

PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT AND URBAN ENVIRONMENT
Formulation and Co-ordination of Policies

Report from the House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation

May 1978

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT
AND CONSERVATION

The Committee was appointed by resolution of the House of Representatives on 2 March 1978* to inquire into and report on -

- (a) environmental aspects of legislative and administrative measures which ought to be taken in order to ensure the wise and effective management of the Australian environment and of Australia's natural resources, and
- (b) such other matters relating to the environment and conservation and the management of Australia's natural resources as are referred to it by -
 - (i) the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development, or
 - (ii) resolution of the House.

These terms of reference are identical with those of the Committee of the Thirtieth Parliament. On 9 September 1976 that Committee resolved to inquire into the urban environment.

At the dissolution of the Thirtieth Parliament, the Committee had made considerable progress in its investigations. On 14 March 1976 the present Committee resolved that it resume the Urban Environment Inquiry.

The Inquiry, on which this Report is based, was undertaken partly by the preceding Committee. The conclusions and recommendations in the Report are those of the present Committee.

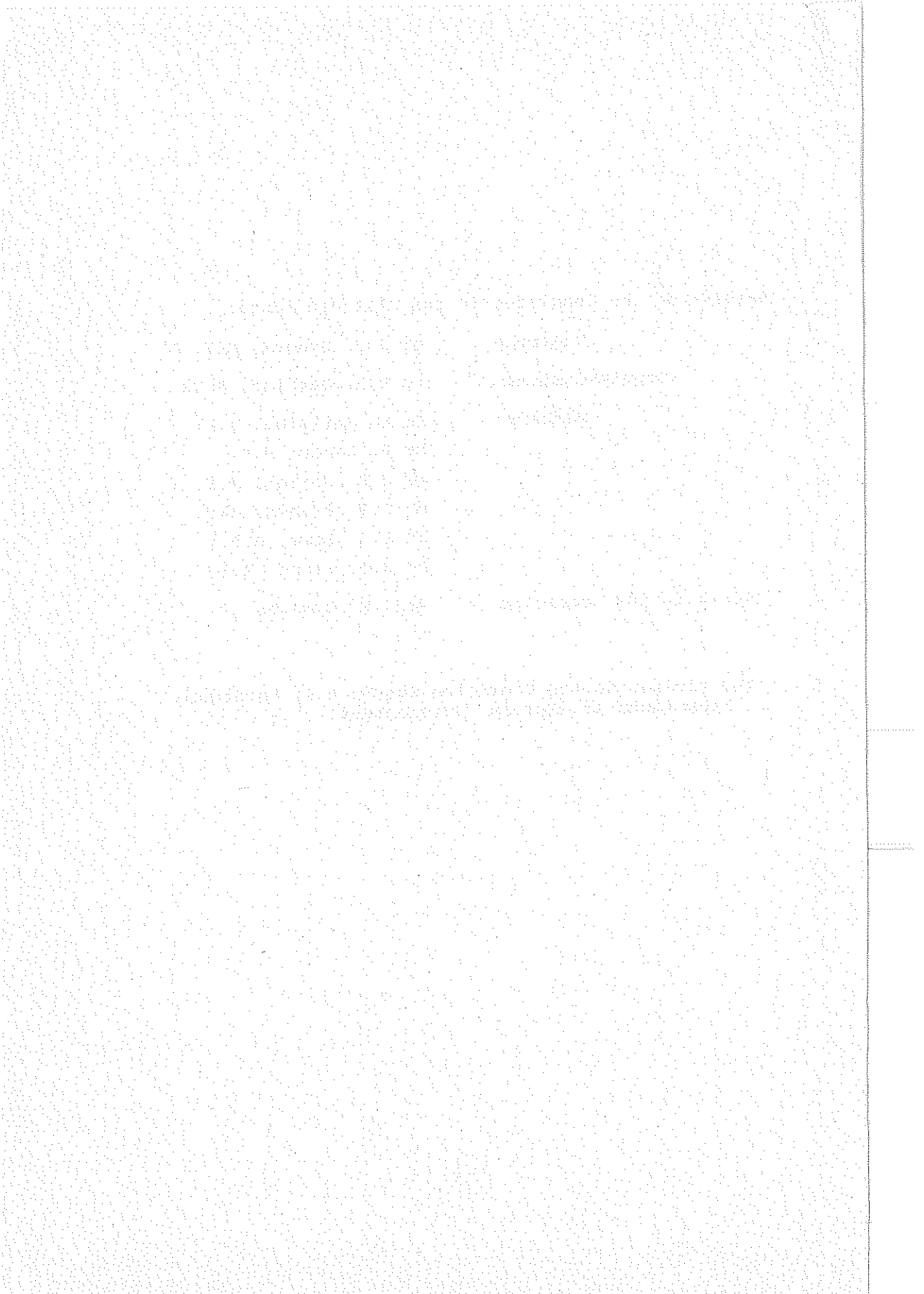
* House of Representatives Votes and Proceedings No. 10,
14 March 1978

The Committee appreciates the contributions made to the inquiry by the Hon. G.M. Bryant, E.D., M.P., the Hon. M.H. Cass, M.P. and Mr I.B.C. Wilson, M.P. who were Members of the previous Committee.

