



Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

REPORT

relating to the

REFURBISHMENT OF AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON

(Twenty-first Report of 1995)

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA 1995

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

Report Relating

to the

Refurbishment of Australian Embassy, Washington

(Twenty-first Report of 1995)

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

(Thirty-First Committee)

Mr Colin Hollis MP (Chair) Senator Paul Henry Calvert (Vice-Chair)

Senate House of Representatives

Senator Bryant Robert Burns

Mr John Neil Andrew MP

Senator Shayne Michael Murphy*

Mr Raymond Allen Braithwaite MP Mr Russell Neville Gorman MP Mr Robert George Halverson OBE MP Hon Benjamin Charles Humphreys MP

* replaced Senator John Devereux on 10 February 1995

SECTIONAL COMMITTEE

REFURBISHMENT OF AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON

Mr Colin Hollis MP (Chair) Senator Paul Henry Calvert (Vice-Chair) Hon Benjamin Charles Humphreys MP Senator Bryant Robert Burns

Committee Secretary:

Peter Roberts

Inquiry Secretary: Secretarial Support: Michael Fetter Belynda Zolotto

EXTRACT FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

No. 152 dated Thursday 29 June 1995

13 PUBLIC WORKS, PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE, REFERENCE OF WORK - REFURBISHMENT OF AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON

Mr Walker (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: Refurbishment of Australian Embassy, Washington.

Question - put and passed.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REFURBISHMENT OF AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY WASHINGTON

By resolution on 29 June 1995, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report to Parliament the refurbishment of the Australian Embassy, Washington.

THE REFERENCE

- 1. The Overseas Property Group proposes to refurbish the office accommodation for the Australian Embassy in Washington to a standard suitable for efficient and effective operation. The proposal entails a staged program of internal refurbishment providing tenancy conditions which meet the requirements of occupational health and safety, the replacement of outdated and obsolete equipment and the provision of office accommodation which meets current data and communications needs. Physical security protection will also be improved.
- 2. The estimated cost of the proposal when referred to the Committee was \$16m at November 1994 prices.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

- 3. On 31 August 1995 the Committee appointed a Sectional Committee comprising Mr C Hollis MP (Chair), Senator P Calvert (Vice-Chair), the Hon B Humphreys MP and Senator B Burns to undertake this inquiry. The Committee received written submissions from the Overseas Property Group (OPG) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Sectional Committee took evidence from representatives of both organisations at a public hearing held at Parliament House, Canberra on 13 September 1995. Prior to the public hearing the Sectional Committee viewed a video which showed the condition of the existing Embassy. The Chair inspected the Embassy in August 1995 during a private visit to Washington and had discussions with the Ambassador and OPG representatives. However, the Committee again draws attention to its inability to travel overseas to inspect existing premises, proposed sites and to have discussions with planners, designers and staff. The Committee regards this as a completely unsatisfactory situation.
- Written submissions regarding the proposal were also received from the following organisations and are incorporated in the Committee's proceedings:

- · Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
- · Commonwealth Fire Board
- · Department of Primary Industries and Energy
- Australian Heritage Commission
- Integrated Lighting Controls
- Childcare at Work
- 5. A list of the witnesses who gave evidence at the public hearing is at Appendix A. The Committee's proceedings will be printed as Minutes of Evidence.

BACKGROUND

- 6. Under the Administrative Arrangements Order of 24 July 1987, the Department of Administrative Services is responsible for the acquisition, leasing, management and disposal of land and property overseas. This activity is undertaken by the Department's Overseas Property Group which, in managing the overseas estate, is the funding and construction authority of new works.
- In administrating this function, the Department is advised by the Overseas Property Committee, which comprises senior representatives of user, service and regulatory departments.
- 8. Given the unsatisfactory nature of the existing Embassy offices, the project has been given a high priority on the capital works program.

