

1959.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

TWENTY-FIFTH GENERAL
REPORT.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(SIXTEENTH COMMITTEE.)

(Senators appointed 16th February, 1956; Members of the House of Representatives appointed 22nd February, 1956.)

Senator NORMAN HENRY DENHAM HENTY (Chairman).⁽¹⁾
 WILLIAM ROBERT LAWRENCE, ESQUIRE, M.P. (Chairman).⁽²⁾
 DAVID OLIVER WATKINS, ESQUIRE, M.P. (Vice-Chairman).⁽⁴⁾
 Senator JUSTIN HILARY O'BYRNE (Vice-Chairman).⁽⁵⁾

Senate.

Senator EDMUND BEDE MAHER.
 Senator KENNETH MCCOLL ANDERSON.⁽³⁾

House of Representatives.

ALLAN CHARLES BIRD, ESQUIRE, M.P.
 GEORGE JAMES BOWDEN, ESQUIRE, M.P.
 ROGER LEVINGE DEAN, ESQUIRE, M.P.
 WILLIAM PAUL O'CONNOR, ESQUIRE, M.P.

⁽¹⁾ Resigned 19th October, 1956.
 Vice-Chairman 29th January, 1957.

⁽²⁾ Appointed Chairman 24th October, 1956.
⁽³⁾ Appointed Vice-Chairman 29th January, 1957.

⁽⁵⁾ Appointed 25th October, 1956.

⁽⁴⁾ Resigned as

(Ceased to exist on dissolution of House of Representatives on 14th November, 1958.)

(SEVENTEENTH COMMITTEE.)

(Senators appointed 19th February, 1959; Members of the House of Representatives appointed 24th February, 1959.)

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

Senate.

Senator KENNETH MCCOLL ANDERSON.
 Senator EDMUND BEDE MAHER.

House of Representatives.

WILFRED JOHN BRIMBLECOMBE, ESQUIRE, M.P.
 ROGER LEVINGE DEAN, ESQUIRE, M.P.
 CHARLES EDWARD GRIFFITHS, ESQUIRE, M.P.
 HECTOR JAMES McIVOR, ESQUIRE, M.P.
 WILLIAM PAUL O'CONNOR, ESQUIRE, M.P.

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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

TWENTY-FIFTH GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency Field-Marshal 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 *Public Works Committee Act 1913-1953*, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has the honour to submit the following report of its proceedings:—

SIXTEENTH COMMITTEE.

1. The members of the Sixteenth Committee were appointed in the Senate on the 16th February, 1956, and in the House of Representatives on 22nd February, 1956. The following were the members appointed to the Committee:—Senators N. H. D. Henty, E. B. Maher and J. H. O'Byrne, and Messrs. A. C. Bird, G. J. Bowden, R. L. Dean, W. R. Lawrence, W. P. O'Connor and D. O. Watkins.

2. At its first meeting Senator N. H. D. Henty was elected Chairman, and Mr. D. O. Watkins elected as Vice-Chairman. The Committee ceased to exist on dissolution of the House of Representatives on 14th November, 1958.

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL.

3. Following his appointment as Minister for Trade and Customs, Senator N. H. D. Henty resigned from the Committee on 19th October, 1956. Mr. W. R. Lawrence was elected Chairman on 24th October, 1956, and Senator K. M. Anderson was appointed to fill the vacant place on the Committee on 25th October, 1956. Owing to sickness Mr. D. O. Watkins resigned as Vice-Chairman of the Committee on 29th January, 1957, but continued as a member of the Committee until the end of the period under review. Senator J. H. O'Byrne was elected Vice-Chairman on 29th January, 1957, to take Mr. Watkins's place.

REFERENCES DEALT WITH.

4. This General Report, the twenty-fifth 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.

5. When the Twenty-fourth General Report was presented there were two inquiries incomplete as follows:—

	£
Canberra Community Hospital, Australian Capital Territory	2,500,000
Plant and Soils Laboratory, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, St. Lucia, Queensland	133,000

The reference relating to the Canberra Community Hospital was referred in due course during the period now being considered, but the reference relating to the Plant and Soils Laboratory in Queensland was allowed to lapse.

All the works referred to the Committee during the present period were completed and the relevant Reports presented to Parliament.

COMPLETED INVESTIGATIONS.