Members of the Committee in the 31st Parliament

Chairman	Mr J.C. Hodges, M.P.
Deputy-Chairman	Dr H.A. Jenkins, M.P.
Members	Mr M. Baillieu, M.P. Mr B. Cohen, M.P. Mr J.F. Cotter, M.P. Mr P.S. Fisher, M.P. Mr B.L. Howe, M.P. Mr B.D. Simon, M.P.
Clerk to the Committee	Mr J.R. Cummins

The adviser to the Committee was Mr R.L. Marshman,
Department of National Development



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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

- 1 (a) the Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs be abolished and reconstituted as the Ministry for Population and Ethnic Affairs;
- (b) the Ministry of Population and Ethnic Affairs have two major functions -
 - (i) national population planning and policy,
 - (ii) migration and ethnic affairs;
- (c) an independent Bureau within the Ministry be established to formulate, co-ordinate and implement national population policies;
- (d) the Bureau be small and staffed by experts drawn from a range of disciplines;
- (e) the Bureau be responsible for servicing the Australian Population and Immigration Council;
- (f) a department of Population and Ethnic Affairs be responsible for the management and co-ordination of immigration programs and the implementation and co-ordination of policies concerned with ethnic affairs;
- (g) to ensure that population policies are co-ordinated across the broad spectrum of Commonwealth departmental interests, there be a Standing Inter-departmental Committee on Population chaired by the Director of the Bureau; and

- (h) population policies be formulated on the basis of 3 to 5 year forward programs.
(paragraph 69)
- 2 (a) the Standing Inter-departmental Committee on Population prepare suitably qualified population forecasts on a State by State, and where possible a region by region, basis for circulation with Department of Finance instructions for the preparation of forward estimates;
- (b) the Population Bureau be clearly identified as the focus for co-ordination of research and advice on inter-state and inter-regional population analysis and projections.
(paragraph 78)
- 3 (a) joint Commonwealth/State Advisory Committees on population and migration be established in each State;
- (b) the Advisory Committees be made up of representatives from State and Commonwealth departments, local government and other interest groups. Commonwealth departments represented should include the Departments of Environment, Housing and Community Development, National Development and the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the recommended Population Bureau;
- (c) each Advisory Committee produce an annual report on population distribution trends and policies and projected population change and household formation; and

- (d) Advisory Committees provide a focus for research and information exchange at the State level.

(paragraph 98)

- 4 action be taken wherever possible to publicise the concept of migration in and out of the country.

(paragraph 102)

- 5 when the results of the survey of departures become available, they be circulated widely for debate and comment.

(paragraph 103)

- 6 (a) as part of planning for future Census counts there be adequate pre-Census publicity to demonstrate more effectively to organisations and the public how the information will be used to the benefit of all sections of the community. For example, local government should be made aware of how municipal funding in many areas is dependent upon Census results;

- (b) departments, universities and private institutions that request questions, be asked to appear publicly at their own cost to support their inclusion; and

- (c) there be a wider involvement of the public in the development of topics to be included or excluded.

(paragraph 144)

7 (a) in accordance with the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974* and its procedures all Ministers advise the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development at the earliest possible stage in the planning process of proposals which will have a significant impact on the environment; and

(b) all civil works, leasing and acquisition programs be referred to the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development in their formulative stages to allow for a comprehensive co-ordinated assessment of programs as a whole.

(paragraph 169)

8 appropriate arrangements be made to upgrade the staff of the environmental assessment units of the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development and that this be achieved by secondments from -

- (i) other departments and agencies for agreed periods; and
- (ii) State officers and the private sector where mutually acceptable conditions can be agreed.

(paragraph 175)

9 the environmental assessment arrangements negotiated between the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development and the State counterparts be made public.

(paragraph 180)

the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development embark on a major educative campaign, which should include:

- (i) the preparation and distribution of pamphlets and other material detailing the purpose and scope of the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974* and the responsibilities and obligations it confers;
- (ii) an ongoing series of seminars for
 - . officers of other departments and instrumentalities
 - . all new Commonwealth employees of the Commonwealth Public Service; and
- (iii) provision of speakers for meetings of community interest groups and other organisations.

(paragraph 193)

- 11 (a) all Commonwealth Government departments and instrumentalities submit 3 to 5 year locational strategies to the Location of Australian Government Employment Committee for endorsement and comment in terms of their impact on the urban environment;
- (b) the leasing and acquisition programs currently administered by the Department of Administrative Services be submitted to the Location of Australian Government Employment Committee at an early stage of development for general endorsement or otherwise in terms of their impact on the urban environment and relationship with the planning strategies of State and local government; and

- (c) the terms of reference of the Location of Australian Government Employment Committee be re-drafted to specifically identify the need for detailed examination of the impact of locational proposals on the urban environment.

(paragraph 221)

- 12 the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet be given the Chairmanship of the Location of Australian Government Employment Committee and be responsible for the servicing function.

(paragraph 224)

- 13 (a) joint Commonwealth/State Government working parties on office accommodation and location be established in each State;
- (b) representation on the working parties be drawn from State Government departments and instrumentalities responsible for planning and co-ordination of investment, State and Commonwealth Public Service Boards and the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development, National Development and Administrative Services;
- (c) as far as Commonwealth Government employment is concerned the working parties be integrated with the operation of the Location of Australian Government Employment Committee;
- (d) locating agencies be co-opted on an ad hoc basis to discuss their future plans and their relationship with metropolitan and non-metropolitan planning strategies;

- (e) that regional planning and development agencies and local government bodies be co-opted as necessary when particular proposals affect their areas of functional responsibility; and
- (f) the working parties be encouraged, where appropriate, to give evidence to Commonwealth and State Parliamentary works committee's hearings on particular locational proposals.

(paragraph 234)

- 14 (a) the Commonwealth Government recognise explicitly its obligation to compensate municipalities for loss of general rate revenue as a consequence of Commonwealth Government immunity in respect of Crown property; and
- (b) the right of Commonwealth Government statutory authorities, not subject to the *Audit Act 1901*, to determine whether their own policy as to the payment of rates be removed and that they be required as a matter of course to follow overall Commonwealth Government policy.

(paragraph 245)

- 15 (a) all Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities comply with State and local government laws, regulations and schemes; and
- (b) non-compliance on the grounds of overriding national interest should only occur where the Commonwealth Government departments or instrumentalities involved are specifically exempt by act or regulation.

