

DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE
PAPER NO. 4185
DATE PRESENTED 29 AUG 1972
<i>J.R. Odgers</i> Clerk of the Senate

1972

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

REPORT

relating to the proposed construction of a

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

at

Shepparton, Victoria

(NINETEENTH REPORT OF 1972)

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Paragraph</u>
The Reference	1
The Committee's Investigation	4
Shepparton	7
Existing Facilities	8
The Need	12
Mail Traffic	13
Telephone Subscriber Growth	15
Committee's Conclusion	18
The Site	19
The Proposal	
Outline	22
The Existing Post Office	24
The Building	
Design	29
Construction	31
Engineering Services	33
Amenities	39
Committee's Conclusion	40
Estimate of Cost	42
Programme	43
Recommendations and Conclusions	44

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
SHEPPARTON, VICTORIA

R E P O R T

On 30 June 1972, His Excellency the Administrator in Council referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament, the proposal for construction of a Post Office and Telephone Exchange at Shepparton, Victoria.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal involves the demolition of the existing post office at Shepparton and its replacement by a new building with a ground and two upper floors to accommodate a post office with associated facilities and a telephone exchange including a manual assistance centre and trunk switching equipment.
2. The building proposed will meet the exchange requirements of the Shepparton secondary switching area and development of subscriber trunk dialling (S.T.D.) until approximately 1990 when a three floor vertical extension will become necessary.
3. The work now proposed is estimated to cost \$1.4 million.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

4. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Postmaster-General's Department and the Department of Works and took

2.

evidence from their representatives and the Mayor of Shepparton at a public hearing in Shepparton. We also heard evidence from the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) at a public hearing in Melbourne and received several written submissions. The final evidence was taken from the departmental representatives at a hearing in Canberra.

5. We inspected the existing post office, which is on the site of the proposed building, and nearby telephone exchange facilities.

6. The proceedings of the Committee's hearings will be printed as Minutes of Evidence.

SHEPPARTON

7. The Shepparton district was settled about 1838 and the first post office was established in the area which was then known as Maquire's Punt some 16 years later. Shepparton became a borough in 1927 and was proclaimed a city in 1950. Situated at the junction of the Midland and Goulburn Valley Highways on the banks of the Goulburn River, Shepparton has a population of 19,400 and is the commercial and business centre of a large progressive area.

EXISTING FACILITIES

8. Post office activities in Shepparton are now housed at two separate locations. Counter and telegraph services are in the original building and other facilities including private letter boxes are located in a former theatre in High Street some 300 yards away.

9. Conditions in the post office building reached the stage some 12 months ago when relief of the congested work area and improvement of public facilities became imperative. As an expedient to overcome the immediate problem, arrangements were made to lease and equip the Astor Theatre and overcrowding in the post office has been temporarily alleviated.

10. The automatic telephone exchange on the corner of Welsford and High Streets is a short distance from the post office. It was built in 1956, extended in 1968 and is now incapable of further economic extension. It accommodates the local subscribers' exchange, trunk line switching equipment and a manual assistance centre (M.A.C.). Space now available for local subscribers' equipment will meet development until about 1975 when it will be necessary to re-house the trunk switching and trunk line equipment. The space thus freed would meet demands for local subscribers' equipment until about 1980. By that time, the proposed re-establishment of the M.A.C. would provide additional space for development of local exchange equipment until about 1990.

11. Radio equipment associated with radio telephone (R.T.) systems is accommodated in a small building in the south-east corner of the post office site near the radio tower. These facilities, using frequencies allocated to the trunk systems in and out and through Shepparton, will meet requirements for some years.

THE NEED

12. The Committee's inspection confirmed that the existing facilities will be unable to cope with the expected growth of mail and telecommunications services.

13. Mail Traffic As mentioned above, conditions in the existing post office building reached the stage recently when relief of the congested mail traffic areas became imperative, and a building nearby was leased and equipped for this purpose. However, this arrangement can only be considered a temporary expedient and will not be able to cope with further significant growth in mail traffic.

14. The present volume of mail handled is 9.6 million articles annually. This traffic is predicted to increase at a rate of 2.8% per annum, to 11.1 million by 1975, 12.9 million by 1980 and 17.3 million by 1990.