6. The works referred to the Committee by the House of Representatives, under the terms of the *Public Works Committee Act 1913–1953*, and upon which investigations were completed, comprise—

	£
(1) Community Hospital, Canberra	2,500,000
(2) Automatic Telephone Exchange, Haymarket, Sydney	754,500
(3) Food Research Laboratory Buildings, North Ryde, New South Wales ..	650,000
(4) Studios for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Perth, Western Australia	750,000
(5) Additions to Customs House, Melbourne	630,000
(6) Steam Power Station, Darwin, Northern Territory	1,850,000
(7) Automatic Telephone Exchange and Post Office, Potts Point, Sydney, New South Wales	400,000
(8) Mail Exchange, Redfern, New South Wales	4,170,000
(9) Repatriation General Hospital, Hobart, Tasmania	220,000

SUMMARY OF INQUIRIES.

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

(1) COMMUNITY HOSPITAL, CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY.

The Proposal.

8. The proposal submitted to the Committee did not present a planned building for investigation by the Committee, but the terms of reference stipulated that, at this stage, the Committee should investigate the need, suitability of the site, and proposed method of implementation. A proposal was therefore submitted, giving details of the site at present being used and suggestions for development of projects upon it to give an ultimate establishment of 472 beds, with appropriate ancillary services. The proposal suggested the construction of a hospital unit with access to the present main building by a connecting link; a separate nurses' home; and a boiler house and laundry unit. The programme envisaged successive construction of six stages of the work, spread over the period extending until about 1970.

Need for the Building.

9. It was explained that the present hospital is reasonably adequate for present needs, but that provision would have to be planned for the increase in Canberra's population, which is intended to include gradual removal of various departments from Melbourne to Canberra. It was calculated that the increase in population would demand the establishment of a hospital of 472 beds by about 1970, while a population of 75,000, anticipated by about 1985, would need a hospital of 600 beds.

The Cost.

10. No attempt was made to supply any detail of the cost of construction, but the Committee was informed that additions of the types suggested in the proposal would cost in the order of £2,500,000, from which it is assumed that the completed 600-bed hospital would involve construction of ten units instead of six, at a cost of approximately £4,000,000.

Recommendations.

11. (1) The site is adequate for some time to come, and the buildings recommended should provide for the maximum establishment desirable on the area. (Para. 13.)
- (2) The site is an excellent one and the best for the proposed additions. (Para. 14.)
- (3) If in the distant future development of Canberra demands further hospital facilities, they probably will have to be placed on some other site. (Paras. 15 and 21.)
- (4) It is not possible to decide now on the nature of future requirements, but alternative sites should be allowed for in the City plan. (Para. 16.)
- (5) Precautions against extreme floods are reasonable. (Para. 12.)
- (6) There is need for immediate action towards the provision of 472 beds by 1970, and the site should be developed to the maximum of 600 beds, calculated to be required by a population of 75,000 by about 1985, with the consideration beyond that time being given when more definite indications are available. (Para. 21.)
- (7) If Canberra Hospital is changed to a base hospital in the future, additional associated hospitals could be erected in the suburbs. (Para. 23.)
- (8) The basis of 32 beds per ward, as proposed, should be adopted in planning. (Para. 30.)

- (9) In the terms of an ultimate 10-ward addition (total approximately 600 beds) a horizontal building of five floors would be preferable to a vertical one of ten floors. However, the compromise suggestion of a seven-floor building of 48 beds per floor, appears to be more satisfactory, if the building is to be erected in stages, but it should be subject to close examination, and consultation with the Medical Superintendent and others concerned with the use of the building. (Paras. 31 and 33.)
- (10) Construction of a complete 600-bed hospital now is not justified under present circumstances. (Para. 36.)
- (11) Plans for 600-bed hospital should be prepared with a view to constructing only a first stage to 472 beds at present. (Para. 37.)
- (12) The proposed connecting link should be planned to ensure that it will maintain an aesthetic balance between the old and the new buildings. (Para. 39.)
- (13) The Committee agrees that the construction schedule should be phased as proposed, but emphasis should be placed upon the necessity to complete the nurses' home and the hospital building at the same time. (Para. 41.)
- (14) The ancillary buildings should be planned to allow for future additions when the final stages of the 600-bed hospital are being constructed. (Para. 43.)
- (15) The building plans should be drawn up as soon as possible, and a fresh reference made to the Committee. (Para. 44.)
- (16) Although not entirely suitable, from the Civil Defence point of view, the site is the most appropriate for the purpose. (Para. 47.)
- (17) The impact of the hospital insurance scheme on demand for the hospital accommodation should be studied before the plans are drawn up. (Para. 48.)