(paragraph 255)

- 16 (a) the Commonwealth Government develop an information system to identify in a comprehensive form the capital expenditures of Commonwealth Government departments and instrumentalities on a State by State basis;
- (b) the information system then be expanded to identify capital spending by metropolitan area, region and major provincial centre;
- (c) the information system form part of the supplementary papers to the Commonwealth Government Budget;
- (d) State and local governments be encouraged to participate in the development of the information system by providing details of their own capital expenditures.

(paragraph 266)

- 17 (a) the development of the IMPACT Project be given every encouragement and details of its potential and progress be published as widely as possible; and
- (b) representatives of the Departments of the Treasury and/or Finance should participate.

(paragraph 274)

- 18 (a) the Commonwealth Government explicitly recognise the advantages inherent in area based co-ordination; and
- (b) take positive steps in conjunction with the States and local government to further develop the concept of voluntary co-operative regional arrangements based on local government.

(paragraph 283)

19 the Commonwealth Government appoint regional co-ordinators on an experimental basis to serve as a link between the Commonwealth Government and local organisations.

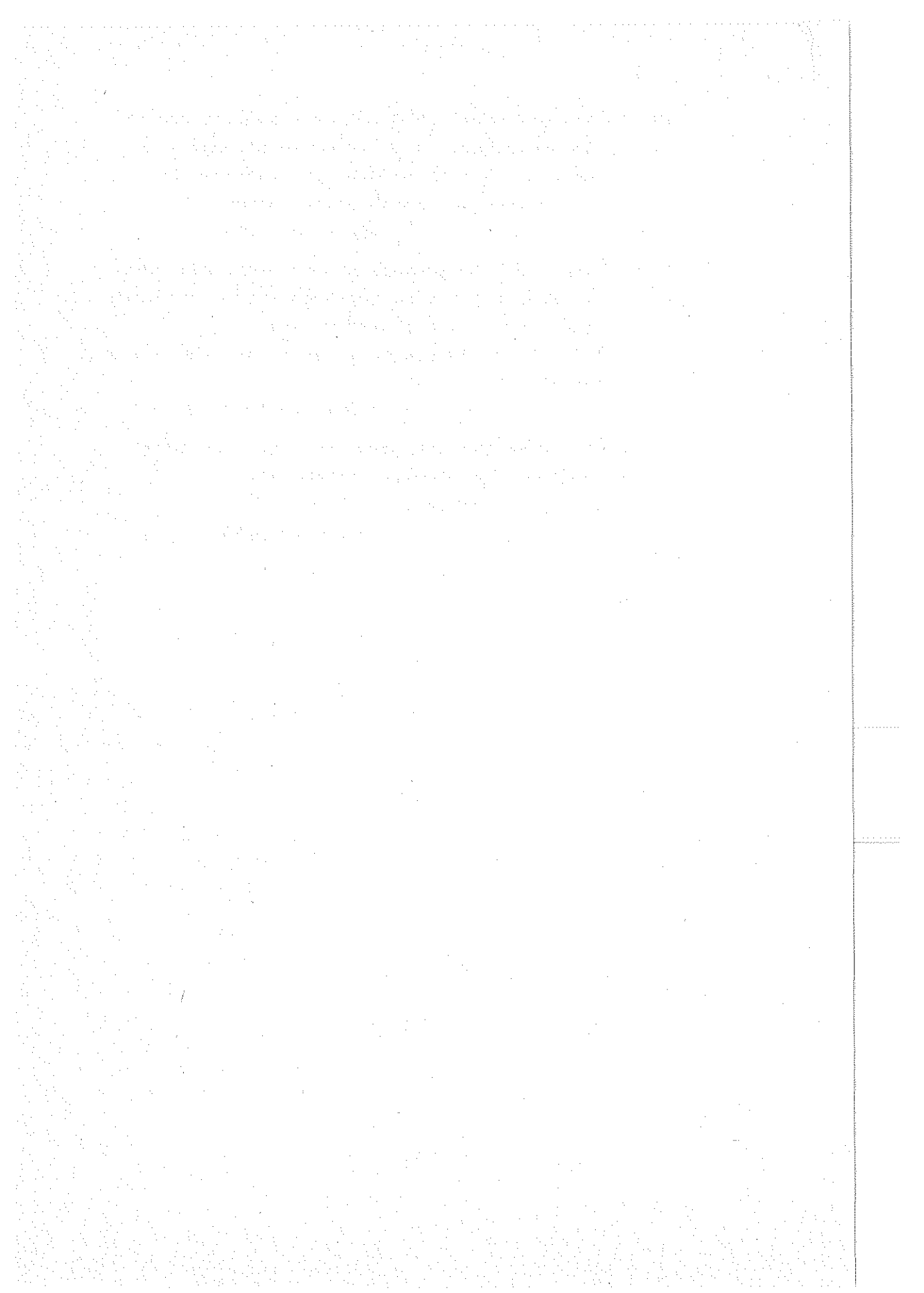
(paragraph 288)

20 where the Commonwealth Government has been invited to provide representatives on State, regional or local authorities, the invitation should be accepted and the presence maintained.

(paragraph 292)

21 the Commonwealth Government use the term regional development rather than decentralisation.

(paragraph 296)



REPORT ON THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT
AND THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

On 9 September 1976 the Committee established in the Thirtieth Parliament resolved to inquire into and report on:

the extent to and the manner in which in the development and implementation of Commonwealth Government policies and programs influencing growth and change in Australian cities and towns there are mechanisms which recognise:

- the need to have regard for effects on the urban environment; and
- the need for co-ordination between departments and instrumentalities of the Commonwealth and other levels of Government.

