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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

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R E P O R T

relating to the proposed

construction of a

NEW NURSES' HOME AND TRAINING SCHOOL AT THE  
CANBERRA COMMUNITY HOSPITAL,

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

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CANBERRA COMMUNITY HOSPITAL  
NEW NURSES HOME AND TRAINING SCHOOL

R E P O R T

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By resolution on 25th November, 1959, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, for further examination and report, the proposal to construct a new nurses home and training school at the Canberra Community Hospital in the Australian Capital Territory. The Committee have the honour to report as follows:-

S E C T I O N I.                      I N T R O D U C T I O N

1. The existing building.- The present nurses home is located close to the existing hospital building on the eastern side. It has accommodation for 152 people.
2. Present training facilities.- The training school is located in part of a prefabricated building, erected some years ago for use as a 50 bed ward. This building is expected to be required for patients before long to meet the increasing demand for hospital beds pending the construction of the new main hospital block. It is envisaged that when the building programme is completed, the prefabricated building will be removed from the site.
3. The 1956 Reference.- On the 13th March, 1956, the House of Representatives referred to the Committee a proposal for additions to the existing hospital. Little planning had been carried out at that time and the Committee's inquiries were confined to an investigation of the need, suitability of the site and proposed method of implementation.
4. The Committee suggested that emphasis should be placed on the necessity to complete the nurses' home and the new hospital building at the same time.

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5. Present trends.- The population of the Australian Capital Territory has increased rapidly since the Committee studied this proposal in 1956. Even at that stage the need to add to the existing hospital was established. The additions involved the provision of increased accommodation for nurses as well as additional hospital beds.

6. The estimates of population on which the Committee in 1956 based <sup>their</sup> recommendations, are no longer valid, and it has therefore been necessary to make a new assessment of the time by which additional accommodation for nurses and for the training of nurses should be available.

#### S E C T I O N II. THE PROPOSAL

7. The proposal now referred to the Committee involves the construction, in two stages, of a new nurses' home and training school. The first stage is planned to provide accommodation for 254 nurses, together with associated training school and dining and recreation block. The second stage will complete the home and provide for a further 91 nurses.

#### S E C T I O N III. THE COMMITTEE'S INQUIRIES

##### General

8. Most of the evidence was taken in Canberra and a visit was made to Newcastle where the Royal Newcastle Hospital was inspected and evidence taken.

9. Those who gave evidence before the Committee were the Acting Director-General of Health, the Chairman, Canberra Community Hospital Board, the Associate Commissioner, National Capital Development Commission, the Director of Architecture, Department of Works, the Consulting Architect (Leighton Irwin), the Medical Superintendent, Canberra Community Hospital, the Matron, Canberra Community Hospital, the Chairman of the Canberra Medical Advisory Council, the Secretary, Canberra Branch of the Hospital Employees Federation of Australia, the

the President, Hospital Employees Federation No.3 Branch, Canberra, the President, Canberra Area Committee of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the Chairman, Queanbeyan District Hospital Board, and the Medical Superintendent, Royal Newcastle Hospital.

The need for a New Building

10. Hospital expansion.- In another report the Committee have recommended the erection of a new main hospital block to bring the capacity of the Canberra Community Hospital to 618 beds. When that proposal was referred to the Committee, planning was on the basis that the new block would be built in two stages. However, the rate of development of Canberra is such that the Committee believe the project should go head in one stage and have recommended accordingly.

11. Nurses' accommodation.- The Committee have been told that the need for more accommodation for nurses has become an urgent problem. The existing nurses' home which has accommodation for 152, is fully occupied and some nurses are living in temporary quarters built for 28 domestic staff.

12. It has been possible to maintain an adequate nursing staff only by insisting that nursing staff whose homes are in Canberra, live out, by engaging staff who are prepared to live out and by engaging married women for nursing duties for fixed and limited hours.

13. Evidence was given that when the 50 bed pre-fabricated ward is opened, the lack of staff accommodation will make the problem of staffing most acute.

14. The hospital authorities have calculated that approximately 545 nurses will be needed to staff the proposed 600 bed hospital, and of this figure they would expect 123 to live out. Thus accommodation will need to be provided for 422 nurses.

15. Other staff for whom accommodation will have to be found include resident medical officers, wardsmen, dietmen, therapists and technicians. The Committee have been told that provision should

be made for 80 of these people to live in.

16. Thus accommodation will have to be provided for 502 people. With room for 152 in the existing nurses home, the new building will need to accommodate approximately 350 nurses. The other 72 will be accommodated in the existing building.

17. Although not regarded as entirely satisfactory, the Hospital authorities are not unduly concerned about the fact that all the nurses will not be housed in the one building. In any case, there does not seem to be any practical alternative to the arrangement.

18. "Living in".— It occurred to the Committee that more nurses might be encouraged to live out, thus reducing accommodation required in the nurses' home. The views of several witnesses were therefore sought.