THE NEED

9. The original building which houses the Australian Embassy in Washington was constructed in 1969 and is well located at 1601 Massachusetts Avenue. An extension was added in 1976. The seven storey building has a gross floor area of 13 800m² which includes 11 800m² of office space and 2 000m² of public space. In addition there is 5 700m² in two basements and 800m² of plantroom space on the roof. The building is now 25 years old and has not undergone a major refurbishment since it was constructed. Considering that the industry norm is to refurbish office buildings after 20 years, it is not unexpected that the Washington Embassy now has many deficiencies. It lacks suitable fire protection and fire egress while major building services have reached the end of their design life and require replacement. In addition, office layouts are inefficient. The

provision for current and future technology is inadequate. Physical security protection is also deficient.

- 10. The Embassy services some 19 government departments and organisations with functions as diverse as foreign relations, defence, immigration and trade. Washington is one of Australia's largest and most diverse overseas missions. Total staff number approximately 310. It is also the hub of the communications network for Australia's diplomatic missions in North and South US.
- 11. Since the construction of the Embassy building, the office environment has changed significantly. As a consequence, the building does not adequately meet contemporary needs in respect of:
 - · sophisticated cable management
 - increasing security concerns
 - information technology
 - a modern efficient office environment
 - architectural and cultural values
 - current Australian Standards and the Building Code of Australia
 - . the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991

Committee's Conclusion

12. There is a need for a complete refurbishment of the Australian Embassy building in Washington to ensure protection of the Commonwealth's investment at one of Australia's more significant overseas missions and to provide accommodation for staff which meets current standards.

THE PROPOSAL

Options

- 13. OPG advised the Sectional Committee that in a recent survey it was established that:
 - the value of the Embassy premises had dropped considerably as a result of its condition and the state of the commercial property

- market. In May 1992, the building's valuation was USD19.9m (this figure is still valid)
- because of its age and outdated interior, the building is now rated as downgraded institutional accommodation with a rental value of USD20 to USD25 per square foot per annum.

14. OPG considered the following options:

- alternative leasing suitable premises were in the leasing range of USD35 to USD40 per square foot per annum and fitout costs were in the order of USD80 to USD100 per square foot plus special security needs. This option was eliminated on security grounds
- smaller commercial buildings were available but did not offer any economies over the existing premises as they would also need extensive refurbishment
- OPG concluded that the most acceptable option is to remain in the
 existing building and to undertake a refurbishment. In addition, the
 importance of Australia's bilateral relationship with the United States
 is better reflected in a major refurbishment rather than selling the
 premises and moving from a prominent location.

Planning and Design Concepts

- 15. To establish priorities, broad functional accommodation needs, policy influences, operational changes and other factors relevant to the user department's future directions in Washington, detailed accommodation studies were undertaken in August and November 1994 and subsequently reviewed during two value management conferences. The first was held in Canberra on 5-6 April 1995 and was attended by representatives from OPG and major user departments. The second was held in Washington on 5-6 June 1995 and included the heads of various departments represented at the Mission.
- 16. As a result of the value management studies and other meetings, the implementation of a staged program of internal refurbishment is proposed providing tenancy conditions which meet the requirements of occupational health and safety, the replacement of outdated and obsolete equipment and the provision of office accommodation which meets current data and communications needs.
- 17. In summary, the principal objectives and findings which have influenced the planning and design concepts are:

- to upgrade the facilities to provide better, more efficient delivery of services
- to carry out the refurbishment with minimum disruption
- to rationalise the use of space to:
 - improve functionality
 - provide a better and flexible working environment
 - distribute under-utilised space for effective future use
 - provide multi functional but distinctive representational space
- · to ensure that security is maintained
- the works to be sequenced in accordance with:
 - seasonal changes
 - maior VIP visits
 - operational needs, floor by floor
- to ensure requirements for public interface are achieved without compromising security
- a space audit was implemented taking into account known and anticipated staff reductions and revisions
- a building services condition audit identified that existing equipment and services are reaching the end of their useful life and that an automatic sprinkler system is required to meet Washington DC building regulations
- refurbishment proposals were examined for upgrading the Embassy to achieve a consistent and modern standard of office accommodation and make effective use of the space available
- a notional program for implementing a staged refurbishment strategy has been developed
- a range of refurbishment strategies have been examined including the need for external staging space.

