

1973

DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE	
PAPER NO.	368
DATE	14 APR 1973
PRESENTED	<i>J.R. Odgers</i>
Clerk of the Senate	

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

THIRTY-FIFTH GENERAL REPORT

with two - tabbed Paper 138 cl
#11 368

Date Proposal Referred	Proposed Work	Date of Report	Report Presented	Expenditure Proposed When Referred to Committee	Expenditure Recommended by Committee	Motion for Expediency Passed	Remarks
23. 6.72	Tiwi and Wanguri Schools, Darwin, Northern Territory	13. 7.72	16. 8.72	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 2,080,000	29. 8.72	Recommended as proposed.
13. 4.72	Casuarina Hospital Darwin, Northern Territory	26. 7.72	16. 8.72	24,000,000	24,000,000	11.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
30. 6.72	Royal Australian Army Service Corps Centre, Puckapunyal, Victoria	26. 7.72	16. 8.72	8,400,000	8,400,000	23. 8.72	Recommended as proposed.
30. 6.72	Commonwealth Centre (Phase 1), Melbourne, Victoria	7. 8.72	16. 8.72	6,300,000	6,300,000	11.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
25. 6.72	Post Office and Administrative Building, Bathurst, New South Wales	7. 8.72	16. 8.72	1,500,000	1,500,000	29. 8.72	Recommended as proposed.

WITH REFERENCE TO THE REPORT, I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT THERE IS A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SECTION 18 (8) OF THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE ACT TO RAISE THE VALUE OF THE MANDATORY LIMIT OF \$750,000 TO - SAY - \$1,500,000. ~~HOWEVER, SHOULD A LIMIT OF \$2 MILLION BE PROPOSED IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXPECTED MAGNITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENTAL MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME, I WOULD AGREE THAT \$2 MILLION IS A REALISTIC FIGURE.~~

IT IS A FACT THAT OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A GENERAL INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF REFERENCES TO THE COMMITTEE AND THIS TREND IS CONTINUING IN 1973 WITH A RECORD TOTAL OF 54 POSSIBLE PROPOSALS LISTED ~~(18 OF WHICH ARE LESS THAN \$2 MILLION).~~

IN THE GENERAL REPORT, PARAGRAPH 8 MENTIONS THAT IN 1972 THE COMMITTEE MET MORE FREQUENTLY AND EXAMINED MORE DIFFERENT PROPOSALS THAN IN ANY PREVIOUS YEAR.

THE COMMITTEE WAS ORIGINALLY ESTABLISHED FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENSURING THAT FULL AND DETAILED INFORMATION ON MAJOR PROJECTS SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE PARLIAMENT WHICH HAS TO PROVIDE THE FUNDS NECESSARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS. IT HAS BEEN CONSTITUTED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT TAXPAYERS RECEIVE VALUE FOR THEIR MONEY IN THE UNDERTAKING OF WORKS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF WORKS ON BEHALF OF THE CLIENT DEPARTMENTS.

THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE IS INTENDED TO BE A WATCHDOG OVER THE MAJOR PUBLIC WORKS SO FAR AS THEIR DESIGN AND THEIR GENERAL CONCEPTION ARE CONCERNED AND HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT WORKS ARE IN THE GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST.

THE FIXATION OF AN UPPER LIMIT OF ONE AND A HALF MILLION DOLLARS ~~TO THE COMMITTEE~~ IS DEPENDENT UPON THE NUMBER OF MAJOR PROJECTS ON WHICH THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO BE ENGAGED AND THE RELATIVE AMOUNT OF TIME AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE TO LOOK AT THESE PROJECTS.

ON THE BASIS OF THE EXISTING LIMIT OF \$750,000, THE COMMITTEE WOULD HAVE TO AVERAGE SIX PROJECTS PER MONTH. DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS, AN AVERAGE OF ONLY ONE WEEK PER MONTH IS AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTIONS AND HEARINGS. THE COMMITTEE WILL NEED TO BE OCCUPIED DURING THE WHOLE OF THE WINTER RECESS. THE PROGRAMME IS ALSO DEPENDENT UPON THE STEADY RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS, WHICH, FROM PAST EXPERIENCE IS KNOWN TO BE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN. IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER THE COMMITTEE WOULD BE ABLE TO CARRY OUT ANY MORE INSPECTIONS AND HEARINGS AS OCCURRED DURING 1972 WHEN THE RECORD OF 35 PROPOSALS - 17 MORE THAN IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR - WAS ACHIEVED. ~~IF THOSE PROJECTS COSTING MORE THAN \$2 MILLION WERE DELETED, A TOTAL OF 36 PROJECTS WOULD REMAIN AND THIS WOULD THEN RESULT IN A SIMILAR PROGRAMME AS OCCURRED IN 1972.~~

