



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
ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING**

at

Bathurst, New South Wales

(SIXTEENTH REPORT OF 1972)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

POST OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING,
BATHURST, NEW SOUTH WALES.

R E P O R T

On 23 June 1972 His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to Parliament, the proposal to erect a Post Office and Administrative Building at Bathurst, New South Wales.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the erection of a building comprising a basement, ground and three upper floors on a site in Howick Street to provide space for a post office, and office accommodation for the Australian Post Office and other Commonwealth departments in Bathurst.
2. The estimated cost of the work in the reference is \$1.5M.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Australian Post Office and the Departments of the Interior and Works and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Sydney on 24 July 1972. We later inspected the site proposed for the building and premises currently occupied by the Australian Post Office and Commonwealth departments in Bathurst.
4. The Committee's proceedings will be published in printed form as minutes of evidence.

POSTAL AND OTHER COMMONWEALTH OFFICES IN BATHURST

5. Bathurst Post Office Besides being the postal centre of the city, Bathurst Post Office is the mail distribution point for 26 post offices in the surrounding area. Its postal and mail handling activities are conducted in Commonwealth owned sections of the Supreme Court complex of buildings which were completed in 1880 and are regarded as being of major historical importance. They have been classified by the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.) as Category 'A' - preservation regarded as essential to the heritage of the State.

6. The Post Office also maintains three other district groups in Bathurst under the direction of the District Postal Manager, Divisional Engineer and District Telephone Manager.

7. District Postal Manager The District Postal Manager and staff are also located in a section of the Supreme Court complex, being in the area previously accommodating the telephone exchange prior to its relocation in Howick Street. His office administers postal activities within the Bathurst postal district.

8. Divisional Engineer The Divisional Engineer is responsible for communications engineering activities within Bathurst and the surrounding district. His staff include professional, technical, drafting and clerical officers. They are currently housed in leased accommodation in the Bathurst Civic Centre near the Post Office.

9. District Telephone Manager The District Telephone Manager's office is also accommodated in the Bathurst Civic Centre. This group provides customer sales and service facilities covering the full range of telecommunications equipment available to the public.

It also provides operator training for and supervision over manual trunk systems and enquiry centres throughout the Bathurst district.

10. Other Commonwealth Administrations The Commonwealth currently leases 1,800 square feet of office space in Bathurst for the Department of Labour and National Service, the Electoral Office and the Federal Member for Macquarie. Furthermore it is proposed that the Departments of Social Services, Health, Housing and Taxation will soon establish offices in Bathurst.

THE NEED

11. The Committee were told that postal and mail handling activities and their administration are being conducted with difficulty within the 1880 buildings. Although the position was eased following the removal of telephone exchange facilities to Howick Street, subsequent expansion of services to meet the City's growing needs has resulted in considerable congestion, particularly during peak periods, in the public space, mail room, letter delivery and mail contractors' areas. As a result, operations are conducted at times under considerable difficulties and with inconvenience to the public. There is also an attendant inefficiency arising from fragmentation of staff and facilities throughout the building and the lack of adequate vehicle access for receiving and despatching mail.

12. The space in the 1880 building occupied by the District Telephone Manager's office, whilst adequate in area, is sub-standard. Two important factors have limited the extent to which it has been possible to modify facilities in the 1880 building to meet growth and demand for services. Firstly any major alterations or extensions to the buildings would have had a detrimental effect on the architectural and historical value of the pre-Federation complex.

Secondly any extensive alterations would have required major and costly structural changes.

13. It is expected that the leased accommodation in the Bathurst Civic Centre will soon be inadequate to meet Post Office needs. Conditions are becoming crowded and the Post Office expects that by 1975 severe overcrowding will occur to a point where conditions will be sub-standard. No relief of these conditions can be provided within the Civic Centre and further, it is understood that the accommodation now occupied by the Post Office will soon be required by the City Council for its own needs.

14. In addition the leased office space occupied by the Commonwealth is not of a satisfactory standard and is too small for the needs of the occupying departments. Furthermore there is a coming need to provide office space for the Departments of Social Services, Health, Housing and Taxation.

15. The inadequacies of the present accommodation in Bathurst to effectively fulfil Commonwealth needs were confirmed during the Committee's visit to Bathurst. Consequently the Committee find that there is a need for new and additional accommodation in Bathurst for postal and other Commonwealth purposes.

THE PROPOSAL

16. The proposal is to erect a post office and administrative building comprising a basement, ground and three upper floors to provide about 41,800 square feet of net useable space which is expected to meet growth requirements up to 1990. Expansion beyond 1990 could be met by the addition of two floors to the building and this has been allowed for in the building design.

17. Location The site in Howick Street is owned by the Commonwealth and is close to the commercial centre of the city. It appears to be well placed to meet community needs for postal, mail handling and other Commonwealth services. An automatic telephone exchange is erected on the rear of the site but there is sufficient land to erect the proposed building and for on-site facilities.

18. The Committee agree that the site for the proposed building is suitable.

19. Occupancies Most of the basement will be used to park official vehicles based on the building. Areas for bicycles and scooters and some plant facilities will also be located at this level.

20. The ground floor will contain the post office and mail handling and associated functions. Public space will be large enough for counter services and also for promotional and educational displays. Direct access will be available to the mailroom to facilitate loading and unloading.

21. The first floor will accommodate the District Telephone Manager's office, the Australian Postal Institute, a lunch room and conference facilities. A telecommunication and sales information centre will be established on this floor for the purposes of sales promotion and customer advisory services.

