

1962-63.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Report from the Select Committee on House
of Representatives Accommodation

together with

Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee.

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STATE OF NEW YORK

COMMISSIONERS OF THE STATE

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE STATE

PERSONNEL OF THE COMMITTEE.

- Mr. Bury (Chairman).
- Mr. Duthie (Deputy Chairman).
- Mr. Costa.
- Mr. Coutts.
- Mr. Failes.
- Mr. Fox.
- Mr. Wentworth.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS.

No. 107 OF THURSDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 1963.

5.—SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ACCOMMODATION.—Mr. Wentworth moved, pursuant to notice—

- (1) That a Select Committee be appointed to consider the adequacy or inadequacy of the accommodation available for Members and Ministers and their staffs on the House of Representatives side of the present Parliament House and to make recommendations in relation thereto.
- (2) That the Committee consist of the mover and six other members.
- (3) That there be a Deputy Chairman of the Committee.
- (4) That of the six members other than the mover, three be appointed by the Prime Minister and three be appointed by the Leader of the Opposition.
- (5) That from the seven members of the Committee, the Prime Minister appoint the Chairman and the Leader of the Opposition appoint the Deputy Chairman.
- (6) That every appointment be forthwith notified in writing to the Speaker.
- (7) That any member of the Committee have power to add a protest or dissent to the report of the Committee.
- (8) That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records and to sit during any adjournment of the House and during the sittings of the House.
- (9) That the Committee report to the House as soon as possible.
- (10) That the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the Standing Orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing Orders.

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

No. 109 OF WEDNESDAY, 9TH OCTOBER, 1963.

11. SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ACCOMMODATION.—Mr. Speaker informed the House of the following appointments of Members as members of the Select Committee on House of Representatives Accommodation:—

The Prime Minister had appointed Mr. Bury to be the Chairman, and Mr. Failes and Mr. Fox to be members of the Committee, and the Leader of the Opposition had appointed Mr. Duthie to be the Deputy Chairman, and Mr. Costa and Mr. Coutts to be members of the Committee.

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REPORT.

INTRODUCTORY.

1. The Select Committee appointed to consider the adequacy or inadequacy of the accommodation available for Members and Ministers and their staffs on the House of Representatives side of the present Parliament House and to make recommendations in relation thereto; has agreed to the following Report.
2. The present session was already far advanced when Your Committee was appointed. To enable the investigation to be as thorough as practicable, and in accordance with the requirement of the House to report as soon as possible, Your Committee has held eight meetings covering many hours.
3. In addition to an informal meeting with the Hon. Sir John McLeay, K.C.M.G., M.M., M.P., Speaker of the House of Representatives, Your Committee has heard evidence and/or considered submissions from Ministers, Members, Officers of the Parliament and the National Capital Development Commission as listed in Appendix I attached.
4. Your Committee carried out a detailed inspection of all relevant accommodation including those rooms occupied by Members on the Senate side of the Parliament. In order to obtain an overall picture of measures which might be taken to alleviate the position of Members, Ministers and their staffs Your Committee thought it desirable to examine the accommodation of Hansard and members of the staff of the House.

Our inspection revealed serious over-crowding and that in many instances accommodation is extremely poor. In some instances it is a hazard to the health of the occupants, particularly in the cases of Hansard and the Transport Office.

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM.

5. Your Committee's survey of the situation has revealed the following deficiencies:—

MEMBERS.

(a) *Inadequacy of Accommodation:*

After placing the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Three Whips, a Party Secretary and two Members who have no other electorate office, in single rooms, the 34 remaining rooms are allocated as follows:—

- 8 rooms each containing 4 Members;
- 14 rooms each containing 3 Members;
- 12 rooms each containing 2 Members;
- and one Member is located in a Party Room.

(b) *A serious lack of privacy and proper facilities for the efficient performance of the normal duties of a Member.*

Members are often obliged to conduct telephone conversations with their constituents and other parties with two other Members in the same room who may well be using the telephone at the same time.

It is often impossible to interview visiting constituents or deputations except in King's Hall or some other public place.

Many Members are actively engaged on Committee work and some hold important positions on various active Government bodies which may require considerable office work and contact with Government officials.

The pressure of Parliamentary duties and the demands made upon private Members have greatly increased in recent years and this trend seems certain to continue.

(c) *Remoteness from the Chamber.*

Nine rooms accommodating 26 Members are located on the Senate side, eight of these rooms are on the top floor in the furthest corner. To reach the Chamber before the Division or Quorum Bells stop is sometimes a problem.

Proximity to the Chamber and suitable facilities for physically handicapped Members are highly desirable.

(d) First Aid Room.

The lack of a suitably equipped First Aid Room has proved embarrassing in the past. There are large numbers of people working in Parliament House and medical facilities in Canberra are remote from it.