15. Telephone Subscriber Growth The expected development of telephone subscriber growth in both the local exchange and the secondary switching area is shown below:

Area	Subscribers					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Shepparton local exchange area	4,370	5,800	7,400	9,400	11,600	14,300
Shepparton secondary switching area	21,780	27,450	33,590	40,339	47,620	55,760

16. This growth will necessitate automatic trunk switching equipment to function as the main switching centre for all trunk traffic originating, terminating or switched through the Shepparton secondary area. Associated trunk amplifying and carrier apparatus will also be needed to meet demands for both present and future R.T. traffic in addition to programme carrier equipment to service additional lines to the Radio Australia complex which is located in the district.

17. R.T. systems link Shepparton with other switching centres the most important of which is Bendigo. Additional equipment for these broad band bearer networks will be required for this important secondary switching centre. The Committee were told that based on an average increase of 6% per annum, traffic to be switched through the proposed new equipment would number 1.79 million trunk calls in 1975, 3.10 million in 1985 and 5.42 million in 1995.

18. Committee's Conclusion The Committee concluded that there is a need for the facilities proposed, to be provided by means of the work in this reference.

THE SITE

19. The site occupied by the existing post office has frontages to Wyndham and Fraser Streets of some 146 feet and 158 feet respectively.

20. It is centrally located in the business district and well placed to serve the city's postal needs. It is also well located in relation to existing telecommunications cable reticulation, trunk routes and broad band radio bearer systems. We were told that the site is a suitable location for the immediate and long term development of both postal and telecommunications facilities.

21. The Committee concluded that the site selected is suitable,

THE PROPOSAL

22. Outline The proposal referred to the Committee is for a building to be constructed on the site of the existing post office to house post office and associated facilities, a manual assistance centre and trunk switching equipment.

23. The building is planned as a three-storey structure capable of being extended by a further three floors to meet future demand growth. It has been designed as an L shaped block with frontages to both Wyndham and Fraser Streets. A prerequisite for construction of the proposed building is the demolition of the existing post office.

24. The Existing Post Office This building was constructed in 1883 as a post office and court house. The post office section was transferred to the Commonwealth at Federation and the court house was acquired from the State in 1970.

25. The Committee were told that before the court house was acquired the post office building was considered by the National Trust as "of sufficient interest to be recorded". This classification was subsequently changed to "preservation desirable" and evidence was given to the Committee by the Trust at the public hearing in Melbourne in support of this approach. The Committee noted that a number of interested local organizations and persons were of the same opinion.

26. In evidence, the representatives of the Post Office indicated that a study was made during the development of the present proposal of the possibility of preserving the building, renovating it and continuing to use it for post office purposes. This was one of several alternatives examined for the provision of the additional facilities required for Shepparton. The conclusion was that because of the National Trust's original classification and the increased cost of acquiring further land for a telephone exchange, the present proposal was in the best public interest. It was noted also that a reconditioned building would not provide either the extent or standard of accommodation required.

27. During the course of the Committee's enquiry, a request was made by the Shepparton City Council for the material from the demolished building to be made available free of cost so that it could be re-erected as the administrative block and become part of the Australian section in a proposed international village in Shepparton. This course of action is now supported by the Shepparton and Goulburn Valley Historical Society. On enquiry, the Committee were informed by the departmental representatives that the Council could be assured of the co-operation of the Commonwealth in arranging the careful demolition of the building and the contract could provide accordingly.

28. Before finally reaching a conclusion, the Committee requested the sponsoring departments to again examine the total proposal with a view

to retaining the existing post office for that purpose and constructing a telephone exchange on another site. Our conclusion on this aspect of the proposal which was reached after closely studying the additional evidence and the original submissions is set out at paragraph 40.

THE BUILDING

29. Design The building has been designed as an L shaped block with frontages to Wyndham and Fraser Streets. It will be one of the largest in Shepparton and will feature horizontal cantilevered sun hoods on its northern elevation. A covered public concourse on the Wyndham Street frontage will provide weather protection to private box and public telephone users, and sheltered access to the post office.

30. Generally, public access to the post office will be from Wyndham Street with access also available from Fraser Street. The staff entrance will be from Fraser Street leading to the passenger lift. Vehicular access will be by a 14 ft wide driveway from Fraser Street. Heavy equipment will be offloaded from vehicles in the yard behind the building into an uncrating area, which will adjoin the emergency power room and the goods lift. Loading access to the mail room and mail contractor space will be at the east side of the building.