(2) AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE EXCHANGE, HAYMARKET, SYDNEY.

The Proposal.

12. As a consequence of the pressing need to develop the facilities in the Haymarket area, it was proposed to redesign the existing City South area, so that part of it would be served by a new exchange to be known as Haymarket. A survey showed that it will be necessary to proceed promptly with the erection of a new telephone exchange building at Haymarket to accommodate 20,000 lines of telephone subscribers' equipment. It was also proposed to transfer to the new building the main trunk line equipment serving the western route, and to provide 900 trunk terminations.

13. Plans were prepared for a six-story building to cover the whole of the site, using structural steel frame encased in concrete, with concrete floor slabs, and external walls of precast concrete panels. The total estimated cost was shown as £754,500.

Need for the Building.

14. The present building has already exceeded its maximum planned capacity, but, by making certain additions to the building, and by using various other expedients to crowd in more lines, it will be possible to increase effective capacity to cope with requirements until about 1960. A graph was submitted showing the net increase throughout the metropolitan area of Sydney since 1925. During the past five years there has been an average yearly rise of 7 per cent., and it is anticipated that growth will continue to at least the same extent.

15. The building, as proposed, is designed to meet the telephone requirements for approximately twenty years. After that period it would be necessary to provide for any further expansion by adding up to three more floors to the building.

Recommendations.

16. (1) The Committee is convinced that there is an urgent demand for the Haymarket Exchange. (Para. 19.)
- (2) Provision should be made to ensure that expansion will be possible to meet the needs in this locality. (Para. 24.)
- (3) The amount of £26,340 to strengthen the foundations now, so that future additions will be possible without delay, should be provided, but the three extra floors considered should not be constructed at the present time. (Para. 27.)
- (4) The site is suitable for the purpose. (Para. 36.)
- (5) Particular attention should be given to the possibility of supply, fabrication and delivery of steelwork by independent contract, and co-operation of the Treasury sought, to arrange the necessary finance to procure essential supplies at the required stages, with the resulting important saving in time for construction of the building. (Para. 42.)
- (6) Some more direct and expeditious method of purchasing and handling the necessary structural steel might be evolved, if suitable action is taken to approach the Broken Hill Proprietary Limited, concerning purchases of appropriate materials. (Para. 44.)

- (7) The Committee recommends the adoption of the No. 3 proposal for one passenger-goods lift to carry sixteen passengers plus one sixteen-passenger lift, together with a lift well for future lift when required, at the resultant saving of £4,270. (Para. 48.)
- (8) Pre-cast slab facing should be suitable for facing the building, but it will be advisable to use a very bold pattern to ensure that it will be effective in appearance on the high building. (Para. 49.)

(3) FOOD RESEARCH LABORATORY BUILDINGS, NORTH RYDE, NEW SOUTH WALES.

The Proposal.

17. The building groups planned in this project comprised the Main Laboratory Block, the Food Canning Block, the Administration Block and the Workshop Block. In addition, provision was also made for miscellaneous minor buildings such as sulphur shed, chemical process shed, oil store, &c., with caretaker's cottage to be added later. The buildings were to be constructed on a site at North Ryde, on an area of land adjacent to the present Coal Research Establishment of the C.S.I.R.O., on the south side of Delhi-road. The estimated cost of the project, including preparation, buildings, services, and miscellaneous items, was set down at £650,000.

Need for the Buildings.

18. It has been shown that a floor area of less than 350 square feet per person results in severe overcrowding and impaired efficiency. The floor area at Homebush is 260 square feet per person, and experience has shown that this area is quite inadequate for the needs of the Division, with the result that many services cannot be installed because of lack of space.

19. The area planned is 67,000 square feet, of which 15,000 square feet is for cold rooms and pilot plant. Under the present conditions at Homebush it is practically impossible to obtain suitable surroundings in which to carry out bacteriological tests. As there is no further room for expansion at Homebush, laboratories and conditions are so cramped that valuable work is being hampered.

20. Many examples of the valuable work being carried out by the Division, resulting in the saving of thousands of pounds per annum, were explained to the Committee. Outstanding achievements quoted including the cases of chilled beef, rot in eggs, canned peas, rotting in citrus fruits, storage of apples and pears, deterioration of prawns, refrigerated rail transport and many others. A great many problems remain to be tackled when suitable facilities can be made available.

Recommendations.

