



1972

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

REPORT

relating to the proposed construction of

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES

at

Port Moresby
Papua New Guinea

(THIRTY-FIFTH REPORT OF 1972)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES, PORT MORESBY
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

R E P O R T

By resolution on 21 September 1972, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament, the proposal to construct a Commonwealth office building at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee involves the construction of an office building to serve as an interim chancery for an Australian diplomatic mission to Papua New Guinea after the country's independence. The proposed building is to be constructed at Waigani, the new town centre six miles from the present commercial centre of Port Moresby. It will comprise three podium levels and a tower of nine upper floors to provide 41,400 square feet net of space to accommodate departments that will represent the Australian Government.

2. The work is estimated to cost \$1,650,000.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Works and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Canberra on 17 October 1972.
4. Before the hearing the Committee had inspected the site proposed for the building and also A.N.G. House in Port Moresby, the basic design of which is proposed for the new building.
5. The Committee's proceedings will be printed as Minutes of Evidence.

THE NEED

6. Future Australian Representation After independence in Papua New Guinea, Australia's relationship with the country will become that of one sovereign State with another, although Australia will continue to have special responsibilities towards the new State.
7. Australia will be expected to give a lead to other countries in establishing a diplomatic mission and it is desirable that a mission be set up by the time independence is granted to demonstrate Australia's continuing interest and confidence in the new State.
8. For the purposes of planning for the change it has been assumed that independence could come at any time from 1974 although at this stage the actual date is not known. It has also been necessary to assume that Port Moresby will be the seat of Government at independence and for some time thereafter, whatever arrangements might ultimately be made for the location of the country's capital.
9. The Committee were told that in view of the imminence of independence it is not now possible to design and construct a permanent chancery in time for occupancy immediately on independence.

It is therefore proposed to construct an office building on another site near that set aside for the permanent chancery to serve as an interim chancery until such time as the permanent facility is provided. It is intended that the building will be sold when the permanent chancery is built.

10. Thirteen Commonwealth departments have indicated a need to be represented in the Chancery. The departments are Attorney-General's, Civil Aviation, Customs and Excise, Defence, Navy, Air, Army, Education and Science, Immigration, Interior, Trade and Industry, Works and Foreign Affairs. The Committee were told that firm staffing figures are not yet available but departmental submissions are currently before the Public Service Board.

11. Committee's Conclusion The Committee agree that it is most desirable that an Australian Mission be established from the outset of independence. As time precludes construction of a permanent building the Committee concur with the proposal to establish an interim chancery.

THE PROPOSAL

12. Site The Papua New Guinea Administration has developed extensive plans for the creation of a new town centre at Waigani and has already commenced construction of a number of buildings including the Supreme Court. A site has been reserved for the interim Australian Chancery adjacent to an area set aside for prestige government buildings. It is of 2½ acres and is zoned for commercial office building purposes with a minimum height requirement of eight stories. The proposed building meets these requirements.

13. As it is likely that Port Moresby will be the seat of Government for some time after independence, the Committee consider it appropriate that the interim Chancery be located in the new town centre.

14. The Committee were told that although the site has in effect, been allocated to the Australian Government the conditions of tenure of the land have not yet been determined. It is expected however that this will occur shortly and that a 99 year lease will be granted over the land on the payment of a premium and an annual rental.

15. The Committee's endorsement of the proposal mentioned below is subject to the satisfactory settlement of the lease conditions.

16. The Building Evidence was taken that the best way to provide the required accommodation in a minimum of time is to re-use the basic design and documentation of an existing building in Port Moresby which it is known, can be readily constructed with local resources. The building is A.N.G. House in the Port Moresby commercial centre and it is understood that the owners do not object to the re-use of the design provided alterations are made to the external treatment so as to avoid identical appearance to A.N.G. House. The Department of Works expects that by the substantial re-use of the basic documentation, six months design time can be saved. By using this approach it is expected that the building would be ready for occupation late in 1974. We were assured that the A.N.G. House design is quite suitable for the needs of the interim Chancery. Furthermore we were informed that when the permanent Chancery is built the interim Chancery could be readily sold at a favourable price.

17. Accepting these assurances, the Committee agree that because of urgency it is appropriate to re-use the basic design of A.N.G. House for the interim Chancery.

18. General Planning The building will comprise three podium levels and nine upper floors providing 35,500 square feet net of office space and 5,900 square feet net for other facilities.

A two-level penthouse on the roof will accommodate plant and a lift motor room. The building will be 120 ft high from ground level to the top of the parapet. It will conform with the local building ordinance and we were told that it is acceptable to the local planning authorities.

