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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

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REPORT

RELATING TO THE PROPOSED REMOVAL OF THE

DUAL PURPOSE JETTY

AT

TOWNSVILLE, QUEENSLAND.

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*Presented pursuant to Statute ; ordered to be printed 17th May, 1955.*

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(FIFTEENTH COMMITTEE.)

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EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL—No. 10, DATED 31st MARCH, 1954.

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Melbourne, Victoria.

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*Public Works Committee Act 1913-1953.*

REMOVAL OF DUAL PURPOSE JETTY, TOWNSVILLE,  
QUEENSLAND.

Recommended to His Excellency the Governor-General that the  
Removal of the Dual Purpose Jetty, Townsville, particulars of which  
are set out in the attached statement, be referred to the Parliamentary  
Standing Committee on Public Works for inquiry and report to the  
House of Representatives.

W. S. KENT HUGHES,  
Minister for Works.

Approved in Council.

(Sgd.) W. J. SLIM,  
Governor-General.  
31st March, 1955.

Filed in the Records of the Council.

(Sgd.) T. J. COLLINS,  
Secretary to the Executive Council.

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# THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS—REMOVAL OF DUAL PURPOSE JETTY, TOWNSVILLE, QUEENSLAND.

## REPORT.

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 removal of the dual purpose jetty at Townsville, Queensland, has the honour to report as follows:—

### SECTION I.—INTRODUCTION.

#### EARLY HISTORY.

1. The dual purpose jetty is one of the wharfs in Townsville harbour, built during the war in 1943-44 by the Allied Works Council, on a requisition from the Department of Supply and Shipping. The pile-driving was done by the Townsville Harbour Board as agent for the Allied Works Council, and the superstructure was erected by a contractor. The name follows from the decision to provide one structure for two purposes—to provide wharfage for naval vessels on one side and for cargo-carrying lighters on the other.

2. The original proposal for construction of the jetty was for a structure 600 feet in length and 300 feet distant from the western side of the concrete pier existing in the Outer Harbour. Dredging at the site was begun while the working drawings for the pier were being prepared, but before the piles were driven it was decided to place a 40-ft. wide structure at a distance of 240 feet from the concrete pier, and to extend the length from 600 to 800 feet, in order to make use of deeper water with a minimum of dredging.

3. In 1943 the Harbour Board advised the Allied Works Council that no objection would be offered to the erection of the proposed dual purpose jetty as a temporary expedient for the duration of the war, and twelve months thereafter.

4. While the jetty was being constructed the Townsville Harbour Board requested that the piles be protected with concrete sleeves to ensure that they would have a longer life, and this was agreed to, provided that this did not delay the work and that the cost of such protection would be borne by the Board. The Board also agreed to pay the extra cost of fender piles necessitated by the use of the concrete sleeves.

5. After the end of the war the Harbour Board proceeded to implement a scheme of development which involved the removal of the jetty. In 1948, a conference took place at which the Board made it clear that they desired the demolition of the jetty, though the Commonwealth Government representatives at the conference stressed the desirability of making use of the structure, which was in good condition.

6. Shortly after this a start was made on the demolition of the jetty, but, after some piles were drawn and some of the superstructure dismantled, the work was discontinued. The Department of Works advised the Harbour Board that, if the Board would remove the concrete sleeves, at its cost, the Department would proceed with the work of demolition, but the Board refused to accept any responsibility for the removal of the sleeves or the piles. Several attempts have been made to arrive at a satisfactory basis for agreement on the matter, but without success, and the Harbour Board has recently renewed requests for the jetty to be removed by the Commonwealth to enable the Board to proceed with its developmental work.

### SECTION II.—THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

#### GENERAL.

7. The Committee took evidence from officials of the Department of Works concerned in the proposal, and proceeded to Townsville to inspect the dual purpose jetty. Evidence was also taken from the Mayor of Townsville and from the Chairman and officials of the Harbour Board. The plans of the port were studied, and the Committee obtained a clear idea of the piers and the port installations.

#### THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL.

8. The original proposal for the pier arose through the war necessity to provide urgently required facilities to serve the large volume of shipping connected with the war effort. There is no doubt that the important consideration at the time was for the structure to be built as quickly as possible, and it is generally recognized that the proposed structure was then visualized as a temporary expedient for the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter, as advised by the Harbour Board in May, 1943. It seems, however, that the original siting of the jetty was made with the object of fitting in with the post-war development of the port. This point was challenged by the Harbour Board, though it was pointed out that the policy of the Port Equipment and Development Committee at the time was for all its war-time structures in Australia to be fitted in as far as possible and to be of some ultimate value.

