



1968

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REPORT

relating to the proposed construction of

HOSPITAL COMPLEX STAGE 1

Gove, Northern Territory

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
CANBERRA: 1968

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Paragraph</u>
The Committee's Investigation	1
The Reference	2
Reason for the Proposal	5
Township of Gove	9
The Proposed Hospital	13
Scale of the Service	16
Phasing of Construction	20
Staff Accommodation	23
The Site	24
The Building Proposals	
Planning Considerations	27
Design and Construction Arrangements	30
Fittings and Finishes	33
Mechanical Services	34
Electrical Services	35
Hydraulic Services	38
Fire Protection	39
Committee's Recommendation	40
Programme	41
Estimate of Cost	42
Recommendations and Conclusions	45

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

HOSPITAL COMPLEX, STAGE 1, GOVE,
NORTHERN TERRITORY

R E P O R T

By resolution on 10 October 1968, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report, a proposal for the construction of stage 1 of a hospital complex at Gove in the Northern Territory.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

1. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Department of Health and the Department of Works and evidence was taken at a public hearing in Canberra from representatives of these departments. The site for the proposed hospital was inspected by a Sectional Committee in March 1968.

THE REFERENCE

2. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the erection, in two phases, of hospital buildings in the township of Gove in the Northern Territory. These buildings will be the first stage of hospital facilities designed to meet the needs of a health region based on Gove.

3. The buildings in this reference will include

- an administration building housing out-patients, casualty and the para-medical services;

- a 64 bed ward block, including operating theatre and delivery suites and a central sterilising department;
- a services building;
- a nurses' home;
- a bulk medical store; and
- eight staff residences.

4. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$5 million.

REASON FOR THE PROPOSAL

5. The peninsula on which Gove is situated lies at the north-eastern corner of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve in the Northern Territory. In 1964, the Government invited proposals from interested parties to mine and treat the extensive bauxite deposits which occur on the peninsula. A proposal put forward by Nabalco Pty Ltd was accepted and in February 1968 a formal agreement was signed with the Company requiring the detailed design of an alumina plant to be completed by December 1969. The plant is to have an annual production capacity of at least 500,000 tons of alumina by December 1971. The expected life of the project on the basis of known ore resources and likely production rates is at least 50 years.

6. Under the agreement the Company is also responsible for the establishment of a township and the provision of essential town services and facilities. Construction of accommodation in the form of houses, flats and maisonettes will commence with the erection of 25 prototype houses followed by further units to meet the company's requirements. Housing will be provided simultaneously for Government staff of whom there are expected to be about 120.

7. To meet the needs of the community at Gove, the Government has agreed to provide health facilities including staff and equipment. The Company is, by agreement, responsible for the erection of the hospital buildings under the supervision of the Department of Works. Pending the provision of the hospital, health services will be provided within the present Northern Territory medical network and aerial service. Planning for the hospital envisages future expansion beyond the first stage when the population of the region reaches a level which warrants the extra facilities.

8. The Committee agree that there is a need for hospital facilities at Gove township.

TOWNSHIP OF GOVE

9. The area proposed for the township is Mt. Saunders, which lies between Gove Harbour on the north-west of the peninsula and the mining leases to the south-east. Mt. Saunders has been selected because it will provide an attractive setting for housing, commercial and recreation facilities and will meet the requirement for a compact settlement insulated from the mining, processing and shipping activities of the area. The standard of the town and its location are expected to help in reducing labour turnover and establishing a comparatively permanent population. A town plan prepared by Nabalco Pty Ltd has been approved by the Northern Territory Town Planning Board.

10. Generally, the township, including the residential areas, higher primary school and town centre, will be on the eastern and south-eastern slopes of Mt. Saunders overlooking the coastal waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The hospital site is on fairly high ground west and south-west of, but adjacent to, the family housing.

11. It has been predicted that when the operational phase of the Company's activities commences in 1971, the population of Gove will be around 3,000.