IT IS ALSO POINTED OUT THAT SECTION 18 (1) OF THE ACT PROVIDES THAT ANY PUBLIC WORK MAY BE REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE REGARDLESS OF VALUE. THIS ELIMINATES THE IDEA THAT THE COMMITTEE WOULD BE PRECLUDED FROM REVIEWING THE SMALLER PROJECTS. IT MAY BE NOTED THAT ALL WORKS IN EXCESS OF \$40,000 ARE LISTED IN THE CIVIL WORKS PROGRAMME CIRCULATED BY THE MINISTER FOR WORKS AT THE TIME OF ~~THE~~ ^{THE} PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraph</u>
Twenty-first Committee	1
Proposals Referred to the Committee	4
Meetings	6
Public Works Committee Act	7
The Committee's Task	8
Timing of References	11
Floor Coverings	15
Services Scales and Standards of Accommodation	17
Appreciation	18
Staff	20

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

THIRTY-FIFTH GENERAL REPORT

Pursuant to Section 16 of the Public Works Committee Act 1969-1972 the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works have the honour to report on the proceedings of the Committee during the period between 1 January and 2 November 1972.

This report is an account of the proceedings and the views of the Twenty-first Committee which ceased to exist when the House of Representatives was dissolved on 2 November 1972. The subsequent Committee was not appointed until 6 March 1973.

TWENTY-FIRST COMMITTEE

1. Members of the 21st Committee were appointed in the Senate and the House of Representatives on 25 November 1969. They were Senator G.H. Branson, Senator F. Dittmer, Senator E.W. Prowse, the Honourable C.R. Kelly and Messrs. J. Corbett, W.J. Fulton, A.W. James, L.R. Johnson and R.H. Whittorn. At their first meeting the Committee elected the Honourable C.R. Kelly as Chairman and Senator F. Dittmer as Vice-Chairman.
2. Senator Branson and Senator Dittmer held office until 30 June 1971 and Senator Prowse resigned on 19 August 1971. They were replaced as members of the Committee by Senator H.G.J. Cant, Senator D.S. Jessop, and Senator J.J. Webster who were appointed in the Senate on 19 August 1971. Mr. Fulton was elected as Vice-Chairman on 24 August 1971 to replace Senator Dittmer in that office.

3. Senator Cant resigned on 22 February 1972, and was replaced by Senator A.G. Foyser who was appointed in the Senate on 23 February 1972.

PROPOSALS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE

4. At the high level of 35, the number of references reported on by the Committee in 1972 was 13 greater than in any previous year. This level of activity reflects a continuation of the trend evident in recent years towards an increase in the volume of major Commonwealth works projects as well as a tendency for a somewhat heavier programme of proposals referred for scrutiny in the years in which the House of Representatives election is held.

5. A tabulated summary of the references on which reports were presented to the Parliament is attached.

MEETINGS

6. The Committee met on 62 occasions in 1972. These meetings were held to transact private business, to carry out inspections or to take evidence at public hearings and were held in Canberra (31), Darwin (10), Sydney (6), Perth (4), Melbourne (2), Brisbane, Hobart, Lae, Port Moresby, Townsville, Amberley, Shepparton, Puckapunyal and Tennant Creek. Brief inspection visits were also paid to Bathurst, Canungra and Alice Springs.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE ACT

7. As a result of the extensive travelling done by the Committee and increases in the cost of airline fares and members' travelling allowances, it became necessary to increase from \$20,000 per annum to \$30,000 per annum, the annual financial provision for members' sitting fees and travelling expenses. The increase was provided for by amending Section 36 of the Act by means of the Public Works Committee Act 1972 which was assented to on 9 June 1972.

THE COMMITTEE'S TASK

8. In 1972, the Committee met more frequently and examined more different works proposals than in any previous year.

9. The reasons for this are partly explained in paragraph 4 above, but it is also relevant that the cost level above which Commonwealth works proposals must be referred to the Committee has fallen in real terms and the Committee is now examining some proposals which in the past would have been estimated to cost below the statutory limit.

10. In our view, more useful work could be done by the Committee if it had fewer references to investigate, was able to devote a greater proportion of its time to the more important projects and the smaller projects to which its contribution is minimal were not required to be referred. As the most effective method of implementing this suggestion would be to raise from \$750,000 to, say \$1,500,000, the value above which works must be referred to the Committee, we submit for the consideration of the incoming Committee and the Government that Section 18 (a) of the Public Works Committee Act be amended accordingly.

TIMING OF REFERENCES

11. In several recent general reports, the Committee has directed attention to the timing of references in relation to design and construction targets, particularly those which are hastily referred as a last step before tenders are called and seeking, in effect, a rubber stamp endorsement of the proposal. As this is still occurring, we have recently debated the reasons for it happening at all and the possible means of overcoming it.

