

DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE  
PAPER NO. 4218  
DATE 17 AUG 1972  
PRESENTED  
*J.R. Odgers*  
Clerk of the Senate

1972

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

*Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works*

## REPORT

relating to proposed extensions to

## FILM STUDIOS

at

## Lindfield, N.S.W.

(TENTH REPORT OF 1972)

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
CANBERRA: 1972

## C O N T E N T S

	<u>Paragraph</u>
The Reference	1
The Committee's Investigation	3
Commonwealth Film Unit	
Organization and Functions	5
Existing Facilities	10
The Need	14
The Site	21
The Building Proposal	
Design	23
The Proposed Facilities	26
Construction Materials and Finishes	33
Engineering Services	36
Committee's Conclusion	42
Estimate of Cost	43
Programme	44
Recommendations and Conclusions	45

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

EXTENSIONS TO FILM STUDIOS  
LINDFIELD, N.S.W.

R E P O R T

By resolution on 25 May 1972 the Senate referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament the proposal to extend the Film Studios at Lindfield, New South Wales.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee involves the construction for the Commonwealth Film Unit of buildings for film production, processing and administration, a laboratory, a sound department, a presentation theatre, stores and workshops, and a garage.
2. The work is estimated to cost \$1.7 million.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Commonwealth Film Unit and the Department of Works and took evidence from their representatives at public hearings at Canberra. We inspected the Unit's facilities at Lindfield and the sites for the proposed buildings.
4. The proceedings of the Committee's hearings will be published in printed form as Minutes of Evidence as soon as possible.

COMMONWEALTH FILM UNIT

5. Organization and Functions In 1950 the Commonwealth Film Unit, which had previously operated in various forms for some 50 years, became the Film Division of the Australian News and Information Bureau in the Department of the Interior. The unit is the Government's official film production and distribution agency and although largely operating in Australia, unit teams work also in Papua and New Guinea and other parts of the world.

6. Its function is identified by two charters: those of the Australian News and Information Bureau and the National Film Board. However, its aims may be summarised as producing and distributing films to make Australia more widely and favourably known overseas, for use within Australia on matters of national interest and welfare and to meet the specialised needs of other Government departments and instrumentalities. These aims are carried out by undertaking a national film programme on subjects approved by the Minister for the Interior on the recommendation of the National Film Board and by undertaking a sponsored film programme on request, by other Departments.

7. Other work includes making foreign language versions of Unit films, the supply of film material on Australian subjects for use by overseas film or television producers, assistance to visiting film makers and television producers, acquisition for official use of prints of films made by other organizations and advice to Government departments and instrumentalities on film matters generally. The Unit also produces catalogues, brochures, teaching notes and other supporting material for its films.

8. In addition to its own staff and facilities, the Unit employs freelance writers, directors, technicians and others to work on individual projects. It commissions music composition and performance for use in its films and contracts work to industry, particularly film laboratories and production organizations.

9. The distribution function of the Unit involves arrangements with commercial distributors and with agents, institutions and individual buyers and users throughout the world. It supplies State film libraries and education departments and Australian missions abroad. Representatives are stationed in New York (covering North America) and London (covering U.K./Europe). Asia and Oceania are serviced from Lindfield.

10. Existing Facilities The Unit's permanent accommodation at Lindfield consists of a two storey technical and administrative block with a theatre wing attached. It is connected by a single storey stores and dressing room section to a large sound stage. A five garage block is located separately.

11. When the studios were first planned in 1956/57, a three stage scheme was envisaged. The buildings mentioned comprised the first stage and were designed to meet the immediate needs. A film printing and processing laboratory, music recording facilities and such other facilities as became necessary to meet demands were planned as the second and third stages.

12. The first stage was completed and occupied in 1961. At that time, the Unit's film laboratory continued to operate in Melbourne, but in 1964 it was reopened in a leased two-storey building in Chatswood near

near Lindfield. Other leases in the same area were arranged to cater for subsequent increases in staff and functions. In addition, bridging accommodation at Lindfield was provided in the form of temporary prefabricated units.

