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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

*Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works*

## REPORT

relating to the proposed construction of a

# REHABILITATION CENTRE

at

## Townsville, Queensland

(SEVENTH REPORT OF 1974)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REHABILITATION CENTRE  
TOWNSVILLE, QUEENSLAND

R E P O R T

By resolution on 24 September 1974, 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 rehabilitation centre at Townsville, Queensland.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the construction of a complex consisting of single storeyed buildings to provide facilities for an administrative centre, general amenities, medical centre, occupational therapy, vocational counselling, physiotherapy, residential patients, central change block and service areas. The complex also includes a two-storey building for use as residential staff quarters.
2. The buildings are required to provide a fully decentralised rehabilitation treatment and training service for Queensland's major provincial city and the rural population of North Queensland. Initially, treatment facilities will be available for 65 handicapped persons, including residential facilities for 25. The rehabilitees' residential quarters have been designed to allow future vertical extension which, if required, would accommodate 15 more rehabilitees.

3. The estimated cost of the project when referred to the Committee was \$2.3 million.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

4. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of Social Security and Housing and Construction and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Townsville on 6 and 7 November 1974. We also took evidence from a number of local organizations and private citizens.

5. Prior to the public hearing, the Committee inspected the site for the proposed work.

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

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REHABILITATION SERVICE

7. The Department of Social Security is responsible for the operation of the Australian Government Rehabilitation Service and provides, without charge, rehabilitation treatment and vocational training for persons suffering from a physical or mental disability who:

- receive or are eligible for an invalid or widow's pension;
- receive or are eligible for a sickness, unemployment or special benefit;
- receive a tuberculosis allowance; or
- are young people 14 or 15 years of age and who, without rehabilitation treatment or training, would be likely to qualify for an invalid pension at 16 years of age.

8. Beneficiaries under the Compensation (Australian Government Employees) Act may also qualify for treatment and training.

9. The Department of Social Security is also responsible under the Defence (Re-establishment) Act for providing rehabilitation services for discharged former National Servicemen and discharged members of the regular forces who are not eligible for this type of assistance from the Repatriation Commission.

10. Disabled persons not eligible for the service without charge may be sponsored (by insurance companies etc.) or provided with rehabilitation treatment or training at a charge determined in accordance with individual capacity to pay.

11. Rehabilitation Centres This proposal represents an extension of existing policy whereby the Department has, to date, operated its own rehabilitation centres only in the capital cities of each mainland State. These centres are equipped and staffed to provide specialised programmes of remedial treatment and to assess employment potential.

12. Skilled therapists, working under medical supervision and using modern methods and equipment, help the disabled in achieving maximum physical and mental restoration. Patients requiring artificial limbs, or other surgical aids or appliances, are prepared for the fitting of the aids and trained in their use. The severely handicapped learn to meet the demands of daily living, confidence is restored and residual abilities that can be used to aid in physical and economic independence are developed. Preliminary training, education, sporting facilities and a wide range of amenities are provided to help in treatment, physical, mental and social adjustment, in assessment and in the development of future work capacity.

13. Resident patients are accepted as well as those who are able to live at home and attend daily.

14. Woodhouse Report The Committee noted with interest the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation in Australia and in particular paragraph 99 of Volume 2 of that report which states, inter alia, "However, it is necessary to emphasise that the type of centre we recommend is much more comprehensive in its function than the rehabilitation centres now conducted by the Department of Social Security".
15. Should the Social Services Act 1947-1973 be amended in line with the recommendations of the Woodhouse Report, the question arises as to whether the building proposed will be suitable for the then more comprehensive functions of the Rehabilitation Service.
16. However, the Committee are convinced that there is a pressing need in Townsville for a rehabilitation centre as proposed in this reference and that consideration should be given to constructing additional rehabilitation centres in other locations in North Queensland should the building proposed in this reference be unable to cater for any future expansion of the Rehabilitation Service.
17. Rehabilitation in Queensland The Australian Government operates the only comprehensive, multi-diagnostic rehabilitation service in Queensland. This service has its headquarters in Brisbane, at the Department's rehabilitation centre at Taringa.
18. The present rehabilitee capacity at the Taringa centre is 67 residential and 75 day attendance places, making a total of 142. When the new patients' residence and other new facilities at the centre are completed, the respective capacities will be increased to 75 and 90 making a total of 165.
19. From July 1948 to the end of June 1974, the Australian Government Rehabilitation Service in Queensland had given assistance to 9,308 disabled persons as a result of which 6,705 were placed in employment. During 1973/74 300 persons were placed in employment following treatment and/or training.

