the course of the inquiry the Committee considered the question of the density of population in the area, and the methods of controlling it by use of the Floor Space Index and Plot Ratio. The original Floor space index of 4.8, providing space for 3,624 persons on the whole of the site, has come to be regarded rather as a somewhat arbitrary, town planning ideal than a practical requirement for the busy city, and it is generally agreed that, with open planning there is no weighty reason why the population density should not be increased in this area. The present revised plan provides for a floor space index of 5.66, giving a population of 4,630 persons, and this is still less than could be provided under a proposed Plot Ratio factor of 10, being considered by the Sydney City Council.

40. The Committee is of opinion that, with the modern planning adopted in this proposal, and the off street parking spaces provided, many of the problems which the Floor space index aims to control are already partly solved, and it is recommended that the population of 4,630 planned for in this project should not be regarded as excessive.

41. The Cafeteria - The plans include provision for a Cafeteria, in the Basement, covering an area of 13,880 sq.ft. The Committee made inquiries regarding the necessity for the space allowed, and was informed that, in common with the other amenities, the space had been provided in accordance with recommendations made by the Department of Health and the Department of Labour and National Service. Evidence given by a representative of the Department of Labour and National Service in the earlier stages of the inquiry had indicated in considerable detail the type of service which might be provided, and this is the basis upon which the space has been allotted in the new plan.

42. The type of food service suggested was one which it was stated was normal practice in both Government and private establishments, and there was stated to be a demand for a type of light meal consisting of a simple entree with one vegetable, and either soup or sweets, and for light refreshments in the form of pies, sandwiches, cakes, fresh fruit, confectionery, ice-cream and cordials. It was not considered, however, that a cafeteria should provide a full meal of the type normally available in public restaurants.

43. The Committee was informed that the approval of the principle of providing the cafeteria service has not yet been given by the Treasury Department,

but that procedure will follow. It was stated that a Committee representing the Department of Works, and Department of Labour and National Service, under the chairmanship of a Treasury official has recently started to function again, but the procedure to obtain its approval was not expected to interfere in any major way with this scheme. The Committee feel that, if the approval of such a Committee is now a requisite in the building programme, it should be sought in the very early stages of planning, so that suggestions of the type put forward by the Department of Labour and National Service could be questioned before such large spaces and facilities are allowed in the plans and estimates of cost.

44. If a specialised departmental Committee on this matter comes to a considered conclusion that the suggested type of meal is necessary, the Public Works Committee is prepared to recognise its study of the question as a reliable guide, but, as this provision appears to have been made before special consideration had been given to it, the Public Works Committee desires to express its present feeling that a simpler type of meal is ample for the purpose. It is not considered that hot meals are required, and evidence shows that elaborate facilities have not been adequately used in the past. If sandwiches, pies, cakes, fruit and confectionery were supplied, there would be no need for elaborate cooking and heating appliances, and the main demands would be met. It is recommended that the departmental committee on this matter be consulted without delay, and, if possible, the space reduced and used for additional storage or other purposes, with the appropriate saving in cost of equipment.

45. Lifts - Considerable thought has been given to the number of lifts required for this massive building, and the departmental officials have consulted specialists in this field in order to determine the number which would serve the building adequately. As a result a total of 12 lifts in all will be provided; eight of them in the first stage serving all floors of the main unit and the Hunter street wing. A further four lifts, serving up to the 5th floor only will be provided in the third stage, in a position where the building only rises to that height. The lift installation will be capable of filling the building in 30 minutes, and on this basis it will be desirable to stagger starting hours for office workers over approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Only two of the lifts are planned to serve the basement, but the opinion was expressed

that, with a large car park, display area, cafeteria, and lecture theatre in the basement, it will be necessary to have more than two lifts serving the basement. The Committee recommends that this point of view be further investigated and a better service provided for the basement if it is possible to do so.

