

DEPT. OF THE SENATE	
No.	745
Presented	28 AUG 1962
<i>[Signature]</i>	
CLERK OF THE SENATE	

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

R E P O R T

relating to the proposed construction of

PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION FOR THE AUSTRALIAN REGULAR ARMY

at

KAPOOKA, NEW SOUTH WALES.

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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION FOR THE AUSTRALIAN REGULAR ARMY,
KAPOOKA, NEW SOUTH WALES.

REPORT

By resolution on 3rd April, 1962, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report, a proposal to erect permanent accommodation for the Australian Regular Army at Kapooka, New South Wales.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:-

General

1. The Committee visited the Kapooka Army Camp and made an inspection of existing accommodation and facilities. Evidence was heard from representatives of the Department of the Army, the Department of Works and from the Gas Works Engineer and Manager, Wagga Wagga City Council.

Kapooka Army Camp

2. The Kapooka Army Camp is situated 7 miles south of Wagga Wagga, on a site well placed in relation to road and rail facilities. The camp occupies 3,219 acres of land, the unimproved value of which is approximately £90,000.

3. Historical.- Originally used as an army camp during the Second World War, Kapooka was transferred to the Department of Immigration after hostilities ceased but was reoccupied by the Army in 1951. It has, in the years since, been developed as the basic training centre for all Australian Regular Army recruits.

Requirements of a Recruit Training Establishment

4. Prior to 1951, recruit training was undertaken in separate commands in recruit training companies. This was costly in staff, failed to produce a uniform standard of recruit training and made difficult the allocation of personnel to the Corps for which they were most suited.

5. The centralisation of army training at Kapooka has overcome these disabilities and has proved to be thoroughly satisfactory to the Army.

6. It is important for a recruit training establishment absorbing all recruits for the Australian Regular Army, irrespective of the State in which enlistment takes place, to be readily accessible from the major centres of population. It is also desirable for such an establishment to be centrally located in relation to the main areas of Army activity and those in New South Wales at present take about 85% of the Kapooka output.

7. Other desirable features of a recruit training establishment are segregation from other major army complexes and reasonable remoteness from capital cities with their attendant distractions. It is also desirable to be able to provide adequate facilities for small arms training, close training and organised sport.

8. The camp at Kapooka meets all these requirements, with the added advantage of an equable climate, thus minimising the loss of training time through bad weather.

9. The Committee are satisfied that a sound case has been made in favour of Kapooka as a most suitable locality for recruit training.

Recruit Training

10. Of the 13 weeks each recruit spends at Kapooka, one week is devoted to such activities as kitting out, medical documentation and dental treatment, one week to camp duties and eleven weeks to training. Of the training period, 50% of the time is devoted to drilling

and learning weapons (rifle, grenade, automatic rifle and sub-machine carbine); 15% to physical training and organised sport; 15% to educational training and character guidance; 10% to field craft, map reading and hygiene and the remaining time is devoted to lectures, military law, inspections and the O.O.'s Hour. There is also one weekend bivouac and one period of long leave.

11. The aim is to produce a physically strong man who can dress and behave like a good soldier, be proficient at foot drill and who can handle and fire the basic weapons. The training is common to all recruits irrespective of the corps to which they are allocated.

The Need for New Accommodation

12. Whilst most of the buildings are of temporary wartime construction, there are some permanent structures on the site.

13. Permanent Buildings.- The permanent buildings include a theatre, a canteen and 50 married quarters. There is additional accommodation for married staff in Wagga which is provided by the New South Wales Government in accordance with arrangements made under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. The camp hospital, providing accommodation for 25 patients, is expected to have a useful life of some 15 years. Associated with it are suitable female staff quarters.

14. There is a primary school erected by the New South Wales Department of Education and a pre-school centre provided from regimental funds.

15. Temporary Buildings.- Most of the buildings at Kapooka were built in wartime. They are timber and iron structures, considered to have outlived their economic life. They are only being kept in use by extensive maintenance, which cost £23,304 in 1960/61 and £24,954 for the first eleven months of 1961/62.

16. Our inspection revealed that some of the barrack huts appeared to be beyond repair, while the Quartermaster's Store is a most dilapidated structure. It is insecure, is a fire risk, is not weather-proof and has flooring which is in a dangerous condition.

17. The bulk of the existing accommodation can only be described as makeshift and the impression was gathered during our inspection that the resourcefulness of the Commanding Officer and his staff is a significant factor in keeping existing facilities in use.

18. The Committee are satisfied that there is an urgent need to provide new accommodation at the Kapooka Army Camp.

The Work Proposed

19. The buildings described as permanent and referred to in paragraphs 13 and 14 above are to remain but all the temporary structures are to be replaced progressively.