- 21. (1) The Committee is impressed with the research work being carried out under difficult conditions by the Food Preservation Division at Homebush. (Para. 31.)
- (2) The whole of the investigations indicate that the organization of present work, as well as the planning of future activities, have been carefully carried out, with due regard to economy, and demonstrate the urgent need for the proposed buildings. (Para. 32.)
- (3) The results of the work of the Division are of tremendous potential value, both to the internal economy of the country as well as to our export trade, and the proposals making extensions to the work possible, should be given the highest priority. (Para. 33.)
- (4) The site is conveniently situated in relation to other Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization activities, and is suitable for the purpose. (Para. 35.)
- (5) Immediate action to complete the resumption of the whole of the area required should be taken as an urgent measure. (Para. 36.)
- (6) The essential engineering services which are of a complex nature, have been carefully planned. (Para. 38.)
- (7) It is not considered necessary to provide new emergency generating plant, so long as space is reserved for the use of appropriate plant available from the existing equipment. (Para. 39.)
- (8) Evidence from all the witnesses, in their various spheres, indicates that the buildings have been well planned, and should be eminently suitable for the research work projected for some years to come. (Para. 40.)

(4) STUDIOS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION, PERTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

The Proposal.

22. The new building is planned to occupy only the upper level of the site, with a frontage to Adelaide-terrace, the lower level with frontage to Terrace-drive being reserved for future television purposes. The building is to comprise an administrative wing of ground and four upper floors, and also a Production Block, of studios, control rooms with associated technical facilities, certain office accommodation directly connected with the studio production, and the Services Block.

23. The two components of the building are to form an "L" shape on plan, and will enclose a rear court for off-street parking and access to loading dock. The building is to have a total cubic content of 1,169,300 cubic feet, and the estimated cost of the proposal was £750,000.

Need for the Building.

24. Many reasons were advanced to justify the urgent necessity for a new A.B.C. building in Perth, the most impressive being the desire to alleviate the congestion and difficulties under which the staff is at present working. The Committee's inspections demonstrated convincingly that the whole organization was labouring under extreme difficulties, which must certainly impair the efficiency of the work, and result in very great discomfort and problems for the staff.

25. Under the new Town Hall Act an agreement has been entered into between the Commonwealth Government and the City Council that, by 31st December, 1960, the area at present used for the A.B.C. buildings would be vacated. The City Council is waiting to proceed with arrangements for providing the new Town Hall, and is held up until definite plans are made for the new A.B.C. accommodation.

Recommendations.

26. (1) There is an urgent necessity for the building—
 To relieve the present intolerable conditions. (Para. 16.)
 To comply with the agreement under the Town Hall Act. (Para. 17); and
 To take advantage of the present favorable conditions for building. (Para. 18)
- (2) The site is eminently suitable for the purpose. (Para. 19.)
- (3) The old foundations should be demolished as suggested. (Para. 21.)
- (4) Efforts should be made to obtain portion of the adjoining site for future expansion. (Para. 23.)
- (5) Office accommodation allocated on the basic rate of 85 square feet per person, suggested in the evidence, is economical and desirable. (Para. 35.)
- (6) Further co-ordination of the experts should be effected in order to ensure that the allocation of space will actually achieve the results estimated in the planning. (Para. 36.)
- (7) It is advisable to provide the fourth floor for television purposes now, and also to allow for foundations to permit the addition of up to three more stories at a future date. (Para. 39.)
- (8) Air-conditioning for the Administrative Wing is fully justified, and should be included at a cost approximating £45,000. (Para. 46.)
- (9) The plans are well prepared, and should provide a useful and interesting architectural feature for the City of Perth. (Para. 60.)
- (10) The cafeteria for light meals only should be provided as planned. (Para. 63.)
- (11) Owing to the urgent nature of the proposal, special priority should be given to allow plans to be completed and work commenced at the earliest possible moment. (Para. 53.)
- (12) Immediate approval should be given for the expenditure of sufficient money to carry out preliminary site work without delay, in order to assist in relieving the existing unemployment position in Western Australia. (Para. 54.)

(5) ADDITIONS TO CUSTOMS HOUSE, MELBOURNE.

The Proposal.

27. The original proposal, referred to as the Annexe Proposal, aimed to provide a building comprising a rectangular block containing basement, lower ground floor, ground floor, and three upper floors, to occupy the whole of the available site formed by the courtyard at the rear of the existing Customs House, after allowance for light courts and easements. The building would extend from William-street to Market-street, and, at an appropriate central position, a northern wing would link on to the existing Commonwealth Laboratory.