12. With some projects referred to the Committee, it is obvious that final Government endorsement has been obtained only a short time before reference occurs and it is understandable when projects are urgent that there is often only limited time for the Committee's investigation.

In this light, we considered whether it might be proper and possible for the Committee's investigation to be more a study of the need for the project and taking place at a point before the design has advanced to the preliminary stage. On this approach, it was evident that however desirable it may be to advance the staging of the Committee's enquiry, it would be quite inappropriate for it to occur before final Government approval had been given to the project.

13. This subject is raised here again as a further expression of the disquiet we feel when a project is referred and which by its very nature and priority requires the Committee's urgent and undivided attention. It is not suggested that urgent projects should not be referred to the Committee because this type of proposal is probably in greater need of scrutiny than more normal work. Rather the point of view of the Committee is that there is scope and need for our enquiries to be conducted with proper regard to the details without pressure being applied for a quick enquiry and an expedited report.

14. To enable as many interested people as possible to become aware of hearings being conducted by the Committee it was decided that as soon as a proposal is referred to the Committee the House of Representatives member for the area be notified by the Committee.

FLOOR COVERINGS

15. The Committee mentioned in the 34th General Report that it had made representations on the use of carpet in living-in accommodation in Services' establishments and were critical that although the Government had agreed that carpet should be used in corridors, it was still undecided about it as a covering on the floors of bedrooms.

16. Unfortunately, we have again to report that despite further pressure from the Committee, the policy decision on the latter aspect has still not been made and individual cases are being considered on their merits.

As the evidence all points towards carpet as a superior covering in these circumstances from the economic, aesthetic and amenity viewpoints, we continue to find it extremely difficult to understand the reluctance to make the change, bearing in mind that the Committee's original recommendation on this matter was made some two years ago.

SERVICES SCALES AND STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION

17. It was also reported in the 34th General Report that at the Committee's instigation a review is being made of Services Scales and Standards of Accommodation. Whilst we noted during several enquiries in 1972 that this review is continuing, we strongly urge that it be completed quickly so that the updated Scales and Standards may be applied to new accommodation now being provided at Services' establishments.

APPRECIATION

18. The Committee record their appreciation of the assistance given by the many people who gave evidence as witnesses or who assisted during site inspections and in other ways. As the most frequent witnesses before the Committee, we are grateful to the officers of the Department of Works for their co-operation and willingness to fit in with our meeting and inspection arrangements.

19. We are particularly grateful to the Principal Parliamentary Reporter and his staff for their co-operation and services.

STAFF

20. To the end of the 27th Parliament, the Committee was served by Mr. M. Adamson as Secretary and by Mr. A.E. Norman, Mr. F.N. Murdoch and Mrs. J.R. Thompson.

21. At that time, Mr. Adamson left the service of the Committee on transfer to the Prime Minister's Department and Mr. Murdoch was promoted to the staff of the Senate.

We record our appreciation of the able services given by all members of the Committee staff.

22. Mr. Adamson is being replaced as Secretary by Mr. R.B. Fenton.



(W.J. Fulton)
Chairman.

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

7 March 1973.

Date Proposal Referred	Proposed Work	Date of Report	Report Presented	Expenditure Proposed When Referred to Committee	Expenditure Recommended by Committee	Motion for Expenditure Passed	Remarks
7.10.71	Central Hospital Services Complex, Stage 1, Canberra, A.C.T.	24.2.72	29.2.72	\$ 4,865,000	\$ 4,865,000	8.3.72	Recommended as proposed.
14.10.71	Anula and Wulegi Neighbour- hoods, Sanderson District, Darwin, Northern Territory	24.2.72	29.2.72	8,750,000	8,750,000	21.3.72	Committee recommended immediate attention be given to the planning and construction of the Palmerston Freeway.
10.11.71	Sewerage System, Katherine, Northern Territory	24.2.72	29.2.72	1,300,000	1,300,000	8.3.72	Recommended as proposed.
11.11.71	Road to East Alligator River Area, Northern Territory	24.2.72	29.2.72	4,400,000	4,400,000	29.3.72	Recommended as proposed.
24.11.71	Sewerage System, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory	2.3.72	7.3.72	900,000	900,000	29.3.72	Recommended as proposed.
24. 2.72	No. 2 Stores Depot R.A.A.F., Regents Park, New South Wales	20.4.72	26.4.72	3,400,000	3,400,000	11.5.72	Recommended as proposed.