20. Master plan.- The master plan for the development of the camp area has been prepared by the Department of Works in conjunction with the Department of the Army and has the concurrence of the Defence Business Board.

21. Barrack Blocks.- It is proposed to erect 7 barrack blocks, each to accommodate 144 men. They are to be three-storey brick structures providing sleeping accommodation on each floor for 48 men in 4-man cubicles. As well as sleeping accommodation, each floor will have a room for a duty N.C.O., a box room and toilet and shower facilities. Ironing and drying rooms and laundries are to be provided in single-storey blocks alongside the barrack blocks.

22. The arrangement suits the requirements of the Recruit Training Battalion for it allows a platoon of 48, divided into 4 squads of 12, to be accommodated on each floor.

23. Six of these blocks are to be for recruits and this will provide accommodation for 864.

24. The actual enlistments and peak strengths at Kapooka since 1957/58 and the forecasts for the next four years are shown in the following table:-

	<u>Enlistments</u>	<u>Peak Strength</u>
1957/58	1967	(May) 806
1958/59	3187	(April) 886
1959/60	1690	(March) 481
1960/61	1904	(June) 630
1961/62	2554	900
1962/63	2565	850
1963/64	2256	800
1964/65	2110	800
1965/66	2730	900

25. Based on the forecasts, which were stated to be conservative, the six blocks for recruits will meet requirements till the end of 1964/65.

26. One barrack block will accommodate rank and file staff and this will account for 144 of a staff of 187, the balance of whom will live in married quarters either in the camp area or in the Housing Commission homes becoming available to the Army in Wagga.

27. Officers and N.C.O's Messes and Living Quarters. Officers and N.C.O's sleeping quarters have been designed to accommodate 40 and 35 respectively.

28. This provision is against a strength of 68 N.C.O's and 44 officers, the latter number rising to 56 for one week in every four, when 12 chaplains spend a week at the camp to conduct character guidance courses. Married officers and N.C.O's will be accommodated either in the married quarters at Kapooka or in houses in Wagga.

29. The ante-rooms, dining rooms and kitchens have been designed to cope with the larger number who will use the common areas, particularly for the midday meal when, because of the nature of the training syllabus, the limited time available will prevent the majority of the married staff from returning to their quarters.

30. The buildings will be in brick and will each consist of a two-storey wing for living accommodation and an associated single-storey mess and kitchen block.

31. Appropriate toilet and shower facilities, box rooms, ironing and drying rooms and laundries will be associated with the living quarters. The mess blocks will include ante-rooms, bars, bar stores, dining rooms, lounges and visitors' rooms.

32. Recruit and Rank and File Kitchen and Mess.- Centrally located in relation to the barrack blocks will be the kitchen and mess for recruits and rank and file staff. Basically, it is to be a single-storey structure but where ground levels permit below the kitchen there will be a basement to house such items as boiler plant and electrical switch gear. The building has been designed to accommodate 1,000 men.

33. Associated with the kitchen will be the necessary food preparation and storage areas and cooking equipment. Ramped road access will serve the kitchen. The plant rooms below will also have road access.

34. A single span steel portal type frame will be used for the dining and kitchen areas.

35. Quartermaster's Store.- The Quartermaster's Store, which will be the main building in the "Q" complex, will be a single-storey steel framed, clear span structure, with a covered loading platform along one side. The building will contain storage and issue facilities for clothing, linen, blankets, kitchen ware and furniture, an armoury and armourer's workshop. There will also be space for a tailor and a bootmaker, administrative offices for the Quartermaster and his staff and a store for unserviceable items.

36. The other components of the "Q" complex will be a supply point for perishable and non-perishable rations, an R.A.E. office, workshop and store including a fenced security compound, and finally a transport compound comprising office, tool store, service station and coverage for 17 vehicles and ground maintenance equipment.

37. Military Training Centre.- The training centre is to be a three-storey steel and concrete framed structure which will provide normal class room facilities, including film projection.

38. The building will contain six lecture rooms, four of which will accommodate 50 recruits each, and two, 150 recruits each. This will permit instruction by platoon or by half companies. In addition, space will be provided for the storage of training aids, offices for education officers, a military library, an education library and the usual toilet facilities.

39. At the lower level, a covered training area will be available for use in wet weather until that area is needed for two additional lecture rooms. Provision has been made to incorporate further covered training areas at that stage.

40. Recreation Block for Rank and File Staff.- To permit rank and file staff to relax away from the absolute need of recruit discipline, it is proposed to provide a recreation block for their use. The building will include lounge, bar and billiard rooms.