2. On 14 March 1978 the Committee decided to resume the Urban Environment Inquiry commenced in the Thirtieth Parliament.

3. The term "urban environment" means different things to different people. The Committee therefore adopted broad definitions to ensure that submissions and evidence reflect a wide diversity of public opinion, expert knowledge and practical experience.

4. The Committee has adopted the definition of "environment" as set out in Section 3 of the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*. The definition reads:

"Environment" includes all aspects of the surroundings of man, whether affecting him as an individual or in his social groupings...

5. The term urban is capable of many definitions. The definition adopted by the Committee is that used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics which is:

population clusters of 1,000 or more persons having a minimum density of 500 or more persons per square mile, major urban being 100,000 or more persons, other urban being 1,000 to 99,999 persons.

6. It is the responsibility of any national government to devise programs and policies within the context of a proper understanding of the urban system and an awareness of the implications and the possible differential impact of diverse national actions on the settlement pattern and the overall quality of the urban environment.

7. The Commonwealth Government has a powerful influence on the distribution of Australia's population and the structure of cities and towns. Apart from the direct and obvious roles in areas such as housing, transportation, telecommunications, the location of public service and defence employment, and regional development, it has a pervasive influence on the pattern and distribution of Australia's population through the indirect effects of virtually all its policies and actions. One of the most important is the impact of immigration policy on rates of population growth. Others include industry assistance policies, manpower policies and monetary and fiscal policies.

8. The Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development (EHCD) provided the Committee with a list comprising 200 Commonwealth Government programs and policies which it believes influence growth and change in the urban environment (see Appendix 4). The Committee did not examine individual

programs. It has been concerned with awareness and the mechanisms for consultation and co-ordination, the recognition of the need for consultation and co-ordination between Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities and the existence or otherwise of mechanisms to ensure that this process occurs.

9. The Committee took evidence from 132 witnesses representing Commonwealth Government and State departments and instrumentalities, local government authorities and their associations, regional planning bodies, private industry, community groups and private individuals. An examination of this evidence revealed a number of recurring concerns which are discussed in some details in the chapters of this Report.

10. The areas of concern are:

- . the perception of Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities of the direct and indirect impact of policies and programs on the urban environment and the interdependence of government action at the Commonwealth, State and local government levels;
- . the importance of the relationship between population planning and research and the urban environment;
- . the implications of the delay in the processing of the 1976 Census for the formulation of policies and programs which have an impact on the urban environment;
- . the scope and purpose of Commonwealth environmental legislation;
- . the effects of decisions on the location of Commonwealth Government employment and property on the urban environment;

- . the need to co-ordinate policies and programs on a regional basis.

11. Clearly State Governments and the private sector make decisions which have significant impacts on the urban environment. The purpose of this inquiry, however, has been to examine the role and responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government on the formulation and co-ordination of policies affecting the urban environment.

12. Apart from the major concerns discussed in this Report a range of others were raised throughout the inquiry. Examples include the co-ordination of policies and programs for the management of Australia's inland river systems, national and state housing, transportation, decentralisation and other urban policies and programs. These matters are covered in some detail in the evidence given during the inquiry.

13. Many of the issues covered in the Report will be of interest to other bodies concerned with inter-government relations. In particular, the Committee commends its conclusions and recommendations to the Advisory Council on Inter-Governmental Relations.

2 PERCEPTION

14. Human settlements are not static. The living environment is in a constant state of flux as the impact of long and short term public and private investment decisions alters the balance of amenity both in established and developing areas.

15. A full understanding of the significance of the direct and indirect impact of Commonwealth Government decisions is not possible without an appreciation of the inter-relationships between the levels of government and the private sector in the evolution of the urban environment. Individuals, private corporations and all levels of government are actively and continuously involved in making decisions which help to determine the nature and structure of human settlements and communities in Australia. Such decisions are inextricably interwoven at all levels of the decision-making processes.

16. The Manager of the South Australian Housing Trust, when elaborating on the submission of the South Australian Government drew attention to the important nexus between perception of the urban environment and the ability of policy-makers to co-ordinate decisions and programs with full regard to their effects on people and the environment in which they live. ⁽¹⁾

17. He suggested that houses, for example, should not be considered as being on a piece of land, but rather as being suspended in a series of complex networks which include physical services, employment, education, health, kinship, recreational, cultural facilities and so on. The networks are inextricably linked at all levels of government and all governments have

(1) Transcript, p. 1243

fundamental responsibilities to ensure that there is an awareness that where people live in an urban situation, co-ordination is not only concerned with roads, pipes and wires.

18. Similarly, Commonwealth, State and local government responsibilities in relation to the urban environment cannot be defined with precision. Some people try to define inter-governmental responsibilities and duties discreetly, as if they were a "layer cake" where one level of Government's responsibilities are always the same wherever the cake is cut. The situation is more like a "marble cake" in that any one slice has a quite different and varied distribution of inter-governmental relations, rights and responsibilities. (2)

19. As part of its examination of existing mechanisms or new arrangements for the co-ordination of Commonwealth Government policies and programs which have an impact, direct or indirect, on the urban environment, the Committee was concerned to gain an appreciation of the perception by various Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities of the relationship between particular policies and programs and the urban environment.

20. The evidence revealed a lack of perception in a number of departments and instrumentalities, including those with key policy responsibilities. The Committee emphasises that the following comments relate only to departments and instrumentalities which have either made submissions to the inquiry or have appeared before the Committee. They are not intended as a comprehensive assessment of the attitudes and perception of all Commonwealth Government departments and instrumentalities.

(2) Transcript, p. 1246

21. The Department of Finance stated that the Commonwealth has very limited responsibilities in relation to the urban environment in that land development, education, municipal roads, water supply and sewerage are all the responsibility of State Governments, local government or the private sector.⁽³⁾ While the Department may have been correct in identifying the primary providers of urban services, this simplistic approach fails to recognise the Commonwealth Government migration and population policies are a key determinant of the level of demand for such services.

