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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

REPORT

relating to the proposed construction of

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES STAGE 1

at

Hobart, Tasmania

(NINETEENTH REPORT OF 1970)

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Recommendations and Conclusions

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES - STAGE 1 HOBART, TASMANIA

REPORT

On 29 July 1970, His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament, the proposal to construct Stage 1 of a Commonwealth offices complex in Hobart.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

- 1. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the construction in Hobart of an office building comprising a basement, lower ground, ground and fourteen upper floors to accommodate Commonwealth departments which have little or no requirement for technical and scientific installations. Some 152,000 sq.ft of office space is proposed for 1,500 staff besides 28,000 sq. ft for ancillary facilities including a cafeteria, recreation amenities and future computer space.
- 2. The building is to be the first part of a two stage development to accommodate 4,500 office staff. The total facility has been designed to meet the Commonwealth's needs for the next 20 to 25 years.
- The work in this reference is estimated to cost 34.6 million.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

4. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of the Interior and Works and took evidence from their representatives

at public hearings in Camberra and Hobert. We also took evidence in Hobert from representatives of the City of Hobert and the Council of Commonwealth Public Service Organizations.

5. We inspected the site of the proposed development and staff working areas in two Commonwealth-owned buildings in Hobart.

THE PROPOSAL

- 6. <u>History</u> The proposal to erect Commonwealth offices in Hobert was first investigated by the Committee in 1949 and subsequently approved by Parliament in 1950. That proposal was to be an eight-storey development providing 91,000 sq. ft of office space, but it was not proceeded with and the site of 18,000 sq. ft at the corner of Argyle and Collins Streets was sold as it was no longer considered to be adequate for the Commonwealth's office construction needs. A new site of some 77,000 sq. ft was acquired in 1967.
- 7. The Need In March 1970, Commonwealth departments in Hobart occupied a total of 260,000 sq. ft of office space of which 125,500 sq. ft (48,2%) was leased, at an annual rental of \$346,334. The Committee noted that of the total space occupied, some 107,000 sq. ft (41%) is considered unsatisfactory. The two offices we inspected which are both Commonwealth-owned and which provide 37,000 sq. ft are both substandard.
- 8. The present unsatisfactory overall situation has arisen due to the lack of a major modern Commonwealth-owned building and because of a continuing scarcity of suitable privately-owned accommodation for leasing as an alternative. The Committee were told that recently, the largest area of office space available for leasing in one building was 4,700 sq. ft and that the total space available amounted to 16,000 sq. ft in nine separate buildings. No major buildings with space for leasing are in construction or are planned for the near future.

- 9. Forecasts of staff growth suggest that the office space of 260,000 sq. ft in use at present, will need to rise to 278,000 in 1973 and 298,000 in 1976. However, by continuing to use some 47,600 sq. ft of good leased accommodation and 81,200 sq. ft of satisfactory Commonwealth-owned space, there is currently a need for 131,200 sq. ft of space of an acceptable standard. This latter figure will increase two 149,500 sq. ft in 1973 and 169,600 sq. ft in 1976.
- 10. We were informed that an economic study of the present proposal as against leasing an equivalent area of privately-owned space, if it was available, shows substantial cost advantages to the Commonwealth. An immediate saving of about \$187,000 could be expected. This conclusion is similar to one reached earlier this year when we were examining the construction of a similar office building in Brisbane for the Post Office.
- 11. <u>Committee's Conclusion</u> We are satisfied that many Commonwealth staff in Hobart are housed in unsatisfactory and substandard accommodation and should be relocated in space of an acceptable standard at the first opportunity.

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12. The Committee believe that the proposal to erect a private enterprise investment type office building as the first stage of a Commonwealth office complex is appropriate and economically sound. There is therefore a need for the work in this reference.

THE SITE

13. The site which has an area of 77,000 sq. ft, is bounded on the north-west by Collins Street, with a frontage of 334 ft, on the north-east by Harrington Street with a frontage of 235 ft and on the south-east and south-west by commercial development. In addition, it has a frontage of some 37 ft to Macquarie Street, suitable for vehicular and pedestrian access. Macquarie and Collins Streets carry two-way traffic and Harrington Street carries one-way traffic.