#### PROTECTING THE PILES.

9. The Harbour Board made a request on 22nd July, 1943, that the piles be protected against attacks by marine borers, by placing concrete pipes over the vertical piles, in order to extend the life of the structure, and agreed to meet the cost of such protection. As a consequence, it became necessary to replace the vertical chafing pieces with fender piles, and the difference in cost was also borne by the Board. The cost of the sleeves and the fender piles amounted to approximately £8,950.

10. It has been declared by the Board that the action taken to protect the piles was a specific contribution to the war effort, that it was not done with the object of making use of the jetty after the war, and that the jetty would not have been of use to the Board at any time. During the course of this evidence, however, it was stated that, if the piles had not been protected in some adequate way they could be expected to break off at ground level and become a menace to subsequent dredging operations.

11. The placing of the sleeves on the piles has been regarded as of particular significance by the Department of Works, because it was taken to indicate that the Board desired longer life for the jetty, so that it would be of commercial use in the future, and also because it represented a considerable variation in the original conception of the jetty as a purely temporary structure. It is contended that the concrete sleeves represented what is practically the only way of

converting the jetty into a semi-permanent work, and in fact the effect of their protection did alter the life of the job considerably, and so constituted a variation of the original agreement for a temporary structure which would be removed when the war ended.

12. The Harbour Board insists that their motive in spending about £9,000 to prolong the life of the piles is immaterial, as the Commonwealth agreed to remove the jetty after the war and should honour their obligation in this regard. The Department, however, feels that the motive is important if it prompted the decision to sleeve the piles, because subsequent events are stated to have proved that a great deal of difficulty, delay and expenditure have been involved in the attempts to remove the piles through the presence of the sleeves tightly wedged on to the piles. A considerable amount of evidence was submitted on different aspects of this question, including the fact that amongst the works carried out by the Board during the war, none but the protection of the piles was carried out at the Board's expense as a patriotic war gesture.

#### LIFE OF UNPROTECTED PILES.

13. Not the least important of the points raised was the fact that the protection of the piles was regarded by the Department as unnecessary for a temporary war structure, but was agreed to on condition that the Board should meet the cost, the Department being under the impression that protection of the piles would, in the end, benefit the Board after the war. Weight was given to this point by the fact that no other temporary wartime structure was provided with protection for the piles, even in the tropical waters of the more northerly harbours. It was stated that the turpentine piles used would normally stand without protection for at least fifteen years, and at that stage, in 1943, the war had already been in operation for over three years. It was therefore considered that any protection given to the jetty would be primarily of use in the distant future well after the end of the war. The Department believes that the Board at that time, with some of the personnel different from the present Board, fully intended to use the jetty after the war, but, owing to the buoyant state of the town revenues throughout the war and post-war years, decided subsequently to push ahead with major port development. The Board states that their schemes for development have been progressively planned since 1911, and the dual-purpose jetty had no part in their scheme, but is now holding up further progress until it is demolished.

#### THE COMPLETED JETTY.

14. The pier was built, but was not completed in time to be of any practical use, as by that time the war had moved further away from the area. Although naval vessels used the jetty from time to time it was not used by commercial vessels. Apart from the desire to remove the jetty to make way for the developmental work, there seems to have been no reason why the structure could not have been used commercially at that time, at any rate until maintenance of the long approach made it uneconomical. There was a 24-ft. depth of water for 200 feet at the outer end which could have been carried further in with more dredging. When the decking was removed, of course, it became useless.

#### REMOVING THE PILES.

15. When after the war pressure was brought to bear upon the Department to honour their obligation to remove the jetty, considerable efforts were made by departmental officials to emphasize that the jetty was still a very sound structure, with many years of useful life, and it would be a scandal to remove it at that stage, having been provided with special protective sleeves at its construction, only about five years previously. Offers were made to sell the jetty or lease it

to the Board who, however, finally refused it even as a gift, and insisted that it should be demolished. The Department therefore reluctantly commenced to remove the jetty.