28. The Annexe was designed so that, in the event of a future expansion of Commonwealth activities, it could form part of an overall site development. Accommodation to be provided in the new building would be sufficient for 244 persons, while subsequent renovations of the existing building would provide for an additional 188 officers. The total usable office space to be provided was 31,920 square feet, and the estimated cost of the proposal was £630,000.

Need for the Building.

29. Use of this particular area as the site for the proposed accommodation for the Customs Department posed problems with the foundations, and caused considerable difficulty in the early planning. The use of the present old building, which is an example of early historic architecture in Melbourne, as part of the ultimate total accommodation, proved a strong but problematical influence in arriving at the proposal presented to the Committee.

30. During previous investigations by the Committee into the necessity for accommodation for departments in Melbourne, it was clearly understood that no provision was made for the Customs activities in the Commonwealth Administration Centre at Spring-street, because concrete proposals were at that time in course of preparation for a new Customs House building.

31. It was represented to the Committee that the location of several branches away from the main section in the Customs House causes much waste of time to the Department itself, adversely affects its operation, and causes much inconvenience to the large body of commercial people transacting their business from day to day. The Commonwealth Laboratory was designed and built nearly 50 years ago, and is quite inadequate for the modern instruments and processes required in an analytical laboratory to-day. Staff increases, based upon calculations of past experience is reckoned to be in the order of 2½ per cent., and provision is planned for the future at this rate.

32. Some expressions of opinions stressed the value of the old Customs House building in particularly emphatic terms, though other opinions favoured the replacement of the old structure with modern buildings making better use of the valuable site. Several other sites and other alternatives to destruction of the old building were considered, and various plans for providing the essential accommodation for the future were investigated. Four additional schemes were developed before the inquiry concluded, and the Committee gave a great deal of study to the matter before arriving at the final conclusions.

Recommendations.

33. (1) It is important to provide additional accommodation for the Customs Department in Melbourne as soon as possible.
- (2) The evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of the Customs Department remaining in the present locality. (Para. 44.)
- (3) The evidence does not indicate any other really suitable site available in the locality. (Para. 45.)
- (4) The proposal for the Annexe in the Court Yard is a very commendable effort on the part of the designers to submit a compromise to satisfy very difficult conditions, but the result would be a building which would be uneconomical and inadequate for ultimate requirements. (Para. 46.)
- (5) The Commonwealth has a responsibility to retain and develop the whole of the site upon which the present Customs House is built, but the Laboratory site, between the State Electricity Commission and the Harbour Trust buildings, should be declared surplus to Customs requirements and consideration given to disposal of it. (Para. 47.)
- (6) As the ultimate demolition of the old Customs House is regarded as inevitable, it is desirable to demolish it in the first instance, to allow adequate scope for appropriate development of the very valuable site involved. (Para. 65.)
- (7) The plans submitted should be not approved, but the designers should be given a better opportunity to plan a worthy building for the whole site, more economical in construction, and providing adequately for expansion of the Customs Department for a reasonable period ahead. (Para. 52.)
- (8) The Committee endorses the view that full investigation is necessary by officials of the various departments involved, and recommends that the evidence available in this inquiry, as well as that connected with the earlier Commonwealth Administration Centre investigation, so closely related to this one, should be the basis for the further study now required. (Para. 74.)
- (9) Sufficient evidence is available at this stage to prompt the recommendation that immediate steps should be taken to develop the Flinders-street site along the lines suggested in Scheme B, and such a project should be submitted then for final inquiry by the Committee. (Para. 78.)

(6) STEAM POWER STATION, DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY.

The Proposal.

34. After studying all available alternatives in the provision of electric power for Darwin, the Department of Works submitted a proposal considered the most suitable, having regard to the factors involved, and particularly the economics of the question. The First Stage of the proposal was to provide for requirements up to 1971, and would comprise two 7,500-kilowatt turbo-alternators, two oil-fired boilers, and associated equipment. This 15,000-kilowatt steam station was to be installed on the seafront, adjacent to Stokes Hill, and to the north of the New Wharf. A second stage was envisaged for further plant to provide additional capacity in accordance with a suitable review of the position, and the economics concerned as the necessity arose in the future. The estimated cost of the first stage, to be installed as soon as possible, was £1,850,000.

Need for the New Station.

35. Most of the existing equipment was installed many years ago, and it is only practicable to instal one more set in the building. This total capacity would be fully needed by 1963, and arrangements will be required immediately in order to ensure continuity of supply after that date. Study of the demand has resulted in the conclusion that the rate of increased demand to be adopted for future calculations is 10½ per cent. compound, and the proposal was planned on this basis.

