

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REPORT
relating to
UPGRADE OF ARMY LIVING-IN ACCOMMODATION
AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS AUSTRALIA-WIDE

(Third Report of 1988)



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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

(Twenty-Ninth Committee)

Mr Colin Hollis, MP (Chairman)
Mr. Percival Clarence Millar, MP (Vice-Chairman)

Senate

Senator Bryant Robert Burns
Senator John Robert Devereux
Senator Dr Glenister Sheil

House of Representatives

Mr Maxwell Arthur Burr, MP
Mr George Gear, MP
Mr Robert George Halverson,
OBE, MP
Mr John Graham Mountford, MP

EXTRACT FROM THE
VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NO. 33 DATED WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 1987

24 PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE - REFERENCE OF WORK - UPGRADE OF
ARMY LIVING-IN ACCOMMODATION: Mr West (Minister for
Administrative Services), pursuant to notice, moved -
That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public
Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be
referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on
Public Works for consideration and report: Upgrade of
army living-in accommodation at various locations
Australia-wide.

Mr West presented plans in connection with the proposed
work.

Debate ensued.

Question - put and passed.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

UPGRADE OF ARMY LIVING-IN ACCOMMODATION
AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS AUSTRALIA-WIDE

REPORT

By resolution on 9 December 1987 the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report the proposal for the upgrade of Army living-in accommodation at various locations Australia-wide.

THE REFERENCE

1. The work proposed under this reference involves the upgrading of 118 accommodation buildings in various locations throughout Australia to provide living-in accommodation as close to the Services Scales and Standards of Accommodation (SSSA) as the existing building structures will permit.
2. The proposed scope of works varies from building to building having regard to the building's age and condition. Typically, the proposed upgrading provides:

- conversion of existing four-person bedroom units to two separate single person bedrooms;
- provision of common rooms;
- change room facilities for living-out personnel;
- upgrading of ablution facilities;
- upgrading of internal engineering services;
- general repairs and refurbishment of the building fabric;
- fire protection measures.

3. The estimated cost of the proposed work when referred to the Committee in December 1987 was \$57.6m at November 1987 prices.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

4. The Committee received written submissions and plans from the Department of Defence (Defence) and the Department of Administrative Services (Construction Group) (DAS) and took evidence from departmental representatives at a public hearing held at the Enoggera Army Base on 12 February 1988.

5. The Committee also received letters relating to the proposal from the Defence Force Ombudsman and Mr N. Barwick.

6. Prior to the hearing the Committee inspected existing accommodation at Watsonia, Victoria and Enoggera, Queensland. The previous Committee had inspected accommodation at Lavarack Barracks, Townsville in December 1986.

7. A list of witnesses who appeared at the public hearing is at Appendix A.

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

BACKGROUND

9. The SSSA prescribe area sizes, generally on a square metre per person basis, and specific facilities to be provided, such as toilets, bathrooms and common rooms. They also prescribe general requirements with respect to construction, materials, finishes, fitments, equipment and engineering services.

10. The bulk of the Army's permanent living-in accommodation was constructed in the 1960s to the then SSSA, which provided for four-person rooms, minimum built-in furniture and communal ablutions.

11. In 1973 the SSSA were amended to provide for a four-person module concept. This consisted of four single bedrooms with built-in furniture, a common room and a toilet/shower area serving four occupants. Additional areas were also provided for change rooms, common rooms and box rooms. Accommodation built since 1973 has been to the amended SSSA.

12. Defence personnel in the following categories are normally required to live in:

- new trainees and personnel undergoing first training courses;
- all personnel under 18 years of age;
- all personnel required to be on call for immediate duty;
- personnel required to live in for disciplinary reasons;
- personnel required to live in by single service commanding officers for operational reasons; and
- any other single service approved requirement.

13. Significant differences exist between the 1960 and the 1973 SSSA standards. These are summarised at Appendix B.

THE NEED

14. Defence informed the Committee that 65% to 75% of personnel entitled to live in are actually doing so - i.e. approximately 8700 people in the ranks private to corporal. The Committee was informed that the number of living-in personnel has been slowly increasing due to increased rental markets and the increasing number (due to greater wastage rate) of younger soldiers who are initially required to live in.

Existing Facilities

15. The Committee noted that in the existing four-person room privacy is limited, security of personal effects is lacking, built-in furniture, where provided, is limited to a wardrobe and there are no common rooms. Drab vinyl tiles add to the austere atmosphere and the noise of traffic in the corridors often results in shiftworkers being unable to sleep. There is no provision for change rooms for living-out personnel and insufficient box room storage for living-in personnel. The Committee was informed that personal possessions are often stored in the boots of cars or at the residences of families or friends.

