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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

REPORT

relating to the proposed redevelopment of

KORMILDA COLLEGE FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

at

Darwin, Northern Territory

(EIGHTEENTH REPORT OF 1972)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

KORMILDA COLLEGE FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS
DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY

R E P O R T

By resolution on 25 May 1972, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament, the proposal for re-development of Kormilda College for Aboriginal Students at Darwin, Northern Territory.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal involves the construction of new buildings at Kormilda College to provide residential and educational facilities for 310 male and female Aboriginal students who are preparing for secondary education or undertaking three-year post primary courses. The buildings and services included in the reference are, two dormitory blocks, a teaching and instructional complex, an administration building, recreation hall, kitchen and dining complex, a clinic, services buildings, staff residences, sporting facilities and supporting engineering services.
2. The estimated cost of the proposed work is \$3.3 million.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Northern Territory Administration and the Department of Works and took evidence from their representatives at public hearings in Darwin and Canberra. We also took evidence from a number of private witnesses and received several written submissions. The Committee inspected the existing facilities at the College, the sites proposed for the new buildings and visited two Aboriginal communities and school centres.

4. The Committee's proceedings will be published in printed form as Minutes of Evidence.

EDUCATION OF N.T. ABORIGINALS

5. Aims Within the Government's stated policy on the assimilation of Aborigines the aims of the parallel education programme include:

- Aboriginal children should have equality of educational opportunity with other Australian children;
- the education of Aboriginal children must take cognisance of European and Aboriginal cultures and must be developed in such a way as to help Aborigines achieve their own integration of European and Aboriginal beliefs and ways;
- Aboriginal children have the same potential for educational achievement as children of other ethnic groups, but there are both social and cultural factors which must be considered in developing effective education programmes;

- emphasis should be placed on the development of appropriate programmes for all age groups;
- the Aboriginal culture must be recognised and respected by teachers and instructors;
- curriculum content and methods of instruction should be planned and organised to ensure to the fullest extent the transfer of school learnings to village living;
- schools should be established where Aboriginal people live and work;
- Aboriginal teaching assistants should be used at all levels in the education programme to help bridge educational, social and cultural gaps; and
- at secondary level in community schools no distinction should be made between Aboriginal children and children of other ethnic groups in the provision of educational services.

6. Implementation In 1962 a committee was appointed to investigate the curriculum and teaching methods used in Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory. An important recommendation of that Committee was that a residential college should be established for Aboriginal students preparing for secondary education and for those undertaking three-year post primary courses. Subsequently Kormilda College was established in Darwin in 1967 and to meet the needs of increasing numbers of students requiring these courses, a new college, Dhupuma, was commenced in 1972 in temporary quarters at Gove and construction has recently commenced on Yirara College at Alice Springs.

Yirara College was the subject of a report by the Committee to the Parliament on 28 April 1971. It will open in 1973 and will accommodate 300 students.

7. Some 60 special primary schools have been progressively established throughout the Northern Territory and over 6,000 Aboriginal children are now enrolled. Special syllabuses and teaching techniques are used to accord with the children's everyday life, the conditions in which they live and their experiences and interests. The schools have been developed in parallel with the community schools under the control of the Department of Education and Science.

8. Since 1965, post primary schools have been established at the larger welfare division settlements. Students from primary schools on the smaller settlements, missions and pastoral properties, where it neither economical nor practical to establish post primary schools, have the opportunity to attend Kormilda College or Yirara College when it is opened. Kormilda College is to continue in this role as a district post primary centre for the northern half of the Northern Territory and it is planned that Yirara College will provide similar facilities besides its other responsibilities. Dhupuma College at Gove has no post primary classes as schools in its area have their own facilities.

RESIDENTIAL COLLEGES

9. Wide differences occur between Aboriginal children in their stages of acculturation. There are still a large number of Aboriginal children close to tribal beliefs and patterns of living but a few have a higher degree of sophistication because of their closer and longer association with European culture.

