

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

1968—Parliamentary Paper No. 160

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

REPORT

relating to the proposed construction of a

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT CLOTHING FACTORY

at

Coburg, Victoria

*Presented pursuant to Statute and
ordered to be printed 24 October 1968*

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
CANBERRA: 1969

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

(TWENTIETH COMMITTEE)

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EXTRACT FROM
THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
No. 30, DATED 14 AUGUST 1968

13. PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE—REFERENCE OF WORK—COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT CLOTHING FACTORY, COBURG, VIC.: Mr Kelly (Minister representing the Minister for Works) moved, pursuant to notice—That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1913–1966*, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report: Construction of Commonwealth Government Clothing Factory at Coburg, Vic.

Mr Kelly presented plans in connection with the proposed work.

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

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WITNESSES

	Paragraphs in Evidence
Baskin, H., Esq., Acting Promotion Officer, Latrobe Valley Development Committee, Division of State Development, Premier's Department, Public Offices, Melbourne, Victoria	44-45
Bott, L. F., Esq., D.S.C., Deputy Secretary, Department of Supply, Constitution Avenue, Parkes, Australian Capital Territory	1-14 50-66
Brewster, L., Esq., Director, Latoof and Callil Pty Ltd, 17 Brunswick Road, Brunswick, Victoria	54-66
Frappell, R. G., Esq., Promotions Officer, Ballarat Development Committee, Division of State Development, Premier's Department, Public Offices, Melbourne, Victoria	42 46-49
Houlahan, K., Esq., Acting Development Officer, Bendigo Development Committee, City Hall, Bendigo, Victoria	43 48-49
MacSween, D. R., Esq., State Secretary and Federal President, The Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia, Box 56, Trades Hall, Melbourne, Victoria	24-41
Ozanne, W. H. A., Esq., Assistant Director (Design), Department of Works, Victorian Branch, Commonwealth Centre, Latrobe Street, Melbourne, Victoria	15-23
Wright, J. W., Esq., Manager, Commonwealth Clothing Factory, South Melbourne, Victoria	50-66

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT CLOTHING FACTORY
COBURG, VICTORIA

REPORT

By resolution on 14 August 1968 the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report, a proposal for the construction of a Commonwealth Government Clothing Factory at Coburg, Victoria.

We have the honour to report as follows:

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

1. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of Supply and Works. We took evidence at public hearings in Melbourne and Canberra from witnesses representing these departments, the Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia, the Ballarat, Bendigo and Latrobe Valley Development Committees and from the Honorary Business Adviser on Clothing to the Minister for Supply. A number of written submissions was also received from other interested organisations and individuals.

2. An inspection was made of the Commonwealth Government Clothing Factory at South Melbourne, its branch at Brunswick, and the site for the new factory.

THE REFERENCE

3. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the erection, at Coburg, Victoria, of a clothing factory to replace the existing factories at South Melbourne and Brunswick.

4. The estimated cost of the building proposals in this reference is \$1.3m.

ROLE OF COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT CLOTHING FACTORY

5. The Commonwealth Government Clothing Factory at South Melbourne, which first commenced manufacturing operations in 1913, and its branch at Brunswick provide an essential and otherwise economically unobtainable service in manufacturing items of clothing and similar requirements for the armed services

and for other Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities. These items range from uniforms, trousers, shirts, combat equipment, to sheets, dressing gowns, embroidered badges, caps, flags and canvasware.

6. Following an independent study of the matter in 1964, the Government took a number of decisions on the manufacture of items of clothing etc. for the Commonwealth, one of which concerned the erection of a new Commonwealth Government Clothing Factory. In essence the decisions were that

- the Commonwealth factory should continue production as it provides a service which is otherwise unobtainable;
- the South Melbourne factory should be replaced by a new factory located in Melbourne on a site to be determined; and
- private enterprise should be given the opportunity to manufacture suitable items hitherto produced by the Commonwealth factory.

Today, as a result, the value of production for the Government by private industry has been increased to three times the value of the production by the Commonwealth factories, mostly in long run production items. The policy is that the Commonwealth factories are to continue to produce low volume items and specialised requirements which are generally unattractive to industry due to uneconomic short run production, but at the same time, they are to maintain reasonable volume production in essential items so as to operate as an economically viable unit.

7. Caps and canvasware are now produced at the Brunswick factory. The intention is that industry will take over all canvasware production by mid 1969 and cap making will continue at Brunswick until it is transferred to the new factory.