The Public Service Inspector approached the matter from the point of view of maximum efficiency in the staff usage, and stated quite definitely that it would be practicable to stagger office hours on condition that the staggering is not within departments, and that it does not extend beyond 15 minutes. In amplification of the limit to 15 minutes it was explained that a rough calculation shows that, if staffs averaged 5 minutes late per day for each officer using the lift service in Stage 1 of the building, the cost to the Commonwealth in lost time would be in the order of £20,000 per annum.

46. The Committee made inquiries in the matter and is of opinion that the fast modern lifts of the type proposed, should be able to meet the conditions required, but it is recommended that, during the later planning stages, further study should be given to the proposed zoning of the lifts, in the light of the evidence received by the Committee.

47. Accommodation Required - In the light of the re-planned scheme further evidence was sought regarding the accommodation to be provided, and the latest figures supplied by the Public Service Inspector show that by March 1966 there will be 4,682 officers requiring accommodation in the new building, while there will be over 6,000 by 1970. It will therefore be seen that the whole of the new buildings on the proposed site will be required by about 1966, and every delay in commencement of the building makes the matter more urgent.

48. Phasing - The main unit is planned to provide 2,300, the Hunter Street wing 700, and the northern unit 1,630 persons - a total of 4,630. It is stated that it will take 15 months to prepare documents for the first stage of the project, and a further 36 months for construction.

49. As the matter is so pressing the Committee was concerned by the letter, written by the Director of Works to the Town Clerk, Sydney, on 22nd September, 1955, requesting that the plans be given no publicity at this stage, as the proposal is not on the current year's construction programme, nor on the Works Programme for 1956/57. This has no doubt caused disappointment in the minds of the City Council authorities at a time when every influence is required to



assure them that the Commonwealth is to proceed with the work, and that it is essential for the City Council to carry out their part of the Agreement without delay. The Committee recommends that immediate consideration be given to making available sufficient money for the planning to proceed, and funds provided to allow the successive stages to be constructed consecutively.

50. Owing to the special need for this accommodation in Sydney, and the fact that it has been delayed very many years already, the Committee recommends that very definite action be taken to push ahead with construction of the first stage of the proposed building as soon as possible.

51. It is very evident that, under the most favourable conditions, there will still be a serious shortage of accommodation when the first stage is completed, and the Committee therefore recommends that planning and construction of stages two and three of the proposal be proceeded with, so that the whole project may be completed in the cheapest and most efficient manner, <sup>as possible</sup> and as much of the present leased accommodation handed back to private enterprise requiring it now.

52. Height between floors - A matter of considerable importance is the height allowed from floor to floor, because a small alteration per floor can make a large variation in the amount of space available and the ultimate cost of providing it. The suggestion was made that, with flat slab construction and flattened air conditioning ducts, valuable inches may be saved, and the Committee recommends that attention be given to this aspect of the construction when the final plans are being prepared.

53. Revolving Doors - Criticism was made of the proposal for revolving doors to the Entrance Lobby on the Ground Floor, as they can be a hindrance and most awkward for people carrying parcels. It is suggested that it would be preferable to instal sets of double storm-proof doors at this point. The Committee recommends that this suggestion be given further consideration.

54. Stairways - The time available for preparation of these revised plans has not allowed great detail in many respects, and the stairways proposed have not received particular attention at this stage. It is pointed out that stairs in high buildings have become a secondary consideration, and are mainly used for emergencies and for the few people requiring to go quickly from floor to floor. It is therefore considered that the provision of elaborate stairways, except

perhaps at Ground Floor level, should be avoided, and the main upper stairs should be constructed in the most economical way, with cement finished treads and risers, suitably treated to look attractive. The plans do not appear to provide for the stairs to be fire-enclosed at all floors, but this is considered an important safety precaution in a high building. The Committee agrees that these matters regarding stairways should receive further attention in the subsequent planning.