16. No specific agreement was made for the Board to pay for the removal of the sleeves, or on the other hand for the Commonwealth to remove the jetty, including the protection on the piles, without some contribution by the Board, though, at a conference on 9th June, 1948, Mr. Lewis claimed that the Board should first remove the sleeves. The fact, however, would appear to be that, until commencement of demolition operations nobody realized the real difficulty which the presence of the sleeves presented. There seems little doubt, that, if the sleeves had caused no considerable delay, difficulty, or expense, the whole job would have been completed at that time. The Board contends that the main difficulty was caused by removal of the superstructure rather than by the presence of the sleeves.

17. Tenders were called for the work of demolition, and, in view of the acute shortage of timber, it was proposed to make immediate use of the material in the jetty. At one stage the Department had estimated that the cost of demolishing the jetty was about £10,600 greater than the value of the materials made available from it. In July, 1948, the lowest tender was £9,741 the contractor retaining the materials, and £14,500 with the materials remaining with the Commonwealth. As the timber was urgently needed for New Guinea work, and the £14,500 was considered too high for demolition alone, the estimate of the Works Department for £10,000 net was decided upon.

18. Demolition commenced early in July, 1949, using some equipment hired from the Board at what is considered a very high charge. The equipment was not strong enough for the work and made the unit costs too high, so, after a comparatively small amount of the work had been carried out, it was discontinued in February, 1950. Further sections of the superstructure were removed in May, 1950, leaving the piles isolated for almost half the length of the jetty.

19. In 1951 further efforts were made by the Board to have the work resumed, but a letter dated 21st May, 1951, was sent to the Board drawing attention to the difficulties caused by the pile casings, and repeating that the Department looked to the Board to remove the sleeves before the rest of the work could be resumed. The Board refused to accept the responsibility for removal of the sleeves, and the work has remained in abeyance ever since.

#### METHODS OF DEMOLITION.

20. Inquiry was made as to the methods of demolition likely to be available if the work is to be carried out in a practical way now. There are several methods which are stated to be effective, but it is questionable which would be the cheapest and most suitable. The piles can be removed by jetting under high pressures, or by flotation, but in respect of all the methods it is apparent that the sheathing adds considerably to the trouble. It was suggested that equipment could be brought from the south to give a greater lift than was possible in previous attempts, when a pull of 40 tons had failed to move some of the piles. One of the cheapest methods was stated to be the use of flotation units so that the piles could be lifted under pressure by the tide. This would be extremely slow but effective, if the units could be used while the sleeves are on the piles.

#### COST OF REMOVING SLEEVES.

21. It has not been possible to get an estimate for the cost of removing the sleeves, so that the piles could be drawn afterwards, though an amount of £2,000 was

suggested as necessary for removing the sleeves after the piles were drawn, allowing the piles to be used again.

#### COST OF TOTAL DEMOLITION.

22. The estimates for the cost of removing the jetty have become progressively higher as time has passed. The latest estimate of the cost of demolition is £25,000, though much depends on what plant can be obtained. It has been found that the piles were driven well into a hard clay and will require powerful pressures to lift them out. It is well recognized now that a great deal of money would have been saved if one of the tenders had been accepted some years ago, though, in the light of departmental experience with the piles, there is room for doubt that the contractor would have been able to carry his contract through.

#### CO-OPERATION.

23. During the inquiry special efforts were made with the object of securing some compromise with the Harbour Board, or some degree of co-operation, so that an effective basis could be built for an agreement to complete the work. A special appeal was made to the Board, when the Chairman was asked if they would consider any type of compromise in which the Board would contribute in some way towards the removal of the sleeves, either in the cost of demolition or in some other way. The Chairman considered that the whole responsibility lay upon the Commonwealth, and he could not advise his Board to bear any financial obligation. He did offer, however, that the Board would co-operate in any other way possible, such as by the use of workshons, machinery and equipment, or trained personnel, but the Board would expect reasonable compensation in respect of labour, plant and materials used. It was stated quite definitely that the Board will not make any financial contribution to the removal of the jetty.

#### SECTION III.—THE COMMITTEE'S DELIBERATIONS.

24. A great deal of time and thought was given to discussion on the various aspects of the inquiry, and the members of the Committee expressed themselves fully concerning their views. Some divergences of opinion were put forward on several points during the discussions. Most of the members feel that the sleeves did not contribute in any way to the war effort, but in fact delayed construction, and, as unprotected piles were adequate for so many years, could only have been of use ultimately in the Board's interests.