19. Besides general office space the building will contain a theatre with seating capacity for 70 persons, a display area of 1,100 square feet on the ground floor and a staff lunch and amenities area on the third floor with access to a terrace on the flat roof over the second floor. The building plan will be rectangular in shape with its long axis running east-west. The service core containing lifts, stairs, toilets, store etc will be located on the north wall to provide, as far as possible, large clear areas for office space.

20. The building will occupy only a small portion of the site which except for car parking areas will be extensively landscaped in keeping with the local environment.

21. Design and Construction The building will be constructed of reinforced concrete consisting of flat plate floors supported on columns and founded on piles driven through clay into weathered volcanic rock. The floor slabs will be designed to carry normal office floor loads but an area on each floor near the core will be strengthened to permit high density storage. The building has been designed as a simple mass with a strong horizontal emphasis achieved through the use of spandrel walls and insitu concrete sun hoods which will be cement rendered and painted. Other exposed wall areas will also be cement rendered and painted.

22. Finishes Public areas at ground floor level will be paved in concrete. Windows will be plastic covered galvanised steel tube with fitted venetian blinds.

The roof will be of galvanised steel decking. The terraced area over the second floor level will be covered with concrete paving slabs over insulation and bituminous water proofing. Internal finishes will be selected for economy and low maintenance and will include hard vinyl floor tiles in office and other work areas, ceramic tiles in toilets, cement rendered and painted walls, acoustic tile ceilings, vinyl fabric to lift lobbies and main entrance lobby and granolithic topping to stairs.

23. Engineering Services The building will be air conditioned with plant arranged to allow independent after-hour operation of the lobby and exhibition area, and the theatrette and foyer area. Plants will be located on each floor and common cooling towers will be housed in roof level plant room. Areas not normally air conditioned such as the lift motor room, store rooms, plant rooms, toilets and kitchen will be provided with air supply and/or exhaust ventilation. Other services and equipment will include chilled drinking water coolers and kitchen equipment.

24. Fluorescent lighting to be installed generally throughout the building will conform with the lighting code of the Standards Association of Australia. Automatic emergency lighting will be installed in stair wells and at exits. Power outlets will be provided as necessary and provision will be made for the installation of telephones.

25. Water, sewerage and stormwater lines will be connected to local mains services.

26. Fire protection installations will comprise thermal fire detectors with alarm points, small bore fire hose reels and portable extinguishers on each floor and external fire hydrants. Booster pumps and supply tanks will be installed to ensure adequate pressure and flow.

27. Two automatic lifts will be installed and will serve all levels except the roof.

28. Car parking will be provided for 100 vehicles and an area will be set aside at the main entrance for eight visitors' cars.

29. The site will be extensively landscaped with planting, flower boxes and seating. Flag poles and a building identification sign will be provided.

30. Committee's Recommendation Subject to satisfactory settlement of the lease conditions the Committee recommend the construction of the work in the reference.

ESTIMATE OF COST

31. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1,650,000 made up as follows:

	\$
Building works	1,170,000
Mechanical services	200,000
Electrical services	80,000
Lifts	104,000
Hydraulics and other external services	96,000
	\$1,650,000

PROGRAMME

32. Ideally the permanent chancery building should be completed and ready for occupation when independence is granted. The Committee noted with some concern therefore that firstly the proposed building is to be an interim chancery only to be disposed of when the permanent building is eventually built.

Furthermore the proposed building will not be completed until about the end of 1974 which is expected to be subsequent to independence.

33. Even allowing for the uncertainty about the precise timing of the need for a Commonwealth owned building in Port Moresby the facts point to an indecisive planning approach to the problem. The results may be a less than ideal functional solution in the short term and a financial return depending on the demand for the interim building when the permanent structure is completed. It might also be observed that it is unusual for the Commonwealth to involve itself intentionally in the construction and sale of office buildings.

34. The preparation of contract documents, the invitation and consideration of tenders and the letting of a contract is expected to take eight months from the date approval to proceed is given. Construction time is expected to take 18 months after a contract is signed.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

35. 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

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|----|--|----|
| 1. | THE COMMITTEE CONCUR WITH THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN INTERIM CHANCERY. | 11 |
| 2. | IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT THE INTERIM CHANCERY BE LOCATED IN THE NEW TOWN CENTRE. | 13 |
| 3. | THE COMMITTEE'S ENDORSEMENT OF THE PROPOSAL IS SUBJECT TO THE SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT OF LEASE CONDITIONS. | 15 |

	<u>Paragraph</u>
4. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO RE-USE THE BASIC DESIGN OF A.N.G. HOUSE.	17
5. SUBJECT TO RECOMMENDATION NO. 3 THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THE REFERENCE.	30
6. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$1,650,000.	31

Chlor
(C.R. KELLY)
Chairman.

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

19 October 1972.