22. On the second floor, accommodation will be provided for the Divisional Engineer and the District Postal Manager and their respective staffs.

23. The third floor is to be leased by the Department of the Interior to provide space for the Federal Parliamentary Member, the Commonwealth Departments of Labour and National Service, Social Services, Health, Housing, Taxation, the Electoral Office and conference facilities.

24. It was decided to lease accommodation in the proposed building for these miscellaneous Commonwealth offices rather than seek space elsewhere because it was calculated that the cost of occupying Commonwealth owned space would be substantially cheaper than rented premises. Furthermore, there is not enough suitable privately-owned space in Bathurst to meet the Commonwealth's expanding needs. We were told that the only privately-owned space of a suitable standard available for leasing would cost about 50 cents per square foot per annum more than the cost of occupying the third floor in the proposed Post Office building.

25. The Committee were assured that the "bulk" accommodation in the proposed building would be satisfactory for subdivision as required, the building amenities would be suitable and that no security problems to either the tenants or the Post Office should arise. The Committee therefore agree that it is appropriate to plan for the occupation of a floor in the proposed building by Commonwealth departments.

26. A plant room at roof level will contain the air conditioning plant, various items of mechanical equipment and the lift motor room.

27. On site parking spaces will be provided for mail contractors' vehicles, engineering service vehicles, official visitors and some limited staff parking. In connection with staff parking it was noted that the site is conveniently located near two areas reserved for public parking developments.

28. Facilities to be provided within the building will comply with the relevant legislation, the amenities code and to normal standards adopted by the Post Office. Group amenities, such as a lunch room and recreation area, are to be provided for the needs of the proposed occupants.

CONSTRUCTION

29. Site The site covers about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre and has a frontage to Howick Street on the north east. Buildings immediately adjacent are the Technical College and the Presbyterian Church. Vehicular access will be provided from Howick Street and will link with an existing loop around the telephone exchange from the lane at the rear of the site.

30. Building Design The site is a prominent one in the City and consequently the building elevations have been designed to reflect this factor. Whilst the building will occupy virtually all of the site frontage it will be set back 10 feet from the boundary so as to preserve existing trees. In designing the building, attention has been given to providing at ground floor level a covered public area for weather protection to drop boxes, private mail boxes and telephone cubicles and access to the post office public space. The three upper office floors have been designed to provide open flexible use space with a minimum of internal columns. Toilets, fire stairs, lift shafts and lobbies have been grouped in a service core at the eastern end of the building and a second fire stairway is to be provided at the opposite end. Plant services and the lift core have been designed so as to require a minimum of disruption when additional floors are added.

31. Construction The building is to be constructed of reinforced concrete and will feature modular pre-cast concrete panels to achieve a high standard textured finish. To limit glare, direct summer sun penetration and heat gain, a system of pre-cast concrete external sun louvres will be used in conjunction with double glazed windows. The building will be temporarily roofed with steel decking over the proposed fourth floor concrete slab.

32. Internal Finishes The ground floor post office area will feature sheet vinyl flooring, modular demountable partitions where required and a suspended acoustic tiled ceiling. Finishes in the office areas will include carpet, demountable partitions and a modular suspended acoustic tiled ceiling. Finishes in recreation and ablution areas will be appropriate to function.
33. Mechanical Services The building is to be air conditioned. The system will be supplemented by mechanical ventilation in plant rooms, utility areas etc. Other services will include domestic hot water supply, a pneumatic tube system, drinking water coolers, hot water urns and stovettes in amenities rooms.
34. Electrical Services A substation will be installed in the basement to serve both the existing telephone exchange building and the post office building. Fluorescent lighting will be installed generally throughout the building in accordance with S.A.A. lighting code standards. Emergency battery operated lighting will be provided in stair wells and external security lights will be installed. Provision will be made for installation of power and telephone lines in the Post Office and office floors.
35. Lifts Initially a single automatic passenger lift will be installed but space is being allowed for a second lift to be provided when the two additional floors are constructed.
36. Hydraulic Services Water supply, sewerage and stormwater lines will be connected to nearby Council mains.
37. Fire Protection An automatic fire sprinkler system will be installed in the basement car park and bicycle store. A thermal fire alarm system will be provided on the ground and upper floors and in the equipment areas of the plant room.

The alarm system will be linked to the Bathurst Fire Station. Fire hose reels and hand extinguishers will be provided on each floor.

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

ESTIMATE OF COST

39. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1.5M as follows:

Building Works	1.05M
Engineering Services	0.45M
	<hr/>
	\$1.5 M

PROGRAMME

40. The Committee were told that after approval to proceed is given, preparation of working drawings and contract documents is expected to take up to 7 months.

41. Construction is expected to take 20 months from the time a contract is let.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

42. The summary of the recommendations and conclusions of the Committee is set out below. Alongside each item is shown the paragraph in the report to which it refers.

1. THERE IS A NEED FOR NEW AND ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION IN BATHURST FOR POSTAL AND OTHER COMMONWEALTH PURPOSES.	<u>PARAGRAPH</u> 15
2. THE SITE FOR THE PROPOSED BUILDING IS SUITABLE.	18
3. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO PLAN FOR THE OCCUPATION OF A FLOOR IN THE PROPOSED BUILDING BY COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENTS.	25

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| 4. | THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION
OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE. | 38 |
| 5. | THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN
REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$1.5M. | 39 |


(C.R. Kelly)
Chairman.

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

7 August 1972.