

1970

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REPORT

relating to the proposed provision of

TRANSPORTABLE HOUSES

and

CLASSROOM

at

Exmouth, Western Australia

(FIFTEENTH REPORT OF 1970)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

TRANSPORTABLE HOUSES AND CLASSROOM,
EXMOUTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

R E P O R T

By resolution on 2 September 1970, the Senate referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament the proposal for the construction of 40 transportable houses and a classroom in the township of Exmouth, Western Australia.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the purchase, delivery and erection in the township of Exmouth, Western Australia, of 40 transportable houses and a transportable classroom building. The accommodation is required by R.A.A.F. members and their families who are associated with the construction by No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron, R.A.A.F. at Learmonth, Western Australia, of airfield and other development works.

2. The estimated cost of the houses and classroom is \$775,000.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of Air and Works and we took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Canberra.

R.A.A.F. LEARMONTH

4. Approval was given by the Government in July 1969 for the upgrading for the R.A.A.F. of the airfield at Learmonth. That work not only includes improvement of the runway and other pavement, taxiway and apron works and associated services but also the cost of maintenance of No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron (5 ACS), of hutted accommodation at the airfield site for single personnel and workshops, stores and other facilities normally provided in a construction camp. In February 1970, the Governor-General by order, declared that this work is for defence purposes and that reference of it to the Public Works Committee would be contrary to the public interest. The proposals were thereby exempted from our scrutiny.

5. The airfield works commenced in March 1970. The programme provides for the strength of 5 ACS to build up to about 140 members in October 1970 when the construction camp at the airfield will be ready, to 220 by January 1971 and for the airfield to be completed by December 1972. Some 100 of the 220 personnel will be married accompanied members for whom married quarters are required.

6. 5 ACS This permanent R.A.A.F. unit undertakes, in peacetime, airfield works in the approved works programme. It and similar units have since World War II undertaken major projects for the R.A.A.F. at a number of bases in Australia and overseas.

7. As there is now only one such squadron in the R.A.A.F., there is no reserve of tradesmen of the skills and experience required for rotation of single and married unaccompanied personnel. Furthermore, posting of married personnel for long periods, unaccompanied by their families, leads to problems of morale and maintenance of efficiency and is a vital factor which servicemen consider in deciding whether or not to re-engage.

HOUSING FOR 5 ACS

8. The Committee were told that at the time the Learmonth project was planned, the cost of the 100 married quarters required, together with any school additions for dependant children, was not included as part of the project estimate. It was thought that these facilities could be provided in the town of Exmouth - 23 miles north of Learmonth - by the Western Australian Government, which would accelerate the construction of houses in the town for the R.A.A.F. members concerned. Under this arrangement, the cost of the houses would have been met by an advance to the State under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement but as this would have been recovered in due course by the Commonwealth under the provisions of the Agreement, it was not to be charged to the airfield works.

9. The State Government subsequently indicated a willingness to build only 60 houses in this way. This quota was then reduced to 48 after 12 married quarters had been obtained by the conversion of single accommodation in the Commonwealth Hostel at Exmouth.

10. The Requirement The need for 100 housing units at Exmouth for married members of 5 ACS concerned with the construction works at Learmonth and the availability of only 60 units from other sources has created the requirement for the 40 houses in this reference.

11. The total housing requirement for 5 ACS is 200 units. As a first step towards meeting this need, 114 demountable units were erected at Tindal in the Northern Territory when 5 ACS was building that airfield. Twenty of these units are to be retained at Tindal for R.A.A.F. members stationed there permanently and the remaining 94 units are to be taken to Darwin for 5 ACS when planned airfield improvements there are approved.

12. The Committee were told that it is planned to build up progressively the number of demountable housing units available to 5 ACS until the total requirement is satisfied. As the houses will need to be moved from time to time according to the location of the unit, it is proposed that they be of robust construction capable of being transported by road on conventional vehicles and of quick erection on serviced sites with a minimum of labour.

13. The Committee concluded that there is a need for the 40 housing units in this reference and agree they should be of demountable construction.