10. The Northern Territory Administration's approach to education of Aboriginal children is that assistance must be given to them in the transition from the local special primary school to the urban community high school and in their general social progress.

The view is that this is best achieved by the provision of a residential college in an urban area where, by teaching methods and education and social programmes adapted to their special needs, the children will be able to gain security and confidence and so develop attitudes conducive to educational and social progress. The Committee were informed that it has been the experience at Kormilda College that students coming directly from an isolated situation to an urban area without any special provision for social adjustment, have educational and social difficulties. Residential colleges such as Kormilda are seen as essential in promoting the effective social adjustment of these students.

11. The Committee accepted the validity of this approach in its report on Yirara College at Alice Springs. Whilst misgivings were expressed by some witnesses at the enquiry into the Kormilda proposal that residential colleges may not be the ideal approach, it was evident to the Committee that the college concept at Kormilda has assisted substantially in the education of young aboriginals notwithstanding the serious limitations and disabilities of the facilities provided to date.

12. The Committee therefore consider that at this stage, the concept of residential colleges for Aboriginal children such as Kormilda and Yirara is appropriate.

KORMILDA COLLEGE

13. History Kormilda College is located at Berrimah eight miles south of Darwin. Many of the buildings were erected in 1941/42 as part of an Army general hospital and were later used for various purposes including a Qantas transit accommodation centre. The buildings were taken over by the Commonwealth for use as Kormilda College in 1967.

14. The first full year of operation was 1968 with an enrolment of 104 students. Enrolments increased to 146 in 1969, 173 in 1970 and 224 in 1971. At the commencement of 1972 there were 227 enrolments.

15. College Programme The major aspects of the college programme are education and social development and students are encouraged to participate in local cultural, social and sporting activities and to associate with their European counterparts.

16. Education is provided in the three areas of transitional, post primary and teaching assistants. Transitional classes are for academically advanced students in their final year of primary schooling. Students who attend post primary classes come mainly from small centres where no post primary school has been established, and are generally in the 14/16 years age group. Three year courses allow these students to explore various vocational pursuits, and provide the opportunity to select and specialise by the time they enter the third year of the course. In addition to the general subjects of english, maths, and social studies, courses are provided for boys, in woodwork, metalwork, mechanics, brickwork, welding, use of power tools, agriculture and pottery, and for girls, in cookery, sewing, laundry, homemaking, mothercraft, first aid, home nursing, child care practices, typing, health and hygiene. Classes in business methods, office procedures, shorthand, shopkeeping etc. which can increase employment opportunities are also provided. Courses for Aboriginal teaching assistants which are now held at Kormilda College because training facilities are not presently available elsewhere will be conducted at the Darwin Community College when it commences operation in 1974.

17. Advantage has been taken of the facilities available at the College to conduct special short-term courses including induction courses for new teachers, leadership and literary courses for Aboriginal leaders, instructional courses in ceramics and in-service courses for teachers. Tutorial assistance and supervision of homework is also provided for students who live at the college. The present policy for high school students is to give them the opportunity to reside at the college until they have completed the second year of high school studies. Foster homes are then sought in the general community.

18. Existing Facilities The disadvantages of using buildings not designed for educational purposes have increased as additional enrolments and expansion of curricula have placed further demands on them. Further, the buildings are old, and in some cases have deteriorated to the point of being unusable for teaching and accommodation purposes. In 1970 a number of demountable buildings were provided to accommodate 100 students, staff and ablution facilities. The first permanent residential building was erected in 1971 and accommodates 95 girl students. It is proposed to meet the immediate future needs by providing additional temporary buildings in time for the commencement of the 1973 school year. These buildings will be such that they can be re-located once the proposed re-development is completed.

19. Size of College The Committee were told that from experience in operating the college over the past 4½ years, a capacity of around 300 students is regarded as the optimum from the management viewpoint and a full realisation of educational and social aims. Planning for the Yirara College was on the same basis and it will accommodate 300 students.