- 14. The site has a 3 ft footway easement from the south-east boundary to Macquarie Street and an 8 ft right of carriageway along portion of the south-west boundary. However, these will not interfere with the planned development. The land slopes generally from south-east to north-west. Some two-thirds of the area is currently occupied by commercial and residential buildings, mostly in poor condition which will be demolished. The remainder of the area is used as a car park.
- 15. The site is on the fringe of the city's retail business centre near to the expanding administrative and professional sector. It is readily accessible to the public by either private or public transport and its proposed use complies with the Council's zoning requirements.
- 16. The Committee believe that the site selected is suitable.

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THE PROPOSED BUILDING

- 17. <u>Design</u> In normal circumstances, the design and documentation of this project would have been undertaken solely by the Department of Works.

 The Committee noted, however, that as early occupation of the proposed building was required by the Department of the Interior and as the accommodation needs closely approximated those of stage one of the Post Office Administrative Centre in Brisbane, the repetition of the design and documentation of that building was investigated.
- 18. The outcome was a decision to again commission the architectural firm of Peddle, Thorp and Walker, which designed the Brisbane structure, to prepare studies of the total Hobart site development, to be proceeded with in two stages, the first stage of which envisaged re-use of the Brisbane documentation. The Committee, in the report on the Brisbane proposal

presented on 11 June 1970, noted that design and documentation was being undertaken for the Department of Works on a fee basis by the consultants and that they were considered to be well equipped for the task.

- 19. The brief for stage 1 of the present reference called for a building providing standard office accommodation for 1,500 staff, similar to quality commercial development and with a cost limit for the basic building of \$1,750 per gross square of office space. These requirements have been met and a satisfactory efficiency ratio of 82.12% for usable space on typical office floors has been achieved. The design of the total complex required staging of construction with a total accommodation for 4,500 staff. The second stage building will not be required until the need is created by further staff growth in Commonwealth departments.
- 20. With the future stage 2 development in mind, the stage 1 building has been designed as a simple mass, with horizontal emphasis provided by precast concrete spandrels which project beyond double glazed windows. At roof level, a similar horizontal mass is proposed. By recessing the perimeter glazing at the ground floor level, the structural columns will be exposed providing a colonnade on two sides of the building.
- The building will have a basement and lower ground floor occupying about half of the site, and a tower section containing a ground floor, 13 office floors and topped by a plant room floor. It will rise 180 ft above the northeast corner of the site in Harrington Street. Access to the main entrance lobby will be from Collins Street at ground floor plaza level, but will also be provided from Harrington Street. A staff entrance to the lower ground floor will be available from the lower plaza level. The service core on the south-east side of the tower will contain stairs, toilets, service ducts and lifts.

- 22. Structural Design Following investigations into the most economical form of construction, the use of reinforced concrete is proposed. The reinforced concrete slab structure will have columns on a grid of 27 ft by 25 ft. The 9 in. thick slab floor which will eliminate the need for beams and minimise the floor to floor height will be generally designed to carry standard office floor leadings except for two storage areas adjacent to the sorvice core on each floor where the design loadings will be 200 lb/sq. ft.
- 23. Site investigations indicate that the building can be founded on sandstone rock. Simple concrete pier and spread footings will therefore be used.
- 24. Extornal Finishes The precast concrete structural spandrel panels will be finished with an exposed river gravel aggregate, columns with a crushed quartz aggregate render and exposed walls up to the ground floor plaza level will be bush hammered ribbed concrete. Public areas on the ground floor will have local stone facings and the plaza will be paved with brick.
- 25. Aluminium framed, double glazed windows fitted with adjustable venetian blinds between the panes, will be used.
- 26. <u>Internal Finishes</u> The main entrance lobby will be paved with polished marble slabs and walls will be faced with a stone veneer. Office areas will have vinyl tile floors, acoustic tile ceilings and will be sub-divided with demountable partitions.
- 27. In the basement and the lower ground floor, partitions will be generally of rendered masonry, painted as appropriate. Ceilings will be off-form concrete. The cafeteria and amenities areas will have vinyl tile floors, walls will be rendered and painted and ceilings acoustically tiled.
- 28. The walls and floors of toilets and the kitchen will be ceramic tiled.