The Committee rejects the Board's contention that it spent almost £9,000 as a war contribution gesture, and feels at that time it must have had the idea of utilizing the Wharf for its own purposes after the war.

25. The Committee is of opinion that the Board had negatived the original responsibility of the Commonwealth by altering the temporary character of the structure which the Commonwealth agreed to erect for the duration of the war. It agreed that throughout the years, during the strenuous and unusual war period, faults and misunderstandings had occurred on both sides, but the majority of the Committee felt that at least some real compromise should be conceded by the Harbour Board, when the Commonwealth has been, and is, willing and prepared to make concessions. This opinion is held by the Committee, particularly in view of the fact that one of the great difficulties contributing to the cost of removing the jetty was, and is, the sleeving of the piles, specially carried out at the request of, and at the expense of the Harbour Board, obviously for their own purposes.

26. During the deliberations by the Committee a point of view was expressed that the Commonwealth had entered into a contract, and, notwithstanding what has happened in the interval, nothing had occurred to change or vary the terms of the original contract, so that the Commonwealth is therefore committed to complete removal of the jetty. A group of three other specific points of view was also brought forward maintaining—

- (a) That the dual purpose jetty was part of the overall Australian war effort, and the cost of the demolition should therefore be a charge against the nation;
- (b) as partial demolition had been carried out, the Commonwealth had become committed to complete removal of the structure; and
- (c) as the sum involved, being the cost of removing the sleeves, could conceivably be more than offset by the offer of the Harbour Board for the use of equipment and staff on the spot, even though the Commonwealth would be charged for these, it should not be allowed to be the cause of continuing the present deadlock.

27. The Committee in arriving at its decisions, gave particular consideration to the above four points of view, but they were not considered acceptable and rejected them against the weight of all the other factors in the matter. After full consideration of the whole subject the Committee came to its decisions in the usual manner, with divisions being taken where necessary.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

28. The following conclusions, with extracts from Minutes of Proceedings when divisions were taken, were reached by the Committee:—

- (1) The Committee is of the opinion that the Commonwealth had a responsibility to remove the jetty prior to the addition of the concrete sleeves to the piles.
- (2) The Committee is of opinion that, when the jetty was first erected, all the implications suggested that the intention by the Harbor Board was to use the jetty in the future for a long period of years.
- (3) The evidence suggests that it was only when hostilities ended that the Harbor Board, finding itself in a buoyant financial position through war revenues, decided to implement their scheme for greater port development.
- (4) Whilst at no time did the Commonwealth accept responsibility for the cost of removing the concrete sheathing, the Department did not at first realize the full extent of the difficulty that the sheathing of the piles presented. This was only revealed when the work of demolition commenced.
- (5) The Committee is of opinion that the question can only be resolved if a new agreement is entered into by the Commonwealth and the Harbor Board in relation to the matter.
- (6) An extract from the Minutes of Proceedings follows:—

Mr. Lawrence moved, and Mr. Bird seconded—  
That it is recommended that the new agreement be made, and should provide—

- (a) That the Townsville Harbor Board remove the sheathing on the piles at their own cost, and that the

Commonwealth should then proceed to the demolition of the jetty, or

- (b) That the Townsville Harbor Board pay an amount in cash or services equal to half the extra cost involved in the removal of the jetty caused by the presence of the concrete sheathing.

Senator Maher moved an amendment, seconded by Mr. O'Connor—

That the Commonwealth Government assume responsibility for removal of the jetty, including the concrete sheaths, as soon as possible at its own expense.

The Committee divided on the Amendment—

Ayes, 2.	Noes, 6.
Senator Maher.	Senator Henty.
Mr. O'Connor.	Senator O'Byrne.
	Mr. Bird.
	Mr. Cramer.
	Mr. Lawrence.
	Mr. Watkins.

And so it passed in the negative.

The Committee divided on the original motion—

Ayes, 6.	Noes, 2.
Senator Henty.	Senator Maher.
Senator O'Byrne.	Mr. O'Connor.
Mr. Bird.	
Mr. Cramer.	
Mr. Lawrence.	
Mr. Watkins.	

And so it was resolved in the affirmative.

29. There were many aspects of the matter, and a great many minor issues, brought before the Committee in relation to the negotiations over the years. It is not considered desirable to extend this Report to deal with all of them, but perusal of the full evidence will amplify the principal points referred to here.

J. O. CRAMER, Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing  
Committee on Public Works,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra.

12th May, 1955.