(e) Committee Rooms.

At present there are only two House of Representatives Committee Rooms to handle approximately 35 Private Members Committees, 5 Standing and 2 Select Committees. In the case of Joint Committees, although Senate Committee Rooms relieve some of the pressure, the accommodation is still inadequate, both in size and number of rooms. Committee work for Members has greatly increased in recent years. Numerous instances were brought to our attention where Committees of Members desiring to meet were unable to obtain a suitable room.

MINISTERS.

Inadequacy of Accommodation.

The Prime Minister has two staff rooms additional to his suite. Fifteen Ministers and staff occupy 44 rooms and one Minister from the House of Representatives and his staff are located on the Senate side.

Some of the Ministers' rooms are small and badly situated. In certain cases their Private Secretaries and staffs, including those of the Prime Minister, work under very serious disabilities in overcrowded offices. The incorporation of verandahs to obtain more space, has, in many instances, left rooms badly ventilated and without natural light. Some staff are widely separated from their Minister, which militates against working efficiency.

Difficulty is experienced in accommodating official visitors and deputations. The lack of a suitable reception or waiting room often results in these people having to wait in corridors. The poor comparison with Parliaments overseas was impressed on Your Committee by witnesses with first hand knowledge of the matter.

LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

Some of the rooms are too small. The office of the Deputy Leader is an enclosed verandah lightly partitioned from his Secretary's room. The lack of privacy is very marked and is apt to be a source of embarrassment.

The staff is badly housed and over-crowded and, in some instances, cut off from natural light and proper ventilation.

Difficulty is experienced in accommodating official visitors and deputations. In the case of the Deputy Leader, more than three visitors in his office at one time makes it extremely uncomfortable for all concerned.

HANSARD.

Hansard is badly housed in poor conditions. Thirty-six people are now occupying the space originally designed for 22. The dictation cubicles are mostly without natural light or adequate ventilation.

The reporters work in over-crowded offices. The Third Reporter, 3 Supervisors and 16 Reporters now have to fit into three rooms which were originally occupied by only eleven people.

The Executive Council has approved the appointment of three additional Reporters. It is expected that they will join the staff in the New Year, further aggravating the accommodation problem.

The establishment of a Daily Hansard, the appointment of more Select Committees and the increased activities of the Public Accounts and Public Works Committees have greatly added to the demands on Hansard.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

The growing activities of Members of the House with an increasing emphasis on Committee work has made necessary the appointment of two additional officers to the Records and Papers Office and a Secretary to the Clerk of the House. These new appointments will severely overtax existing accommodation.

The Serjeant-at-Arms, who is also Clerk of Committees, occupies a noisy, badly situated room, which is too small and should be closer to the Chamber.

The Transport Office is occupied by two attendants. It is over-crowded especially when one or more Members are making transport arrangements. It is also badly ventilated and without natural light.

REQUIREMENTS.

6. After assessing the evidence submitted and in the light of its own observations, bearing in mind the need for economy and the inherent limitations of the present building, Your Committee considered that the following requirements were the most urgent.

(a) MEMBERS.

The Provision of sufficient rooms to allow for not more than two Members to a room, situated as close to the Chamber as practicable.

The provision of interview rooms for private and confidential interviews with constituents and deputations.

Telephone cubicles suitably sound-proofed to preserve the privacy so necessary in a large proportion of Members' calls.

More Committee rooms to enable Committees to function in a proper and efficient manner.

Additional stenographic facilities adjacent to Members.

(b) MINISTERS.

A suite of three adjacent rooms for each Minister.

A joint reception or waiting room for use in receiving official visitors or deputations and for holding press conferences.

The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the House must be close to the Chamber, to the Cabinet Room and to each other. It is also desirable that senior Ministers should be accommodated in close proximity to each other.

(c) LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

Provision of a joint waiting and reception room for receiving deputations and official visitors and improved facilities for the staff.

(d) HANSARD.

Two additional rooms adjacent to their present accommodation, and improvement of conditions prevailing in the dictation cubicles.

(e) HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DEPARTMENT.

Accommodation for the proposed additional staff and a new room for the Transport Office.

(f) GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.

A suitably equipped first aid room, centrally located.

A sound proof room suitable for Radio and Television Recording.

CONCLUSIONS.

7. After examining the evidence Your Committee concludes that the accommodation available to Members, Ministers and their staffs is quite inadequate for their present needs. Likewise the accommodation for Hansard and the staff of the House is well below reasonable working standards.

8. Your Committee is satisfied that no amount of re-arrangement nor minor structural alterations within the present building (on the House of Representatives' side) can remedy the serious accommodation problem.

NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

9. Since this pressing problem cannot be solved without the construction of additional accommodation, Your Committee considered whether it would be reasonable to await the completion of the new Parliament House or to take some interim measures to ease the situation in the meantime. Evidence was sought, therefore, as to the time likely to be required to construct a new Parliament House, and whether any additions to the present House would serve a useful purpose when Members have moved to the new building.

10. Evidence placed before Your Committee by the National Capital Development Commission, based on a very favorable series of assumptions, was that a minimum period of six years would be needed from the time detailed requirements were specified to the Commission until the completion of the building. Since both Houses would need to be consulted before these detailed requirements were finalized, and since quite complicated problems are involved, this process of itself is not likely to be short, and there may be other procedural difficulties. After weighing all the factors involved Your Committee felt that it would be unlikely to be less than ten or twelve years before Parliament could meet in a new building.

11. In view not only of the poor existing conditions, but also of the progressive deterioration which is taking place under growing pressures, Your Committee considers that interim measures are needed now.

12. Evidence was given indicating a rising demand for office accommodation in Canberra and that if suitable additions were made to the present House they would be of continuing use for official purposes. On the other hand, Your Committee was convinced that no additions could make the present cramped and outmoded House really satisfactory for the working of Parliament, and that no immediate interim measures should be allowed to affect the construction of the new Parliament House.

ADDITIONS TO PRESENT BUILDING.

13. In the light of its conclusion that no remedy could be found by re-allocating existing accommodation Your Committee examined alternative sketch plans supplied by the National Capital Development Commission for additions to the present building which had been drawn up in response to earlier requests.

14. Evidence submitted indicated that suitable extensions could be completed within eighteen months. They need not place any undue strain on the existing services of the House.

15. The representative of the National Capital Development Commission expressed concern lest the symmetry of the present building be disturbed by additions. It seemed to Your Committee, however, that extensions to the South-East sector of the building could well be made without spoiling the present vista from the Lake side adjacent to the proposed site for the new Parliament House, and that this aspect of the matter should not be exaggerated. It also considered additions which would encroach upon the present courtyards. It felt, however, that the latter are an important amenity to the present building for light, ventilation, reception, and aesthetic reasons and ought not to be curtailed.

16. Your Committee examined two studies prepared by the National Capital Development Commission, the second of which would appear likely to provide sufficient additional accommodation to enable most of the requirements specified by Your Committee to be met. In the time at its disposal Your Committee could not go into these or any alternative proposals in detail in relation to requirements, but urges that this task be undertaken as soon as possible, and concluded without delay.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

17. Your Committee recommends—

- (a) That plans be drawn up for an extension to the House of Representatives side of the present Parliament House, designed—
 - (i) To meet the most pressing needs of Parliament until the new Parliament House is constructed.
 - (ii) To be used subsequently for official office purposes.
- (b) That the National Capital Development Commission prepare such plans as a matter of urgency.
- (c) That this action should not influence consideration of the new Parliament House.

L. H. E. BURY,
Chairman.

Canberra,
28th October, 1963.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

THURSDAY, 10TH OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Bury (Chairman).

Mr. Costa	Mr. Failes.
Mr. Coutts.	Mr. Fox.
Mr. Duthie.	Mr. Wentworth.

The entries in the Votes and Proceedings No. 107 of 26th September, 1963, and No. 109 of 9th October, 1963, regarding the appointment of Members to the Committee and the appointment of the Hon. L. H. E. Bury as Chairman and Mr. G. W. A. Duthie as Deputy Chairman were read by the Secretary.

The Committee deliberated.

On the motion of Mr. Costa the Secretary was directed to prepare and circulate to members of the Committee a list of Members and Ministers rooms showing the location and number of occupants.

The Committee deliberated.

On the motion of Mr. Wentworth the following motions were agreed to:—

- (1) That Ministers and Members be invited to submit their views to the Committee either personally or in writing; and
- (2) That the Chairman ascertain the views of the Prime Minister, Leader of the Country Party, Leader of the House and Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee adjourned until Tuesday, 15th October, at 3.30 p.m.

TUESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Bury (Chairman).

Mr. Costa.	Mr. Failes.
Mr. Coutts.	Mr. Fox.
Mr. Duthie.	Mr. Wentworth.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Committee deliberated.

On the motion of Mr. Failes the Committee carried out an inspection of the accommodation available to Members, Ministers and others.

The Committee deliberated.

Ordered.—That the Clerk of the House (Mr. A. G. Turner) and the Principal Parliamentary Reporter (Mr. W. E. Dale) be asked to appear before the Committee at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, 16th October, 1963.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee adjourned until Wednesday, 16th October, 1963, at 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, 16TH OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Bury (Chairman).

Mr. Costa.	Mr. Failes.
Mr. Coutts.	Mr. Fox.
Mr. Duthie.	Mr. Wentworth.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses were called, examined and withdrew:—

- Mr. A. G. Turner (The Clerk of the House of Representatives).
Mr. W. E. Dale (Principal Parliamentary Reporter).

