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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REPORT

relating to the proposed erection of a

COMMONWEALTH HOSTEL

at

ALICE SPRINGS

NORTHERN TERRITORY

(Second Report of 1969)

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Paragraph</u>
The Committee's Investigation	1
The Reference	3
The Existing Hostels	6
Stott House	9
Todd House	12
The Need	14
The Site	19
Y.W.C.A. Hostel	23
Committee's Conclusion	26
The Building Proposals	
Outline	27
Design Approach	30
Construction and Materials	34
Finishes	37
Mechanical Services	40
Electrical Services	43
Hydraulic Services	45
Site Works	46
Fire Protection	48
The Committee's Recommendation	49
Estimate of Cost	50
Programme	51
Recommendations and Conclusions	52

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

COMMONWEALTH HOSTEL, ALICE SPRINGS
NORTHERN TERRITORY

R E P O R T

By resolution on 6 March 1969, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report, a proposal for the erection of a Commonwealth hostel at Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

1. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Northern Territory Administration, the Department of Works and Commonwealth Hostels Ltd and took evidence from representatives of these bodies at a public hearing in Canberra. A further public hearing was held in Alice Springs when evidence was also heard from representatives of the Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association and the Centralian Teachers' Association.

2. An inspection was made of the existing hostels in Alice Springs and the site for the proposed work. During the course of a visit to Darwin the Committee also took the opportunity of inspecting the Esplanade, Ross Smith and Arafura Hostels conducted by Commonwealth Hostels Ltd.

THE REFERENCE

3. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the erection of a Commonwealth hostel at Alice Springs to replace the existing hostels, Stott House and Todd House, which will be demolished. The recreation room and a 24-bedroom block of Stott House, which are of more recent construction, will be retained to form part of the new complex.

4. The new buildings are to be erected in two stages so that there is no overall loss of accommodation during construction. The salaried officers' bedroom accommodation and the administrative and dining room/kitchen block will be erected on the vacant part of the site adjoining Stott House as the first stage. The latter will then be demolished to allow construction of the industrial employees' wing. Todd House will then be demolished.

5. The cost of the work is estimated at \$1.7 million.

THE EXISTING HOSTELS

6. At the end of World War II, two groups of hutments and messing facilities which had been erected by the Allied Works Council at Alice Springs, were taken over by the Department of Works and the Northern Territory Administration respectively. Accommodated by the Department of Works were industrial employees and contract tradesmen engaged on Government projects, while the Northern Territory Administration housed salaried officers of the Government departments operating in the area. Since then a 12-bedroom block which was erected in 1949, a 24-bedroom block in 1958, and a recreation room in 1960, have been added to the salaried officers' hostel.

7. As part of an arrangement made in 1958, Commonwealth Hostels Ltd in 1959 and 1960 respectively, took over the management and staffing of the

salaries officers' hostel which then became known as Stott House, and the industrial employees' hostel, which was named Todd House. From late 1960 the two hostels have operated as separate accommodation units, but with common kitchen, dining and administration services in Stott House.

8. The hostels are located on diagonally opposite corners of the Stott Terrace/Todd Street intersection.

9. Stott House Stott House now has a capacity of 73 persons and caters for both single male and female officers of Commonwealth departments located in Alice Springs, and teachers on loan from the South Australian Education Department. When rooms are available, visiting staff is also accommodated.

10. The rooms, spread over four accommodation blocks are generally small, poorly ventilated and uninsulated against temperature extremes. There are no sound buffers between rooms. Evaporative cooling is provided only in the dining rooms, office and the adjoining manager's flat. The furniture is minimal, consistent with the space available and the essential services are limited, often with externally located toilet and laundry facilities. Rooms are equipped with table fans but there is no heating, although the use of privately owned radiators is permitted.

11. The manager and his assistant are accommodated in two flats which are part of Stott House.

12. Todd House Todd House, which occupies part of the site for the future Alice Springs Civic Centre, provides accommodation for 143 male guests in six blocks. Those housed are day labour employees of the Department of Works and industrial employees of other Commonwealth departments, the

Northern Territory Administration and private firms engaged on Government contracts. Casual boarders are also taken if there is a surplus of accommodation after the primary requirement has been met.

13. The hostel has only ten single rooms. The balance of the accommodation consists of 52 shared rooms and three dormitories. Furnishings are austere as the size of the rooms make it impossible to equip them with more than absolute essentials. In the dormitories, each man is provided with a bed, bedside locker and a wardrobe. Although rooms are fitted with ceiling or wall fans, their effect is limited by the lack of cross ventilation and insulation. Like Stott House, no heating is provided.

THE NEED

14. The Government's object in providing staff hostels in the Northern Territory is to ensure the continued presence of a work force to implement its policies. The Committee believe that it is reasonable that people living in hostels should have a reasonable measure of comfort for their well being and amenity and so that staff are encouraged to remain in the Territory. Although this is particularly important in isolated areas where there are few amenities, the present hostels fall far short of those requirements.

15. In the main, both Todd and Stott Houses were temporary buildings when erected more than 25 years ago, consisting of lightly constructed timber-framed buildings clad either in corrugated galvanised iron or asbestos cement. Except for the few buildings of more recent origin, the accommodation is of a poor standard and the essential services are basic only. The rooms are small,

uninsulated against temperature extremes, and lack cross ventilation and heating. Despite the precautions taken, the buildings also represent a serious fire hazard as the timber frames have become tinder dry, there are no fire retardant baffles in the entire length of the roofs, the long corridors are natural flues and much of the electrical wiring and equipment which was installed during the original construction is deteriorating.

16. The Committee agreed that further major maintenance or rehabilitation of Todd and Stott Houses would be uneconomic.

17. Major new Government facilities are under construction or are being planned for Alice Springs and this will result in an increased work force. It was noted that there is thus expected to be a continuing and increasing need for single accommodation for Commonwealth officers and employees. It is therefore proposed to provide for 104 salaried officers in the new hostel, an increase of 31. Accommodation for industrial employees is to remain at about the present level.

18. The Committee concluded that there is a need for the work in this reference.

THE SITE

19. The site which the Alice Springs Town Plan allocates for a Commonwealth hostel is partly occupied by Stott House and covers $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres. It is bounded on the east by Todd Street and to the south and north respectively, by Stuart and Stott Terraces. A 16-ft laneway at the rear joins the two

terraces. The site also includes an area 124 ft wide between the laneway and Hartley Street to the west, which is planned for use as a car park.

20. The site is level and investigations have shown that the top soil is sandy, overlaying sandy clay to a depth of nine feet. No foundation problems are expected. It is also advantageously placed, fronting on to the town's main street, Todd Street. The shopping area and town centre are within easy walking distance.

21. The Committee noted the proposal to build a car park between the rear of the hostel and Hartley Street. The present requirement is for about 75 vehicles but as a future total need for some 125 spaces is foreseen, the car park has been planned on this basis.

22. Master planning of the site envisages that future expansion of the hostel, when the need arises, will occur generally in the area bounded by the laneway and the Hartley Street/Stott Terrace intersection. This would require the acquisition of three residential properties.

23. Y.W.C.A. Hostel A Y.W.C.A. hostel, the establishment of which was subsidised by the Northern Territory Administration, occupies a site on the north-east corner of the Hartley Street/Stuart Terrace intersection, and within the block on which the hostel is to be erected.

24. At the time of the inspection, the Committee were told by representatives of the Y.W.C.A. that they wish to extend their premises but the siting of the hostel's car park could inhibit their expansion plans.

25. The Committee believe that there is sufficient land available to meet the hostel expansion needs of both the Y.W.C.A. and the Commonwealth as well as the car parking requirements. We therefore suggest that before the site

for the car park is finally determined, the Northern Territory Administration should consult with the Y.W.C.A. with a view to, if necessary, making further land available to that organization, but without prejudicing the Commonwealth's hostel proposals.

26. Committee's Conclusion. Subject to the qualification in the preceding paragraph, the Committee agree that the site selected is suitable.

THE BUILDING PROPOSALS

27. Outline. Although the design has, of necessity, been influenced by the fact that the site is partly built on, it has all the features required of a modern hostel. It will have a capacity of 237 guests, comprising 104 salaried officers and 133 industrial employees. A self-contained two-bedroom flat each will be provided for the manager and his assistant.

28. From the operational aspect, it is necessary to treat the two hostels as one, but for industrial reasons, it is desirable to separate the two categories of guests. This involves a divided dining room and separate lounges and accommodation blocks.

29. The salaried officers' room will be 116 sq ft while those for industrial employees will be 106 sq ft. Furnishings and fittings will include a built-in wardrobe, divan bed, counter writing top and dressing table and vanity or wash basin with hot and cold water. Rooms will be evaporatively cooled and provided with infra-red radiant heating. Ablutions, laundry and toilet facilities will be located adjacent to bedrooms, on each floor. The existing 24-bedroom block to form part of the industrial employees' wing will be fitted out similarly to other accommodation in this section.

30. Design Approach There are three distinct elements in the proposed plan, viz. salaried officers' accommodation, industrial workers' accommodation and, common to both, a centrally placed administrative, dining and kitchen block.

31. In general, the design of the hostel will be domestic in scale with a character appropriate to the area. The dominant three-storey accommodation buildings will balance each other on either side of the single storey services unit. Covered ways will connect all buildings. A courtyard concept has been adopted in the design to reduce exposure to the prevailing hot wind and dust conditions. Courtyards will be grassed and tree shaded to provide pleasant and sheltered outdoor areas for guests.

32. Each room will be sunshaded by recessing the windows to a depth of three feet from the face of the buildings, and by vertical blades between each pair of windows.

33. Generally, the facing material will be brickwork, but local red-brown sandstone will be used for wall surfacing in the central unit, thus providing an interesting foil to the formal brickwork of the two flanking blocks.

34. Construction and Materials All buildings will be constructed of load bearing brickwork using local cement/sand bricks, founded mostly on concrete strip footings. The high section of the roof over the administrative unit will be spanned by steel portal frames supported on simple concrete spread bases.

35. Ground floors will be concrete slabs on consolidated filling and upper floors will be reinforced suspended concrete slabs. The roof, which will be of galvanised ribbed sheet steel decking is to be carried on steel

purlins supported off intermediate walls, or on the portal frames in the central unit. Ceilings under roof spaces will be insulated.

36. Dropped ceilings to corridors and ceilings under roofs will have suspended tile panels in aluminium frames. Ceilings under concrete floor slabs will be exposed "off form".

37. Finishes The external faces of the accommodation blocks will be light coloured brickwork. The stone facing of the central unit will be random coursed. Exposed concrete will finish "off form". Window frames will be of anodised aluminium and spandrel panels will be of coloured insulated decorative board. Fascias will be colour-coated asbestos sheet.

38. Internal finishes will be selected to provide durability and low maintenance costs consistent with the degree of wear expected in a hostel.

39. Floors to stores etc. will be granolithic, kitchen areas quarry tile, toilets and bathrooms unglazed mosaic ceramic tiles, other floors being surfaced with vinyl tiles. Except for kitchen and toilet areas, walls generally will be painted brickwork. Kitchen walls will be tiled to 6 ft and painted above this level. Woodwork will be either painted or oil stained, as required. Toilet and shower partitions will be of precast terrazzo, and glazed ceramic tiles will be used behind sanitary fittings. Bench and counter tops will be surfaced with laminated plastic.

40. Mechanical Services Bedrooms, dining rooms, lounges, offices and the kitchen will be evaporatively cooled for comfort conditions in summer by humidified air ducted from plant rooms located in each wing of each of the three buildings. Grouped cooking equipment and toilet areas will be served by exhaust ventilation.

41. Hot water will be generated from roof-mounted batteries of solar absorbers fitted with electric booster elements. It will be reticulated as required, including to the basins in guests' rooms. A separate hot water system will service the kitchen.

42. Miscellaneous items will include refrigerated drinking water units, cool rooms, and an industrial dry waste and sanitary incinerators. Electrical, steam and gas equipment will be installed in the kitchen as required. Air curtains will be used in kitchen and dining room doorways.

43. Electrical Services Electricity will be drawn from the town supply by an underground high voltage cable. Apart from incandescent bed head lights in bedrooms, lighting will be generally fluorescent. General purpose power outlets will be provided in all rooms. Security lighting will illuminate the perimeters of the buildings, courtyards and car parking areas. Bedrooms and all main rooms will be electrically heated in winter by wall mounted infra-red radiant heaters.

44. A public address system, operated from the general office, will be installed with three outlets to each floor of the accommodation blocks and six outlets in the central block.

45. Hydraulic Services Water supply and sewerage services will be connected to the town mains. Water will be reticulated to grassed areas.

46. Site Works External works will include the construction of a sealed laneway at the rear of the hostel between Stuart and Stott Terraces to give access to car parking areas in addition to that available from Hartley Street. Car park areas will be sealed and provided with kerbs and channels.

47. As far as possible, the existing trees on site will be preserved. Courtyards will be landscaped to create pleasant gardens as a relief from the arid environment.

48. Fire Protection The buildings will be served by a thermal fire alarm system connected to the Alice Springs Fire Station. Hose reels and portable fire extinguishers will be located internally and hydrants externally.

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

ESTIMATE OF COST

50. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1.7 million made up as follows:

	\$
Building work	1,102,500
Furniture and fittings	66,000
Mechanical and electrical services	448,000
Hydraulic services	29,500
Site works	54,000
	1,700,000

PROGRAMME

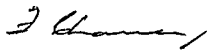
51. It is expected that after an approval to proceed is given, the preparation of final drawings, tender documents and letting of a contract will take about nine months. Construction time for stage 1 is expected to be 15 months and stage 2, a further 9 months.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

52. 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.

Paragraph

1. FURTHER MAJOR MAINTENANCE OR REHABILITATION OF
TODD AND STOTT HOUSES WOULD BE UNECONOMIC. 16
2. THERE IS EXPECTED TO BE A CONTINUING AND INCREASING
NEED FOR SINGLE ACCOMMODATION FOR COMMONWEALTH
OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES AT ALICE SPRINGS. 17
3. THERE IS A NEED FOR THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE. 18
4. THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ADMINISTRATION SHOULD CONSULT
WITH THE Y.W.C.A. WITH A VIEW TO; IF NECESSARY, MAKING
FURTHER LAND AVAILABLE TO THAT ORGANIZATION, BUT
WITHOUT PREJUDICING THE COMMONWEALTH'S HOSTEL PROPOSALS. 25
5. SUBJECT TO RECOMMENDATION 4, THE COMMITTEE AGREE THAT THE
SITE SELECTED IS SUITABLE. 26
6. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK
IN THIS REFERENCE. 49
7. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO THE
COMMITTEE WAS \$1.7 MILLION. 50


(F.C. CHANEY)
Chairman.

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

17 April 1969.