13. The present situation is then that apart from the permanent accommodation at Lindfield, the film laboratory, stock-shot library and film storage, the mechanical workshop and the print check theatre are located in two leased blocks totalling some 5,000 sq. ft in Chatswood. At Lindfield one temporary prefabricated block of 1,890 sq. ft is occupied, and another of 1,968 sq. ft is almost ready for occupation.

#### THE NEED

14. The Committee were told that the objective of the proposed work is to centralise all sections of the Commonwealth Film Unit at Lindfield, to provide the technical, administrative and service accommodation necessary for the efficient operation of the film production and distribution programme, to ease the overcrowding caused by the inadequacy of the present accommodation and to replace temporary prefabricated buildings.

15. It was obvious from the Committee's inspection that the technical work space at Lindfield is insufficient for the present level and complexity of film production. The basic cause of the accommodation congestion and technical difficulties has been a considerable growth in the quantity, complexity and variety of the work performed. For example in 1962/63, 101 reels of film were produced, which included 20 reels of foreign language versions of existing films as against the yearly average for the last three years of 334 reels including 206 reels of foreign language versions.

16. The type of film has also changed. Competition has forced the transition from the straightforward documentary requiring a small production team and an uncomplicated script to modern and complex film production techniques. Where once a basic unit of three and a total of 8 to 10 persons would have been involved in a normal film, today even a simple training film can directly involve 50 people. The Commonwealth Film Unit of 1972 is thus a greatly different organization from that of 1961 when the present permanent buildings were occupied. Then the Lindfield based staff of the Unit was 62. The present staff establishment is 164, of whom 161 are based in Sydney. In addition the number of individual contractors working in the studios has grown over the same period.

17. In summary, film production has increased by 230% since 1962 and films themselves have increased in complexity. Distribution activity has increased by 290% since 1964 and staff by 160% since 1961. The result has been that the accommodation originally provided at Lindfield cannot cope with the staff numbers and the expected production and distribution outputs of today.

18. Apart from the lack of technical workspace, film storage vaults can no longer cope with the volume of material to be housed and film material of considerable value is stored in areas where desirable temperature and humidity controls are not possible. Office accommodation is also quite inadequate. The leased accommodation at Chatswood separates the integral laboratory and stock-shot library functions from the main production area at Lindfield. Operational efficiency is thereby reduced and the unsuitability of premises not designed for such specialised use adds to the problem.

19. The Committee believe that it is imperative that the studios at Lindfield be augmented to provide proper operational and technical facilities and working space. Only by such provision can quality of output be maintained and sufficient high calibre staff be attracted, trained, utilised and retained.

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

#### THE SITE

21. The site at Lindfield covers an area of 5½ acres, and measures some 600 ft by 400 ft. Its northern boundary is shared with a number of residences, whilst the other three adjoin the Lindfield Teachers' College. Access is from Eton Road at the north-east corner of the site.

22. The Committee noted that the location of the proposed buildings is consistent with future development proposals and found that the sites selected are suitable in each case.

#### THE BUILDING PROPOSAL

23. Design The design of the studio complex has been influenced by the location and function of the existing buildings.

24. The general arrangement will be that film production activities will occur on the ground floor whilst administrative and technical offices are confined to first floor levels. This will permit ease of movement of film material on the one level and also allow heavy and vibration sensitive equipment to be seated at ground level. As much equipment will have to be moved around the complex, the new floor levels will match those of the existing buildings.



25. All the proposed buildings will initially be built independently of those existing, and then links will be created in the final stages of the work. This arrangement will achieve the minimum of interference to the studio activities during construction.

26. The Proposed Facilities The two-storey film production building will be located west of the existing buildings. Its ground floor will have rooms for receipt and despatch and the mint print store. Also planned are two working theatres with a common projection room, six cutting rooms, a plant room, lunch room, kitchen and toilets. The first floor will have offices for directors, production assistants, script writers and technical staff, as well as a plant room and lunch and recreation rooms and toilets.

27. The processing/administration wing extending south from the film production building is planned as a two-storey structure and will have negative cutting rooms with associated storage on its ground floor level. Administration activities covering registry, duplication, a general work area, typists and other personnel, and a conference room will be sited on the first floor.