8. The South Melbourne factory is geared for diversity of production to enable it to meet quickly, demands for a variety of items which private industry cannot meet due to such factors as the delays inherent in applying tendering procedures. It is also important that the Commonwealth factory acts as a laboratory for garment design and development.

THE NEED

9. The recommendation of the independent enquiry in 1964 was that it was neither desirable nor economical to retain, renovate or remodel the 50 year old buildings at South Melbourne, and that a new factory should be built. The Committee endorse the Government's acceptance of this recommendation.

10. The condition of the present buildings is generally dilapidated and substandard despite regular maintenance. Floors are in a poor and dangerous condition, lighting is unsuitable, a serious fire hazard exists although all possible precautions have been taken, and working conditions are congested. The Committee were also told that on an average of six days a year, high temperatures in the factory bring about intolerable working conditions necessitating early closure and loss of output.

11. The factory at Brunswick is not suitable for the relocation of the functions of the South Melbourne factory.

12. The Committee are therefore agreed that there is a need for the work in this reference.

THE SITE

13. The proposed site is in Gaffney Street, North Coburg, adjoining Batman Railway Station. It has a frontage of 474 ft, a depth of about 700 ft and is approximately 150 ft west of Sydney Road. A portion of the area which adjoins the railway has been scheduled for a roadway reservation. The intended use of the area complies with the light industry zoning specified by the town planning authority.

14. The site is well served by public transport with the Batman Railway Station adjacent, a tram service is available on Sydney Road, and a bus service passes the factory.

15. The Committee were informed that at least two-thirds of the employees of the South Melbourne factory are expected to transfer to the new factory so that, initially, there will not be a significant disruption to production. It

is not thought that there will be any difficulty in recruiting the 200 new employees expected to be required particularly as substantial numbers of the staff of the Brunswick branch will transfer to the new factory as canvasware production is discontinued.

16. We took a considerable amount of evidence and received a number of written submissions about the suggested location of the new factory, or part of it, in a country area. After carefully considering the pros and cons on this subject, we firmly believe that the decision to build this factory at Coburg is the correct one. This matter is discussed in more detail later in the report.

17. The Committee believe that the site selected is suitable.

THE BUILDING PROPOSAL

18. The proposal comprises a single-storey factory building towards the rear of the site with a separate administrative building and guardhouse in front, a garage, car park and carpenters' shop on the western side and associated stores and an incinerator at the rear.

19. *Planning and Design.* In determining the functional requirements, the Committee noted that a study was made of recently constructed clothing factories in Victoria and New South Wales. We think that the plan submitted makes most economical use of the site and the funds available. It will have a rational grouping of functions, an efficient provision of services and makes allowance for future expansion towards the rear of the site.

20. The appearance of the administrative building will be appropriate to its function and in harmony with the architectural character of the nearby housing and factories. The factory building is designed with a low pitched roof to reduce its prominence above the skyline. External walls will be the natural colour of the cement masonry blocks with a contrasting colour accent on steel column frame members.

21. The administrative building will be 106 ft by 40 ft with a covered area and guard room attached. The executive offices and enquiry desk will be located at the western end of the building and general offices at the eastern end.

22. The factory building will be 450 ft by 210 ft with the main work areas between the lockers and toilets on the east, and stores and

a canteen on the west. A security fence will surround the area.

23. *Structure.* The structure of the factory will consist of rigid steel frames and a longitudinal lattice girder at the ridge line supported by centre columns at every third bay. Foundations will be spread footings for the structural frames. Independent strip footings will be provided for concrete block walls. Floors will be reinforced concrete. Window frames will be of timber, faced with aluminium.

24. *Materials and Finishes.* Materials and finishes generally have been chosen with regard to ease of maintenance and economy. In the administrative building, sheet vinyl will be used on floors except in toilets where ceramic tiles will be used. Walls will have sheet vinyl on rendering, and the ceilings will be suspended acoustic plaster tiles.

25. The factory floors will generally be finished with sheet vinyl or monolithic concrete. Toilets and wash areas will be ceramic tiled. Walls will be mostly face masonry block with a paint finish in selected areas. Ceiling materials will include U foam board with an aluminium finish, hardiflex or fibrous plaster.

26. *Mechanical Services.* The factory working areas including the canteen will be mechanically ventilated by a system of roof mounted evaporative cooling units combined with exhaust fans providing fresh air. Heating will be provided by projection type hot water units. The administrative building will be ventilated naturally and heated by hot water skirting radiators.