This figure is expected to continue to grow thereafter, the extent of the growth depending on the nature of the development which occurs.

12. In addition, there is within a 200 miles radius of Gove an Aboriginal population of 4,500.

THE PROPOSED HOSPITAL

13. Medical and hospital services in the Northern Territory are conducted by the Commonwealth Department of Health. They are administered from Darwin by the Director of Health.

14. The plan is that Gove will become the base centre of a health region with an area of about 200 miles radius embracing eastern Arnhem Land, Grootte Eylandt and the Roper River area. The McArthur River area will probably be served from Gove also but should it develop as a major mining township, there would be a need for a separate base there.

15. The base at Gove will be designed to provide urban public health, rural health, area medical and full clinical services.

16. Scale of the Service The Committee were told that experience in Northern Territory hospitals has shown that, on average, the bed occupancy rate is about 7 per 1,000. This means that the number of hospital beds a community requires is a little in excess of 7 to absorb peak demands and emergencies. By way of comparison, hospital planning in Canberra is currently carried out on the basis of providing 6 beds per 1,000 of population.

17. The proposal referred to the Committee, based on an expected population of 8,000 in the region in 1971, has been planned around a 64 bed ward block with supporting services.

18. Provision has been made in site planning for extensions to the hospital in the event that the population of the region grows beyond the level expected in 1971. Additional accommodation allowed for includes a 84 bed ward block, two 30 bed wings to the sisters' quarters and extension of the operating theatre suite and administration building.

19. The Committee believe that, as a first stage of development, a 64 bed hospital with supporting services is appropriate to the needs of the Gove region.

20. Phasing of Construction Until the initial hospital accommodation is available, Gove will be served by the present medical network and aerial service.

21. During the initial construction period at the township and by the end of 1969, it is proposed to erect

- the single storey air conditioned administration building providing out-patient, X-ray, physiotherapy and casualty services, a dispensary and, initially, beds for ten in-patients. Space occupied by the latter will be converted to offices when the ward block is completed. During the early period, serious cases requiring specialist treatment will be evacuated to Darwin;
- a services building containing stores, the kitchen, a laundry, plant rooms, morgue, staff rest and recreation area;
- five air conditioned staff houses to be occupied initially by nursing sisters.

22. The remaining accommodation required to complete the complex as a 64 bed hospital is to be completed by 1971 and is to include

- a three-storey air conditioned ward block providing 64 beds in ground and first floor wards and an operating theatre, delivery and sterilising facilities on the second floor. The wards have been designed for 32 male and 32 female patients and 9 babies with supporting accommodation;
- an air conditioned sisters' home for 53 nursing staff;
- a single-storey bulk medical store;
- a further three staff houses;
- miscellaneous buildings, including vehicle shelter and inflammable liquids store.

23. Staff Accommodation The Committee were informed that as in the case of the Woden Hospital, Canberra, on which we reported to Parliament on 15 May 1968, the Department of Health is proposing to accommodate nursing staff in quarters erected in the hospital grounds. In this particular instance, we recognise that there are sound reasons for deciding to house female staff in this way. However, we again draw the notice of the Department to the tendency elsewhere to depart from this practice and suggest that attention should continue to be given, when future hospitals are being planned, to the possibility of nursing staff living outside the hospital environment.

THE SITE

24. The site of approximately 19½ acres is conveniently located, adjoining a main road on the southern boundary, residential development to the east and a site reserved for special uses to the west.

25. Two of the staff houses are to be built within the hospital grounds adjoining the eastern boundary. The other six will be erected adjacent but just outside the hospital area.

26. The Committee agree that the site for the hospital is adequate and suitable for present and expected needs.

THE BUILDING PROPOSALS

27. Planning Considerations Except for the three-storey ward block, the buildings in this reference are to be single-storey structures, generally connected by covered ways. The site layout is compact for the convenience of staff and patients.