- 29. <u>Mechanical Services</u> The architectural and structural treatment of the building will contribute considerably to the economic design of the mechanical services including air conditioning of the major portion of the building.
- The eight upper office floors will be air conditioned from two air handling plants located in the roof plant room, whilst the six lower floors will be served by two plants in the basement plant room. Offices on the perimeter of the building will have air circulated by a dual duct high velocity system and those situated internally, by a single duct high velocity induction system. Chilled water will be circulated through the cooling coils from two chiller sets each being 55% full load capacity and equipped with centrifugal refrigeration compressors. Oil-fired boilers in the roof plant room will feed the heating coils.
- 31. Due to differing load and occupancy characteristics, separate air handling plants operated from a basement refrigeration plant will serve the cafeteria, recreation area and P.A.B.X.
- 32. Stores, plant rooms, electrical substation, switchroom, waste-paper treatment room, maintenance workshop, kitchen, toilets, lunchrooms, cleaners' rooms and similar areas will be mechanically ventilated. Other mechanical services will include a domestic hot water supply, kitchen and cafeteria equipment, refrigerated water bubblers, automatic pneumatically operated main entrance doors and stairwell pressurisation fans.
- 33. <u>Electrical Services</u> Electricity will be supplied through underground high voltage mains of the Hobart City Council to a substation on the lower ground floor. The adjacent main switchboard will reticulate electricity to suitably located distribution boards. The substation will be large enough to take switchgear for the stage 2 building.

- 34. Lighting will generally be fluorescent. Battery operated emergency stair case lighting will be also provided. Power outlets will be located as required and a master and slave clock system will be installed. External areas will be lit and provision made for flood lighting.
- 35. <u>Lifts</u> An interconnected group of six automatic passenger lifts and two document lifts are proposed. The passenger lifts, which will serve floors from the lower ground to the thirteenth, will each be designed for a loading of 3,500 lbs (23 persons) at a speed of 500 ft per minute. Two of these lifts will also service the basement. At times other than peak periods, it will be possible to withdraw one lift for use as a goods lift. The document lifts will serve all floors.
- 36. Starting and finishing times for staff occupying the building will be staggered to minimise lift congestion at peak periods.
- 37. <u>Fire Protection</u> A smoke detection system will cover the waste-paper treatment area, the future computer area, P.A.B.X., the switchroom, mechanical plant room, the records area and the air conditioning ducts. The remainder of the building will be protected by a thermal detection system. Fire isolated escape stairs will be automatically pressurised in the event of fire to prevent smoke ingress.
- 38. Small bore hosereels, hydrants and portable extinguishers will also be provided on each floor. Booster pumps and head tanks will maintain water pressure to fire outlets.
- 39. <u>Plazas and Londscaping</u> An upper and a lower plaza will separate the building from Collins Street, providing an attractive paved and landscaped forecourt through which the main entrance will be accessible. A wall along the

south-west boundary of the plazas will screen the car park and also enclose a sunken garden. The plazas will be landscaped and seating will be provided.

- 40. Two aluminium flagpoles will be positioned at lower plaza level and building identification signs will be suitably located.
- 41. Special Features Staff amenities are to be provided in accordance with approved standards. A cafeteria, located on the lower ground floor, will take 300 persons at one sitting and by staggering the lunch break, it is planned to serve up to 600 hot meals over the luncheon period. These facilities are designed to permit use after hours without impairing the security of office areas.
- 42. Special design features will be incorporated in the basement area for the installation of a future computer complex.
- 43. <u>Committee's Conclusion</u> The Committee recommend the construction of the work in this reference.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

- 44. Work of Art It was noted that a sum of \$20,000 is allowed in the estimates for the provision of a work of art associated with the project. In the Committee's view this provision is excessive, particularly as only \$3,000 was allowed for the same purpose in the Post Office Administrative Centre in Brisbane. Noting that there is no firm Government policy on the provision of works of art in Commonwealth buildings, we feel expenditure on a work of art for this project should also be limited to \$3,000.
- 45. <u>Floor Coverings</u> The Committee noted that it is proposed to use a vinyl floor covering in office areas in accordance with the usual practice. We have, however, been examining the substitution of carpet for vinyl in a number of other recent references and in this instance we were told

that consideration is being given to the possibility of using carpet generally in Commonwealth office buildings.

