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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

REPORT

relating to the proposed

REPLACEMENT OF ACCOMMODATION

(1971 REFERENCE)

at

H.M.A.S. Albatross, Nowra
New South Wales

(ELEVENTH REPORT OF 1971)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REPLACEMENT OF ACCOMMODATION
(1971 REFERENCE)
H.M.A.S. ALBATROSS, NOWRA, NEW SOUTH WALES

R E P O R T

On 10 June 1971, His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament, the proposal for the final stage of replacement of living, dining and recreation facilities at the Naval Air Station, H.M.A.S. Albatross, Nowra, New South Wales.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The reference to the Committee is for the erection of accommodation in the living-in zone at H.M.A.S. Albatross to replace substandard buildings. Its main components are

- an assembly hall;
- extension of junior sailors' canteen;
- a gymnasium and squash court;
- junior W.R.A.N.S. sleeping quarters;
- a senior sailors' mess and galley;
- a wardroom;
- officers' sleeping quarters;
- senior sailors' sleeping quarters; and
- junior sailors' sleeping quarters.

4. The work is estimated to cost \$5.8 million.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of the Navy and Works and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing at H.M.A.S. Albatross. On that occasion we also took evidence from the President of the Petty Officers' Association.

4. During the same visit, we inspected the existing facilities of the station and the sites for the proposed buildings.

H.M.A.S. ALBATROSS

5. Location H.M.A.S. Albatross covers 1,340 acres of undulating country in the Shoalhaven Valley, five miles south of the town of Nowra on the south coast of New South Wales. By air it is about 70 miles from both Sydney and Canberra.

6. The station was constructed initially as an operational training base for the R.A.A.F. early in World War II and was taken over by the R.A.N. in 1947.

7. Previous References The Committee reported to the Parliament on 13 March 1968 concerning the proposal for construction of an avionics workshop at H.M.A.S. Albatross at an estimated cost of \$530,000.

8. On 13 August 1968, the Committee reported on the initial stage of a programme for replacement of living-in accommodation comprising a senior sailors' and W.R.A.N.S.' accommodation block, and a junior sailors' and W.R.A.N.S.' galley and mess and a victualling store. We again reported on 25 September 1969, on two officers' accommodation blocks

and a junior sailors' accommodation block. The estimated cost of these proposals was \$1,050,000 and \$900,000 respectively.

9. The work now proposed is the final stage of the programme for replacing by permanent construction unsatisfactory buildings in the living-in zone.

10. Functions H.M.A.S. Albatross is the shore base for the Fleet Air Arm. It provides aircraft for the Fleet and for operational and training purposes as well as facilities for the maintenance of these aircraft and for maintenance training. The station is also the base for the Australian Joint Anti-Submarine School which provides anti-submarine training for the R.A.N. and R.A.A.F.

11. It maintains and operates front line aircraft squadrons when disembarked, aircraft for fleet requirements, the helicopter and fixed wing aircraft operational flying schools, the Jervis Bay airfield, the Beecroft Head Gunnery Range, and provides pilotless target aircraft for Fleet requirements and also Jindivik in conjunction with the Department of Supply. It also operates and administers schools of instruction concerned with naval aviation and transport including photography and meteorology.

12. The complement at H.M.A.S. Albatross as at June 1971 was 331 officers, 534 senior sailors and 1,306 junior sailors, a total of 2171. By 1974, it is expected to increase to approximately 2,468 personnel.

13. Existing Facilities The station is divided roughly into five major zones:

- (i) the airfield proper which comprises two sealed runways (6,650 ft and 6,750 ft), taxiways and hardstandings;

- (ii) the technical area where hangars and workshops are located;
- (iii) the administrative and living-in area;
- (iv) married quarters; and
- (v) playing fields.

14. Many of the buildings in the second and third zones were originally built during World War II and have been replaced or now need replacement. A master plan has been prepared to control this rebuilding.

15. In the living-in area, six sleeping blocks for junior sailors, a sailors' canteen, a squash court and a sick quarters operating theatre have recently been built in permanent construction. In addition, the senior sailors' and W.R.A.N.S.' accommodation block, junior sailors' and W.R.A.N.S.' galley and mess, victualling store, two officers' accommodation blocks and the junior sailors' accommodation block mentioned in paragraph 8 above are nearing completion.

16. The Committee noted that the work in the present reference is consistent with the master plan and will not prejudice any other redevelopment proposals in the living-in area. It was also noted that both existing and planned accommodation are outside noise dangerous areas and that special sound proofing or noise attenuation measures are therefore not considered necessary.

NEED FOR THE PROPOSED FACILITIES

17. As reported previously, the Government has planned the progressive replacement of substandard buildings in the living-in area and the work now proposed represents the final stage of that programme. The total cost of all phases of the work is estimated to cost \$7.75 million.