31. Construction Preliminary site investigations indicate clay to a considerable depth which will require reinforced concrete footings. The building will have a reinforced concrete frame with load bearing concrete walls in the lift and stair well area. Provision will be made in the structure for the subsequent vertical extension. The building will be temporarily roofed with metal decking over the concrete slab of the future third floor.

32. Externally, columns will be finished in off-form concrete and beams and sun hoods will be concrete with a white rendered finish. Internally equipment room walls will have vinyl finish on a cement render surface. Toilet walls will be ceramic tiled and other areas generally will be finished with hard plaster and painted. Floor finishes will be mainly vinyl tiles with toilets being ceramic tiled. Equipment area ceilings will be vinyl coated whilst those in occupied areas will have suspended ceilings.

33. Engineering Services Mechanical services will include air conditioning, mechanical ventilation, emergency generating plant, a domestic hot water system, drinking water coolers, sump pumps and mechanically operated lifting hoists.

34. Electricity will be distributed from a ground level substation to a main low voltage switchboard. Distribution to each floor will then be by a vertical cable duct and separate sub mains will be provided for essential and non-essential loads. Fluorescent lighting will conform to the S.A.A. code except in equipment areas, where due to the signal light system used in the new generation of switchboards, diffused lighting will be installed to reduce glare.

35. The building will be of fire resistant construction. Smoke detectors will be installed in equipment areas whilst other areas will have thermal detectors. Hydrants, portable extinguishers and hose reels will be located at appropriate points.

36. Water, sewerage and drainage services will be connected to the existing systems. Water storage facilities and pumps will be provided within the building to ensure continuity of supply.

37. Within the yard at the rear of the building, parking will be provided for seven vehicles. The remainder of the area will be hardstanding for vehicular movement.

38. One goods/passenger lift will be installed at this stage and provision will be made for the installation in stage 2 of a passenger lift.

39. Amenities The total staff of the facility when fully equipped by 1995 will be 190 of whom 138 would be the maximum number on duty at the one time. The Committee were told that amenities to be provided in the building will comply with local ordinances and the standards laid down in the amenities code of the Commonwealth Public Service. Included will be locker/change rooms, toilets, ablution facilities, first aid and rest rooms and a lunch room.

40. Committee's Conclusion The following is an extract from the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 17 August 1972 when the evidence taken on this reference was considered.

" The minutes of evidence taken on this reference were debated.

It was moved Senator Jessop, seconded Mr. Corbett

That the proposal recommended by the sponsoring authorities be recommended. Debate ensued.

An amendment was moved by Senator Webster

That the Australian Post Office be again requested to present to the Committee a plan of development which will retain the existing post office building, taking the following steps:

1. Approach the Shepparton Council to achieve their agreement to Commonwealth acquisition of the Fraser Street park on the understanding an open public use area of greater size be created surrounding the existing historic building.

2. That upon such agreement, the Victorian State Lands Department be approached for their agreement to an acquisition by the Commonwealth of the Fraser Street site.
3. That a comprehensive facility be developed by the Department of Works which would meet with the original A.P.O. brief but to now account for
 - the retention and renovation of the existing post office building for certain services of the A.P.O.;
 - a clear public park area and car parking facility surrounding the existing post office building;
 - a new multi-storey building to house the A.P.O. requirement, mainly based on the present State-owned land.

The amendment lapsed for want of a seconder.

The Committee divided on the motion.

Ayes

Noes

Mr. Kelly
Senator Jessop
Mr. Corbett
Mr. James
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Fulton

Senator Webster

and so it was resolved in the affirmative. "

41. The Committee therefore recommend the construction of the work in this reference.

11.

ESTIMATE OF COST

42. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1.4 million made up as follows:

	\$
Building work	740,000
Engineering services	<u>660,000</u>
	<u>\$1,400,000</u>

PROGRAMME

43. It is planned to complete the building by March 1975 to meet post office requirements. Demolition of the existing post office and subsequent construction time will require some 20 months from the date a contract is let. The post office facilities will be located in temporary premises during this period.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

44. 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. | THERE IS A NEED FOR THE FACILITIES PROPOSED,
TO BE PROVIDED BY MEANS OF THE WORK IN THIS
REFERENCE. | 18 |
| 2. | THE SITE SELECTED IS SUITABLE. | 21 |
| 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 \$1.4 MILLION.



(C.R. Kelly)
Chairman.

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

24 August 1972.