



1951.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

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TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL  
REPORT.

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PURSUANT TO SECTION II OF THE COMMONWEALTH  
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE ACT 1913-1947 THE  
TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL REPORT OF THE  
PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC  
WORKS.

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# THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

## TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable William John McKell, the Governor-General in and over the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

In pursuance of the requirements of section 11 of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1947*, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has the honour to submit the following report of its proceedings:—

### THIRTEENTH COMMITTEE.

1. The members of the Thirteenth Committee were appointed in the Senate on 23rd February, 1950, and in the House of Representatives on 1st March, 1950. The following were the members appointed to the Committee:—Senators J. H. O'Byrne, A. J. M. Rankin and G. J. Rankin, and Messrs. G. J. Bowden, J. O. Cramer, A. McK. McDonald, W. P. O'Connor, E. H. D. Russell and D. O. Watkins, and the membership remained the same throughout the life of the Committee. At its first meeting the Committee elected Senator G. J. Rankin as Chairman, and Mr. E. H. D. Russell was elected as Vice-Chairman. The Thirteenth Committee ceased to exist on 19th March, 1951, the date of the double dissolution of the Federal Parliament.

### REFERENCES DEALT WITH.

2. This General Report, the *Twenty-second* in the history of the Public Works Committee, is made at the commencement of the present session to cover the activities of the Committee during the previous session of Parliament.

### INQUIRIES INCOMPLETE.

3. When the *Twenty-first* Report was presented inquiries in respect of the undermentioned works were incomplete:—

	Estimated cost.
Central heating and hot water systems at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne	£ 118,500
Extensions to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Sydney	145,310

Action was taken by the new Committee with a view to having these projects referred to the Committee again, but, after some time had elapsed, the Government decided that the question of the proposed central heating of Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, should not be referred to the Committee, but that relating to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Sydney, was referred in due course for investigation and report.

4. During its short life of just over one year, five projects were referred to the Committee, and investigations were completed in connexion with all except one of them, viz:—

Automatic telephone exchange at Launceston, Tasmania	£ 657,700
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### COMPLETE INVESTIGATIONS.

5. The works referred to the Committee during its term of office, and upon which investigations were completed, comprise—

(1) Extensions to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine	£ 145,310
(2) Extensions to telephone exchange building, Lismore, New South Wales	138,800
(3) Automatic telephone exchange, Bathurst, New South Wales	132,635
(4) Irwin automatic telephone exchange, Perth, Western Australia	852,000

### MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(THIRTEENTH COMMITTEE.)

(Senators appointed 23rd February, 1950, Members of the House of Representatives appointed 1st March, 1950.)

(Ceased to exist on double dissolution, 19th March, 1951.)

SENATOR GEORGE JAMES RANKIN (Chairman).

#### Senate.

Senator JUSTIN HILARY O'BYRNE.  
Senator ANNABELLE JANE MARY RANKIN.

#### House of Representatives.

GEORGE JAMES BOWDEN, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
JOHN OSCAR CRAMER, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
HON. ALLAN MCKENZIE McDONALD, M.P.  
WILLIAM PAUL O'CONNOR, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
EDGAR HUGHES DEG RUSSELL, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
DAVID OLIVER WATKINS, ESQUIRE, M.P.

(FOURTEENTH COMMITTEE.)

(Senators appointed 21st June, 1951, Members of the House of Representatives appointed 28th June, 1951.)

HON. ALLAN MCKENZIE McDONALD (Chairman.)

#### Senate.

Senator NORMAN HENRY DENHAM HENTY  
Senator JUSTIN HILARY O'BYRNE  
Senator the HON. ALBERT DAVID REID

#### House of Representatives.

ALLAN CHARLES BIRD, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
GEORGE JAMES BOWDEN, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
JOHN OSCAR CRAMER, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
WILLIAM PAUL O'CONNOR, ESQUIRE, M.P.  
DAVID OLIVER WATKINS, ESQUIRE, M.P.

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### SUMMARY OF INQUIRIES.

6. The following is a summary of the reports presented to Parliament in connexion with the completed inquiries:—

#### EXTENSIONS TO THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND TROPICAL MEDICINE, SYDNEY.

7. The original building which is at present being used for the work of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Sydney, was erected at a cost of £30,000, following the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in 1928, and the structure was built on land set apart by the Sydney University.