- 18. Options for the interior design have been explored to complement the 1960s style of the original building and to ensure an image reflecting a progressive country.
- 19. At the public hearing the Sectional Committee raised with OPG the practicality of refurbishment without the need to move staff into external staging space. OPG agreed that there will be disruption to normal operations particularly as the building will be required to be kept operational during the refurbishment program and this was an issue discussed at the value management exercises. OPG pointed out that most of the nosiest activities will be carried out after hours. The refurbishment program has been discussed by OPG with contractors in Washington who are familiar with projects of this nature. OPG stressed that arrangements will be made to ensure satisfactory access to the building for both staff and customers during the refurbishment program.

Committee's Recommendation

20. The Overseas Property Group continue to consult with staff and the Community and Public Sector Union during the refurbishment program to ensure minimal disruption and inconvenience to staff and other users of the building.

Scope of Work

- 21. The proposed refurbishment works comprise:
 - demolition of the existing spiral stair, construction of a new stair and installation of a lift from level 1 (ground floor) to level 2 for public and disabled access
 - the refurbishment of the core areas
 - complete refurbishment of all floors, including new ceilings, office partitioning, carpet, lighting, power and airconditioning
 - installation of a sprinkler system to levels 1 to 7
 - replacement of the perimeter induction units with a new perimeter heating system
 - · installation of stair pressurisation to both fire escape stairs
 - · upgrade of the communications centres for DFAT and Defence

- provision for a modern data and communications network throughout the building
- physical security works.
- 22. At the public hearing OPG advised the Sectional Committee that consideration was being given to raising the level of the front porch of the building. The cost of this work, estimated at approximately \$A400 000 was not included in the budget for the refurbishment However, OPG will discuss its possible inclusion in the project with the Department of Finance.
- 23. OPG advised the Sectional Committee that following the completion of the refurbishment there will be some 800m² of surplus space which will be available for future expansion.

Approvals

24. The refurbishment is to be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the District of Colombia.

Heritage Issues

- 25. There are no special heritage issues applicable to this refurbishment project. However, every effort will be made to incorporate Australian content in the built form and in the selection and reuse of materials, finishes and artworks.
- 26. In a written submission, the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC), while indicating that places overseas are not regarded as part of the National Estate, stated that the Commission encourages the conservation of heritage values of Australian places overseas. The Washington Embassy building is highly regarded for its design style and the AHC believes it may be appropriate to consult with the designers of the building to ensure that the design style will not be compromised. OPG advised that it has instructed its architects to maintain the original design concept wherever possible during documentation of the refurbishment program.

Environmental Impact Assessments

27. An environmental impact assessment is not required by the local authorities.

Codes and Standards

- 28. The refurbishment is to be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the current building regulations in force within Washington DC and to meet relevant Building Code of Australia (BCA) requirements.
- 29. All work will endeavour to meet these statutory requirements with the recognition that some constraints will apply due to the age of the building. The requirements will be negotiated with appropriate organisations including staff representatives and associations.
- 30. All new work will be designed to meet the Australian Occupational Health & Safety Act, local fire brigade requirements and Australian Standards.

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Structure

31. Structurally the building is in sound condition. In 1993/94 extensive repairs were carried out to the external marble cladding of the building.

Materials & Finishes

- 32. The refurbishment work includes:
 - new suspended ceilings and integral low brightness 400 lux lighting
 - new partition system for all floors
 - new doors, external wall linings and joinery
 - blinds to windows
 - complete refurbishment of toilets and tea rooms
 - new carpets
 - new finishes to lift lobbies.
- 33. Allowances have been made for specialist ceiling treatment and lighting, high quality wall finishes to match existing finishes, parquetry floor finish to gallery and public areas on levels 1 and 2.