28. The laboratory will connect with the processing/administration wing and run parallel to the film production building. It will be located at both ground and first floor levels and has been planned on a work flow basis. The various functions will be situated to minimise film and staff movement and also to separate clean and dirty areas within the laboratory.

29. The sound department will be to the east of the proposed film laboratory and will be a single storey building except for the projection area which will be situated above the main music recording and sound mixing area. Other facilities include activities with either a direct working relationship, or those which will act as a noise buffer zone.

30. The presentation theatre to the east of the existing buildings will also be mainly a single storey building. To achieve desirable screening width projection angles and acoustic conditions, and for a prestige seating arrangement for film presentation, the capacity will be limited to 200 persons. The theatre foyer will be provided with appropriate toilet, servery and cloakroom facilities.

31. The stores and workshops building, set apart from and to the north of the main building complex will adjoin the existing sound stage. At ground floor level, areas for set storage, workshops, stores and a cold room for raw film storage will be provided. The first floor will have a silent stage for interior camera work and offices for cameramen and other technical staff. Rooms will also be provided for graphic artists and set designers and for a plant room and a small stage props store.

32. The proposal includes the construction of four double garages to house film unit vehicles and a large garage for the mobile generator used on location.

33. Construction Materials and Finishes Structurally the buildings will have load bearing walls of either brick or concrete. Floors will be of suspended reinforced concrete and the roof system will be based on

steel trusses. Materials will be chosen that are functional, durable and require low maintenance. The main elements will be either brick or concrete with aluminium window frames and coloured steel roof decking.

34. Internally, finishes for many areas within the studio complex will need to satisfy specific technical requirements, such as acoustic properties and chemical resistance. However, they will generally consist of carpet, sheet vinyl and tiles for floors, walls of face brick, cement render, timber panelling and glass and ceilings of off form concrete, plasterboard and timber.

35. Benches, cupboards, storage racks and theatre seating will be provided in addition to normal fittings and specialist equipment such as compactus shelving, cold rooms, spray booth and laboratory facilities.

36. Engineering Services Mechanical services will include air conditioning, ventilation and heating, exhaust systems, cold rooms, chilled and hot water for film processing, compressed air, domestic hot water and lunch room and miscellaneous equipment. All buildings except the stores/workshops and the garages will be air conditioned and in film processing areas temperature and humidity will be closely controlled to protect film quality. Film handling areas will be protected from dust particles by absolute filters and sound silencers and other appropriate measures will be provided in the recording and presentation theatres to reduce background noise levels from the air conditioning plant.

37. The increased electrical load will necessitate construction of a substation at the western end of the film production building. Other electrical services will include special lighting for stages, theatres and laboratories.

38. Water, sewerage and drainage will be connected to the existing systems. Action will be taken to ensure the proper treatment of any chemicals being discharged from the laboratory into sewerage mains.

39. Civil works will include extension of the road system for access to loading areas and plant rooms and parking areas for 95 vehicles.

40. There will be no special fire hazards associated with the film studio. The fire protection equipment will therefore be an extension of the existing thermal alarm system and fire hydrants, hose reels and portable extinguishers will be located at appropriate points. However, where valuable film material and equipment is to be stored, these areas will be of fire-isolated construction and fire doors will be positioned to isolate individual buildings within the complex.

41. Areas adjacent to the buildings including two proposed courtyards will be landscaped and some external furniture in the form of seats, bollards and light standards will be provided.

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

ESTIMATE OF COST

43. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1.7 million, made up as follows:

	\$
Buildings	1,000,000
Mechanical and electrical services	550,000
Hydrants, civil works, fire protection and landscaping	150,000
	<u>1,700,000</u>

PROGRAMME

44. The Committee noted that after an approval to proceed is given, the preparation of contract documents and consideration of tenders is likely to take 12 months. Construction time is estimated at 21 months from the date the contract is let.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

45. 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 SITES SELECTED FOR THE PROPOSED BUILDINGS ARE SUITABLE IN EACH CASE.	22
3.	THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	42
4.	THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$1.7 MILLION.	43



(C.R. KELLY)  
Chairman

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

25 July 1972.