41. Battalion and Administrative Headquarters.- A building for Battalion Headquarters, containing normal accommodation and facilities and three company administrative buildings, containing administrative offices and company quartermaster's stores, will be erected.

42. Other Buildings.- It is also proposed to erect buildings for a regimental aid post, post office, band practice and an ammunition magazine.

43. Gymnasium, Swimming Pool and Squash Courts.- In order to attain the high standard of physical fitness required of a soldier, an essential element is a properly equipped gymnasium and it is proposed to incorporate this in a building which will also contain a swimming pool and two squash courts.

44. The approved Scales and Standards of Accommodation permit only one squash court to be provided at public expense for a unit of the size of Kapooka. However, the Army places such value on squash courts as an aid to achieving physical fitness and also as a recreational amenity that it is proposed to provide a second court from amenities funds.

45. In evidence presented to the Committee, witnesses from the Department of the Army stressed the need for soldiers to be able not only to swim but to swim with a combat load, to know lifesaving techniques, to inflate special clothing and to handle small craft. A surprisingly low proportion of the recruits can swim with reasonable proficiency; fewer still know anything about lifesaving.

46. It was pointed out to us that a recruit would be less timid about admitting inability to swim when, at the commencement of his army career, he finds himself among a group of people who show a common lack of skill in army techniques in general. For this reason, the atmosphere at the Recruit Training Battalion presents a unique opportunity to encourage men to learn to swim.

47. The Community Pool at Wagga is inadequate to allow military requirements to be superimposed on normal civil use. In any case, travel to the pool would seriously interfere with training time and would involve cost of transport and entrance fees.

48. If the teaching of swimming is to be a part of the training at Kapooka, the pool will need to be available all the year round and it is therefore proposed to enclose and heat it. The alternative to this is to have the pool out of use for five to six months each year and to lose the opportunity of teaching to swim a large proportion of recruits.

49. The Army has been making determined efforts to teach recruits to swim and we have concluded that to do this properly a swimming pool is needed at Kapooka and we recommend accordingly. We further recommend that the pool be heated to permit its use throughout the year.

50. The accommodation proposed to be provided at Kapooka conforms with the Scales and Standards of Accommodation for the Services in Peace.

51. Building Materials and Finishes.- Generally, buildings will be finished externally in face brickwork with aluminium window frames.

Internal floors to sleeping quarters and administrative offices and similar areas will have linoleum tiles, while dining rooms and common user areas will have vinyl tiles. Floors to toilets and wash rooms will be finished with impervious tiles, stores areas with granolithic, gymnasium and squash courts with timber and the swimming pool will have tiled surrounds.

52. Corridor walls, stair halls, dining rooms and common user areas will have linoleum tile dadoes, while other wall surfaces will be rendered and painted.

53. Where necessary, ceilings will be acoustically treated; otherwise they will be rendered and painted. Roofs will be of galvanised metal.

54. Engineering Services.- The proposal involves the provision of hydraulic, electrical and mechanical services to the buildings. This will include improvements to the sewerage treatment plant to meet State standards and a considerable amount of new sewage reticulation to replace pipes blocked by tree roots or of inadequate size.

55. Fire Protection.- Thermal type fire alarms are proposed for most of the buildings. Originally it was intended to make extensive use of sprinkler systems but the Department of the Army has modified its requirements and the new proposals are acceptable to the Executive Officer of the Commonwealth Fire Board. The modification is expected to result in a saving in the estimates of up to about £20,000.

56. Miscellaneous Works.- Other miscellaneous works to be undertaken include improvements to the camp theatre, fencing to the security compounds, train-fire ranges, arboriculture, demolitions and additional works to the canteen.

57. Phased Construction.- So that the Recruit Training Battalion will continue to function while re-building is in progress, the work is to be carried out over a period of two to three years. Construction will be phased so as to minimize interference to existing buildings and to permit them to continue in use until the new accommodation becomes available.

58. It is proposed to carry out the work in two stages, the first of which will comprise the "Q" complex, six barrack blocks for recruits and one for rank and file staff, the kitchen and mess for recruits and rank and file staff, battalion headquarters, train-fire ranges and the engineering services associated therewith. This work will cost approximately £1,300,000.