20. The Committee were informed that initial results of a survey had indicated that when people are firmly established back in employment, apart from the humanitarian aspects, there are also economic benefits. It has been found that over a period of some four years, the Australian Government is able to recoup operating costs due to two factors; through cessation of social welfare payments and increases in revenue due to taxation payments by persons returned to employment.

THE NEED

21. Rehabilitation in North Queensland The North Queensland Region is at present served by a Departmental rehabilitation unit which operates from Australian Government premises located at Townsville, one of twelve such units located in provincial areas throughout Australia. The purpose of the unit is to

- investigate the rehabilitation potential of all cases referred for consideration by departmental and non-departmental sources within the region;
- recommend future action in the case of clients in need of rehabilitation assistance, either through the Department's rehabilitation centre in Brisbane or through local treatment facilities, such as may be available, for instance, through the local hospital;
- accept for assistance those cases not in need of further medical treatment but whose employment opportunities would be enhanced by the provision of vocational training arranged through local recognised training institutions; and
- supervise the resettlement, including placement in suitable employment and follow-up, of cases completing treatment and/or training in the region or following discharge from the Department's Brisbane rehabilitation centre.



22. The unit is staffed by a resident rehabilitation casework team, consisting of a sessional medical consultant, and full time positions of vocational counsellor and social worker. During 18 months operation, the unit has gained considerable local acceptance and has contributed to the strong public interest in rehabilitation in the Townsville region. However, the full effect of the team's activities in the region has been somewhat diminished by the fact that comprehensive rehabilitation services and facilities are not available locally.

23. The nearest available comprehensive rehabilitation centre is in Brisbane (the Taringa Centre) almost 1600 km from Townsville and there is considerable resistance on the part of many otherwise eligible cases, with good rehabilitation potential, to leave home to travel to Brisbane.

24. Population Growth in North Queensland Region Evidence presented to the Committee showed that the population of the region to be served by the proposed rehabilitation centre has experienced an annual growth of 3% since the 1971 census. The population of the region is made up as follows:

Mackay Division	61,750
Cairns Division	116,320
Townsville Division	120,550
Peninsula Division	12,600
North West Division	46,960
	<hr/>
Total at June 1973	358,180
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25. The Committee were advised that increases in the population of the North Queensland Region, the rising incidence of accidents and improved treatment techniques are contributing to a growing and continuing need for a modern rehabilitation centre in the region.

26. Factors Favouring Townsville as the Location for the New Centre

Townsville is the second city of Queensland both in size and importance. It has a substantial metropolitan population (80,000) and also has a considerable regional and hinterland population (358,000 including Cairns and Mackay), sufficient to fully justify the proposed rehabilitation facilities.

27. It is expected that over the next 15 to 20 years the city's population will increase to about 180,000 without additional Government impetus to that existing now.

28. Townsville has been mentioned as a designated growth centre and is the principal city and port for the North Queensland Region. The city's development and potential were examined by the Cities Commission and favourably reported upon when that Authority reported to the Australian Government in June 1973, concerning a recommended new cities programme for the period 1973/78.

29. As well as being the focal point for the North Queensland network of roads and railways, and therefore the natural outlet and distribution centre for the region's trade, Townsville is also the chief industrial centre in the region. These are important factors, when considering the employment potential of an area for the resettlement of handicapped persons following rehabilitation.

30. Hospital and Educational Facilities at Townsville It is the policy of the Department to establish close working relations between free-standing rehabilitation centres and major public hospitals; it is planned to pursue this policy in respect of the proposed rehabilitation centre and all major hospitals in the North Queensland Region.

31. Townsville has a major hospital of some 500-bed capacity. The hospital authorities have already indicated a readiness to offer full co-operation with Rehabilitation Service representatives in the region, and have shown considerable interest in the proposed centre.

32. A university, a technical college and a teachers' college are also established in Townsville. The availability of these facilities is an important consideration in planning for the provision of adequate vocational training services for disabled persons undergoing rehabilitation.

33. Committee's Conclusion There is a growing and continuing need for a modern rehabilitation centre in the North Queensland region. The centre would best be located at Townsville.

#### THE PROPOSAL

34. Site The site, of approximately 1.5 hectares, is bounded by Fulham Road, Palmerston Street and Ronan Street and located approximately 8 km from the Townsville General Post Office. The site is at present vacant and is centrally located in a residential area which has been developed jointly by the Australian Government and the Townsville City Council.

