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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

R E P O R T

relating to the proposed

REHABILITATION OF 1942 BUILDING

G.P.O., SYDNEY

(Seventeenth Report of 1969)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REHABILITATION OF 1942 BUILDING
G.P.O., SYDNEY

R E P O R T

By resolution on 12 September 1969, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report, a proposal for rehabilitation of the 1942 building at the G.P.O., Sydney.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

1. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Postmaster-General's Department and the Department of Works and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Canberra.
2. In anticipation of the reference of this work by the Parliament, the Committee took the opportunity in August 1969 to inspect the 1942 building and its facilities.

THE REFERENCE

3. The proposal referred to the Committee involves the upgrading of accommodation and facilities on the ground, mezzanine, first and second floors of the 1942 building, which adjoins the Sydney G.P.O. in Pitt Street. The proposed improvements will allow these floors to be used for the processing of mail, other than parcels, for delivery within the city area, until about 1990.

4. The work represents the first stage of a three-stage plan to fire isolate the building from the adjoining G.P.O. buildings and to equip it as an operations centre for the City Section Mail Exchange and the Chief Telegraph Office.

5. The work in the present stage is estimated to cost \$1.1 million.

REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

6. Outline The buildings in the G.P.O. complex comprise the original G.P.O. or 1887 building fronting Martin Place, the 1927 extension at the rear and the 1942 building which faces Pitt Street.

7. The construction of the Sydney Mail Exchange building at Redfern and the removal of the functions of the Exchange formerly carried out at the G.P.O. have made it possible to re-organize the accommodation in the G.P.O. complex of buildings.

8. The overall plan is to rehabilitate the 1942 building, in stages, for use as an operations centre for those post office services that for reasons of location and economy should be conducted from the G.P.O. area. These services are the City Section of the Mail Exchange and the Chief Telegraph Office. Other operational activities now in the 1887 building and the 1927 extension are to be relocated and those buildings are to be reconditioned, in the long term, to accommodate functions of a non-technical nature.

9. Mail Exchange, City Section The existing accommodation of this section is on the ground, mezzanine and part of the third floor of the 1942 building and the third floor of the 1927 extension. From this space, the section is responsible for the sorting and delivery of all letters, newspapers and packets destined for the city area of Sydney. It also receives mail posted at the G.P.O. and bulk lodgements.

10. During the period 1958/1968, the number of letter class articles handled by the exchange increased by 12% and newspapers and packets by 17%. This trend is expected to continue on the lines of the traffic forecasts below.

	<u>Millions of Articles per annum</u>				
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1990</u>
Letter class mail	124	142	157	174	188
Newspapers and packets	18.7	22.1	25.2	28.7	32.4

11. First Stage Proposals As the mail exchange cannot operate efficiently from the present accommodation and with existing facilities and because of the serious overcrowding, poor working conditions and obsolete mail handling plant, it is proposed to renovate the ground, mezzanine, first and second floors of the 1942 building. In this space it is proposed to instal new mail handling equipment designed to meet present and near future needs and to provide conditions and facilities equivalent to those provided in the new Sydney Mail Exchange.

12. The Committee were told that this accommodation will provide for the processing of mail, with conventional plant, for delivery within the city area until about 1990.

THE NEED

13. One of the reasons for the erection of the new Sydney Mail Exchange at Redfern was the growing congestion and inadequacy of the exchange operations at the G.P.O., including the City Section. Since that proposal was approved in 1958, conditions in the City Section have progressively deteriorated due to the greater workload and consequential staff increases. The removal of the main exchange to its new building has now made possible the proposed rearrangement of the activities of the City Section.

14. The Committee saw ample evidence of the overcrowding and poor working conditions in the City Section and believe that efficient operation of the Section can only occur if rearranged accommodation, modern plant and mail handling facilities are provided. We found that there is a need for the work in this reference.

FUTURE STAGES

15. Congestion, inefficient use of the space available and substandard working conditions make it imperative to improve and rearrange the telegraph operating services located at the G.P.O. which comprise the Chief Telegraph Office. This work is to be undertaken as the second stage of the rehabilitation on the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh floors of the 1942 building, and will be possible when the first stage is completed.