55. Lecture Hall - The plan provides for a Lecture Hall in the Basement, seating 150 persons. It is to have a small stage, projection room and store, and will fit in alongside the Cafeteria with entrance on to the Display Area and Lift Lobby. It was explained to the Committee that the Commonwealth Public Service has an organised training scheme for personnel on rather a large scale. In post-war years it has been necessary to train officers and entrant staff to cope with quicker promotions under present conditions. There is a growing need to train staffs in public relations, and arrangements are made to train any officers from entrants to assistant secretaries. The Committee is satisfied that there is a need for the Lecture Hall and recommends that it be included as proposed.

#### Estimated Cost

56. The General Scheme - The estimated costs of the various stages of the project, based upon September, 1955, price levels is as follows:

|         |                    |                   |
|---------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Stage 1 | Main 230ft. unit   | £2,745,800        |
| Stage 2 | Hunter Street wing | 637,400           |
| Stage 3 | Bent Street wing   | <u>1,520,400</u>  |
| Total   |                    | <u>£4,903,300</u> |

57. First Stage only - If the first stage of the project only is to be proceeded with the estimated cost of £2,745,800 will be increased by £62,700, to £2,808,500, to cover the extra cost for temporary walls, additional air-conditioning, ventilation and paving.

58. Cost details - For Stage one construction alone the amount referred to above is composed of the following items:

|                                                                                                              |        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Site preparation - Demolition of all buildings except Wenbley Chambers, Club Chambers, and 39 Bent Street | 12,400 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|

|    |                                                                    |                |                   |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 2. | Building:                                                          |                |                   |
|    | Main structure                                                     | 2,031,600      |                   |
|    | Underpinning                                                       | 3,300          |                   |
|    | Extra for imported steel                                           | 36,600         |                   |
|    | Extra for temporary walls etc.                                     | <u>31,800</u>  | 2,103,300         |
| 3. | Hydraulic Engineering Services:                                    |                |                   |
|    | Sewerage                                                           | 45,500         |                   |
|    | Water & Fire service                                               | 34,800         |                   |
|    | Drainage                                                           | <u>10,700</u>  | 91,000            |
| 4. | Mechanical Engineering services:                                   |                |                   |
|    | Air-conditioning and ventilation                                   | 88,200         |                   |
|    | Extra for stage construction                                       | 25,300         |                   |
|    | Hot water                                                          | 5,700          |                   |
|    | Fire extinguishers etc.                                            | 1,800          |                   |
|    | Kitchen equipment (Cafeteria)                                      | <u>12,600</u>  | 133,600           |
| 5. | Electrical Engineering services:                                   |                |                   |
|    | Lifts                                                              | 257,100        |                   |
|    | Electric light and power mains                                     | <u>205,000</u> | 462,100           |
| 6. | Miscellaneous:                                                     |                |                   |
|    | Paving, walling, planting, etc.<br>(including temporary car parks) |                | <u>6,100</u>      |
|    | Funds required                                                     |                | <u>£2,808,500</u> |

59. For the completed project (Stages 1, 2 and 3) if completed in one contract, at September, 1955, price levels, the details of cost are:

|    |                                                            |                |                   |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Site preparation - Demolition of all buildings on the site |                | 27,500            |
| 2. | Building:                                                  |                |                   |
|    | Main structures                                            | 3,659,600      |                   |
|    | Underpinning                                               | 22,000         |                   |
|    | Car Park Area                                              | 45,800         |                   |
|    | Imported steel (extra)                                     | <u>67,600</u>  | 3,795,000         |
| 3. | Hydraulic Engineering services:                            |                |                   |
|    | Sewerage                                                   | 81,800         |                   |
|    | Water and fire services                                    | 62,700         |                   |
|    | Drainage                                                   | <u>19,100</u>  | 163,600           |
| 4. | Mechanical Engineering services:                           |                |                   |
|    | Air conditioning and ventilation                           | 182,100        |                   |
|    | Hot Water                                                  | 10,700         |                   |
|    | Fire extinguishers                                         | 3,600          |                   |
|    | Kitchen equipment (cafeteria)                              | 12,600         |                   |
|    | Sprinklers to car park only                                | <u>4,400</u>   | 213,400           |
| 5. | Electrical Engineering services:                           |                |                   |
|    | Lifts                                                      | 314,300        |                   |
|    | Electric light and power                                   | <u>383,000</u> | 697,300           |
| 6. | Miscellaneous:                                             |                |                   |
|    | Planting, sculpture etc.                                   |                | <u>6,500</u>      |
|    | Funds required                                             |                | <u>£4,903,300</u> |