28. The Committee noted with approval the changes that have taken place in the basic design of the complex since the preliminary planning stages when it was proposed to build the wards as single-storey pavilions, joined to each other and the central facilities by a covered way. We did not consider the latter approach to be practical, particularly as it was proposed that the main circulation routes would follow the slope of the site.

29. We noted that the standard of accommodation and extent of services to be provided for patient care are in line with those in other hospitals operated by the Department of Health in the Northern Territory.

30. Design and Construction Arrangements The Committee were told that owing to the remote location of Gove, there are decided advantages in the hospital being erected as part of the general construction programme for the remainder of the buildings in the town. A standard form of construction is being evolved by the Company and this is to be used for all buildings in the

hospital complex except the ward block. The method of construction will be based on an industrial system of modular building components with infill panels.

31. The three-storey ward block will be a reinforced concrete structure designed on the same modular system and using the same infill panels.

32. The Company is to call tenders, generally on a performance specification, so that details of construction and materials will not be finalised until after tenders have closed.

33. Fittings and Finishes The type and standard of fittings and standard of finish to be provided in each area are set out in the brief to the company. In each case standards appropriate to the location and function have been specified.

34. Mechanical Services The ward block, administration building and residential accommodation are to be air conditioned. Other mechanical services will include mechanical ventilation, hot water and steam as required, laundry and kitchen equipment, sterilising facilities, a garbage incinerator and an emergency diesel alternator.

35. Electrical Services Electricity will be purchased from Nabalco Pty Ltd, which will instal a ring main high voltage connection and a transformer substation.

36. Electrical services will include special lighting for operating theatres, night lights, bed lights, nurses' and doctors' call systems and a radio rediffusion system.

37. Two fully automatic bed/passenger lifts will be provided in the ward block.

38. Hydraulic Services Sewage and storm water from the hospital will be received by the appropriate town drainage system through mains in the road to the south of the hospital. Water will come from the town supply.

39. Fire Protection A thermal fire alarm system is to be provided and connected through a central hospital alarm panel to the town fire station. Fire hydrants will be located on the site and hand extinguishers within the buildings.

40. Committee's Recommendation The Committee recommend the construction of the works in this reference.

PROGRAMME

41. Nabalco Pty Ltd has undertaken to prepare working drawings and tender documents and to receive tenders in February 1969. The initial phase of the work is due to be completed at the end of 1969 and the second phase about the middle of 1971.

ESTIMATE OF COST

42. The estimated cost of the works when referred to the Committee was \$5 million as follows:

	\$
Multi-storey ward block	1,450,000
Administration building	680,000
Services building	1,370,000
Nurses home	750,000
Bulk medical store	150,000
Truck shelter	20,000
Site works etc	340,000
Residences	240,000
	5,000,000

43. The Committee were informed that the cost of providing comparable facilities in Sydney would be of the order of \$3.15 million.

44. We noted that it has been possible to reduce the cost to the Commonwealth of the hospital facilities at Gove to reasonable limits because of the arrangements made for it to be constructed as part of the contract for the Company's building works. In this connection, it is worth recording the comment of an official witness at the public hearing that it would be prohibitive for the Commonwealth to build these facilities at Gove if acting in isolation.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

45. The summary of recommendations and conclusions of the Committee is set out below. Alongside each is shown the paragraph in the report to which it refers.

		<u>Paragraph</u>
1.	THERE IS A NEED FOR HOSPITAL FACILITIES AT GOVE TOWNSHIP.	8
2.	AS A FIRST STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT, A 64 BED HOSPITAL WITH SUPPORTING SERVICES IS APPROPRIATE TO THE NEEDS OF THE GOVE REGION.	19
3.	ATTENTION SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE GIVEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF NURSING STAFF LIVING OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL ENVIRONMENT.	23
4.	THE SITE FOR THE HOSPITAL IS ADEQUATE AND SUITABLE.	26

	<u>Paragraph</u>
5. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORKS IN THIS REFERENCE.	40
6. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORKS WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$5 MILLION.	42

(F.C. CHANEY)
Chairman

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA.

20 November, 1968.