35. Committee's Conclusion The site selected is suitable.

36. Description of Proposed Buildings The rehabilitation centre accommodation will consist of a complex of low level, one-storey buildings which will be linked by a system of covered ways to provide weather protection for rehabilitees and staff. A two-storey building will be provided in a separate area on the site as quarters for live-in staff.

37. All structures, besides having an aesthetic architectural appearance, have been designed to give a compact and functional layout and to take best advantage of natural light and ventilation. Air conditioning will be provided to most areas.

38. The planned treatment capacity will be around 65 cases per day, including residential accommodation for 25.

39. The accommodation has been specially designed to meet the particular needs of disabled persons. Internal corridors will be 2.1 metres wide, all single doorways will be 900 mm wide and lower portions of doors will be protected against wheelchair damage. Some of the toilets, baths and showers will have special fittings for wheelchair cases. Where appropriate, guard rails and hand grips will be provided and some bedrooms will be fitted to take bed hoists. Special attention will be given to such things as the location and type of door knobs, water taps, light and power switches.

40. The area will be professionally landscaped and provision has been made to have parking lots within the grounds for off-street parking for rehabilitees and staff and to retain existing trees which do not interfere with building structures.

41. Rehabilitees' Residential Quarters These quarters are planned in a U-shaped block with separate wings for males and females and a communal main entrance, lounge, kitchenette and laundry. Residential accommodation will be provided for 25 rehabilitees made up as follows:-

- 9 females in 5 single bedrooms and 2 double bedrooms;
- 16 males in 10 single bedrooms and 3 double bedrooms.

42. All bedrooms will have washbasins and built-in wardrobes and dressing tables. Bathrooms and toilets will be provided in each wing and will be within reach of all bedrooms. Linen, cleaners', utility, store, medical orderlies', treatment and visitors' rooms will also be included in a central location. In the female wing a hair wash room will be provided together with an adjacent small laundry for the laundering of personal clothing. A flatette attached to this block will provide overnight accommodation for the parents of young persons who may have difficulty in settling in at the centre.

Structural strengthening has been incorporated in the design of this building to provide for a vertical extension of one floor which would, if required in the future, accommodate 15 more residential rehabilitees.

43. Dining/Amenities Block These facilities adjoin the residential block. In addition to the standard facilities necessary for a kitchen of this nature, provision will be made for a special diets bay and for toilets and locker rooms, with showers and hand basins for both male and female domestic staff. The patients' dining room has been planned to seat rehabilitees at tables of 4 or 6, with sufficient passage space between to permit the passage of wheelchairs. The kitchen and dining room have been designed to provide meals on a self-service cafeteria type basis, but provision will be made for waitress service for those rehabilitees unable to manage the self-service arrangement. A staff dining room to seat 25 members of the staff and a staff lounge room will be provided.

44. Also included in the block are an amenities/lounge room for rehabilitees, a canteen, housekeeper's store, kitchen store, general store for the centre and male and female rehabilitee toilets.

45. Administration/Vocational Block This block will be located near the front entrance of the centre and includes a large entrance canopy which will be used as an embarkation and disembarkation point for persons leaving and arriving at the centre by means of Australian Government and other vehicles.

46. Rooms to be included in the block are a manager's office, assistant manager's office, general office, FBX room, typist's room, counter and waiting area, interviewing room, two rooms for social workers, two rooms for vocational counsellors, two classrooms, private study, storeroom for the vocational section, storeroom for the general office and male and female toilets for both staff and rehabilitees.

47. Physiotherapy Block The physiotherapy block has been designed to include all necessary physiotherapy equipment and facilities to provide a comprehensive physiotherapy treatment programme for rehabilitees. Included will be an area for 6 cubicles, a plaster room, a treatment room, staff offices and a store. Also incorporated in the block will be a small gymnasium approximately 13 x 11 x 5.4m high. Adjacent to the gymnasium a roofed area which can be utilised as a remedial exercise area will be provided. A small kiosk and space for serving morning teas will also be provided.

48. Outdoor Pool The pool will be constructed of reinforced concrete and will be used for recreational purposes, remedial exercise and hydrotherapy treatment. Consequently, it has been designed for accessibility by disabled persons by raising the top of the pool to 500mm above ground level for wheelchair cases and by providing a ramp to a specially graduated stairway into the pool, for persons who are partly paralysed or have leg disabilities.

49. The dimensions of the pool will be 15m x 10m and the depths will be graduated from 900mm to 1800mm.

50. The pool will be enclosed by a wire fence with lockable gates. The surrounds on three sides will have a roof extending 1 metre over the pool in order to provide shade for rehabilitees who are undergoing hydrotherapy treatment during hot sunny periods. A grassed area will also be available within the pool enclosure for sun bathing purposes.