60. In recommending that no time be lost in providing all the accommodation available on this site without delay, the Committee has in mind that the amount of £62,700 will be saved on construction. It is also

anticipated that the amount of £12,600 estimated for cost of cafeteria will be considerably reduced as a result of further study of this item as recommended by the Committee.

61. Comparative Costs - Although the plans are only at the sketch stage, and most of the detail has yet to be planned, thus making estimation of the costs difficult and likely to be somewhat unreliable, the Committee was concerned that it should be responsible for recommending a huge undertaking like this proposal without some searching investigation into the estimated costs involved. It is also felt that, with the passage of the years since the war, and particularly in the last year or two, a number of somewhat comparable projects have been undertaken, both by Government and by commercial undertakings. It therefore seems appropriate that calculations of modern buildings and construction methods should be possible with more exactness than we have been accustomed to accept in the past. The Committee was informed, in evidence, that modern office buildings in Sydney can be built on a basis of about £6.10.0 per sq.ft., while a recently completed one in North Sydney cost only £4 per sq.ft., excluding the cost of air-conditioning and partitioning.

62. The cost of the proposed newly-planned building would work out at something between £8 and £9 per square ft., and, although it was stressed in the comparisons that this building will probably have a better external finish than the North Sydney building referred to, there is a wide variation in the cost. This is a most important consideration which the Committee feels should be watched with the utmost care. In recommending the building as planned, the Committee emphasises that the cost aspect should be given special study, and suggests that, when plans have reached the appropriate stage, the Minister should call for detailed comparison with other building costs, together with full explanations for any considerable differences which become apparent.

#### Supervision

63. It is always exceedingly important to have most reliable and scrupulous supervision in large building projects, but it is pointed out that with a proposal of this magnitude too much stress cannot be laid upon the necessity for special measures of supervision in all departments of the planning and construction.

#### The Economic Aspect.

64. In considering the economic aspect of the proposal the Committee paid attention to the evidence submitted in respect of the original plan by the Chief Property Officer, regarding rentals and the value of the buildings. It was pointed out that, when space in privately owned buildings is returned to the owners there will be a saving, based on the average rental being paid at the present time of £163,178 per annum. This would produce a sum of £3,263,660 if capitalised at 5%, and it is not unrealistic to assume that this amount will be considerably greater by the time the Commonwealth buildings are ready for occupation.

65. The Committee emphasizes that this important project is to be an outstanding feature of the major development of the City, and must not be regarded as the mere expenditure of a large sum of money. The costs involved will be spread over a number of years during the construction period for the three stages, and will not fall heavily upon one budget year. It is pointed out that, in addition to the urgent need for accommodation, this scheme would result in the Commonwealth acquiring a most valuable asset on economically favourable terms. Many other advantages, obtained through having the staffs housed in more efficiently operated offices, will be very important, both to the Commonwealth and to persons needing to conduct business dealings in the building.

#### Air-Conditioning.

66. The question of air-conditioning was studied very carefully in regard to this proposal as well as that for the building on the Palladium site, and detailed evidence referring to the general question for both buildings was given by the Chief Mechanical Engineer. It was submitted that, whilst there is no doubt that air-conditioning would greatly improve comfort conditions and consequently would greatly facilitate recruitment and staff retention, it is essential to establish whether air treatment plant of any kind is necessary and whether there is justification for full air-conditioning. A lengthy and careful study was made to investigate the efficiency of office workers as influenced by atmospheric conditions, and of the economics of the whole question. The conclusions reached indicated, that, while there was yet insufficient data