Mechanical Services

- 34. Alternatives have been examined to refurbish or replace the office floor interior and perimeter heating ventilation and airconditioning system due to ongoing operational and maintenance problems.
- 35. The scope of refurbishment will include:
 - new 24 hour airconditioning system for the guard post
 - renovation of the interior zone to variable air volume (VAV) system on levels 2 to 7 utilising the existing interior zone air handling units and ductwork.
 - replace cooling towers and convert to VAV including construction of new supply air riser in existing shaft
 - · new airconditioning system for the amenities on level 1
 - clean fans, coils and casings, balance and provide new filters for existing air handling units to increase efficiency
 - removal of existing perimeter induction units and installation of a new perimeter system to negate condensation and downdrafts to work areas
 - new air handling units in the roof plant room to service the new communications centres
 - · upgrade impellers to pumps to suit the new HVAC system
 - modifications to the existing Building Automation System (BAS) to include the refurbishment and future maintenance program alterations
 - installation of heat exchanger to reduce energy consumption and ensure comfort cooling for occupants in winter.
- 36. To minimise disruption and environmental discomfort installation of the above will be programmed during the winter months when the cooling system is not required. Major equipment items such as chillers and air handling units will be replaced as part of an ongoing maintenance program to take advantage of future utility rebate opportunities.

Hydraulic Services

37. The scope of the refurbishment will include a new meter room and new water service to comply with Washington DC government regulations.

Electrical Services

- 38. The scope of the refurbishment will include:
 - extension of main switchboard to accommodate additional submains
 - replacement of all distribution boards
 - new suspended ceiling cable management system
 - . new low energy, low glare lighting fixtures to office spaces
 - new gallery, main hall and entry lighting to level 1
 - reinstallation of the recently upgraded EWIS system
 - new data, power and communication network
 - replacement of ovens in kitchen level 1.

Lifts

- 39. The existing three passenger and one service lifts are in good working condition, however, they require upgrading to comply with current US regulations.
- 40. The scope will include:
 - facilities for the disabled
 - · emergency power to one elevator
 - installation of smoke detectors
 - new lift car interior

Fire Services

41. The building will be equipped in accordance with Australian Fire Safety Standards and will also comply with Washington DC requirements.

- 42. The scope of the upgrade will include:
 - extension of the existing basement automatic sprinkler system to levels 1-7 to provide protection for the whole building
 - a new fire pump to boost the water pressure for the sprinkler system
 - new fire alarm panels to provide for the new sprinkler system
 - · stair pressurisation system to both fire escape stairs
 - provision of controls for the airconditioning system shutdown in the event of fire alarm
 - smoke exhaust from the building using manual override switching to an economy cycle (full outside air).
- 43. In a written submission to the Committee the Commonwealth Fire Board (CFB) advised that the upgrading of the fire systems proposed by OPG would result in a satisfactory level of fire protection and safety. However, as the security measures in the building will be complex the CFB believes that consideration should be given to ensuring that there is no conflict between security measures and fire protection which could be detrimental to either system. OPG advised that this issue will be taken into account during the refurbishment program.

Acoustics

- 44. Control of sound transmission between special areas such as conference rooms and nominated offices is to be incorporated.
- 45. Particular consideration has been given to the selection of materials to minimise reverberation in the main public and representational spaces.

Energy Conservation Measures

- 46. The refurbishment includes measures which will minimise energy consumption and take advantage of future utility rebate programs should they eventuate. They include:
 - low energy, low glare light fixtures
 - self contained split system airconditioning for 24 hour service to communication centres and guard post

- · heat exchanger to avoid cost of operating chillers in winter.
- 47. OPG advised that an energy audit of the building was undertaken in 1988 and since that time a 20% saving in energy usage has been achieved, mainly through the modification of plant operation and lighting levels. The Committee believes that there would be considerable merit in OPG testing the effectiveness of the energy conservation measures to be incorporated in the refurbishment program by undertaking an energy audit of the building following 12 months occupation of the refurbished building.