27. Other mechanical plant will be a steam generator for the pressing area, an oil-fired boiler for domestic hot water and a separate boiler to serve the skirting radiators and factory unit heaters.

28. *Electrical Services.* Electricity will be reticulated from a substation provided by the supply authority. Appropriate lighting and power will be provided to meet factory requirements in accordance with the standards code. Provision has been made in the factory for the following levels of illumination:

Embroidery section—100 lumens per sq ft
Work areas and cutting room—70 lumens per sq ft
Storage, plant room, canteen—20-30 lumens per sq ft

General lighting will be provided in the work areas as it is not proposed to use lighting mounted on machines because of the discomfort and eye-strain created.

29. *Fire Protection.* An automatic fire sprinkler with an alarm system, hand extinguishers and fire hydrants will be installed at appropriate points.

30. *Roads and Pavements.* These works which include road connections to Gaffney Street, internal roads and turning areas will all be concrete paved. The employees' car park area will be surfaced with sealed bitumen.

31. *Landscaping.* Areas to be landscaped with gardens will include the frontage to Gaffney Street, the area between the factory and the office block and the area north of the factory. Other areas will be grassed and planted with trees.

32. *Committee's Conclusion.* The Committee recommend the construction of the work in this reference.

ESTIMATE OF COST

33. The estimated cost of the proposed work when referred to the Committee was \$1.3m as follows:

		\$
Building work	..	755,000
Engineering services	..	545,000
		<hr/>
		1,300,000

PROGRAMME

34. It is expected that after an approval to proceed is given, the preparation of final drawings and tender documents will take about 8 months. Construction time is estimated at 11 months from the date the contract is let.

LOCATION OF FACTORY IN COUNTRY CENTRE

35. Mention has been made in paragraph 16 that evidence and other written submissions were received on the proposition that this factory should be located in a country area. These submissions covered the possible decentralisation of either the whole factory or, alternatively, part of it.

36. The Committee carefully examined each of the submissions and for the reasons which

are now discussed, believe that the only possibility is to re-establish the factory in the Melbourne metropolitan area. The perfect location would be on the site of the existing factory at South Melbourne but as it is important that there should be virtually no disruption of production, quite clearly this is not practicable. The site at Coburg is, we believe, a most satisfactory alternative.

37. In considering the possibilities of decentralisation, we always returned to the point that the basic and fundamental aim of the new factory is to rehouse the activities of the South Melbourne factory with as little disruption to production as possible and to retain the present skilled and other staff. The proposal therefore involves the replacement of old and unsuitable buildings and not the creation of a new manufacturing entity.

38. It is important that the prime function of the Commonwealth's factory, now, is the manufacture of low volume items and specialist requirements which are not attractive economically to private enterprise. The workforce required to retain the flexibility that this range of production demands comprises a high proportion of skilled staff who, whilst available in the metropolitan area, could not be expected to be available immediately elsewhere. An example of this requirement is the group of thirty-three expert embroiderers who require at least two years training and their skilled supervisors, each with lengthy experience in this field. A similar situation arises in respect of cutters and tailors whose operations are basic to the factory's activities.

39. Due to the fluctuating output and diversity of production required of this factory we feel that it would not be economically feasible to fragment its functions in a number of smaller dispersed units. It is basic to the concept of the factory that it should retain flexibility in the range of its production, a stable work load and an even level of employment. These objectives are not compatible with a number of widely separated factories.

40. As a Committee, we are sympathetic to the aims of country centres in seeking the decentralisation of industry, but despite the co-operation that might be expected from local or State authorities we are of the firm opinion that it would not be practical to build this particular factory outside the Melbourne metropolitan area.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

41. The summary of recommendations and conclusions of the Committee is set out below. Alongside each is shown the paragraph in the report to which it refers.

	<i>Paragraph</i>
1. The Committee agree that it is neither desirable nor economical to retain, renovate or remodel the factory at South Melbourne	9
2. There is a need for the work in this reference	12
3. The Committee believe that the site selected is suitable ..	17
4. The Committee recommended the construction of the work in this reference	32
5. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1.3m	33
6. It would not be practical to build this particular factory outside the Melbourne Metropolitan area	40

F. C. CHANEY
Chairman

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Parliament House,
Canberra, A.C.T.
22 October 1968.