from controlled experiments to determine exactly how much efficiency improvement can be expected by the installation of air-conditioning in the building, it is contended that logical deduction from established facts does show that the saving resulting from air-conditioning will be greater than the cost. The calculations were made in a scientific analysis of all the factors concerned as applied particularly to the Palladium building, and the Committee is convinced that, with appropriate equipment designed for the conditions of the building, the air-conditioning plant would pay for itself with a margin to spare. The provision of such a plant, therefore, becomes definitely an economic proposition for the Palladium building, and a similar result is assumed for the Phillip Street building under discussion in this reference. The research carried out on this subject is very valuable and practical, and will no doubt be of use in many spheres. The Committee recommends that full air-conditioning be installed in the building as proposed.

#### Building Alternatives

67. During the whole of this inquiry the question of the use of the Palladium site for the building proposed on it has been intimately connected with the various considerations dealt with in this reference. In the first place it was recognised that the Palladium building was proposed as a relief measure to alleviate the urgent need for accommodation as quickly as possible, especially in view of the protracted delays which had taken place in obtaining full use of the site in Phillip Street to the new Elizabeth Street extension alignment. As active steps have recently been taken to assure the City Council that the Commonwealth definitely intends to proceed with its building on the site, the possibility of achieving early results in this locality seems to be bright. It appears, according to the latest evidence, that there is little legal difficulty in obtaining possession of the properties on the Commonwealth-owned site in Phillip Street. The obstacles which caused most of the delay to the City Council's acquisition of the land, necessary for the new street, seem now to be confined to finding alternative accommodation for some of the residents of the area.

68. If the City Council takes the legal steps already in its power, it should not be difficult to secure alternative accommodation for the remaining residents who would then be few. It is therefore considered that considerable

advantages will accrue by the use of this site for the whole of the Commonwealth needs at the earliest possible time, and the Committee recommends that the Palladium site be not used at present.

#### Shops

69. The inclusion of shops in the plan for the office building was a question which aroused some criticism in the original plans, and a considerable amount of evidence was taken on the matter. It was thought that shops on the street alignment of a large government office building would not be in the best aesthetic interest of that section of the city. In addition it was contended that, with the height of the building limited to 150ft., the space available on the site for office accommodation would all be urgently required to house the staffs. On the other hand it was recognised that certain types of shops would be a great convenience to the occupants of the building if suitable space could be provided for them.

70. When the plans were being revised these points were kept in mind, and the new plans have been devised in such a way that some shops can be included on the Ground Floor section at the Bent Street end of the structure. The design cleverly incorporates the shops, and allows for them to be set back from the street frontage, and to have access to the Entrance Lobby. Architecturally there is now no objection to the shops as they do not interfere with the facade, and the planning of the building above the limit height makes sufficient space available for the purpose.

71. Representations were made to the Committee that demolition of the old buildings would deprive present tenants of their business facilities, and in some cases this would amount to considerable hardship. The case of Hallams Ltd., a firm of chemists established at the Bent Street end of the site for the past 28 years, was shown to be one in which legal restrictions make it virtually impossible to take their business to another site, while the specialised nature of their trading is of particular convenience to a very large professional clientele close to that area.

72. The shops sketched in the plans were apparently provided for a kiosk type of usage, but the Committee is of opinion that, when final plans are drawn further consideration should be given to the possibility of providing less shops, but making some of them about double the present size. It is also

considered likely that a certain amount of basement storage space could be provided immediately underneath some of the Bent Street shops, to ensure that adequate facilities would be available for carrying on a satisfactory service. The Committee therefore recommends that appropriate shopping areas be included in the plans, that early steps be taken to decide the type of businesses desirable, and that whatever priority is possible in those types may be extended to present businesses established on the site.