51. Open Recreational Area This area will be for outdoor remedial exercises and for the organization of various types of sports. It will also be available as an area for general recreational purposes, which rehabilitees can use during leisure periods.

52. Large trees and shrubs will be planted on the outskirts along Palmerston Street and Fulham Road to provide shade in the summer months.

53. Medical Block This block will be located in a central position of the treatment area from which the functional remedial programme for rehabilitees will be administered. It will provide accommodation for a full-time medical officer, two consulting rooms and an examination room for sessional medical consultants, rooms for the senior sister, typist, medical records, psychologist, speech therapist, conference room, treatment room, recovery room, general interviewing room, audiology room, waiting area, rooms for the cleaner and linen, and toilets for males and females.

54. Central Toilet/Changeroom Block This centrally located block will be accessible from all areas of the centre and provision for toilets, showers, changerrooms and lockers will be made in it for both rehabilitees and staff. This will be an area in which day attendance rehabilitees and staff will change on arrival at, and departure from, the centre.

55. Outdoor Remedial Area This area will be reserved for heavier outdoor activities and will be an adjunct to the occupational therapy section. Provision will also be made for special outdoor mobility training for persons suffering from lower limb amputations, strokes, etc.

56. Occupational Therapy This section will comprise the following sub-sections:

- aides to daily living;
- light trades;
- process work;
- combined metalwork and woodwork workshop;
- auto repairs workshop;
- spray painting booth.

57. Work areas will be provided for all the above activities, together with instructors' offices and stores, as required.

58. A gardeners' store, lunch room and changerooms will be provided at the southern end of the workshops. A male toilet will be available in this area for use by gardeners, staff and rehabilitees.

59. Staff Quarters This two-storey building will contain two identical 3-bedroom flats on the upper floor for the manager and assistant manager. The ground floor will comprise parking spaces for 5 cars, a bedsitter flatette for the senior sister and a 2-bedroom flat for two sisters. This area will be fenced to separate it from the remainder of the centre's grounds.

60. Committee's Conclusion The proposed design and functions of the rehabilitation centre are appropriate.

#### CONSTRUCTION

61. Building Structure The basic construction of the building will be reinforced concrete slab on fill, with steel portal frames and timber roof framing, steel stud framed walls generally, and reinforced concrete or concrete block walls to toilets and ancillary areas.

62. External Finishes Generally the external walls will be "Colorboard" flat asbestos cement sheet on steel stud, with mineral wool insulation. Walls to ancillary areas will be concrete block. Openings will be aluminium framed. Opening timber shutters will provide cyclone protection to windows. Ancillary area openings will be provided with metal grilles. Flyscreening will be provided throughout. Roofing will be profiled metal decking with bronze "Colorbond" finish on timber framing. Fixed metal louvre vents will be provided to the ends of the roof spaces.



63. Internal Finishes Generally, the internal walls will be flat asbestos cement sheet on steel studs with mineral wool insulation. Sheet vinyl to window sill level will be provided to patients' residential, dining and amenities areas. Ceilings generally will be acoustic tiles, with flat asbestos cement sheeting on suspended aluminium grid to toilets and ancillary rooms, and plasterboard to plant room and roof spaces. Generally, floors will be sheet vinyl finished. Carpet tiles will be provided to administrative, medical and lounge areas, and quarry or mosaic tiles to ancillary and toilet areas. Timber flooring will be provided to the gymnasium and amenities.
64. Fittings Throughout the complex, fittings will be provided in each room or area and will be appropriate for the particular area.
65. Mechanical Services Air conditioning will be provided to residential, amenities, dining, vocational counselling, administration, physiotherapy, medical and light trades areas. The system will comprise a central chilling plant, from which chilled water will be reticulated in covered way roof space to air handling plants located close to areas to be serviced. Low velocity multi-zone air handling plants will be used.
66. Toilets, amenities, kitchen, changerooms, workshops and gymnasium will be exhaust ventilated using individual ducted systems, roof extract units or window mounted propellor fans as appropriate.
67. Hot water will be provided by solar and electric hot water service storage units.
68. A conventional type food service will be provided for patients and staff.
69. Washing and drying machines will be provided as appropriate to the areas concerned.

70. Miscellaneous services including compressed air, spray paint booth, sterilisers and sanitary disposal units will be provided.