59. Estimates of Cost.- The estimated cost of all the work proposed is £2,667,000, made up as follows:-

Buildings: (including all internal engineering services)		
Barrack Blocks (144 man) -		
6 for Recruits		
1 for Rank and File staff		£668,000
Kitchen & Mess for Recruits and Rank and File staff		196,000
Officers' Mess and Living Quarters		113,000
W.O's and Sgts' Mess and Living Quarters		97,000
Recreation Block for Rank and File staff		15,000
"Q" complex:		
Q.M. Store	69,000	
R.A.E. Group	8,000	
Supply Point	38,000	
Transport group and Fire Station	<u>33,000</u>	148,000
Battalion H.Q.		23,000
Coy. Admin. H.Q.'s (3 off)		91,000
Military Training Centre		97,000
Gymnasium/Swimming Pool/Squash Court		129,000
R.A.P. and Psychology Unit		33,000
Miscellaneous Buildings:		
Post Office	£10,000	
Band Practice Room	8,000	
Ammunition Magazine	<u>10,000</u>	28,000
Engineering Services: (Site)		
Civil:		
Including earthworks, roads, paths, kerbing and guttering, car parks, parade grounds		192,000
Electrical:		
Including sub-stations, site reticulation, street lighting, public address system and fire alarms		50,000

Mechanical:		
	Including boiler plant, calorifiers, reticulation and low-pressure gas bulk storage and reticulation	50,000
Hydraulic:		
	Including water and sewage reticulation, storm water drainage and fire hydrants	95,000
Miscellaneous Works:		
	Improvements to Camp Theatre	£3,000
	Fencing to Security Compounds	2,000
	Train-fire Ranges	20,000
	Arboriculture	8,000
	Demolitions	20,000
	Canteen, additional works	9,000
		<u>62,000</u>
		£2,087,000
	<u>Less saving on fire alarm system</u>	<u>20,000</u>
	<u>Total:</u>	<u>£2,067,000</u>

60. Construction Time.- After instructions to proceed are given, approximately nine months will be required to complete documents for the first stage. The signing of the contract and commencement of work would take place approximately three months later.

61. Following acceptance of a contract, construction time is estimated at 21 months. The balance of the work could be processed to tender stage in the same financial year in which funds were provided.

62. Future Development.- As already mentioned, the accommodation proposed will provide for 864 recruits and the necessary staff. This is in accordance with the estimated need to the end of 1964/65. To provide for increased numbers in subsequent years, provision has been made in the master plan for two additional barrack blocks which would increase the capacity of accommodation for recruits to approximately 1200. The basic services have been designed to cope with such numbers.

63. This is the maximum capacity envisaged for Kapooka. In the event of a considerable increase in recruitment, a new battalion would be raised elsewhere rather than increase Kapooka beyond what is considered to be its optimum size.

64. The Committee are satisfied that the buildings and services proposed will meet the needs of the Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka and recommend implementation of the work. In view of the dilapidated state of so many of the buildings, the need to start rebuilding as soon as possible is stressed.

Chapels

65. While not included in the present proposal, an area has been set aside on the master plan for chapels. The Commonwealth Government will make contributions towards the construction of Protestant and Roman Catholic Chapels, the Churches being expected to supplement the amount in order to provide buildings appropriate to their needs. The Chaplains-General's Branch is at present considering the size and nature of suitable chapels.

Town Gas

66. The Committee had the benefit of evidence from the Gas Works Engineer and Manager of the Wagga Wagga City Council, in which he presented a case for the Kapooka Army Camp to make exclusive use of gas for cooking and heating. The evidence also outlined the extent of Council contribution towards bringing town gas to the site.

67. In the absence, at this stage, of detailed planning of the proposed work at Kapooka, the Department of Works was unable to inform the Committee about the installation and operating costs of the alternative fuels which could be used.

68. The choice of fuel will depend on the outcome of a study of economic factors. The Committee nevertheless recommend careful consideration of the offer by the Wagga Wagga City Council for the use of town gas for all heating and cooking requirements.

Summary of Recommendations and Conclusions

69. The Committee's recommendations and conclusions, arrived at after studying the evidence and material submitted, are set out below. The paragraph quoted alongside each recommendation and conclusion refers to the relevant portion of the report.

	<u>Paragraph in report</u>
(1) Kapooka is a suitable locality for recruit training	9
(2) Most of the existing accommodation at Kapooka is sub-standard	15, 16 & 17
(3) There is an urgent need to provide new accommodation	18
(4) The provision of a heated swimming pool is recommended	49
(5) A modified fire alarm system is expected to result in a saving of £20,000	55
(6) The estimated cost of all the work proposed is £2,067,000	59
(7) The buildings and services proposed will meet the needs of the Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka and implementation of the work as a matter of urgency is recommended	64
(8) Careful consideration of the offer of the Wagga Wagga City Council for the use of town gas for all heating and cooking requirements is recommended.	68.

R. L. Dean

(R. L. Dean)
Chairman

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23rd August, 1962.