36. Evidence was received of details of investigations made into a number of interesting alternatives to the steam equipment eventually suggested. These alternatives included diesel engines, hydro-electric power, and nuclear power.

37. The desirability of the site, being close to the town, and to the wharves, as well as being adjacent to the large oil storage tanks on Stokes Hill, was the subject of much consideration. Alternative sites were considered, and, before a final conclusion was reached in this regard, evidence in camera was taken from the Department of Defence, in order to ensure that confidential opinions regarding the site should not be excluded.

Recommendations.

38. (1) The Committee is satisfied that the basis adopted in estimating the future load is reasonable, and that the need for the proposed power station has been adequately sustained (Paras. 21 and 23.)
- (2) Study of the alternative methods (including nuclear power) shows that the oil-fired steam station proposed, with appropriate use of the old equipment, is the most suitable at the present juncture and should be erected at a cost of £1,850,000. (Paras. 36 and 50.)
- (3) Provision for use of alternative methods in the later stages is a wise precaution, and should be adopted. (Para. 37.)
- (4) After weighing all the points involved, including the technical advice from the Department of Defence, the Committee is satisfied that the proposed site at Stokes Hill is the most suitable for the purpose. (Para. 44.)
- (5) Close attention should be paid to the possibility of smoke nuisance, and steps should be taken to ensure that adequate modern preventive equipment is installed, with proper supervision of staff handling the apparatus during operation. (Para. 48.)

(7) AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE EXCHANGE AND POST OFFICE, POTTS POINT, SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES.

The Proposal.

39. The proposal provided for the erection, on a site acquired in Macleay street, Potts Point, of a building to house a new telephone exchange for 10,000 lines and a post office, in order to relieve present congestion, and to cater for the future requirements of the locality. The structure was to comprise three floors—lower ground, ground, and first floors—with two mezzanine floors over part of the area. The planning was based upon the use of a structural steel frame, encased in concrete, with concrete slab floors. The site has frontages to Macleay street, Crick avenue, and Greenknowe avenue. The estimated cost of the building, based upon prices ruling at March, 1958, was £400,000.

Need for the Building.

40. It was shown that present conditions for both telephone and postal facilities in the Potts Point district are very unsatisfactory, and it is essential to provide for more economical cable distribution, and to cater for anticipated heavy development in the area. The Potts Point locality is one of the most densely populated areas in Australia, and for some time it has been necessary to resort to temporary expedients in order to carry on the services. It is likely that future floors will be required on the proposed building, both for additional telephone equipment and for office space. The question was also raised of the desirability of using additional upper floors to provide residential flats in this important and crowded area of the city.

Recommendations.

41. (1) There is a pressing need for a new exchange and post office building for the present and near future period. (Para. 18.)
- (2) The foundations should be strengthened, as suggested, to provide for a limit height building in the future. (Para. 21.)
- (3) The building should be approved, at the estimated cost of £325,000, but a special review should be made, immediately before contracts are signed for the proposal, of all the factors concerned in the costs. (Para. 33.)
- (4) Although the site is a very valuable one for other purposes, the establishment of the proposed building upon it is fully justified, and will result in an adequate use of the site. (Para. 39.)

- (5) After explanations and demonstrations with the model, the Committee is convinced that the facades, which received some adverse criticism during the inquiry will present a satisfactory aesthetic appearance, if constructed with carefully selected materials. (Para. 46.)
- (6) Special attention should be paid to the selection of the bricks and other treatment of the Macleay street facade. (Para. 46.)
- (7) Efforts should be made to enlist the co-operation of the City Council to achieve a garden effect to the Macleay street frontage of the building. (Para. 47.)
- (8) It is not desirable to include residential flats in the plans for this building, but the space should be reserved for future floors for exchange and postal facilities. (Para. 53.)
- (9) Parking space for the public should not be provided in this building. (Para. 54.)

(8) MAIL EXCHANGE, REDFERN, NEW SOUTH WALES.

The Proposal.

42. The plans provided for a very large building of seven floors, on a site in Redfern, to house a staff which is expected to increase ultimately to 5,380. The main building was to be 400 feet by 300 feet, and was to be constructed of reinforced concrete structural frame with monolithic floors. The facing was to be of selected face bricks, and there were to be aluminium frames to the windows. The cost of the building and various services was set down at £4,170,000, and the time quoted for preparation of final designs and contract documents, possession of the site, and erection of the building was approximately 4½ years.