8. In 1944 a proposal for extensions to the original building was referred to the Committee, and its report to Parliament recommended the additions at an estimated figure of £77,881. Owing to the great shortage of materials and labour, and the urgent necessity to press on with housing projects in the period following the Committee's recommendations, the building of the proposed extensions was not commenced. When it was finally decided to start the work it was found that costs had risen steeply and the estimates presented a figure which was twice that of the previous estimate for practically the same building. It was therefore decided to refer the project to the Public Works Committee again for further investigation, and Parliament passed the necessary motion on 12th October, 1949. As Parliament was dissolved a few days after the reference, the matter lapsed and was referred again on 27th April, 1950.

#### *The Proposal.*

9. The project provided for extensions to the main building by the erection of three-storied wings to the east, west and north of the present building, forming an enclosed quadrangle, and an additional floor on the two-story rear portion of the present building. Some consequential alterations were also included in connexion with the interior of the present building, and a complete new floor was proposed to be added over the existing animal house, adjacent to the main building. The estimated cost submitted by the Minister in explanation of the project referred to the Committee was £145,310, of which £81,000 would be required for the first stage planned to proceed immediately.

#### *Reasons for the Extensions.*

10. The necessity for major extensions to the building was established by the evidence taken in the former investigation, when it was explained to the Committee that the School had long outgrown the existing accommodation, lack of space and overcrowded conditions being especially acute in the library, the museum, and the animal house. It was pointed out that, as a result of concentrated action towards assistance in the war effort, increasing use had been made of the facilities of the institution in training and diploma courses, while the field of research was constantly growing wider and the need for accommodation to carry out the work more pressing. At the same time, though the main emphasis was focussed upon the tropical side of the work, a considerable amount of attention was paid to tuition and research work connected with local health and industrial health problems, and this side of the work was expected to grow considerably. A wealth of very important and interesting evidence was submitted, and the Committee was impressed with the value of the work being carried out at the institution, and with its significance in connexion with the health of the community and the nation at large. The evidence emphasized the necessity for the building established at the former inquiry, and the important aspect of the greatly increased cost was studied.

11. Certain alterations in the plans, as a result of a change in the position of Director of the institution since the Committee made its former inquiry, and other alterations consequent upon the trend of development of the School's programme towards public health and industrial health problems, were apparent in the Committee's comparison of estimates, but the most important factor which influenced the increased total figure was the rapid rise in costs during the period concerned. The Committee made searching inquiries into the various estimates made during the period and the methods used for the purpose, and it is satisfied that separate and independent checks give confirmation of the results shown, as accurately as is possible in the present circumstances.

#### *Recommendations.*

12. (1) There is an urgent necessity for the extensions;
- (2) Development of the institute along lines emphasizing work concerned with industrial hygiene and child health problems is most satisfactory and urgently necessary at the present time, but the importance of work on the national questions of tropical medicine already being undertaken, should not be allowed to recede;
- (3) Materials used will not seriously affect the housing problem;
- (4) Most of the labour required is of a special type not used extensively in housing, and the urgent nature of this work makes it desirable to proceed with the building;

- (5) Stages 1, 2 and 2A are recommended to be constructed, with only Stage 3 of the schedule delayed for a further contract;
- (6) The provision of the lift in the third stage as suggested is satisfactory for the purpose;
- (7) The Committee still regards the renewal of the present lease of the land as important.

#### EXTENSIONS TO TELEPHONE EXCHANGE BUILDING, LISMORE, NEW SOUTH WALES.

13. The present telephone exchange building is situated next to the Lismore Post Office in Molesworth-street, and was completed to its present stage early in 1940. It is a two-storied structure with the lower floor set at a suitable height above ground level to act as a safeguard against floods which sweep through the city from time to time. Owing to war time restrictions the building was then constructed to accommodate only the long-line equipment and offices, with the result that the manual telephone exchange had to remain in operation in its old location on the first floor of the Post Office building next door, while the telegraph facilities had to remain on the ground floor of the Post Office building, subject to periodical flooding and disruption. This is still the case and the position cannot be improved until additional buildings are provided.