19. The Committee found that whilst trained nurses were encouraged to live out, some provision has to be made if staff is to be recruited. In this connexion evidence was given that of 545 nurses, about 181 would be trained. The 123 expected to live out thus represented about two thirds of the trained staff.

20. It was pointed out to the Committee that trainees entering hospitals at 17 years of age should be under supervision and that parents expect this supervision to be provided.

21. Evidence was given that there has been a tendency overseas to have more staff live out but that the trend is now being reversed.

22. The weight of evidence is heavily in favour of trainees living in and the Committee appreciated that there is a need to provide accommodation for trained nurses and other staff as well. They have concluded, therefore, that the accommodation proposed in the building is reasonable.

23. Training school.— The Committee were told that considerable advances have taken place in training for nursing staff over the last few years. The block system of training is in use at the Canberra Community Hospital now. Under this system each student category is taken from the

wards for varying periods each year to receive theoretical instruction in the training school. While undergoing this instruction the nurses are not used for ward staffing purposes.

24. It was stated that one of the greatest aids to recruitment is an efficient training school. The hospital authorities have found evidence of this since methods were improved a few years ago. They believe that there will be advantages in locating the training school in the nurses' home. Those undergoing training will not have to move between the main hospital block and the nurses' home and there will be no interference with work in the wards.

25. The Committee believe that it is sound planning to locate the training school within the new nurses' home.

#### Site and building details

26. The site.- The nurses' home and training school is to be located about 150 yards north west of the new main hospital block.

27. The Committee studied details of the whole site when considering the main hospital block proposal. The conclusion was that the site is ideal for hospital purposes and that the proposed treatment will result in a pleasing feature of the Canberra landscape in the lake area.

28. The planners have sought to locate the nurses' home so that there will be easy access to and from the hospital without jeopardising the feeling of separation. The Committee believe that these desirable requirements have been met.

29. Flood level.- Evidence has been given that the ground floor of the nurses' home will be at about the 1836' contour level. Site formation work will bring all the area of the site to the 1835' level.

30. The Committee concerned themselves with flood levels when dealing with the main hospital block. The conclusion reached was that no parts of buildings, housing essential sections, should be in positions where they would be affected by a flood reaching the 1835' level.

31. This 1835' level is the level to which, according to statistical information a flood occurring once in 200 years might rise. The Committee have been told that in the unlikely event of a flood rising higher, the location of the buildings are such that water rising towards them would not be turbulent and levee banks could be placed in position without difficulty.

32. After considering all the evidence the Committee consider the proposed level of the ground floor to be at a safe height.

33. The Building.- The building proposed is of seven floors with two small floors above to house the lift motors and other services. The dining room and lounge are to be in a single storey building, separate from the main structure, the purpose of this arrangement being to achieve the object of maintaining quietness within the sleeping quarters.

34. The Committee agree with the view that, to prevent the site being crowded with buildings, it is preferable to have a building of seven floors than one of say three floors sprawling over a larger ground area.

35. Accommodation for nurses will be in the seven floors of the building which will consist of a "spine" off which will be a series of blocks each containing ten bedrooms. This layout is intended to create a feeling of domesticity not possible with a plan in which bedrooms are placed on either side of a long corridor. It also enables staff on night duty to be accommodated together in sections where <sup>they</sup> will not be disturbed by people working on different shifts.

36. The Committee were informed that the proposed layout of the building would enable extensions to be added if necessary in future.

37. Apart from nurses bedrooms on the ground floor, planning provides for an area in which nurses can receive their parents and friends, a library, and at the eastern end the training school. The training school is to cover a larger area than the six floors which will rise from it. These floors will contain accommodation for the matron, sub-matron, senior sisters and sisters, in the form of bedrooms and small flats.

38. Evidence was given that planning has been aimed to create a strong domestic character and provide a pleasant place in which to live. The building will combine well with the main hospital block to form a dignified and satisfying group.

39. The Committee believe that sound principles have been adopted in planning and that the building will be attractive in appearance and as a place in which to live.

40. Recreational facilities and amenities.- The dining room and lounge block will contain a large dual purpose lounge and dining room and two smaller rooms which could be used as music or television rooms. A cafeteria type food service will be provided. The food is to be prepared in the kitchen in the main hospital block and taken to the nurses' dining room in heated trolleys.

41. Two lounges with small pantries will be conveniently located on each floor in relation to the 10 bedroom units. Part of the roof will be available for recreation purposes.

42. Evidence was given that the design brief by the client department called for more washing and ironing facilities than have been provided. The suggested provision was considered to be on a more elaborate scale than necessary and, on the grounds of economy, reductions were made. It was stated that the standards compared favourably with the new nurses' homes in the State Capitals and were identical with those applying to Repatriation hospitals. However, other witnesses stated that these facilities were inadequate and suggested that provision should be made for one wash trough and one ironing board to fifteen nurses. There was also criticism of the location of these facilities on the ground and sixth floors only.

43. The Committee reached the conclusion that the provision made is inadequate and recommend that there be no less than one wash trough and one ironing board to each twenty nurses. They also recommend that rather than locate these facilities only on the ground and sixth floors, they be more conveniently dispersed throughout the building.