NEED FOR NEW AND ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

20. Because of the increasing number of students becoming available for secondary courses and post primary education, there has been a steady increase in enrolments since the college opened and facilities expanded. The increases have been over all categories. Projections of likely enrolments from outlying schools in the transitional and post primary categories show substantial increases over the next three years after allowing for wastage and enrolments at Yirara College.

21. College Location The college is located in a semi-rural area about 8 miles from Darwin city centre and about one mile off the Stuart Highway. There are some minor industries and a small shopping centre nearby. Factors influencing the decision to retain the site for permanent college buildings are that some existing facilities will continue to be used, it is within easy access of Darwin, yet far enough away to discourage some undesirable visitors from the town environment, the semi-rural setting is considered to be an appropriate environment for the Aboriginal students, and the area is considered to have a natural attraction and potential for special developments, such as a college corroboree ground.

22. Conclusion After inspecting the site and facilities the Committee were of the opinion that the location is suitable for the permanent establishment of Kormilda College. We found that some buildings are unsatisfactory for teaching purposes and consider that these should be replaced with modern purpose-designed buildings as soon as possible to cope with the growing number of students seeking enrolment.

We believe that the planned student capacity of 310 is soundly based on experience and is an appropriate level for the expanded college. We therefore found that there is a need for the work in the reference.

THE BUILDINGS

23. Layout The buildings and facilities to be provided are to cater for the educational and social needs of students whose ages will range from 12 to 16 years. The male to female ratio is likely to be 55:45. The design provides for overall college unity, but maintains three distinct elements - residential, educational and administrative.

24. Residential Buildings The two-storey dormitory building which was completed in 1971 and accommodates girls in four-bed, two-bed and one bed rooms will be extended to accommodate a total of 148. A new dormitory complex will be provided for 162 boys in four-bed, two-bed and one bed rooms. Eight bed/sitter flats will be provided in these buildings for supervisory staff. Each dormitory block will have a quiet room, a common room, drying rooms, laundry, store and ablution areas.

25. Staff residences will be provided for the principal, headmaster, manager, bursar, kitchen supervisor and youth activities officer.

26. A recreation hall will provide a multi-purpose area for assembly, gymnasium activities, film projection, plays, games and a canteen. Toilet and change rooms will be provided and will serve the existing swimming pool.

27. A kitchen/dining complex will be constructed to cater for up to 330 students and staff.

This building will also contain a clinic and accommodation for the resident nursing sister.

28. Educational Buildings Individual buildings are to be provided for manual trades and arts/crafts/domestic science. The arts and crafts centre will enable special attention to be given to Aboriginal art in the college curriculum. A separate academic wing will house six general purpose classrooms, science laboratory, instructional resource centre and lecture theatre. Functions within this building are centred on the resource centre which will incorporate a reading room (library), teachers' reading room, office workroom/ audio visual room, a social studies museum and seminar rooms. The social studies museum will be a distinctive feature of the college providing both general educational resources and opportunities for Kormilda students to document their traditional culture.

29. Administration This building will accommodate staff offices, visitors reception, staff common room, a counsellor's room, and a communications centre.

30. Outdoor Education An area will be set aside within the grounds for agriculture and some aspects of animal husbandry. A special feature is an area within a natural amphitheatre for development by the students as a corroboree ground where people will be able to watch traditional dancing.

31. Sporting Facilities In addition to the swimming pool already provided, there will be tennis courts, basket ball courts, and two ovals. Space has been reserved for future extension of sporting facilities.

CONSTRUCTION

32. Site The site covers 50 acres and is generally level except along the western boundary where the ground drops away steeply to an agricultural lease. Noting that it will be essential to retain some existing buildings until new buildings are available, we were assured that the site is adequate for phased construction of the new facilities and is suitable for the type of re-development proposed.