Date Proposal Referred	Proposed Work	Date of Report	Report Presented	Expenditure Proposed When Referred to Committee	Expenditure Recommended by Committee	Motion for Expediency Passed	Remarks
2.3.72	Naval Support Facility, H.M.A.S. Stirling, Cockburn Sound, Western Australia	11.5.72	16.5.72	\$ 30,000,000	\$ 30,000,000	24. 5.72	The Committee recommended that because of the widespread nature of community interest, day to day care and management of areas of Garden Island open to the public, should be a State responsibility.
12.4.72	Ward and Paramedical Building, R.G.H. Hobart, Tasmania	17.5.72	18.5.72	2,200,000	2,200,000	24.5.72	Recommended as proposed.
20.4.72	17/35 Runway, Taxiways and Aprons, Canberra (Fairbairn) Airport	29.6.72	16.8.72	2,250,000	2,250,000	29. 8.72	Recommended as proposed.
25.5.72	Film Studios, Lindfield, New South Wales	25.7.72	16.8.72	1,700,000	1,700,000	29. 8.72	Recommended as proposed.
17.5.72	Communications Tower, Black Mountain, A.C.T.	13.7.72	16.8.72	6,000,000	6,000,000	11.10.72	Recommended as proposed.

Date Proposal Referred	Proposed Work	Date of Report	Report Presented	Expenditure Proposed When Referred to Committee	Expenditure Recommended by Committee	Motion for Expediency Passed	Remarks
14.7.72	Central Zone Sewerage Scheme, Darwin, Northern Territory	24.8.72	29.8.72	\$ 4,800,000	\$ 4,800,000	20. 9.72	Recommended as proposed.
25.5.72	Kowilda College for Aboriginal Students, Darwin, Northern Territory	24.8.72	29.8.72	3,300,000	3,300,000	14. 9.72	Recommended as proposed.
30.6.72	Post Office and Telephone Exchange, Shepparton, Victoria	24.8.72	29.8.72	1,400,000	1,400,000	14. 9.72	Recommended as proposed.
30.6.72	Commonwealth Centre (First Stage), Woolloomooloo, New South Wales	29.8.72	31.8.72	10,000,000	Nil	-	Committee recommended it is not expedient to proceed with proposal as submitted.
14.7.72	Palmerston Arterial Road, Darwin, Northern Territory	29.8.72	31.8.72	5,400,000	5,400,000	-	Committee recommended that between Coconut Grove and Ross Smith Avenue, the road should follow route 1. Expediency motion not put to House of Representatives before end of 27th Parliament.

Date Proposal Referred	Proposed Work	Date of Report	Report Presented	Expenditure Proposed When Referred to Committee	Expenditure Recommended by Committee	Motion for Expediency Passed	Remarks
27.7.72	Jungle Training Centre, Cannara, Queensland	14.9.72	19.9.72	\$ 6,300,000	\$ 6,300,000	26.10.72	Improved standards of living accommodation should be applied providing Department of the Army concurs in the change.
17.8.72	R.A.A.F. Base, Townsville, Queensland	14.9.72	19.9.72	8,000,000	8,000,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
17.8.72	R.A.A.F. Base, Amberley, Queensland	14.9.72	19.9.72	14,200,000	14,200,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
29.8.72	Primary & Pre-School, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory	21.9.72	26.9.72	1,150,000	1,150,000	11.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
31.8.72	Power Station, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory	21.9.72	26.9.72	1,800,000	1,800,000	11.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
31.8.72	Telephone Exchange, Woollongabba, Queensland	28.9.72	10.10.72	10,200,000	10,200,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.

Date Proposal Referred	Proposed Work	Date of Report	Report Presented	Expenditure Proposed When Referred to Committee	Expenditure Recommended by Committee	Motion for Expediency Passed	Remarks
31.8.72	Telephone Exchange, Sydney East, New South Wales	28. 9.72	10.10.72	\$ 3,500,000	\$ 3,500,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
31.8.72	141/322 Runway and Associated Airport Works, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea	12.10.72	18.10.72	7,500,000	7,500,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
31.8.72	Development of Hadeab Airport, Papua New Guinea	12.10.72	18.10.72	3,850,000	3,850,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
31.8.72	Rehabilitation Centre, Camperdown, New South Wales	19.10.72	24.10.72	3,500,000	3,565,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
4.9.72	Patients and Staff Accommodation at Kingshorne Rehabilitation Centre, Taronga, Queensland	19.10.72	24.10.72	1,800,000	1,800,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
19.9.72	Outpatients Clinic at Repatriation General Hospital Greenslopes, Queensland	19.10.72	24.10.72	1,700,000	1,700,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.

Date Proposal Referred	Proposed Work	Date of Report	Report Presented	Expenditure Proposed When Referred to Committee	Expenditure Recommended by Committee	Motion for Expediency Passed	Remarks
31.8.72	Commonwealth Office Block at Alice Springs, Northern Territory	19.10.72	24.10.72	\$ 1,250,000	\$ 1,250,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.
21.9.72	Commonwealth Offices, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea	19.10.72	24.10.72	1,650,000	1,650,000	26.10.72	Recommended as proposed.