CLASSROOM UNIT

14. The location of R.A.A.F. families at Exmouth will bring with it a need for additional schooling facilities. There is a school at Exmouth which provides for education up to and including third year of the Western Australian secondary syllabus. The Committee were told that the school will require an extra classroom for children of R.A.A.F. personnel at Exmouth and that the State authorities are unable to provide this accommodation for a short term need. The proposal then is to provide a classroom in transportable form so that it can be moved with 5 ACS when it leaves. It can then be used to provide classroom accommodation elsewhere should the need arise again in a remote locality.

15. The Committee concluded that there is a need for the proposed transportable classroom.

THE SITE

16. It is proposed to erect the houses in Exmouth township, which although it is 23 miles from Learmonth, has services and community facilities available and can readily accommodate the population increase involved. Serviced sites are to be acquired from the State and when the houses are finally removed,

the serviced blocks will be available for sale should the Commonwealth decide to dispose of them. We noted that the servicing of sites at Learmonth would cost \$200,000 more than at Exmouth.

17. In the light of these facts and particularly the significant social advantage of the availability of community facilities and services, for both R.A.A.F. members and their families, the Committee consider the proposal to build the houses and classroom at Exmouth is appropriate.

THE BUILDING PROPOSALS

18. Design A basic requirement is that the design and construction of the housing and classroom units should permit them to be supplied and erected on site initially in minimum time and that one or more subsequent moves to various localities and climatic regions be achieved comparatively quickly and economically. Although this requirement is a prime factor in the determination of design form, method of construction and layout, we noted that it adds a premium to the cost.

19. The Committee were told that after studying the range of transportable housing units competitively available, it was found that a sectionised form of house, well constructed and on a rigid base for ease of portability, minimum site work and risk of transport damage and with minimum removal and erection time, is the most satisfactory solution of the housing problem. An important factor also is that State police regulations limit the size of units that can be carried by road.

20. For three-bedroom houses, a floor area of 1,080 sq. ft is proposed and for four-bedroom units 1,224 sq. ft. Besides the bedroom accommodation, each unit is to have a lounge room 21 ft by 12 ft, a dining room 12 ft by 12 ft, bathroom, laundry and toilet. A carport will be added to each house.

The three-bedroom unit would basically consist of two elements each 45 ft long, 12 ft wide and 9 ft high, plus roof and be capable of movement in cube form on semi-trailers. The four-bedroom unit is larger by one 12 ft by 12 ft bedroom.

21. Essential design features are to include

- strong rigid frame with rolled steel sections as bearers;
- strong construction, anchored and braced to withstand cyclonic conditions;
- well insulated with windows and walls shaded by roof overhangs;
- durable, minimum maintenance materials throughout, externally and internally;
- Commonwealth standards of fittings and equipment, e.g. adequate cupboard spaces, 9 ft ceiling height to accommodate ceiling fans.

22. The classroom block is to be a standard 24 ft by 24 ft air conditioned prefabricated classroom plus verandah. It is to be obtained from the supplier to the State Government and is to be integrated with existing units comprising the Exmouth School.

23. Committee's Recommendation The Committee recommend the construction of the works in this reference.

ESTIMATE OF COST

24. The estimated cost of the works when referred to the Committee was \$775,000 made up as follows:

	\$
40 transportable houses including	
36 three-bedroom units and	
4 four-bedroom units	750,000
One standard air conditioned classroom	25,000
	<u>775,000</u>

PROGRAMME

25. The Committee were told that after an approval to proceed is given, it is expected that the preparation of documents, invitation and acceptance of tenders, transportation and erection of houses on site is expected to take 30 weeks. Progressive completion is expected prior to this at the rate of five units per week.

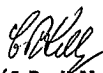
26. The completion time could be prolonged should cyclonic weather affect transport or building operations between December 1970 and April 1971.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

27. 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.

	<u>Paragraph</u>
1. THERE IS A NEED FOR THE 40 HOUSING UNITS IN THIS REFERENCE.	13
2. THEY SHOULD BE OF DEMOUNTABLE CONSTRUCTION.	13
3. THERE IS A NEED FOR THE PROPOSED TRANSPORTABLE CLASSROOM.	15
4. THE PROPOSAL TO BUILD THE HOUSES AND CLASSROOM AT EXMOUTH IS APPROPRIATE.	17
5. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORKS IN THIS REFERENCE.	23
6. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORKS WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$775,000.	24

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


(C.R. Kelly)
Chairman.

11 September 1970.