44. The Committee also examined the provision of plunge baths. Based on evidence submitted and having regard to industrial award conditions elsewhere, the Committee concluded that the provision is inadequate and recommend that the number of plunge baths to be provided should be at least doubled.



45. Training school.- The training school is located in a quiet part of the building away from areas likely to produce noise. It consists of three classrooms and two demonstration rooms. According to the evidence the school will provide adequate facilities without being elaborate.

46. Use of existing nurses' home.- To provide the accommodation needed for nurses, and make full use of the existing nurses' home, 72 nurses will have to be housed in it. This will leave room for 80 other staff and it has been stated in evidence that it will be possible to segregate the nurses from the other staff if necessary.

47. Building materials and finish.- The nurses' home and training school will be of somewhat similar construction to the new main hospital block. It will be a framed structure with solid concrete floors, brick or pre-cast concrete external walls and aluminium windows. Because flat roofs have been found to be unsuitable for conditions in Canberra, a pitched roof is planned. Internal partitions are to be sound-resisting material. On the eastern and western elevations the concrete floors are to be slightly extended to form sun hoods.

48. Method of construction.- Because of the recommendations made in 1956, the proposal put before the Committee is to erect the building in two stages. The first stage would provide accommodation for 254 nurses together with the training school and a detached dining and recreation block. This involves the erection, to full height, of the "spine" of the building and three wings on the northern side containing the ten bedrooms on each floor. It also involves the erection of the training school on the eastern end of the ground floor, and three floors of the sisters' wing rising from it as well as the dining and recreation block.

49. The second stage would increase the accommodation of the nurses' home to 345. The 91 additional beds involve the erection of a wing on the southern side to give seven floors each with 10 bedrooms and 3 more floors on the sisters' wing containing 21 bedrooms and flats.

50. The total accommodation will, therefore, be for 345 people.

51. The Committee studied population trends and estimates in reaching their recommendation that the new main hospital block should be completed in one stage.

52. It follows, therefore, that to be able to accommodate the staff necessary to man a 600 bed hospital it will be necessary to complete the new nurses' home and training school as one stage, and the Committee recommend accordingly.

53. Progress in planning.- Evidence was given that, because of the urgent need for staff beds, priority has been given to the planning of the nurses' home and training school. As a consequence there will be a minimum of delay in completing tender documents once approval is given to proceed.

54. Estimates of cost.- Estimates of cost, which are at costs ruling at the time the proposal was submitted to the House of Representatives and which do not include forecasts for rises due to recent marginal increases, are:-

| <u>Stage 1.</u> Nurses' home and training school<br>including separate dining and<br>recreational block. |              |          |
|--|--------------|----------|
|  | £            |          |
| Building works   | 618,750      |          |
| Mechanical   | 59,250       |          |
| Electrical   | 33,000       |          |
| Lifts  | 33,750       |          |
| Fire alarm system  | <u>5,250</u> | £750,000 |

| <u>Stage 2.</u> Extension to new nurses home. |              |                 |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
|   | £            |                 |
| Building works                                | 127,050      |                 |
| Mechanical                                    | 13,200       |                 |
| Electrical                                    | 8,250        |                 |
| Lifts   | 14,850       |                 |
| Fire alarm system                             | <u>1,650</u> | £165,000        |
|   |              | <u>£915,000</u> |

Note. The cost of site works, internal roads, car parking etc. for the whole hospital site is estimated to be £84,000. This figure is included among the estimates of costs shown in the report on the new main hospital block.

55.           The Committee have concluded that the estimated cost is reasonable, and compares favourably with the cost of similar homes erected elsewhere.

II.

S E C T I O N IV. THE COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS

56. Summary of recommendations and conclusions.- Set out below is a summary of the Committee's conclusions. The references in brackets are to paragraphs in the report.

1. The amount of accommodation proposed in the building is reasonable. (Paragraph 22)
2. It is sound planning to locate the training school within the new nurses home. (Paragraph 25)
3. The site is ideal for hospital purposes and the proposed treatment of it will result in a pleasing feature of the Canberra landscape. (Paragraph 27)
4. There will be easy access to and from the main hospital block without jeopardising the feeling of separation. (Paragraph 28)
5. The proposed level of the ground floor is considered to be at a safe height. (Paragraph 32)
6. A high rise building is preferable to one of say three floors sprawling over a larger area. (Paragraph 34)
7. The building will be attractive in appearance and as a place in which to live. (Paragraph 39)
8. There should be no less than one wash trough and one ironing board for each twenty nurses. (Paragraph 43)
9. Washing and ironing facilities should be more conveniently located than on the ground and sixth floors only. (Paragraph 43)
10. The number of plunge baths to be provided should be at least doubled. ( Paragraph 44)
11. The erection of the nurses' home and training school should be proceeded with and completed in one construction stage. (Paragraph 52)
12. The estimated cost compares favourably with the cost of similar homes erected elsewhere. (Paragraph 55)



Allen Fairhall, Chairman.

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

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