Committee's Recommendation

48. The Committee recommends that the Overseas Property Group undertake an energy audit of the Washington Embassy building following 12 months occupation of the refurbished building.

Provision for the Disabled

- 49. Access and toilet provisions for the disabled will be upgraded to current requirements and the US Disabilities Act.
- 50. A lift has been incorporated to provide easy access between the public areas on levels 1 (ground floor) and 2.

Childcare Provision

51. Some 280m² of space for childcare facilities could be provided from the 800m² of surplus space which will be available in the building following the refurbishment program. However the use of such a facility will depend on the numbers and ages of children and any special regulations applied to the facility by the Washington DC authorities. The fitout, staffing, funding and management will be the responsibility of the Mission.

Security

- 52. The refurbishment will update and rationalise physical and technical security requirements and will include:
 - construction of an enclosed guard post with forced entry ballistic glass protection
 - installation of a metal detection system to screen visitors

- provision of intruder resistant glass at level 4 balcony adjacent the ambassador's suite
- provision of a new card control system from lift lobbies to office floors.
- Communications centres will be demolished and reconstructed to meet current requirements.

Occupational Health & Safety

- 54. Removal of halon and PCB'S in the existing light fittings will proceed independently of the refurbishment. All known asbestos was removed from the Embassy in 1990. Inspection and testing of the cooling towers for legionella is provided on a regular basis as part of the water treatment service.
- 55. There is additional OH&S work related to specific floors which can only be undertaken as part of a refurbishment program. Work in this category includes the upgrading of the lighting, data cabling, airconditioning and fire protection.

CONSULTATIONS

- 56. The following organisations were consulted:
 - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
 - Department of Defence
 - · Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
 - Department of Finance
 - Department of the Treasury
 - · CPSU Branch Committee of Overseas Conditions
 - Austrade
 - Australian Federal Police
 - Australian Education Office
 - Australian Customs Service
 - Department of Transport, Communications and the Arts

- 57. In addition to the above OPG has had consultations with a number of US authorities regarding planning approvals and the provision of services to the building.
- 58. In written submissions to the Committee the CPSU raised a number of issues relating to the project. These were:
 - · health and safety
 - · protective security arrangements
 - · information technology
 - · officers' welfare and amenities
 - childcare
 - · occupational health and safety.
- 59. The Committee was assured by OPG that it will continue to consult with the CPSU and other stakeholders throughout the refurbishment project..

CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

- 60. The program for the refurbishment will be undertaken over a 24 month period commencing on Level 7 and progressing down the building at a rate of approximately 3 months per floor. Services will be maintained to occupied floors during refurbishment.
- 61. When work is occurring at level 1 (ground floor), access from the main entry to the lifts will be restricted. Barricades to the work area and temporary tunnels or an alternative entry to the Embassy will be required. Demolition and concrete pours will be scheduled for weekends or after hours to minimise disruption and noise.
- 62. In the United States, interiors projects are typically undertaken with a general contractor (lump sum tender) or construction manager (work packages). It is proposed to call tenders for work packages following full working documentation using a construction manager. This arrangement will allow for flexibility in programming and sequencing the work in addition to managing occupant satisfaction and unforeseen construction activity.
- 63. An Australia-based project manager will be posted to Washington for the duration of the works to oversee construction and to provide full time liaison between the Mission, contractors, consultants and OPG. This is seen by OPG as

- a critical requirement due to the complexity of the refurbishment and to ensure that value for money is obtained. There is also the need for constant briefings with both management and staff as the program progresses
- 64. In relation to protection for subcontractors OPG will determine, prior to engagement, that the major contractors have sufficient financial backing to minimise the risk of them going into liquidation during the project. OPG expects the major contractors will be underwritten by a major banking or financial institution. Where possible, a clause will be added to all contracts which will require evidence that all sub-contractual financial obligations have been met, prior to subsequent payments being made by the Commonwealth to the contractor.