#### *The Present Proposal.*

14. The present proposal is to extend the existing building towards the rear of the site by the addition of a four-storied building to give the space required for the purposes of the exchange, and to allow the portion of the site behind the present Post Office to remain for use at a future date, when an "L" shaped extension would be possible to meet further requirements. The estimated cost of the proposal was set down at £138,800.

#### *Reasons for the Extensions.*

15. It was emphasized that the additions to the present building were essential because of the obsolete type of equipment, the necessity for additional facilities for local subscribers in the city network, and the pressing need for equipment to handle the expanding trunk line traffic. The manual exchange equipment is located in a small room where, because of the congested conditions and humid climate, maximum efficiency is clearly impossible.

16. Lismore has become one of the largest communication centres in the northern coast area of New South Wales, and it is an important trunk switching centre, with direct channels to both Sydney and Brisbane. Additional trunk line facilities to both these cities are urgently needed, and to provide these the installation of further long line equipment is necessary.

#### *Recommendations.*

17. (1) Replacement of the obsolete equipment is an urgent necessity;
- (2) The temporary relief measures proposed are essential;
- (3) In general the plans for the building are eminently suitable for the Lismore exchange;
- (4) A slight re-arrangement of details of the third floor plan is desirable;
- (5) The air-conditioning equipment proposed is necessary under the circumstances outlined in the evidence;
- (6) The site is the best in consideration of the factors involved;
- (7) Special tests of the site should be made before construction proceeds;
- (8) Competition with housing is not sufficient to warrant any delay in this proposal;
- (9) Ample provision for the growing demands of the district is warranted.

#### AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE EXCHANGE, BATHURST, NEW SOUTH WALES.

18. Bathurst is situated on the Blue Mountains Tablelands, 132 miles west of Sydney, and it is the centre of a rich agricultural and pastoral district producing large crops of vegetables for city consumption and for canning. There is considerable activity in the associated secondary industries which are expanding rapidly, and, with the completion of a large dam on the Campbell River, it is expected that there will be a further increase in both population and industries. The first telephone exchange at Bathurst was opened in 1896, being subsequently transferred to the Commonwealth in 1906 as a result of Federation. The two original stone buildings are still in use, and while making a valuable contribution to the architectural atmosphere of the city, they have long become unsuited to the demands of modern facilities, and the departmental activities have outgrown the space available, in spite of efforts from time to time to adapt the interior areas to use for the expanding services.

*The Present Proposal.*

19. The present proposal is to erect a new building to house the automatic telephone exchange, trunk exchange and carrier equipment, with necessary offices and amenities for the staff required. The building will be a two-storied structure and will be placed on a site in Howick-street, one block away from the present buildings. The exchange will be placed at the rear of the site to allow space for the erection of a new post office at a later date. The cost of the new building is estimated at £132,635.

*Reasons for the New Exchange.*

20. One of the most important reasons which demonstrates the necessity for the new telephone exchange is the greatly accelerated development at Bathurst and the surrounding districts, particularly in secondary industries, including canning, clothing, and other factories, which are being established in the area. The present buildings are totally inadequate for departmental purposes, and it is essential that a new building shall be available to house the automatic equipment to be installed to handle the increasing volume of local telephone traffic. Bathurst is a very important trunk switching centre for the western tablelands area and has direct channels to the surrounding districts and to Sydney, and it is necessary to install immediately additional trunk line facilities to Sydney and other places. Until the erection of the new building, therefore, certain of the departmental activities are to be moved to a prefabricated building so that additional space may be made available in order to provide for services which are needed immediately.

21. A new trunk cable is being laid between Sydney and Bathurst to provide trunk line service in the western portion of New South Wales, while provision is also being made for 132 channels on an inland route between Sydney and Melbourne, and Bathurst will become a repeating station for this service. A very large capital outlay is involved and it is desirable that the cable may be placed in service at the earliest opportunity.

22. The new cable providing the inland route between Melbourne and Sydney is regarded as particularly important from a defence point of view, as it gives an alternative route to the more vulnerable coastal one.

23. Postal facilities under existing conditions are entirely inadequate and service to the public can only be carried on with difficulty. Every available space is overcrowded, and use has had to be made of areas which should be reserved for amenities and other purposes. Satisfactory space for amenities for the staff cannot be provided until the new building is erected, and areas which have been gradually used up to house telephone and other equipment must be released as soon as possible for postal and other departmental purposes.