- 46. Information given to the Committee suggests that in most circumstances there is little to choose economically between the two materials. As carpet introduces a greater degree of comfort and acoustic qualities, we favour its use in this building, particularly because of Hobart's cold climate. We therefore concluded that if it is economically feasible, carpet should be used as a floor covering in office areas of the proposed building. We believe, furthermore, that if carpet containing Australian wool is competitively available, it should be used.
- 47. Car Parking From the initial submissions we received, it was noted that on site car parking was planned for 81 vehicles. It was then ascertained that although the nominal requirement of the Hobart City Council is for one on site car parking space for each 1,000 sq. ft of gross floor area, producing a theoretical need for more than 200 spaces, the Council had agreed to the building plans on the basis of 120 spaces.

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- 48. At that point, the capacity of the parking space was reassessed and following some minor design modifications, we have now been informed that up to 119 cars can now be accommodated in the building and on adjoining Commonwealth land. For practical purposes the Council's requirements have now been satisfied, although the situation will need to be further closely examined when the second stage building is erected as most of the spaces are on the site of that building.
- 49. Without wishing to speculate on the Committee's recommendation had the Council's need not been met, we feel that there is good reason for the Commonwealth to assume the same car parking obligations in relation to its development projects as private developers. We noted with interest that the question of parking practices in Commonwealth buildings generally is being reviewed.

ESTIMATE OF COST

50. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$4.6 million as follows:

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Building works	3,000,000	
Mechanical services	828,000	
Electrical services	311,000	
Hydraulic services	124,000	
Lifts	337,000	
	4,600,000	

PROGRAMME

51. The Committee were told that it is expected that after an approval to proceed is given, the preparation of final drawings and tendor documents should be completed in time to allow a contract to be let in November 1970. Construction time for the work is estimated at about 28 months including the time required for the demolition of existing buildings and the bulk excavation of the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .

52. 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.

		Paragraph
1.	MANY COMMONWEALTH STAFF IN HOBART ARE HOUSED IN	
	UNSATISFACTORY AND SUBSTANDARD ACCOMMODATION.	11
2.	THEY SHOULD BE RELOCATED IN SPACE OF AN ACCEPTABLE	
	STANDARD AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY.	11

		Paragraph
3.	THE PROPOSAL TO ERECT A PRIVATE ENTERPRISE	
	INVESTMENT TYPE OFFICE BUILDING AS THE FIRST	
	STAGE OF A COMMONWEALTH OFFICE COMPLEX IS	
	APPROPRIATE AND ECONOMICALLY SOUND.	12
4.	THERE IS A NEED FOR THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	12
5•	THE SITE SELECTED IS SUITABLE.	16
6.	THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE	
	WORK IN THIS REFERENCE.	43
7.	EXPENDITURE ON A WORK OF ART IN THIS PROJECT	
	SHOULD BE LIMITED TO \$3,000.	44
8.	IF IT IS ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE, CARPET SHOULD BE	
	USED AS A FLOOR COVERING IN OFFICE AREAS OF THE	
	PROPOSED BUILDING.	46
9•	IF CARPET CONTAINING AUSTRALIAN WOOL IS	
	COMPETITIVELY AVAILABLE, IT SHOULD BE USED.	46
10.	THERE IS GOOD REASON FOR THE COMMONWEALTH TO	
	ASSUME THE SAME CAR PARKING OBLIGATIONS IN	
	RELATION TO ITS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AS PRIVATE	
	DEVELOPERS.	49
11.	THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO	
	THE COMMITTEE WAS \$4.6 MILLION.	50

(C.R. KELLY) Chairman

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Parliament House, CANBERRA, A.C.T.

13 October 1970.

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DATE 190CT 1970 PRESENTED

J.R. Odgeno

PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OF THE ABORIGINAL ENTERPRISES (ASSISTANCE) ACT 1968 I PRESENT THE SECOND ANNUAL REPORT B. THE OFFICE OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS ON THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF THE ACT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 1970.