Soldier Attitude Opinion Survey

16. A survey was conducted in 1986 to ascertain soldiers' opinions on various matters having a bearing on issues such as retention rates and morale. Soldiers who are mainly involved in the upgrade program - i.e. private to corporal - represented 70% of the sample. Over 61% of the random sample of 5133 advised they were less than satisfied with their current living-in accommodation. Approximately 10% expressed a neutral view. Defence advised the Committee that sergeants and warrant officers, who already possess separate rooms, possibly made up the 30% who were satisfied. A quarterly survey conducted in March 1987 indicated no change in that viewpoint.

Morale

17. The Committee queried whether greater social problems were experienced by personnel sharing four-man rooms as opposed to those with their own rooms. Defence advised that although it did not have specific evidence towards the relationship between the standard of accommodation and its effect on morale, indications are that personnel in the new blocks are far happier than those in the group environment. The preference is for single rooms with keys to enable possessions to be safely stored.

18. Soldiers interviewed on the inspections by the Committee also indicated that courses of study have had to be abandoned due to the lack of privacy.

Committee's Conclusion

19. A need exists to improve living-in accommodation for single Army personnel. It is desirable that existing accommodation be upgraded to bring it as close as possible to SSSA standards.

THE PROPOSAL

20. It is proposed to upgrade 118 Army rank and file accommodation buildings at 16 locations Australia-wide to provide 4568 single bedrooms.

Options Considered

21. The following options were considered:

Option 1 - construct new accommodation to SSSA;

Option 2 - refurbish rooms only; and

Option 3 - upgrade rooms and buildings.

22. Option 1 New accommodation buildings would be constructed to meet the accommodation requirement. All the existing permanent accommodation blocks would be demolished. This option was not considered further due to the initial high cost of the new accommodation. There would be no offset of this cost by the sale of the existing buildings since they would need to be demolished to make way for the new buildings. The demolition cost would be additional to the cost of approximately \$106m for the new buildings.

23. Option 2 The existing four-man rooms would be converted into two single rooms without associated works to the buildings.

This is a viable option in terms of achieving the objective at the least possible cost. However, this option would still require ablution facilities to be upgraded to a modern standard at an additional cost and the buildings would still require high cyclic maintenance expenditure.

24. Option 3 Rooms, ablution facilities, electrical and mechanical services and internal and external repairs would be upgraded where required.

25. Preferred Option Option 3 is the preferred option because:

- it satisfies the objective in the most cost effective manner;
- it reduces repair and maintenance costs; and
- the life expectancy of the upgraded buildings will be comparable to new construction - i.e. 15 to 20 years.

26. DAS informed the Committee that the buildings would be upgraded and refurbished to a level where maintenance should not be needed for five years.

Scope of the Proposal

27. The proposal comprises upgrading in the following locations with the resultant provision of single person bedrooms as listed:

QUEENSLAND (Townsville, Oakey, Enoggera, Canungra)

- 59 accommodation buildings
- 2393 single bedrooms proposed

NEW SOUTH WALES (Holsworthy, Moorebank, Chowder Bay, Dundas)

- 26 accommodation buildings
- 828 single bedrooms proposed

VICTORIA (Puckapunyal, Watsonia, Broadmeadows, Diggers Rest/Rockbank)

- 25 accommodation buildings
- 1093 single bedrooms proposed

SOUTH AUSTRALIA (Port Wakefield)

- 1 accommodation building
- 13 single bedrooms proposed

WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Karrakatta, Swanbourne)

- 4 accommodation buildings
- 130 single bedrooms proposed

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (Duntroon)

- 3 accommodation buildings
- 111 single bedrooms proposed

NATIONAL TOTAL (16 locations)

- 118 accommodation buildings
- 4568 single bedrooms proposed

28. A detailed description of individual building locations is included at Appendix C.
29. Using an 80-person three-level barrack block of 20 rooms as a standard, the major changes justified by SSSA would typically provide:
 - . 32 single rooms by conversion of 16 four-man rooms;
 - . one common room using a four-man room; and
 - . change room facilities for living-out personnel and additional box room storage for living-in personnel by using one four-man room per floor.
30. Generally, the rooms will be slightly above the stated scale for floor area as a result of the conversion of the

four-man rooms to two individual rooms. Where the existing accommodation comprises single rooms, the accommodation will be upgraded to standard in terms of furniture and fittings and ablution facilities. This type of accommodation will be slightly below the scale for floor area.

31. Defence advised that single-room accommodation is allocated to units rather than to individuals.

Exclusions

32. Defence advised that following completion of this upgrading, 34% of permanent accommodation will still remain below SSSA standards.