33. Design The locations and planning of new buildings has been influenced by the elongated shape of the site and the need to retain a number of existing buildings until their functions are taken over by new facilities. However, the Committee noted that it has been possible to design the project as a college campus with the principal buildings grouped around a central precinct. Buildings will be separated by open landscaped courts to provide pleasant areas for the students and staff, but will be connected by covered ways for both convenience of access and economic reticulation of services.

34. Structure Depending on the nature of the buildings, structural systems will have load-bearing concrete masonry walls and steel or reinforced concrete frames.

35. External Treatment Walls will be of concrete masonry with doors and windows framed in aluminium and roofs will be generally of galvanised steel decking. The main entry courtyard and concourse will feature exposed aggregate concrete paving slabs. These materials and finishes have been selected for their suitability to the locality and climate and character and function of the college.

36. Internal Treatment Walls will generally be painted concrete masonry. Toilet areas will have pre-cast terrazzo partitions and ceramic wall tiling. Floors in classrooms, lecture theatre, language laboratory and the resource centre/social studies area will be carpeted. Floors in the residential buildings and the general academic and administrative areas will be finished with vinyl tiles. Elsewhere floor treatment will range from concrete, timber, to ceramic tiles etc. according to function. Ceilings will be generally finished with fibrous plaster, but accoustic tiles will be used in the administration, academic, arts and crafts and domestic science blocks. Insect screening will be provided.

37. Mechanical Services The administration, academic and arts/crafts/ domestic science blocks, the clinic, and the projection room and tuckshop within the recreation hall will be air-conditioned. Ceiling fans will be provided in dormitory bed/study rooms, common rooms, in the main dining room, and other non-airconditioned areas where required. Mechanical exhaust ventilation will be installed in other areas including toilets, the kitchen, and certain areas of the trades and arts/crafts buildings. Generally domestic hot water will be supplied from solar hot water units electrically boosted where necessary. Other services will include chilled drinking water units, kitchen equipment and cool rooms, L.P. gas reticulation and an incinerator.

38. Electrical Services Power will be reticulated by cables run below covered way roofs or underground. Public address systems, electric clocks and general purpose power outlets will be provided throughout the buildings as required.

There will also be provision for installation of television receivers and instructional equipment. External security and carpark lighting will also be provided.

39. Hydraulic Services The water supply installation will include a reserve emergency supply of 20,000 gallons capacity, with a booster pump. A lawn watering system will be installed. Sewage will be taken to a treatment plant to be constructed in a remote corner of the grounds. After chlorination, the treated effluent will be piped to an outfall in a tidal creek.

40. Roadworks Internal roads and parking areas will be bitumen sealed and provided with kerbs and gutters. Underground stormwater will be collected in a system of underground pipes.

41. Fire Protection Buildings will be provided with a thermal fire alarm system connected to the Darwin Fire Brigade. In addition, hose reels and portable fire extinguishers will be provided. Fire hydrants will be installed throughout the site.

42. Landscaping Existing palms and other trees will be retained where possible. Courtyards and general areas around buildings will be grassed and planted with tropical trees, shrubs and palms to provide visual relief and shade. The corroboree ground will be cleared and roughly formed for later development by the students.

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

ESTIMATE OF COST

44. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$3.3 million made up as follows:

	\$
Buildings	2.1 M
Building services	0.6 M
External services	0.6 M
	\$3.3 M

PROGRAMME

45. After an approval to proceed is given, the preparation of final drawings and tender documents is expected to be completed by February 1973, when it is planned to invite tenders. Within a total construction time of 2 years, staged completion has been programmed to enable the college to operate in new buildings at the commencement of the 1975 academic year. Buildings and services except the administration building, recreation hall and clinic are to be completed by December 1974. The balance is expected to be completed by April 1975.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

46. 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:

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(C.R. KELLY)
Chairman.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Parliament House,
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24 August 1972.