22. In response to a letter to the Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs inviting submissions from his Department and statutory authorities within the Ministry, the Committee received a letter from the Department which said, among other things that the subject matter of the inquiry has no direct relationship to the activities of the Department nor to the activities of the statutory authorities administered by the Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs. The Department declined to make a submission to the Committee.

23. A further request from the Committee to the Minister did produce a submission which said, in relation to the activities of the Industries Assistance Commission, that "the Commission is required, by Section 22(1) of the *Industries Assistance Commission Act 1973* to have regard in the performance of its functions to 'national economic and social policy and urban and regional development' and the conservation of the natural environment". The Committee can only conclude that the Department of Business and Consumer Affairs has no perception as to the relationship between its activities and their impact on the urban environment.

24. The Department or Prime Minister and Cabinet stated that one of its primary roles is to ensure that proper

(3) Transcript, p. 726

co-ordination and consultation takes place between other Commonwealth departments.⁽⁴⁾ The Committee believes that the Department adopts a passive approach to co-ordination, particularly where there is no specific executive direction to bring the parties together in an endeavour to resolve the conflicts arising from vertically organised departments with specific functional responsibilities. The Committee believes that the Department should adopt a more positive approach in ensuring that the full implications of Commonwealth Government decisions and policies are drawn to the attention of the Government.

25. The Department of Administrative Services, which is responsible for the acquisition, leasing and management of Commonwealth Government property, prepared an extremely disappointing one and a quarter page submission which failed to relate the Department's responsibilities to the terms of reference of this inquiry. A supplementary submission, requested by the Committee, clearly identified the important relationship between Commonwealth acquisition and leasing programs and the urban environment.

26. The Department's first submission failed to mention the existence of the Location of Australian Government Employment Committee (LAGE) an oversight that is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the Permanent Head of the Department is represented on the Committee. When representatives of the Department appeared before the Committee, they described LAGE and its method of operation as one of co-ordination where participating departments are working in concert. This evidence was contrary to that given by the Public Service Board and the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development, both of which are represented on LAGE and described its operation as ad hoc and reactive.

(4) Transcript, p. 686

27. The Committee received a disappointing three page submission from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, which suggested that the Department has no real perception of the relationship between population and migration policies and the quality of the environment in which people live. Nor was the Committee satisfied that the Department has a proper awareness of the factors, other than migration, which form integral parts of population policy. The submission referred to the fact that in recent times the immigration intake has been largely determined according to a rigorous analysis of the labour market. The Committee is most concerned at the inference that migration was previously planned and managed without adequate labour market analyses.

28. Reference was also made to the fact that recent submissions, made in 1976, relating to growth centres and decentralisation have provided an impetus to the consideration of the role of migration as a determinant of population growth and distribution. State Governments have had decentralisation policies for many years. The Commonwealth Government has been involved in the development of growth centres since 1972.

29. The Committee expresses surprise that it is only recently that the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs has given the relationship between national settlement and immigration policy any greater significance than that which should have existed from the outset of the growth centres program and before.

30. The Department's submission also states that the Departments of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, and EHCD are agreed upon the matters of co-ordination and consultation, and exchange of opinion has commenced. EHCD confirmed that the existing liaison between the two Departments should be furthered, and that it would be profitable to look now for opportunities for co-operation. (5)

(5) Transcript, p. 1480

31. The Committee is deeply disturbed that it is only now that the important nexus between population and immigration policies and the urban environment appears to have been recognised in any formal way, a fact that tends to substantiate evidence from State and local government witnesses about the insensitivity of the Commonwealth Government to this relationship.

32. The Committee received a supplementary submission from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs which went much further than the first submission in describing mechanisms for consultation and co-ordination in the formulation and implementation of population and immigration policies. Notwithstanding the second submission the Committee continues to be concerned about the emphasis that the Department places on immigration at the expense of the range of other factors which are critical in the formulation of population policies.

33. The Committee first invited a submission from the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations on 29 September 1976. A submission was not received until 8 September 1977, and it was apparent that the Department found difficulty in perceiving how its activities affect the urban environment.

34. In the case of the Australian Telecommunications Commission the Committee was most concerned at the apparent emphasis on achieving a lowest cost solution regardless of the indirect costs which may have to be borne by other levels of Government in the provision of associated infrastructure. The impact of location policies is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

35. The Department of Transport in its submission to the inquiry, and in evidence taken at public hearings, appeared to be sensitive to the impact of transportation on the urban

environment, but the Committee considers that relationships between the Department and EHCD (and now the Department of National Development) should be much closer, particularly at the operational program levels.

36. The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) presented a submission which demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of the inquiry. However, the evidence left the Committee with the impression that NCDC believed it should have a monopoly on advice to Government on all aspects of the development of Canberra, including the environment. The Committee believes that the NCDC should be subject to the provisions of Commonwealth environmental legislation as any other department or instrumentality. This matter is discussed in Chapter 5.

37. The Department of Defence has taken steps to assess the environmental impact of particular proposals with the appointment of environmental officers and the establishment of an environmental board on which officers of the Department and EHCD are represented. While this process is to be commended, it does not necessarily comprehend a broader assessment of the impact of defence installations on the pattern and distribution of Australia's population, particularly in regard to the development of major provincial cities such as Townsville. Nor does it necessarily comprehend the socio-economic impact that a particular installation may have on a community.

38. The Department of Defence recognises the inadequacies of its performance in the past. The Department informed the Committee that Australia as a whole could do better in integrating total defence planning with the urban environment.⁽⁶⁾

39. When the Department of Defence appeared before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure it referred to the fact that 1,000 houses were built for personnel

(6) Transcript, p. 754

in the Townsville suburbs of Heatley and Vincent and that they have become labelled as servicemen's suburbs. This phenomenon is undesirable from the point of view of the community and the servicemen themselves and the Committee hopes that this increased awareness will ensure that situations similar to that in Townsville will be avoided.