33. In certain areas such as Cabarlah in Queensland new additional accommodation will be constructed and the existing accommodation will then be upgraded. Proposals such as this are being addressed separately as inclusion in this program would have created a shortage of accommodation. The accommodation block planned for construction at Cabarlah in 1988-89 will provide an additional 76 bedrooms. Defence advised the Committee that high density blocks will be retained in most major areas. These blocks will accommodate short-term personnel, transients, visitors and, in general, act as a buffer against fluctuations in living-in demand. There is no wish to upgrade these blocks which will represent 25% of living-in accommodation.

Planning

34. Defence advised that the project has been planned to include only areas where the upgrading would not create an accommodation shortfall. Personnel moved out of buildings during the construction period will be accommodated in the high density blocks or may be placed in a four-man room. Some personnel may be paid living-out allowance during the construction period.

35. Defence assured the Committee that rental of the upgraded accommodation would remain the same as that charged for other accommodation. A rations and quarter charge, which is reviewed twice yearly, is charged for accommodation, whether it be old or new.

36. Generally the buildings proposed for upgrading are not suitable for conversion into the four-person module concept (see paragraph 11) as they have load-bearing internal walls which would require extensive structural alterations. Major relocation of existing services, especially plumbing, would also be needed, and planning difficulties exist with respect to access, egress and fire protection measures.

37. Typical upgrading of the buildings generally will consist of conversion of existing four-person bedrooms to two separate single bedrooms. One existing four-person room will be converted to a common room, and additional box room storage and a change room for living-out personnel will be provided by the conversion of another four-person room. Existing ablution and laundry areas will be upgraded.

Asbestos

38. DAS advised the Committee that an asbestos survey group within the Department regularly inspects all buildings to ascertain the presence of asbestos. Most of the buildings in the proposal have asbestos cement sheet roofs. There is a small amount of asbestos lagging to some of the hot water pipes as well as some sprayed-on asbestos insulation to the ceilings of one of the buildings at Puckapunyal. DAS advised that specific requirements exist regarding the removal of asbestos by contractors and these would be adhered to.

Technical Standards

39. The designs will comply with the relevant SAA codes, State Ordinances and local authority regulations.

Construction Details

40. See Appendix D.

Construction Program

41. The Committee expressed concern that the overall upgrade program is planned to take six years. However, Defence advised that in most locations the project will be completed in one or two years. In larger areas the project will run over a longer period of time. In those cases the construction program is solely determined by the availability of barrack blocks in which personnel can be accommodated during the upgrade program. Defence wishes to avoid placing a significant number of personnel onto the local accommodation market, thereby incurring large living-out accommodation payments.

Committee's Conclusion

42. The upgrade of Army living-in accommodation at various locations Australia-wide will increase the number of single bedrooms conforming to SSSA standards from 1838 to 6406.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS

43. The proposal does not involve new construction, acquisition of land or alteration of existing property master plans. DAS informed the Committee that there are no environmental aspects associated with the proposal.

CONSULTATIONS

44. DAS advised that its regional offices had consulted with State and local government authorities on this proposal and would continue to do so throughout the tender documentation and construction phases.

LIMIT OF COST

45. The limit of cost when referred to the Committee was \$57.6m at November 1987 prices. The proposed spread of the expenditure is as follows:

Financial year	88-89	89-90	90-91	91-92	92-93	TOTAL
\$m	11.6	20.0	10.9	8.6	6.5	57.6

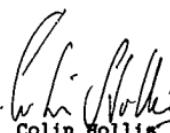
Committee's Recommendation

46. The Committee recommends construction of the work in this reference.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

47. The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee and the paragraph in the report to which each refers are set out below:

	Paragraph
1. A NEED EXISTS TO IMPROVE LIVING-IN ACCOMMODATION FOR SINGLE ARMY PERSONNEL. IT IS DESIRABLE THAT EXISTING ACCOMMODATION BE UPGRADED TO BRING IT AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO SSSA STANDARDS.	19
2. THE UPGRADE OF ARMY LIVING-IN ACCOMMODATION AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS AUSTRALIA-WIDE WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SINGLE BEDROOMS CONFORMING TO SSSA STANDARDS FROM 1838 TO 6406.	42
3. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	46



Colin Hollis

Chairman

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

23 February 1988

APPENDIX A

LIST OF WITNESSES

**Cornish, Mr B.H., Project Manager, Defence, Queensland Region,
Department of Administrative Services, Construction Group,
GPO Box 1381, Brisbane, Queensland**

**Curnow,, Mr S.W., Project Manager, Army, Victoria-Tasmania
Region, Department of Administrative Services, Construction
Group, 239 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria**

**Davey, Mr L.A., Assistant Secretary, Resources and Project
Management Facilities Division, Department of Defence,
Russell Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory**