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee adjourned until 2.15 p.m. Thursday, 17th October, 1963.

THURSDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Bury (Chairman).

Mr. Costa.	Mr. Failes.
Mr. Coutts.	Mr. Fox.
Mr. Duthie.	Mr. Wentworth.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Committee deliberated.

Ordered.—That Mr. J. W. Overall, C.B.E., M.C. (National Capital Development Commissioner) or his delegate, be asked to appear before the Committee at 3.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 22nd October, 1963.

Mr. E. G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P. (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) was called and examined.

Witness withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee adjourned until Tuesday, 22nd October, 1963, at 3.30 p.m.

TUESDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Bury (Chairman).

Mr. Costa.	Mr. Fox.
Mr. Duthie.	Mr. Wentworth.
Mr. Failes.	

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Committee deliberated.

Mr. Grenfell Rudduck (Associate Commissioner, National Capital Development Commission) was called and examined.

Witness withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

Mr. J. Meredith (Chief Engineer, Joint House Department) was called and examined.

Witness withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

Mr. F. C. Chaney, A.F.C., M.P. (Government Whip) was called and examined.

Witness withdrew.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee adjourned until 3.30 p.m., Wednesday, 23rd October, 1963.

WEDNESDAY, 23RD OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Bury (Chairman).

Mr. Costa.	Mr. Fox.
Mr. Duthie.	Mr. Wentworth.
Mr. Failes.	

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following witnesses were called, examined and withdrew:—

Mr. E. N. Drury, M.P.

Mr. E. D. Mackinnon, M.P.

Mr. H. J. McIvor, M.P.

Mr. A. S. Luchetti, M.P.

Mr. J. E. Monaghan, M.P.

Rt. Hon. H. E. Holt, M.P. (Treasurer).

Mr. W. G. Turnbull, M.P. (Country Party Whip).

Mr. R. Cleaver, M.P.

Mr. S. D. Einfeld, M.P.

Mr. L. D. Clay, M.P.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee adjourned until Thursday, 24th October, 1963, at 11.30 a.m.

THURSDAY, 24TH OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Duthie (Deputy Chairman).

Mr. Bury.
Mr. Costa.
Mr. Failes.

Mr. Fox.
Mr. Wentworth.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Committee deliberated.

The Committee adjourned until Monday, 28th October, 1963, at a time to be agreed upon.

MONDAY, 28TH OCTOBER, 1963, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA.

Present:

Mr. Bury (Chairman).

Mr. Costa.
Mr. Duthie.
Mr. Failes.

Mr. Fox.
Mr. Wentworth.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Chairman submitted his Draft Report.

The Committee proceeded to the consideration of the Draft Report.

Paragraphs 1-3 agreed to.

Paragraph 4 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 5 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 6 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 7 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 8 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 9 agreed to.

Paragraph 10 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 11 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 12 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 13 agreed to.

Paragraph 14 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 15 agreed to.

Paragraph 16 amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 17 amended and agreed to.

Resolved.—That the Draft Report, as amended, be the Report of the Committee.

The minutes of this meeting were read and confirmed.

The Committee adjourned *sine die*.

APPENDIX I.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

Rt. Hon. H. E. Holt, M.P.
 Mr. E. G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P.
 Mr. F. C. Chaney, A.F.C., M.P.
 Mr. L. D. Clay, M.P.
 Mr. R. Cleaver, M.P.
 Mr. E. N. Drury, M.P.
 Mr. S. D. Einfeld, M.P.
 Mr. A. S. Luchetti, M.P.
 Mr. E. D. Mackinnon, M.P.
 Mr. H. J. McIvor, M.P.
 Mr. W. G. Turnbull, M.P.
 Mr. J. E. Monaghan, M.P.
 Mr. A. G. Turner (Clerk of the House).
 Mr. W. E. Dale (Principal Parliamentary Reporter).
 Mr. J. Meredith (Chief Engineer, Joint House Department).
 Mr. Grenfell Rudduck (Associate Commissioner, National Capital Development Commission).

In addition, written submissions were received from—

Hon. W. McMahon, M.P.
 Hon. C. F. Adermann, M.P.
 Hon. J. O. Cramer, M.P.
 Hon. H. S. Robertson, M.P.
 Hon. R. W. C. Swartz, M.B.E., E.D., M.P.
 Hon. Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes, K.B.E., M.V.O., M.C., E.D., M.P.
 Mr. R. Cleaver, M.P.
 Mr. E. N. Drury, M.P.
 Mr. E. D. Mackinnon, M.P.
 Mr. K. C. Wilson, M.P.
 Mr. W. E. Dale (Principal Parliamentary Reporter).