40. EHCD prepared a number of submissions to the inquiry and appeared before the Committee on a number of occasions. Notwithstanding the quality of these submissions and the problems that they identified, there appeared to be some reticence, particularly in the early stages, to develop firm proposals as to how co-ordination, understanding and perception might be improved.

41. The detailed statement, approved by the Prime Minister in December 1976, required the Department, among other things, to establish a basis for policy on a range of Commonwealth Government activities affecting the built and natural environment, including the pattern and structure of human settlement. This requirement suggested that the Department and its Minister should be developing mechanisms and arrangements to ensure that policies in a wide range of areas, which impact directly and indirectly on the urban environment, are assessed and co-ordinated.

42. The Department's apparent lack of success in this area was in part a result of the lack of understanding in many other departments of anything other than their direct functional responsibilities (departmentalism), the general lack of awareness of those decision-makers, who generally live well away from the people who feel the impact of those decisions, and the fact that EHCD did not have the capacity to monitor the urban system in any comprehensive, systematic way.

43. Another problem is that many Commonwealth Government departments and instrumentalities tend to perceive involvement in the urban environment in terms of specific urban policies and programs. This narrow view takes no account of the fact that there are many areas of Commonwealth Government activity which have significant indirect consequences for the urban environment and the distribution of the Australian population.

44. It would, of course, be totally unrealistic to expect to co-ordinate all government policy around the theme of the urban environment. It is not unreasonable, however, to expect the Commonwealth Government to bring some order and awareness to the inevitable conflicts and contradictions of the diverse national actions which impact directly or indirectly on the urban environment. Virtually all actions of the Commonwealth have their effects on the map, and as a consequence an implicit policy of concern and awareness is essential.

45. The Committee believes that the responsibility for ensuring concern and awareness for the urban environment does not rest with public servants alone, or in one or two departments with responsibilities for urban matters, environmental legislation and the like; it rests also with Ministers and Members of Parliament, both in terms of Executive decision making and parliamentary debate. Unless this concern permeates the whole administration, co-ordination and understanding will never be achieved, and decisions will continue to be made without proper regard for their urban consequences and long term economic and social costs.

46. Ministers and Members have an obligation to consider policy options, not only in terms of their financial implications but also in terms of their consequences for the urban environment. Public servants, on the other hand, have an obligation to ensure that policy options are presented in such a way that the full implications are drawn to the attention

of the Government. Without a degree of understanding, perception and concern, this process will not eventuate. For example, no matter what mechanisms are established, the Committee believes that there was never any proper perception or evaluation of the far-reaching implications of the decision to process only 50 per cent of the 1976 Census data, and to defer the processing of the data. If this perception had existed, it is difficult to contemplate such a decision ever being taken. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

47. The United Nations Association of Australia in a submission stated that the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements had stressed the need for political will or governmental commitment to enable the known technical skills to be applied to the problems of human settlement. Clearly such an approach must be comprehensive and provide an inter-relation of the urban and national environments and national economic and social policies. The proposition developed by the Conference was that the technical know-how existed, and that what was needed was a comprehending and co-ordinated approach by governments to human settlement issues.

48. A comprehension of the urban environment must cross traditional departmental functional responsibilities, which tend to become entrenched by the long service that has been given to particular departments by individual officers, and that fact that many career officers have spent their entire careers in Canberra.

49. The Committee was told *in camera* that there are a number of people in the private and public sectors who work on a continual basis with Canberra-based Commonwealth public servants. They have the highest respect for their technical and administrative competence, but believe that because their living experiences are largely confined to Canberra there is no opportunity for idealism and theory to be tempered or

enhanced by the vastly different social environments of our major cities and towns.

50. The Commonwealth public service consists of functional departments with expertise and professionalism in those functions. Unfortunately, however, they are often insular and contact is limited. The Committee believes that there is a need for greater mobility of staff between:

- . departments and instrumentalities;
- . central and regional offices;
- . the three levels of Government;
- . the public and private sectors.

51. The Committee believes that mobility could take a number of forms, including secondments for agreed periods, and that mechanisms should be developed as a matter of urgency to ensure that the process can occur. The Committee notes that other bodies, including the Royal Commission into Australian Government Administration, have endorsed similar concepts.

52. The Committee found that the witnesses with the greatest perception of the urban environment, and the complexities inherent in inter-governmental relationships, were those who had worked for two or more levels of government, or had served on inter-governmental task forces and advisory committees. The fundamental difference between these witnesses and those whose career had been spent almost entirely in Canberra, was a sensitivity to the inter-dependency of Governmental action, and the need for a mutual understanding of the impact of diverse actions on the urban environment.

53. The final matter the Committee wishes to comment on is the relationship between the Department of National Development and EHCD. Up until December 1976 EHCD was the Department primarily responsible for programs relating to

the urban environment. Since that time the responsibility for decentralisation has been transferred to the Department of National Development. The following is an outline of the agreement reached between the two Departments on their respective responsibilities:

The Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development and the Department of National Development agree that:

- (a) The Department of National Development has, within its charter of decentralisation and growth centres, a primary interest in matters such as:
 - . locational aspects of structural adjustments;
 - . effects of tariff changes;
 - . depressed regions studies;as they impinge on non-metropolitan areas,
- (b) The Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development has a primary interest in these matters as they affect metropolitan areas,
- (c) Both Departments have a shared interest in the total effects.

54. While it is too early to form any opinion on the effect of the division of responsibilities between the two Departments, there are obvious areas of overlapping responsibility. It is essential that formal or informal mechanisms be established to ensure that the shared interests are co-ordinated effectively.