**Fisher, Brigadier R.W., Director-General, Accommodation and
Works, Army, Department of Defence, Russell Offices,
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory**

**Guivarra, Lieutenant-Colonel, T.W., Staff Officer Grade 1,
Accommodation, Department of Defence, Army, Headquarters,
3rd Military District, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane,
Queensland**

**Jewell, Lieutenant-Colonel, R.E., Staff Officer, Grade 1, Major
Works Project Manager, Department of Defence, Russell
Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory**

**Teichert, Mr K.D., Project Manager, Army, New South Wales Region,
Department of Administrative Services, Construction Group,
PO Box 1412, Chatswood, New South Wales**

**Williams, Mr M.B., Assistant Secretary, Defence Programs,
Department of Administrative Services, Construction Group,
PO Box 111, Dickson, Australian Capital Territory**

APPENDIX B

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 1960 AND 1973
SCALES AND STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>1960 SSSA</u>	<u>1973 SSSA</u>
Rooms	7.43 m ² on the basis of four-man cubicles	9.9 m ² on the basis of single rooms
Ablution Facilities	On a pro rata basis Communal facility	On a ratio of one facility per four men
Built-in Furniture	Wardrobe Divan-type bed	Wardrobe with cupboard over, desk with cupboard under, divan-type bed, towel rail, picture rail, bookshelf
Change Rooms	NIL	0.6 m ² per man
Common Rooms	NIL	0.5 m ² per man Minimum size to be 15 m ²
Box Rooms	NIL	0.6 m ² per man

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF BUILDINGS BY LOCATION

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>NUMBER OF BUILDINGS</u>	<u>PROPOSED NUMBER BEDROOMS</u>
<u>QUEENSLAND</u>		
Townsville	36	1440
Oakey	2	178
Enoggera	20	680
Canungra	1	95
TOTAL	59	2393
<u>NEW SOUTH WALES</u>		
Holsworthy	19	659
Moorebank	5	136
Chowder Bay	1	13
Dundas	1	20
TOTAL	26	828
<u>VICTORIA</u>		
Puckapunyal	8	553
Watsonia	12	414
Broadmeadows	3	96
Diggers Rest/Rockbank	2	30
TOTAL	25	1093

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Port Wakefield	1	13
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TOTAL	1	13
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Karrakatta	2	68
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Swanbourne	2	62
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TOTAL	4	130
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AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Duntroon	3	111
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TOTAL	3	111
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NATIONAL TOTAL	118	4568
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APPENDIX D

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS AND ENGINEERING SERVICES

CONSTRUCTION

1. Existing

The 118 accommodation buildings have been inspected with respect to their suitability for upgrading. They have been assessed as being structurally sound and suitable for refurbishment.

2. Internal Building Fabric

Generally the work will include repair of damaged finishes and new painting throughout. Windows, doors and hardware will be repaired or replaced as required.

New partition walls to divide the existing bedrooms into two single bedrooms and solid core entry doors will be provided. Bedroom and common room floors will be carpeted. Abiations and laundry wall and floor tiling will be repaired or replaced and floors will be regraded to existing wastes where necessary. Vinyl flooring to box rooms and change rooms will be repaired or replaced.

3. Fitments

Fitments and equipment will be provided according to the requirements of the SSSA.

Single bedrooms will have existing wardrobes refurbished or replaced and will be provided with a bed, desk, shelving, towel rail and picture rail. Common rooms will have existing wardrobes removed and will be provided with a tea preparation bench with sink and cupboard.

Ablution areas will have damaged showers, basins and sanitary fittings, coat hooks, benches and mirrors repaired or replaced.

Laundries will have damaged laundry tubs, ironing boards and dryers repaired or replaced.

Box rooms/change rooms will have shelving, bench seating and coat hooks provided.

4. Building Exterior

Repair and maintenance work required to the building exteriors has been included in the proposal.

ENGINEERING SERVICES

5. Mechanical

Mechanical ventilation will be provided to ablutions and laundry areas. This work will include replacement or upgrading of existing systems as necessary. Depending on the location, heating will be provided, and where not existing, ceiling insulation will be installed.

6. Electrical

Electrical services generally will be upgraded. Lights and power points will be provided to SSSA requirements, and a centralised TV antenna will be installed with individual outlets to bedrooms and common rooms.

7. Hydraulics

Existing plumbing will be upgraded to suit the new requirements and stormwater systems will be repaired where inadequate.

8. Civil

Footpaths will be provided for all-weather access to the buildings.

9. Fire Protection

Fire protection will be provided to all buildings in accordance with the 'Policy for Fire Protection Provisions for Defence Living Accommodation'.

10. Landscaping

Limited landscaping will be provided to improve the visual amenity of each building.