16. The final stage of the work will involve renovation of the third, eighth and ninth floors, this part completing the accommodation required for the operations centre at the G.P.O. At this point, the space has not yet been allocated but it is thought that the third floor will probably be used for expansion of the City Section of the Mail Exchange and the eighth and ninth for the Chief Telegraph Office.

THE LOCATION

17. For postal purposes, the City Section area is bounded on the north by the Harbour, on the west by Darling Harbour and Harris Street, on the south by Central Railway and on the east by Wentworth and Haig Avenues and Sir John Young Crescent. The G.P.O. complex is thus very well located to service this area which is an extremely busy commercial and retail zone.

18. The 1942 building is ideally placed for the receipt, processing and delivery of mail for the City Section. From the public viewpoint, it is conveniently located adjacent to private boxes and to the counter services and posting facilities in the G.P.O. It is particularly well placed for City Section postmen whose deliveries are based on the building.

19. It would be difficult, and certainly uneconomic to attempt, at this stage, to find a more suitable location for the City Section, placed as it is in the midst of high density retail and commercial development.

20. The Committee therefore believe that it is appropriate for the City Section of the Mail Exchange to be located in the 1942 building.

AMENITIES

21. As the City Section is expected in 1990, to employ over 700 staff, of whom up to 433 will be on duty at one time, the provision of amenities figures largely in the proposals submitted to the Committee.

22. They are to include locker and change rooms, food services, lunch and recreation areas, first aid room, toilets and wash rooms. The standards being observed conform to the approved amenities code and the local building regulations. The Committee received confirmation from the Australian Postal Workers' Union that the proposals have its endorsement.

BUILDING PROPOSALS

23. Existing Building The 1942 building has an encased structural steel frame with reinforced concrete floors, brick external walls and is considered to be of fire resistant construction. It is structurally sound and capable of taking the floor loadings proposed for the operations centre.

24. Internal Works Adjoining the G.P.O. building and the 1927 extension, fire resistant walls are to be provided to fire isolate the 1942 building. Internal partitions are to be of masonry or of a fire-resistant demountable type.

25. Plant rooms for air handling equipment will be located on each floor. Existing toilet areas will be rehabilitated and extended as necessary, being provided as required with new fittings and wall and floor tiles.

26. Repair and maintenance, including patching of walls and ceilings and repairs to doors, windows and fittings will be carried out.

27. Fire Protection All four floors will be protected by an automatic water sprinkler system, fire hydrants and hose reels and by hand extinguishers located at appropriate points.

28. Engineering Services Except for locker and plant rooms and toilets which will be mechanically ventilated, the areas being rehabilitated in this reference are to be air conditioned. Refrigeration plant will be located in the sub-basement and hot water will be taken from the existing boiler plant. Air handling units will be provided on each floor.

29. Hot water will be reticulated to points requiring it. Other services will include refrigerated drinking fountains, boiling water units, tea preparation and lunchroom equipment.

30. The main electrical switchboard will be modified to supply larger loads including the new air conditioning plant. The existing electrical reticulation will be retained and enlarged as required.

31. Committee's Recommendation The Committee recommend the construction of the work in this reference.

ESTIMATE OF COST

32. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1.1 million made up as follows:

	\$
Building work	300,000
Engineering services	800,000
	<u>1,100,000</u>

PROGRAMME

33. The work will be programmed to allow progressive occupancy of areas according to Post Office priorities and to suit the installation of mechanical equipment.

34. It is expected that after an approval to proceed is given, the preparation of final drawings and tender documents will take six months. Construction time for the work is estimated at nine months after a contract is let.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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

	<u>Paragraph</u>
1. THERE IS A NEED FOR THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	14
2. IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE CITY SECTION OF THE MAIL EXCHANGE TO BE LOCATED IN THE 1942 BUILDING.	20

Paragraph

3. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE
WORK IN THIS REFERENCE. 31
4. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO
THE COMMITTEE WAS \$1.1 MILLION. 32

F. Chaney

(F.C. CHANEY)
Chairman

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

24 September, 1969.