18. Generally, the buildings to be replaced by the work now proposed are timber framed structures clad with asbestos cement or black iron and were designed during World War II for a short life only. In each case, they are obsolete, no longer economic to maintain, do not provide reasonable accommodation and can only be described as substandard. They certainly do not comply with the "Services Scales and Standards of Accommodation".

19. In the case of the junior sailors' canteen building, it is of permanent construction, but it is inadequate for the numbers of sailors using it. There is no proper assembly hall or gymnasium and together with the extra squash court, it is necessary to bring these facilities into line with "Services Scales and Standards of Accommodation".

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

THE PROPOSED BUILDINGS

21. The buildings to be constructed in this reference are described below. In each case, the facilities to be provided comply with "Services Scales and Standards of Accommodation" at a level appropriate to the complement of H.M.A.S. Albatross.

22. Assembly Hall The assembly hall is to be a single storey structure designed for an establishment whose complement lies between 2,000 and 3,000. It will include a main hall seating 600, an entrance lobby with a box office and toilets, a stage, dressing facilities and a properties store.

23. Junior Sailors' Canteen The canteen will be extended by a wing 156 ft long to provide a billiard room, library, reading room, games room and toilets for visitors.

24. Gymnasium and Squash Court This single storey building will have a gallery above the squash court. The gymnasium section will be 90 ft by 56 ft.

25. Junior W.R.A.N.S.' Sleeping Quarters This three-storey building will accommodate 100 junior W.R.A.N.S. in single cabins. It will include boxrooms, toilets and ablution areas on each floor and a recreation room on the ground floor. Also at this level will be laundry and ironing facilities and a drying room.

26. Senior Sailors' Mess The mess will have a central galley initially equipped to cater for 400 and designed to serve separate dining rooms for chief petty officers and petty officers. Separate recreational facilities for the two ranks will be provided scaled for 385 senior sailors. They include in each case an ante room, games room, library, visitors' room, T.V. room and male and female toilets. Separate entrances will be provided and each wing will have an enclosed landscaped courtyard.

27. Wardroom The wardroom is designed for 230 officers with a mess and galley capacity of up to 250. Recreational facilities will include an ante-room and bar and rooms for billiards, games, music, visitors and reading, a library, and male and female toilets. It will also have an enclosed landscaped courtyard and be connected to the officers' sleeping quarters by covered ways.

28. Officers' Sleeping Quarters These three two-storeyed blocks are of standard design for the Services and with slight internal alteration will accommodate a captain's flat, five female officers and 102 male officers. Generally, the cabins will be on the periphery of each building around a central core containing ablutions and toilet areas, box rooms and laundry

and ironing facilities on each floor. The W.R.A.N.S. officers to be located on the ground floor of one of the buildings will have an adjoining recreation room.

29. Senior Sailors' Sleeping Quarters Two hundred and sixty two senior sailors will be accommodated in three three-storeyed blocks of standard design. Once again cabins will be on the periphery of each building surrounding the central service core. Two change rooms and associated facilities will also be provided for use by senior sailors who do not live on the station,

30. Junior Sailors' Sleeping Quarters Two three-storeyed buildings and a two-storeyed building will provide accommodation for 367 junior sailors mainly in four berth cabins. Laundry and ironing facilities and a drying room will be confined to each ground floor whilst toilets and ablution areas will be located on each floor.

CONSTRUCTION

31. Sites The sites selected are in the zone in the master plan set aside for administrative and living-in accommodation. In each case, they adjoin other similar buildings and are convenient to working and recreation areas. The Committee consider the sites selected to be suitable.

32. Structure The terrain is reasonably level with a suitable shale foundation at approximately 15 ft below the natural surface. The shale is overlain by clay which is subject to movement with seasonal variation of moisture content. Due to these conditions, the buildings will be on pier and beam foundations. Above the ground, structural brickwork will be used with reinforced concrete floors. Roof structure will be either of steel for larger spans or of timber where domestic type roofs are possible.

33. Materials and Finishes External walls of buildings are to be face brick whilst the roofs will be either tile or metal deck according to requirements. Window and door frames will be anodised aluminium. Designs and finishes will generally match existing buildings and those under construction.

34. In selecting internal finishes, the need for economic maintenance and durability will be recognised. Generally, they will be similar to those proposed for the buildings previously examined by the Committee and now under construction. Typically, walls and floors in toilets and ablution areas will be tiled and corridors and stair halls will be finished with face brickwork. Floors will generally have a vinyl or linoleum covering. However, carpet is proposed to be used in selected areas. Built-in beds and wardrobes will be provided in the cabins.

35. Engineering Services Mechanical items to be provided will include hot water services, mechanical ventilation, washing machines, kitchen equipment and heating equipment for the wardroom, senior sailors' mess, assembly hall and the junior sailors' canteen extension. L.P. gas will be reticulated from the existing underground service.