Need for the Building.

43. Following extensive surveys it had been determined that the number of postal articles to be processed, comprising three main categories—letters, newspapers and packets, and parcels—will be in the order of 930 million in 1965, and 2,000 million by 1985. This is the quantity which will be passing through the mail exchange in Sydney alone.

44. A centralized mail exchange is essential in order to co-ordinate the various groups of sorting operatives; closely associate at each point of handing the three categories of mail articles involved; and to convey sorted mail automatically from point to point, eliminating wherever possible the manual carriage of mail.

45. It was pointed out that the proposed concentration of mail would—

- (i) reduce transport costs;
- (ii) eliminate time lost in transport between various buildings;
- (iii) permit better staff utilization;
- (iv) ensure proper management, supervision and mail traffic control and;
- (v) eliminate duplication of plant, services and amenities.

46. A great advantage would also be the vacation of space, in the G.P.O., which is urgently needed for expansion in other sections of the establishment. Reduction of traffic in the vicinity of the G.P.O. is an important factor, while the provision of transport garaging facilities at Redfern will result in savings of £10,000 per annum initially.

The Building.

47. *The Mail Exchange* is to occupy a little more than half the site, and comprises seven floors with a total of 620,000 square feet. Every facility is planned for the receipt, holding and despatch of mail matter, and the mechanical equipment has been designed and developed over the years to a very advanced stage of perfection. Staff is well provided for, and a feature of the roof, or penthouse floor, is the cafeteria and roof terraces.

48. *The Transport Depot* will be located on the south-west corner of the site, and will provide day to day service, including servicing and minor repairs for P.M.G. Vehicles.

Recommendations.

49. (1) There is an urgent need for the proposed mail exchange (Para. 21.)
- (2) Escalators should be a suitable form of transport to the number of floors proposed. (Para. 35.)
- (3) Air-conditioning is essential for the efficient working of the establishment and should be installed as planned. (Para. 43.)
- (4) The Committee was favourably impressed with the plans, and recommends that the building be constructed as planned, with special concern being paid to the choice of facing bricks, and with some further attention to detail of the fenestration of the return wall on the Cleveland street facade. (Para. 54.)

- (5) The site proposed is the most suitable for the new exchange. (Para. 58.)
- (6) Progress of this important project will be greatly facilitated if the Commonwealth Government lends its influence to those authorities in a position to take action to supply alternative accommodation for the people to be displaced from their homes on the site. (Para. 66.)
- (7) In view of the magnitude of the proposal, and the necessity to avoid delays in obtaining vacant possession of the site, the action suggested by Cabinet should be taken as soon as possible. (Paras. 65 and 67.)
- (8) If no alternative is discovered, and the sprinkler system of fire protection is necessary, all possible precautions should be taken to ensure that the efficiency of the system is constantly maintained, so that water damage may be avoided. (Para. 73.)
- (9) Reduced tender prices appear to be due solely to diminution of profit margin by contractors. (Para. 80.)
- (10) As the present building conditions are claimed to be abnormal, and tenders are expected to rise again, the Committee is constrained to agree that the original estimate of £4,170,000 for this project should be retained. (Para. 81.)
- (11) As such huge contracts are involved, where builders should be satisfied with comparatively small percentages of profit, it should be possible to ensure that, if conditions do become more normal, only tenders containing a smaller margin of profit should be accepted. (Para. 85.)
- (12) The magnitude of the £50,000,000 annual Works programme should place the Department in a position to bargain for contracts more keenly priced than must have been the case in recent years, before the present reductions became apparent. (Para. 86.)
- (13) The present system of calculating original estimates for the Committee from sketch plans should be examined in view of the fact that, between original estimates and tender prices, there have been reductions of up to 40 per cent., even though estimates based on bills of quantities subsequently prove to be comparatively accurate. (Para. 88.)
- (14) It is essential for the Committee to consider carefully the cost of a project in relation to the desirability to recommend its approval by Parliament. Consideration should be given to evolving a system giving estimates with the desired accuracy, or, alternatively, projects showing major variations from original estimates should be re-submitted for further investigation and report to Parliament. (Paras. 90 and 91.)

(9) REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL, HOBART.

The Proposal.