*Recommendations.*

24. (1) The proposed exchange is essential and urgent, and the project should be given a high priority;
- (2) The plans for the exchange building are suitable for the purpose and will provide a building which will be effective for many years;
- (3) The site is a good one and suitable for the exchange building as well as for the new Post Office at a later date;
- (4) Materials and labour to be used on the building will not seriously affect home building, and the new exchange should be proceeded with to assist in maintaining a balanced building programme;
- (5) Good quality bricks are available locally, and it is suggested that steps could be taken to increase the output there to provide supplies for use elsewhere also;
- (6) As provision is made for future conversion to full air conditioning if proved essential, the Committee is satisfied that the mechanical ventilation as planned should be installed now;
- (7) Further consideration should be given by the Welfare Section to the location and planning of toilets;
- (8) Owing to the importance of the new trunk cable from a defence point of view, and in consideration of the high capital cost involved, it is essential that the new building be erected as soon as possible, in order to bring this equipment into use without delay.

*IRWIN AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE EXCHANGE, PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.*

25. The existing Perth city area is served by one exchange only, Central, and it is situated in Murray-street between King and Milligan streets. The building which houses the equipment was erected in 1911 and was designed for the installation of manually operated apparatus at that time. Automatic equipment was installed in 1914, being one of the earliest automatic exchanges in the Commonwealth. The Perth Trunk Exchange was also installed in that building at the same time. Various exchanges in the suburbs have given relief from time to time to help in meeting the growth in

the city and adjacent suburbs. Telephone development has now reached a stage when it is necessary to divide the city into sections and to erect a second automatic exchange in the city area of Perth, at the same time planning for the establishment of a third automatic exchange at a later date. Sites have been acquired for the purpose, and action is being taken to establish the second exchange at the earliest possible date.

*The Present Proposal.*

26. It is proposed to establish the Irwin Automatic Telephone Exchange at the opposite end of Murray-street to the existing Central Exchange, and it will be situated near the copper centre of the area to be served. The building is to be a structure with two basements, ground, mezzanine and ten upper floors, and it is planned to face the lower portion of the exterior walls with Donnybrook stone, leaving the upper portions to be faced with a material to harmonize with the Perth Hospital facades on the adjoining site. It will be an imposing building, suitable for this important city site, and will provide accommodation for the automatic telephone exchange, trunk exchange and long-line equipment. It will also provide space for a small post office on the ground floor, and the upper floors will be used for office space to house administrative and technical staffs of the Postmaster-General's Department. The estimated cost of the structure is £852,000.

*Reasons for the New Exchange.*

27. Amongst the many reasons advanced in favour of the establishment of the new Irwin exchange it was pointed out that the present buildings used for the various functions of the Postmaster-General's Department are grossly overcrowded to a point where the standard of service possible is being seriously limited; the prospects for the future show clearly that additional new equipment must be provided; and fresh office space is essential to allow expansion of the existing sections of the department. There has been a striking increase in the number of subscribers in recent years, and in an effort to cope with the demand the existing exchange building has been extended to the rear, so that estimated development can be met until 1954. After that date it is hoped that the Irwin exchange will be established and will allow a division of the services in the city into two areas. Maximum relief will be given to the cable system by the establishment of the Irwin exchange, which is close to the heaviest concentration of lines in the city.

28. The existing trunk exchange is located in the General Post Office building, where it was transferred in 1941, and it is more economical and efficient for it to be located in the same building as the automatic exchange. In any case space is not available for the additional trunk equipment which is to be installed, and the space now occupied in the General Post Office is urgently required for postal and other purposes. It is also necessary for the most efficient working of the telephone services that the long-line equipment and the Transmission Laboratory should be situated in the same building as the automatic exchange.

29. Space on the ground floor of the new building is to be allocated for a post office and mail handling room, to cater for the needs of the local people, including the hospital authorities, who have been asking for improved facilities for some time. Extra public telephones are also urgently required in the area, and the new building will meet that need.

30. The postal activities are being seriously hampered by lack of space, and the growing postal services can only be met by the allocation of areas in the General Post Office building at present used by the administrative, engineering, and other sections of the department, as well as areas being occupied by officials of various other departments. When these areas are vacated it will be possible to re-arrange the space and relieve the congestion which is growing rapidly as the postal services develop from year to year.