36. Three electricity substations will be constructed from which supply to individual buildings will be by underground cable. Lighting will be mainly fluorescent and the sleeping quarters will be provided with electric strip heaters. The station's public address and call systems are to be extended to the new buildings.

37. Water, sewerage and stormwater drainage will be connected to the existing systems.

38. The road system is to be modified and extended to serve the new buildings. New roads will be 24 ft wide. Car parks for some 600 vehicles will also be constructed.

39. Landscaping will include lawns, shrubs and tree planting and incorporate paths and paving.

40. Fire Protection All buildings will be fitted with automatic detectors, and hose reels, fire hydrants and extinguishers will also be provided to approved standards.

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

ESTIMATE OF COST

42. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$5.8 million made up as follows:

	\$
Building work	4,982,000
Engineering services	<u>818,000</u>
	<u>5,800,000</u>

PROGRAMME

43. As many of the existing buildings cannot be removed until the facilities they provide have been constructed elsewhere, it is proposed to spread the preparation of contract documents and invitation of tenders over some three years from the time an approval to proceed is given. Similarly, the construction of buildings will be spread over approximately four to five years after the first contract is let.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

44. Scales and Standards of Accommodation The extent and degree of amenity provided in accommodation in peacetime for Services' personnel has been determined by the Government and is set down in a document known as "Services Scale and Standards of Accommodation". The scales etc., which have been approved, have been decided having regard to the requirements of the Services themselves as well as geographic, site and climatic factors.

45. So far as living-in and particularly sleeping quarters for single persons are concerned, the standard varies in barrack type accommodation, according to rank, from a four-man cubicle for other ranks through single rooms with varying degrees of amenity for senior N.C.O.s and junior officers to more elaborate quarters for senior officers. An important factor considered in fixing the standards and the choice of barrack type accommodation has clearly been the cost element.

46. In a report tabled in the Parliament on 18 August 1971, on the redevelopment of the Alice Springs Hospital, the Committee commented on a study which had been carried out by the Department of Works on the standards and costs of living-in accommodation for nursing sisters. The outcome of this study was to question the apparently widely held belief that hostel type accommodation which is similar in many respects to barracks quarters was the most economic and desirable way of housing sisters at the hospital.

47. It was apparent to the Committee that for the Services' requirements, barrack accommodation may be preferred or even be necessary for some or all personnel on the establishment for disciplinary or other functional reasons. On the other hand, it was equally evident that if any of the alternative types of accommodation discussed in the Department of Works' study on the Alice Springs Hospital is as acceptable and

desirable as barrack type accommodation and is less costly to provide, then consideration should be given to providing it instead of the standard barrack quarters.

48. The Committee therefore recommend that as a matter of urgency an examination be made of whether variations of the conventional barrack type of living-in accommodation for the Services might offer a more satisfactory and equally acceptable standard of accommodation and at the same time prove to be at least equally economic.

49. The Committee discussed whether this examination might properly be made before planning of the proposed facilities at H.M.A.S. Albatross took place and construction commenced. We concluded that as that accommodation is urgently required, any further delay in providing it was not justified and that construction should be commenced as soon as possible, notwithstanding the recommendation in the previous paragraph.

50. Floor Coverings In a report presented to Parliament on 25 September 1970 on sleeping, messing and amenities facilities for chiefs and petty officers at H.M.A.S. Cerberus, the Committee concluded " ... that if it is economically feasible, carpet should be used as a floor covering in the sleeping blocks for senior sailors at H.M.A.S. Cerberus".

51. During the course of our examination of the current reference, we were told that consequent upon the Committee's recommendation in respect of H.M.A.S. Cerberus, it has been decided to use carpet in the corridors of the senior sailors' sleeping blocks but that a decision has not yet been taken on the covering of the floors of the cabins themselves.

52. The question of the floor coverings of the cabins is not a critical one but we find it rather difficult to comprehend why a decision

about it has not yet been reached more than nine months after the Committee's recommendation was originally made. We therefore strongly recommend that steps be taken to expedite a decision on this matter.

53. On the living-in accommodation at H.M.A.S. Albatross, we believe that the same principles apply as at H.M.A.S. Cerberus and that if it is economically feasible, carpet should be used as a floor covering in all sleeping blocks.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

54. 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 WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	20
2. THE COMMITTEE CONSIDER THE SITES SELECTED TO BE SUITABLE.	31
3. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	41
4. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$5.8 MILLION.	42
5. AS A MATTER OF URGENCY AN EXAMINATION SHOULD BE MADE OF WHETHER VARIATIONS OF THE CONVENTIONAL BARRACK TYPE OF LIVING-IN ACCOMMODATION FOR THE SERVICES MIGHT OFFER A MORE SATISFACTORY AND EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE STANDARD OF ACCOMMODATION AND AT THE SAME TIME PROVE TO BE AT LEAST EQUALLY ECONOMIC.	48