#### Architecture

73. The Committee desires to record its appreciation of the great volume of good work carried out by the architects on this project. The original design, incorporating the old Wembley Chambers, presented a well designed solution of a very difficult problem, and, when the Committee called for revised plans on the basis of demolition of Wembley Chambers, a new set of drawings was made available in a short time. The result is most pleasing and satisfactory, and all the witnesses have acclaimed its architectural worth and aesthetic appearance. The Committee considers that the building planned will be a magnificent addition to the Sydney architecture, and an important improvement to this section of the city. The design approach allows for the setting back of the structure from the streets, giving the advantages of light, ventilation and outlook from all the typical floors within the building, with garden treatment and large pedestrian concourses off the normal street pavements giving the building an impressive appearance as well as alleviating traffic congestion. It is considered to be well planned and elegant in design, and the overall conception somewhat unusual in Australian public buildings.

#### SECTION IV

##### THE COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS

##### Summary of Recommendations

74. The following is a list of the Committee's conclusions, in summary form only, arrived at after study of the plans, evidence, and the questions involved. The full recommendations are contained in the paragraphs referred to herein:

1. The Commonwealth centre should be established on the proposed site, and the Palladium site not used at present. (68).



2. Every effort should be made to sweep away the obstacles which have been in the way of development in this area for so many years. (24).
3. If the conference with the Housing Commission fails to secure alternative accommodation, and the Council cannot gain possession of its property, it is suggested that early action might be taken to vary the Agreement to provide for the Commonwealth to acquire all the land concerned and use its authority to gain vacant possession without the restrictions which operate against the City Council. (24).
4. The whole of the proposed accommodation will be required by about 1966, and every delay in commencement of the building makes the matter more urgent. (47).
5. Stage 1 of the proposal is required immediately. (49).
6. Stages 2 and 3 will be required before they can be erected, and those stages should be planned and constructed to ensure the most economical and efficient building operations, and allow release of leased accommodation urgently required for commercial use. (51).
7. Every consideration should be given to the provision of funds for the planning to proceed immediately, and successive amounts made available to allow the successive stages to be constructed consecutively. (49).
8. The project is an economical proposition, and the Commonwealth will acquire a valuable asset on favourable terms, while many advantages will accrue through added staff efficiency and convenience to the public. (65).
9. Wembley Chambers building should be demolished at the appropriate stage to allow the overall plan to be adequately created. (26).
10. As this design appears to provide the precautions generally deemed necessary in relation to the surrounding streets and properties, no objection should be raised to the height of the centre wing which exceeds the maximum provided for in the city By-laws. (35).
11. The car parking provisions are recommended, but special attention should be given to evolving a system of priority and control to make the greatest use of the area and facilitate traffic in peak periods. (38).
12. The population of 4,630 planned for this building is not considered excessive with the modern method of planning adopted. (40).

13. Only very light meals should be provided in the Cafeteria, and the departmental committee for the purpose should be consulted without delay with a view to reducing the space and some of the cooking equipment. (44).
14. The question of giving better lift service to the basement should be given further consideration. (45).
15. The zoning of the lifts as proposed should be reviewed in the light of the evidence to ensure that an adequate service is installed. (46).
16. The possibility of reducing the space between floors should be further investigated. (52).
17. Consideration should be given to replacing the revolving doors with sets of double storm-proof doors at the Entrance Lobby. (53).
18. Elaborate stairways should be avoided, and all should be fire-enclosed as a safety precaution. (54).
19. The Lecture Hall is necessary and should be included as proposed. (55).
20. The cost aspect should be given special study when the plans have reached the appropriate stage, and it is suggested that the Minister should call for detailed comparison with other building costs in order to maintain adequate control over this unusually expensive proposal. (52).
21. A project of this magnitude requires specially reliable and scrupulous supervision, and too much stress cannot be laid upon the necessity for all sections of the planning and construction to be strictly controlled. (55).
22. Full air-conditioning is proved to be an economical proposition and also desirable from many other points of view. (66).
23. Appropriate shops should be included in the plans, early steps taken to decide the type desirable, and whatever priority is possible in those types should be extended to present businesses established on the site. (72).
24. The architects are congratulated upon achieving a design of unusual distinction for a building which will be a magnificent addition to Sydney buildings. (73).

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