3 POPULATION

Introduction

55. The size, structure and distribution of Australia's population have far-reaching implications at all levels of Government and the private sector for policies, programs and investment decisions that have an impact on the urban environment. Examples at the Commonwealth level are housing, social welfare, Aboriginal affairs, transport, telecommunications, industry assistance and regional development.

56. The Commonwealth Government has a major role in the formulation, co-ordination and implementation of population policies.

57. First, the aspect of population most readily subject to government policy is the size and character of the immigration intake. It is possible for the Government to vary the gross level of admissions, the level of assisted migration, the age and sex composition of migrants, the educational, technical and professional skills of migrants, the extent of family migration and family reunion, the countries of origin and many other characteristics which ultimately have a profound influence on the urban environment.

58. Secondly, the Commonwealth has the primary responsibility for collecting, maintaining and disseminating population data through the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

59. Thirdly, the Commonwealth is responsible for resource allocation in wide areas of activity, the efficiency of which is dependent on an adequate understanding of trends in the pattern and distribution of the Australian population and the forces shaping such trends.

60. Against this background the Committee believes that:

- . mechanisms need to be established to ensure that the providers of urban facilities and services at the Commonwealth, State and local government levels participate in the population planning process;
- . Commonwealth decisions which influence the pattern and growth of the Australian population are co-ordinated and communicated to those responsible for the provision of urban facilities and services; and
- . there must be a national focus for information, research and advice on population matters, especially where there are gaps in the understanding of population trends, their implications and the forces shaping these trends.

A Comprehensive Population Policy

61. In recent years Commonwealth Governments have taken steps towards the formulation of a comprehensive national population policy with the commissioning of the National Population Inquiry and the establishment of the Australian Population and Immigration Council.

62. The Australian Population and Immigration Council (APIC) was first established on 2 February 1975. Its forerunner was the Immigration Planning Council which operated from 1949 until 1974. The Council members represent a wide cross section of professional, academic, trade union, commercial and political interests. Its terms of reference are to advise the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs concerning:

- (a) regular monitoring of and research into population change;
- (b) major developments in research in Australia and overseas concerning population and immigration;
- (c)
 - (i) the manpower, regional distribution, education, industrial, economic, environmental, transportation, strategic, humanitarian, sociological, foreign relations and other implications of population change;
 - (ii) long term implications of changing patterns of immigration intakes;
 - (iii) the manner in which future immigration intakes can be planned to complement other policies;
- (d) such other matters as the Minister may refer to it.

63. The Committee was informed that the first phase of a major task of the Council was completed when a paper on migration policies and Australia's population⁽¹⁾ was tabled in the House of Representatives on 17 March 1977. The House of Representatives concluded debate on the paper on 19 April 1977 and submissions were then sought from the public at large. The Council expects to produce a Policy Paper on Population and Migration in 1978.

64. As the terms of reference of APIC indicate, migration is only one of a range of important factors in the formulation, co-ordination and employment of a comprehensive population policy. The Committee believes that mechanisms established for the development of population policies should reflect the range of issues involved and not place undue emphasis on a single factor such as migration.

(1) Australian Population and Immigration Council, *Immigration Policies and Australia's Population*, Parliamentary Paper No. 41 of 1977

65. The Committee feels that the present administrative arrangement which places responsibility for population policies with the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs should be modified to provide a more clearly identifiable and effective mechanism for the co-ordination of advice on matters related to population.

66. Two representatives on APIC emphasised the advisory role of APIC and that it is the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs which is responsible for co-ordination between Departments and between Governments.

67. The Committee is not satisfied that there is adequate inter-departmental machinery to ensure that ongoing consultation and co-ordination occurs between the Departments of Treasury, Prime Minister and Cabinet, EHCD, Defence, Employment and Industrial Relations, Foreign Affairs and the Australian Bureau of Statistics all of which have important roles to play in the formulation of population policies.

68. A number of State witnesses commented that investment in community infrastructure requires significant lead times and suggested that population and migration policies should be formulated on the basis of forward programs. For example, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works said that major works, such as water supply and sewerage schemes, can take up to ten years from the design stage to final implementation. A meeting of Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for population, on 14 October 1977, unanimously endorsed the need for such programs.

69. The Committee therefore recommends that:

- . *the Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs be abolished and reconstituted as the Ministry for Population and Ethnic Affairs;*

- . the Ministry of Population and Ethnic Affairs have two major functions -
 - (a) national population planning and policy,
 - (b) migration and ethnic affairs;
- . an independent Bureau within the Ministry be established to formulate, co-ordinate and implement national population policies;
- . the Bureau be small and staffed by experts drawn from a range of disciplines;
- . the Bureau be responsible for servicing the Australian Population and Immigration Council;
- . a department of Population and Ethnic Affairs be responsible for the management and co-ordination of immigration programs and the implementation and co-ordination of policies concerned with ethnic affairs;
- . to ensure that population policies are co-ordinated across the broad spectrum of Commonwealth departmental interests, there be a Standing Inter-departmental Committee on Population chaired by the Director of the Bureau; and
- . population policies be formulated on the basis of 3 to 5 year forward programs.

Population Distribution

70. Many aspects of alternative population policies can only be effectively evaluated in a geographical context, that is, in terms of their effects on particular areas or communities. Population growth, whether from natural increase or migration, has different consequences for different communities and creates

different kinds and levels of demands on local resources. Thus the community and environmental consequences of a certain level of growth may be serious for one city but acceptable for another. Issues such as this must be considered in evaluation of population policy, particularly where immigration is proposed as a significant element of growth.

71. Commonwealth instrumentalities such as Telecom, Australia Post and Departments such as Aboriginal Affairs, Social Security, EHCD and many others are more concerned with population forecasts and trends at the regional and local government levels rather than national forecast. State and local government agencies are also vitally dependent on this sort of information.