71. Electrical Services Electricity supply for the proposal will be obtained from a substation to be constructed within the centre. The main switch room will be located adjacent to the substation. Power supply will be reticulated to distribution boards in the various buildings via the covered walkways. Artificial illumination will be in accordance with the SAA lighting code and will mainly be fluorescent. Hospital lighting will be provided in the bedrooms and this will incorporate a nurses call system. A public address system will be provided throughout the complex.

72. Water supply and sewerage services will be by connection to the Council's water supply and sewerage reticulation system.

73. Civil Works Off street parking for 34 vehicles owned by staff and rehabilitees and access roads will be bitumen surfaced with kerbs and gutters.

74. The stormwater drainage system will discharge at two points into Council stormwater mains.

75. An ornamental fence will be provided for privacy purposes on the boundary line dividing the centre's property from an adjoining commercial site. Street frontages will be fenced with 1200mm wire mesh fencing.

76. Fire Protection The buildings will be protected throughout with a wet pipe sprinkler system. Hydrants, hose reels and portable fire extinguishers will also be provided. All areas will have suitably located manual press button alarm points. The protection/alarm system will be connected to the nearest fire brigade station 1 km east of the site.

77. Committee's Recommendation The Committee recommend the construction of the work in this reference.

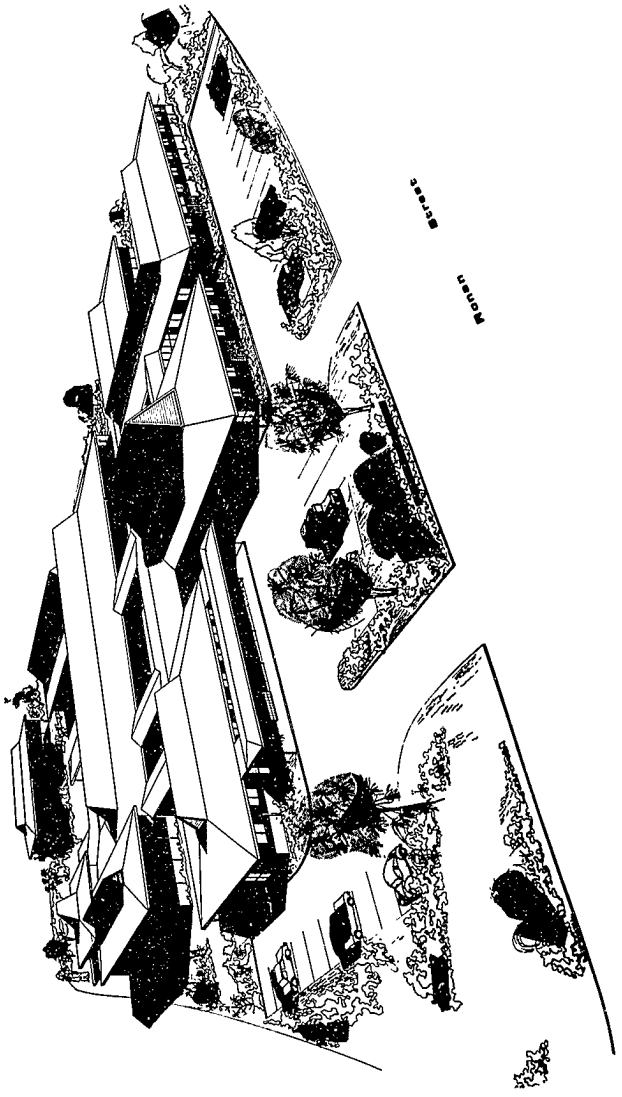
81. Statistical Information During the public hearing, the Committee were informed of the inadequacy of available statistical information relating to the numbers of handicapped persons in the Australian community. The provision of accurate statistical information facilitates the deliberations of the Committee in carrying out its function of informing the Parliament as to the need for a public work. The Committee believe that action should be taken to collect appropriate statistical information relating to handicapped persons in Australia.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

82. 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 GROWING AND CONTINUING NEED FOR A MODERN REHABILITATION CENTRE IN THE NORTH QUEENSLAND REGION.	33
2.	THE CENTRE WOULD BEST BE LOCATED AT TOWNSVILLE.	33
3.	THE SITE SELECTED IS SUITABLE.	35
4.	THE PROPOSED DESIGN AND FUNCTIONS OF THE REHABILITATION CENTRE ARE APPROPRIATE.	60
5.	THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	77
6.	THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE PROPOSAL WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$2.3 MILLION.	78
7.	EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO REDUCE THE DOCUMENTATION PERIOD.	79

*L. K. Johnson.*  
(L. K. Johnson)  
Chairman



Street  
Road

**TOWNSVILLE REHABILITATION CENTRE**