50. The plans were prepared with a view to replacing various old buildings on the present hospital site with two new buildings for ward and administration purposes, as a first step in a programme for ultimate replacement of all outmoded accommodation. The ward unit block is to comprise lower ground, ground, and penthouse floors, while the Administration Block is to contain a ground floor and part lower ground floors, making use of the rather considerable site falls.

Need for the Buildings.

51. It is important to bring the hospital accommodation up to reasonable standards comparable with those operating in State General Hospitals, and in keeping with overseas development. It is also essential to provide separate accommodation for the nursing of very sick patients, greater concentration of the essential operative units of the hospital, and better administrative co-ordination.

52. Some of the present buildings were taken over from the Army after World War I, and they lack the essential facilities for modern hospital treatment, and are, in some cases, in bad repair, though all efforts have been made to maintain them by painting and frequent attention.

Recommendations.

53. (1) There is an urgent need for the replacement of the old wooden buildings, and the first stage of the proposal should be carried out as planned. (Para. 31.)
- (2) In view of past experience and estimates of trends for the future, it is recommended that the proposal to maintain a similar number of beds to those at present available should be adopted. (Para. 37.)
- (3) The site does not lend itself to further parking facilities but, if it becomes essential to provide such space in the future, an approach might be made by the Repatriation Department to the Department of the Army, with a view to exploring the possibility of securing the use of a suitable portion of the adjacent military property. (Para. 39.)

- (4) The present kitchen is out of date, inappropriate, and a considerable fire hazard, and further consideration should be given to the possibility of including the new kitchen in conjunction with the present proposal. However, the addition of a new kitchen should not be made if it will prejudice the urgent construction of the present proposal. (Para. 43.)
- (5) Special attention should be given to the portion of evidence relating to fire precautions, when final drawings for the proposal are being prepared. (Para. 44.)
- (6) The estimated cost of £220,000 is regarded as reasonable on the basis of rates at August, 1958. (Para. 45.)
- (7) The site is convenient and appropriate for the purpose. (Para. 46.)
- (8) The plans indicate a structure which will be pleasing and adequate. (Para. 47.)

THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE ACT.

54. During the period under review the Committee took steps on several occasions to forward the desirability of amending the Public Works Committee Act, and special representations were made to the Prime Minister who promised a deputation that he would personally look into the matter of replacement of the Mandatory Clause in the Act. The Committee has been disappointed that there have been no very definite results, and have reminded the Prime Minister of the number of major works being sent to tender recently without any reference to the Committee.

MOVEMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE.

55. During this term of office the Committee travelled to Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Darwin, and Hobart to take evidence in connection with the various references. Numerous local inspections, were also made in connection with the investigations, involving a considerable amount of car travelling. The official distances travelled by the 16th Committee totalled 15,174 miles, not including the distances covered in local inspections, or by the individual members in proceeding to and from their homes to attend the meetings of the Committee.

STAFF.

56. The secretarial work was continued throughout the period by the permanent Secretary of the Committee (Mr. W. R. Blackman), and the Secretarial Assistant (Mrs. N. G. H. Clarke) has continued to act in that capacity.

A. FAIRHALL

Chairman.

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

26th February, 1959.

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.
		£	£	£	£	
1956-58. (See 25TH GENERAL REPORT.)						
13th March, 1956 to 17th May, 1956	Community Hospital, Canberra..	2,500,000	2,500,000	..	..	Site approved. Building to be phased according to population increase.
23rd May, 1956 to 4th October, 1956	Haymarket Telephone Exchange, New South Wales	754,500	750,230	..	4,270	Recommended with amended lift proposal.
12th September, 1956 to 24th October, 1956	Food Research Laboratory, North Ryde, New South Wales	650,000	650,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed.
12th September, 1956 to 21st March, 1957	A.B.C. Studios, Perth, Western Australia	750,000	795,000	45,000	..	Recommended with additional air-conditioning.
1st November, 1956 to 10th October, 1957	Customs House, Melbourne ..	630,000	..	..	..	Not recommended. Further plans called for.
5th December, 1957 to 17th April, 1958	Steam Power Station, Darwin, Northern Territory	1,850,000	1,850,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed.
26th March, 1958 to 7th August, 1958	Potts Point Telephone Exchange, New South Wales	400,000	325,000	..	75,000	Recommended at amended estimate.
15th May, 1958 to 18th September, 1958	Redfern Mail Exchange, New South Wales	4,170,000	4,170,000	..	..	Recommended, but estimating procedure should be reviewed.
21st August, 1958 to 1st October, 1958	Repatriation Hospital, Hobart, Tasmania	220,000	220,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed.