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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REPORT

relating to the proposed establishment of

CENTRAL LAUNDRY AND STERILIZING SERVICES

at

Canberra Hospital, A.C.T.

(Thirteenth Report of 1969)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

CENTRAL LAUNDRY AND STERILIZING SERVICES
AT CANBERRA HOSPITAL, A.C.T.

R E P O R T

On 17 July 1969, His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the House of Representatives proposals for the establishment of central laundry and sterilizing services at Canberra Hospital, A.C.T.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

1. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of Health and Works. At public hearings in Canberra, we took evidence from representatives of these departments, the A.C.T. Branch of the Australian Medical Association and the National Capital Development Commission, from the Secretary of the Canberra Hospital, two commercial launderers and a private witness who was formerly a member of the Board of Management of the Canberra Hospital. The National Council of Women of the Australian Capital Territory also submitted a written statement.
2. An inspection was carried out of the existing laundry and sterilizing services at Canberra Hospital and those other areas of the hospital affected by the proposed works.

THE REFERENCE

3. The building works involved in the proposal referred to the Committee include
- (a) increasing the boiler capacity of the hospital;
 - (b) enlarging the laundry building and installing new equipment;
 - (c) extending and altering the sterilizing department; and
 - (d) extending the ground floor stores area.
4. The estimated cost of the proposals when referred to the Committee was \$1.6 million.

A.C.T. HOSPITALS

5. The hospitals in the Australian Capital Territory affected by the proposed work are the Canberra, Woden and Calvary Hospitals.
6. Canberra Hospital This is the only hospital in use in the A.C.T. at present. It has a capacity of 600 permanent beds and 150 temporary beds. Some 625 beds are now in use, the remainder being brought in gradually as required.
7. The temporary beds are located in weatherboard buildings formerly used as offices and which are now located in the hospital grounds. It is planned to demolish these buildings after the Woden Hospital is occupied, and the capacity of the hospital will then revert to 600 beds.
8. Canberra Hospital is at present self-sufficient in laundry and sterilizing services, the existing facilities having been designed to meet the needs of 600 beds.
9. Woden Hospital The Committee reported to the Parliament on 15 May 1968 on the proposal to build a new 600 bed hospital in the Woden Valley. Planning

allows for staged construction, the first stage in a multi-storey block being 380 beds and the second of 220 beds in a two-storey building.

10. The original target was to complete the first stage early in 1973 and to take the first patients about six months later after a running-in period. The second stage was programmed to be finished late in 1975 and to be occupied about mid-1976. It is still aimed to have the first stage in use in July 1973, but the second stage has been advanced and is now expected to take its first patients in April 1974.

11. Calvary Hospital The religious order of the Little Company of Mary is planning to erect a 200 bed hospital in the Belconnen district. The project, which is receiving substantial Commonwealth aid, was earlier planned to be occupied late in 1971. The target date has now slipped behind and it is now thought that the first patient will be taken about February 1973.

12. Other Future Hospitals The Committee noted that a Belconnen Hospital Planning Committee has been set up to consider the requirements of a second hospital in the Belconnen district. This hospital will be needed, at a time depending on population growth, after completion of the Woden Hospital.

13. If Canberra continues to develop as now planned, the fifth hospital will probably need to be built in the Tuggeranong district, south of Woden.

INTEGRATION OF HOSPITAL SERVICES

14. When reporting on the Woden Hospital, the Committee noted the plan to co-ordinate and integrate basic hospital services in the A.C.T. involving the Canberra, Calvary and Woden Hospitals and other later hospitals. We also observed then that planning was in hand to enlarge facilities in the laundry

area and in the central sterile supply department at the Canberra Hospital to enable these services to supply all three hospitals. The fruition of this planning is the present reference. The matter was relevant to our consideration of the Woden proposal, only insofar as no laundry or central sterilizing services were planned for that hospital.

15. It is noteworthy in the wider context of integrated services, that the Woden Hospital has been planned to handle the hospitals' bulk pharmaceutical supplies and make up and supply other hospitals from those stocks. A further example of the integration of services is the proposal that Calvary and Woden Hospitals will receive their prepared food requirements direct from the food preparation centre of Commonwealth Hostels Ltd. at Fyshwick. This move will result in economies in the provision of food preparation equipment and space in the hospitals and in operational costs.

HOSPITAL BED REQUIREMENTS

16. The total need for hospital services increases in direct proportion to population growth. In our report on the Woden Hospital, we commented that, based on the currently accepted bed requirement/population ratio of 6 per 1,000 and the latest population projections, the hospital bed requirements in Canberra for the next ten years would be:

<u>Year at</u> <u>30 June</u>	<u>Estimated</u> <u>population</u>	<u>Estimated bed</u> <u>requirements</u>
1968	110,000	666
1969	121,000	726
1970	132,000	792
1971	144,000	864
1972	156,000	936
1973	170,000	1,020
1974	184,000	1,104
1975	198,000	1,188
1976	212,000	1,272
1977	226,000	1,356
1978	240,000	1,440

The above population projections are still being used for planning purposes.

17. It was also stated that while 6 beds per 1,000 was the agreed theoretical requirement, for a number of good reasons, Canberra Hospital was managing with an availability of 5.5 beds per 1,000 and at an occupancy rate of 5.1 per 1,000. These figures represent a beds occupied to beds available ratio of 93% which exceeds the ratio of 80% to 85% considered to be ideal for flexible and efficient hospital management.

18. It should also be mentioned that, at the present time, although Canberra Hospital has accommodation for 750 beds, and there is a theoretical requirement for about 725, only 625 beds are in use.

19. The Committee believe that the figures discussed above indicate that although the completion in 1973 of the Calvary Hospital and the first stage of the Woden Hospital will enable 1,330 beds to be provided, the number of beds required or in use at that time is likely to be much lower.

THE PROPOSAL

20. Outline Set against the background of the overall plan to integrate hospital services, the work in the present reference aims to expand the existing facilities at the Canberra Hospital to provide central laundry and sterilizing services capable of meeting the needs of 1,400 hospital beds (viz. Canberra Hospital 600 beds, Woden Hospital 600 beds and Calvary Hospital 200 beds).

21. It is the intention that these services will operate until about the time the fourth hospital is completed and occupied. At that point, it is planned to have built and ready for use, a new central laundry and sterilizing complex, probably as an element of a hospitals' services facility on a separate industrial site, to cater for the needs of all hospitals. The facilities at Canberra Hospital would then be phased out. The plan is that

the new facility, besides providing laundry and sterilizing services would probably also include such functions as a central food service, purchasing services, warehouses and storage areas.

22. Functions With the aid of the works in the present reference, the interim central laundry service is to be part of and be operated by the Canberra Hospital, which will own and be responsible for the purchase, standardization, processing and delivery of clean linen and uniforms and the collection of dirty linen and uniforms etc. used in the Canberra, Woden and Calvary Hospitals. The service, which is to operate on a six-day delivery cycle, is to be responsible for the delivery of clean linen to and the return of soiled linen from the other hospitals, but not for handling within these hospitals.

23. The central sterilizing service is to operate on similar lines and the Canberra Hospital will own all instruments etc. and be responsible for their maintenance. Sterile supplies will be delivered to and dirty material collected from hospitals on a daily basis.

24. Work Involved The existing boiler house at the Canberra Hospital accommodates three coal fired boilers and other ancillary plant and has space for a fourth boiler. To ensure an adequate supply of steam for all hospital purposes, as well as the laundry and sterilizing services, it is proposed as part of this reference to

- instal a fourth boiler, oil fired, of 20,000 lbs/hour capacity;
- replace an 8,000 lbs/hour coal fired boiler with a 20,000 lbs/hour oil fired boiler;
- convert the remaining coal fired boilers to oil firing.

25. The existing laundry complex is to be extended where appropriate and equipment added to process the workload of the three hospitals, in one shift per day and 40 hours per week. This will require

- provision of space for receiving, despatch, sorting and holding facilities;
- extension of the existing mezzanine floor;
- extensions to the laundry by two bays and providing extra equipment;
- enlarging the clean linen store; and
- relocating the uniform exchange and the central sterile department linen examination area.

26. The central sterilizing area is also to be extended and re-modelled and provided with additional equipment. To meet the increased load and provide reasonable working conditions, it is proposed to

- provide space for the receipt of soiled material and instruments, for sorting and initial cleaning, for the holding of clean linen, and for storage and despatch;
- re-model the cleaning and general work area; and
- provide air conditioning.

27. As a result of internal re-arrangements in the laundry and sterilizing areas, it will be necessary to provide alternative space for lockers for male and female hospital staff, sewing facilities, stores and additional showers and toilets.

28. Estimate of Cost The estimated cost of the proposed work is \$1.6 million as follows:

	\$
Laundry	698,000
Sterile supply	400,000
Boiler house	438,000
Other work	64,000
	<u>1,600,000</u>

29. Programme The Committee were told that a period of about 50 weeks would be required in which to complete working drawings and contract documents, to invite and consider tenders and to let a contract. It has been estimated that 80 weeks would be required to complete the building work.

THE ALTERNATIVES

30. Outline During our enquiry we examined two alternatives to the current proposal. The first involved development of a central facility on a site other than Canberra Hospital to provide a central laundry and sterile supply service for all A.C.T. hospitals. At the outset this facility would need to have capacity for up to 1,400 beds and be capable of extension as further hospitals are erected.

31. The second alternative was of two parts. The first part involved minimum alterations to the existing facilities at Canberra Hospital, broadly to carry the additional load created by the 150 temporary beds there and the initially occupied beds of Calvary Hospital, i.e. a facility with capacity up to 950 beds.

32. It was envisaged that these facilities would be required until the second part could be planned and built. The second stage would, in effect, be the same as the first alternative - a new central facility on a separate site - designed initially for up to 1,400 beds, and for progressive extension. It was suggested that the initial central facility would need to be available in 1973 in time to service Woden Hospital as it comes into use.

33. The Time Factor We noted and accepted the advice of the departmental witnesses, that because little planning work has so far been done on the first alternative, its services could not be available in time to meet the demands to be imposed by the extra beds at Canberra and the initial beds at Calvary.

34. It was also suggested that for much the same reasons, the second alternative would be impracticable because more than 3½ years would be required to plan, design, construct and run-in a new and separate facility and that by this time, the first of the beds at Woden would need servicing. We did not accept this suggestion entirely or the submission that the idea is not feasible because there is insufficient time to make administrative arrangements for the control and operation of a separate facility.

35. It was evident to the Committee that the time already taken in planning the proposed services has not been used as profitably as it might have been, with the result that the time now available in which to complete designs and arrange construction is very short. Nonetheless, it seemed that a satisfactory result, on the lines now recommended by the Committee, is possible providing positive planning action is taken without further loss of time.

36. Although a site has not yet been allocated for the central facility, serviced land can be made available, when the requirement is defined, without delaying construction.

37. Costs In broad terms, the departmental proposals involve the expenditure of \$1.6 million on the work in the present reference, plus \$4.8 million on a central facility designed for 3,000 beds. The latter expenditure would be staged, with \$3.6 million being spent about 1978/79 to provide a service when the Canberra Hospital service is phased out and the Belconnen Hospital is first occupied, and \$1.2 million about 1983/84 to extend it to 3,000 beds capacity. The total cost would thus be \$6.4 million.

38. The second alternative referred to in paragraphs 31 and 32, would, in total, cost \$5.7 million, comprising \$0.9 million on providing interim services at Canberra Hospital immediately, \$3.2 million on a central facility in the next three or four years and extensions of the central facility involving \$0.4 million about 1978/79, and \$1.2 million in 1983/84.

39. We were told that when the proposed expenditure in the two schemes is discounted at 6% per annum to present day values, the departmental proposal will cost \$4.48 million, as against the second alternative at \$4.66 million. It seemed to the Committee that the difference of some 4% was marginal only and, in the circumstances, could hardly be the deciding factor on which proposal to adopt.

OTHER CONCLUSIONS

40. The Need On the basis of the bed requirements referred to in paragraphs 16 to 19, as distinct from the beds available, it was evident to the Committee that the need is for a service which will be capable of

meeting the laundry and central sterile supply needs of about 1,020 beds in June 1973, 1,104 beds in 1974 etc.

41. As opposed to this, the departmental proposal is to provide a service which in 1973 will be capable of meeting the needs of 1,400 beds, an over capacity which would not be fully utilised before about 1978, at which point it is due to be phased out.

42. Integrated Services From the evidence submitted on this and the Woden Hospital references, the Committee believe that the proposal to integrate hospital services in the A.C.T. is sound and practical from the economic and functional viewpoints. In particular, we found it appropriate for laundry and central sterilizing services to be integrated and for facilities to be provided elsewhere than at a hospital.

43. Having decided on this policy, and particularly as the Calvary and Woden Hospitals are to be in use in 1973, we consider that implementation of the scheme should occur without delay, so that the full benefits of integration may be enjoyed as soon as possible. Furthermore, there seems to be no valid reason for spending more money than necessary at Canberra Hospital to provide, what will, in effect, be a temporary or interim service only.

44. Interim Services We acknowledge that the rejection of the proposals referred to us will exert pressures on the laundry and sterilizing services at Canberra Hospital in the period before a central facility can be functioning. However, we think that this disability will be more than offset by the benefits to be gained from accelerating completion of the latter. During the difficult period, further consideration should be given to the more intensive use of the facilities that are available and, if necessary, to using commercial resources to supplement the output of the laundry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

45. The following is an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Committee which followed the final public hearing and a debate on the evidence.

" It was moved Senator Branson, seconded Mr. Holten:

That the Committee report to the Parliament that it is not expedient to proceed with the proposals as submitted; and

That the Government should reconsider the proposed arrangements for providing laundry and central sterilizing services to A.C.T. hospitals with a view to

- (a) proceeding immediately with the design and construction of permanent laundry and sterilizing facilities on a site other than Canberra Hospital; and
- (b) constructing such additional facilities at Canberra Hospital as are required to provide an interim service, pending completion of the permanent facility.

Debate ensued.

The Committee divided

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>
Mr. Chaney	Mr. James
Senator Branson	
Senator Prowse	
Mr. Holten	
Mr. Nicholls	

and so it was resolved in the affirmative. "

46. In accordance with this resolution, therefore, the recommendations of the Committee are that:

- (i) IT IS NOT EXPEDIENT TO PROCEED WITH THE PROPOSALS AS SUBMITTED.
- (ii) THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECONSIDER THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROVIDING LAUNDRY AND CENTRAL STERILIZING SERVICES TO A.C.T. HOSPITALS WITH A VIEW TO
 - (a) PROCEEDING IMMEDIATELY WITH THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF PERMANENT LAUNDRY AND STERILIZING FACILITIES ON A SITE OTHER THAN CANBERRA HOSPITAL; AND
 - (b) CONSTRUCTING SUCH ADDITIONAL FACILITIES AT CANBERRA HOSPITAL AS ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE AN INTERIM SERVICE, PENDING COMPLETION OF THE PERMANENT FACILITY.



(F.C. CHANEY)
Chairman

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

11 September, 1969.