COST ESTIMATE

- 65. The preliminary cost estimate for the proposed refurbishment is AUD16m at November 1994 prices, at an exchange rate of AUD1.00 = USD0.75.
- 66. The preliminary cost estimate includes consultants' fees, project administration and supervision. The estimate excludes furniture and fittings.
- 67. OPG is confident that project can be completed within the cost estimate.

Committee's Recommendation

68. The Committee recommends the refurbishment of the Australian Embassy, Washington at an estimated cost of \$16 million at November 1994 prices.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

69. The conclusions and recommendations of the Committee and the paragraphs in the report to which they refer are set out below:

Paragraph

1. There is a need for a complete refurbishment of the Australian Embassy building in Washington to ensure protection of the Commonwealth's investment at one of Australia's more significant overseas missions and to provide accommodation for staff which meets current standards.

- The Overseas Property Group continue to consult with staff and the Community and Public Sector Union during the refurbishment program to ensure minimal disruption and inconvenience to staff and other users of the building.
- The Committee recommends that the Overseas Property Group undertake an energy audit of the Washington Embassy building following 12 months occupation of the refurbished building.
- The Committee recommends the refurbishment of the Australian Embassy, Washington at an estimated cost of \$16 million at November 1994 prices.

Chair

19 October 1995

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HANCOCK, Mr Brian Richard

Director, Construction Management, Overseas Property Group, Department of Administrative Services, 111 Alinga Street, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2601

State Manager, Department of Administrative Services Interiors Australia, Sirius

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HYAM, Mr Michael John

LIST OF WITNESSES

CAMERON, Ms Marguerite Jov

Executive Officer, Security Operations Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Parkes, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600

LEADER, Dr Malcolm Ashley, Assistant Secretary, Resources Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600

MARGINSON, Ms Michelle

Director, US Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600

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SELLECK, Mr Gordon William

Executive Officer, Overseas Property Group, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2601

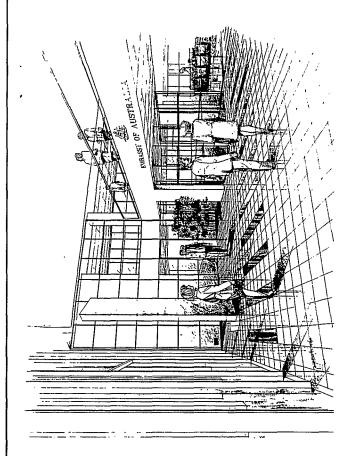
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APPENDIX B

PLANS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Embassy of Australia, Washington DC

	Front entry foyer to Main Hall	B-1
	Location Plan	B-2
•	Site Plan	B-3
	Level 1	B-4
	Level 2	B-5
	Level 3	B-6
	Level 4	B-7
	Level 5	B-8
	Level 6	B-9
	Level 7	B-10
	Section	B-11

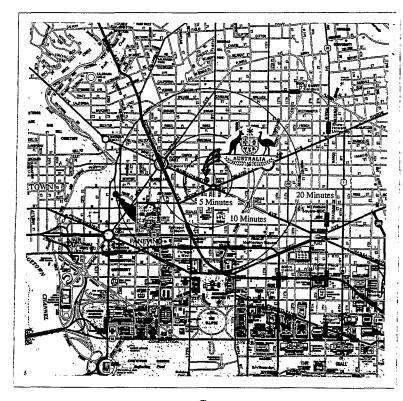












Public Alley Built 1969 (Built 1978 PARKENG 16Th Street

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EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. LOCATION PLAN

EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. SITE PLAN

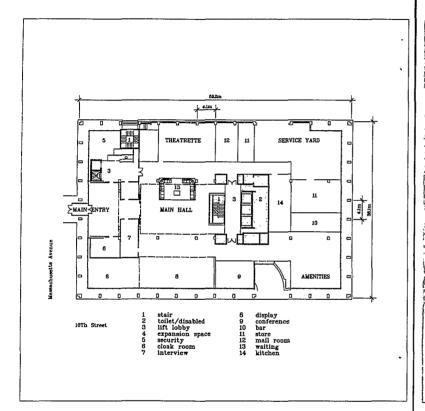
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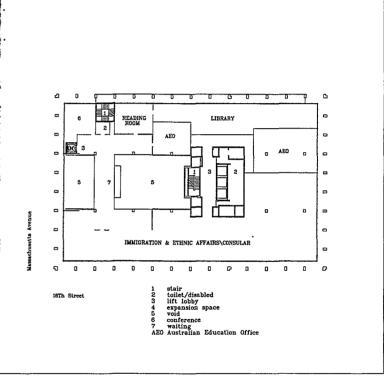












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EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. LEVEL 1

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EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C.

LEVEL 2

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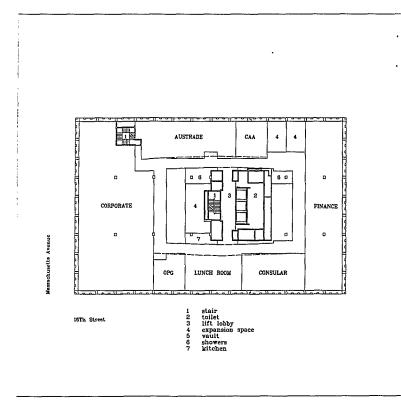
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В POLITICAL 10 EXECUTIVE DFAT/ REGISTRY EXECUTIVE POLITICAL stair toilet lift lobby expansion space vault conference dining . kitchen store technical services 16Th Street 9 10 11 ante room

EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. LEVEL 3

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EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. LEVEL 4

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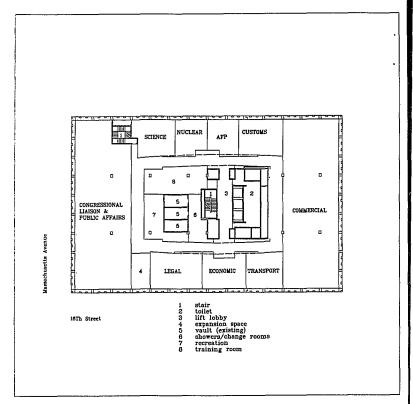
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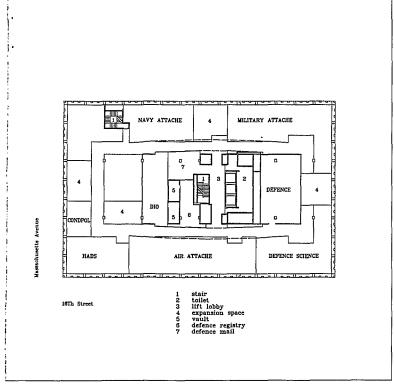












EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. LEVEL 5

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EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. LEVEL 6

MAHTHT.

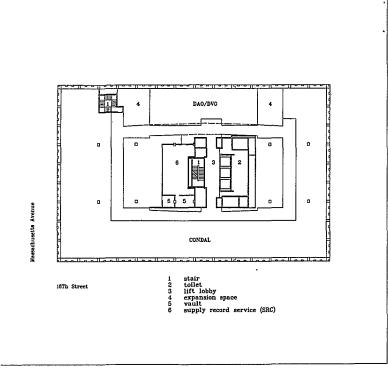
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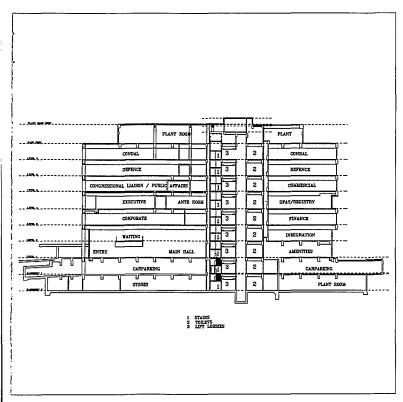












EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. LEVEL 7

WOLL-C

B-10



EMBASSY OF AUSTRALIA, WASHINGTON D.C. SECTION

MA-TI-TI,

R-11