*Recommendations.*

31. (1) There is an urgent necessity for the new exchange;
- (2) It is not desirable to erect the building in stages, as the complete structure is necessary as soon as possible;
- (3) The temporary buildings projected for the Department of Works and Housing should be provided immediately in order to free space in the General Post Office for the essential services of the Postmaster-General's Department;
- (4) The plans, with further consideration on some minor points, will provide a building with pleasing aesthetic appearance and are generally suitable for the purpose;
- (5) Some slight alteration to the planning to give more direct approaches to the escape stair, particularly on the north-east corner of the tenth floor, would provide an additional safety precaution in time of emergency;
- (6) Direct collaboration with the civic authorities in the earlier stages of planning would have produced more satisfactory results in some of the details, and, in the remaining stages every effort should be made to achieve a building having the advantage of full and complete consultation with both State and civic authorities;

- (7) The building should be set back 14 feet from the present alignment to allow for future widening of Murray-street;
- (8) The question of providing car-parking space within the building should be thoroughly discussed with the civic authorities, in an effort to avoid adding to the already difficult traffic problems, if a practical and safe way can be found to effect it;
- (9) Further investigation by the technical officers should be made to ascertain whether, by reason of the different street levels, direct drainage of the upper basement would be practicable, or preferable to the mechanical pumping proposed;
- (10) As labour and materials are particularly difficult to obtain, it is recommended that special efforts be made to secure a tenderer who will be able to bring in materials in short supply, and also to provide additional labour with independent housing for them;
- (11) In addition to the amenities planned it is recommended that a drying room for staff use be included in the final planning of the building.

#### AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE EXCHANGE, LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA.

32. The question of the proposed erection of a building in St. John's-street, Launceston, for telephone exchange and other purposes, was referred to the Committee by the House of Representatives on 7th December, 1950. The plans were tabled by the Minister for Works and Housing, together with an explanation of the project showing that the structure proposed was to consist of two basements, ground and five upper floors. The purpose of the building was to give accommodation for an automatic telephone exchange and trunk line exchange, long line equipment, transmission laboratories, and central telegraph office, while the estimated cost of the proposal was set down at £657,700.

33. The Committee was subsequently informed by the Postmaster-General's Department that the necessary evidence regarding the project would not be ready until the middle of March, 1951. Arrangements were accordingly made to visit Melbourne and Launceston in connexion with the investigation, but they were interrupted by the dissolution of Parliament, and the inquiry was not completed.

#### MOVEMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE.

34. During its term of office the Committee travelled to Sydney, Melbourne, Lismore, Bathurst and Perth on its inquiries. A considerable amount of travelling was undertaken, both on numerous local inspections and interstate journeys. In addition to the considerable distances covered by individual members of the Committee while travelling to and from their homes in connexion with the inquiries, the official distances travelled by the Thirteenth Committee totalled 6,344 miles.

#### STAFF.

35. The Secretary of the Committee (Mr. W. R. Blackman) is a permanent official and continued the secretarial work during the period under review. For health reasons the Clerical Assistant (Miss N. Anderson) sought a transfer to Sydney, and, after the lapse of some months Miss B. F. Hornblow was appointed to the position of Secretarial Assistant.

ALLAN McDONALD,  
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,  
Parliament House, Canberra.

12th July, 1951.

#### PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.—RECORD OF INQUIRIES

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure proposed when referred by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in excess of that proposed.	Amount in reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
		£	£	£	£	
1950-51. (See 22ND GENERAL REPORT.)						
27th April, 1950, to 1st June, 1950	School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Sydney	145,310	145,310	..	..	Recommended as proposed
19th October, 1950, to 30th November, 1950	Lismore Automatic Telephone Exchange, New South Wales	138,800	138,800	..	..	Recommended with minor alterations to plans
7th December, 1950, to 14th March, 1951	Bathurst Automatic Telephone Exchange, New South Wales	167,000	132,035	..	34,965	Plans as amended recommended
7th December, 1950, to 16th March, 1951	Irwin Automatic Telephone Exchange, Perth, Western Australia	852,000	832,000	..	..	Plans as amended recommended with alterations