72. The Committee was informed that projections of intra and inter-state migration, which are critical to projections of population for any one State, are relatively under-developed, and it is not uncommon to find that States and Territories are using population projections which, when totalled, are clearly inconsistent with the national projections.

73. A similar problem has been faced by some States (i.e. inconsistent projections by State agencies for the State as a whole and by regions). This has led some States to identify a single central agency with responsibility for State and regional projections.

74. Population projections and analyses are basic to decisions regarding levels of investment in community infrastructure. Poor co-ordination of population work can lead to costly misallocation of resources. In this regard the Committee believes that there is a need for more liaison between Commonwealth Government departments.

75. When the Department of Finance circulates instructions to Commonwealth departments and agencies for the

preparation of forward estimates, a copy of the Australian Statistician's latest national population projections are circulated. There is no State by State or region by region analysis nor any suitably qualified comment on emerging trends and policies in the distribution of the national population. Each department makes its own assessment of population forecasts and this must increase the chances of costly misallocation of resources across a wide spectrum of public sector investment. The Committee believes mechanisms must be established to improve this process.

76. Evidence was received from EHCD about the work being undertaken regarding the distribution of population within Australia, emerging trends in the settlement pattern and the forces shaping these trends. While the Committee commends the Department for this, it is concerned that its expertise in this area is directed towards specific programs rather than providing a focus for the co-ordination of research and advice. The expertise of the Department has now been divided between EHCD and the Department of National Development.

77. While the Committee recognises that the two Departments must have a continuing interest in matters related to population, it believes that the focus for research and advice should be the recommended Bureau responsible for population policies.

78. The Committee recommends that:

- the Standing Inter-departmental Committee on Population prepare suitably qualified population forecasts on a State by State, and where possible a region by region, basis for circulation with Department of Finance instructions for the preparation of forward estimates;*

the Population Bureau be clearly identified as the focus for co-ordination of research and advice on inter-state and inter-regional population analysis and projections.

Inter-governmental Co-ordination

79. Population and immigration policies are the responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government. The implementation of public works programs is often a matter for the States and local government.

80. Submissions from the New South Wales Government, the New South Wales Planning and Environment Commission, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and a number of local government authorities and associations were critical of the Commonwealth's past performance in population and immigration planning, particularly as regards the failure of the Commonwealth Government to recognise the fundamental and inextricable relationship between population planning and the provision of urban facilities and services.

81. The Local Government Association of New South Wales stated that the immigration program was launched in the 1970's in a way which had total disregard for the impact it would have on the lives of people.⁽²⁾ The Town Planning Commissioner for Western Australia told the Committee that there is very little Commonwealth Government recognition of the impact of immigration programs on the urban environment.⁽³⁾

82. A representative of the Brisbane City Council told the Committee that within the Council's area of responsibility it cannot trace migration movements, has no knowledge of who arrives and who departs, cannot assess the component of the workforce they represent, and has no real notion of their social needs.

(2) Transcript, p. 1744

(3) Transcript, p. 1890

83. The New South Wales Planning and Environment Commission stated that population and immigration planning has been on a yearly basis, and that immigration policy has been based on the maximum number that could be absorbed in any one year without social disruption. Policy stopped short at that point, and did not extend to consider where new migrants would live and work, what housing they would occupy and what services they would require. As a consequence the Commission argues that the States and local government have been unable to keep pace with the demand for urban services. The Commission also suggests that this may in part account for the fact that over the 10 year period 1965-1974 almost one migrant left Australia for every six who came.

84. The Committee was informed by the Commission that in the three decades following World War II over 4 million people have come to Australia either as settlers or as long-term (over 12 months) visitors. A high proportion of these newcomers have settled on the central coast of New South Wales, although it is not possible to say how many as the settlement pattern of migrants has not been recorded. (Intended place of residence for migrants is recorded but not where they actually settle.) The importance of the central coast for migrant settlement is shown by the fact that in 1971 almost one in every four persons living in the area (the Hunter, Sydney, Outer Sydney and Illawarra Statistical Divisions) was born outside Australia. The two particular areas within the central coast to which a disproportionately large number of migrants came were Wollongong (where about 30% of the population was born overseas) and the inner suburbs of Sydney (in which 35-40% of the population was born overseas).⁽⁴⁾

85. The large numbers of migrants were mainly responsible for the rapid growth of the Sydney region. This was not foreseen in the early 1950's when the County of Cumberland Plan for the future growth of Sydney was adopted.

(4) Transcript, p. 1604

86. The Wollongong City Council suggested that over the years successive Commonwealth Governments have seen their duty fulfilled in the provision of migrant hostel accommodation, which in the case of Wollongong has been vastly inferior to the residential standards of the city. The Council also argued that heavy borrowing programs have been necessary to provide a measure of urban amenity for the rapid increase in population and that these programs have placed a continuing burden on the community in terms of higher rating to meet repayment commitments. (5)

87. Provision of urban facilities and services for an increased population require significant lead times and significant financial and technical resources. These requirements should be considered by the Commonwealth Government as an essential part of national population and immigration planning.

88. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works stated that from past experience in population growth it should be recognised that Commonwealth policies and programs relating to matters such as immigration can have a profound effect on the demand for water supply, sewerage and other services. If there is a delay in meeting increases in demand, then environmental pollution and reductions in standards of servicing are inevitable. (6)

89. The Board informed the Committee that migration to Australia has been the major factor in Melbourne's population growth since World War II. It is estimated that the increase in population during the period 1947 to 1976 due directly and indirectly to migration i.e. due to migrants, the children born to migrants in Australia and the grandchildren, totals approximately one million persons. This is approximately 80 per cent of the total increase in Melbourne's population during that period. (7)

90. The South Australian Department of Housing and Urban Affairs suggested that a reduction in the level of the migrant intake has a dramatic effect in terms of lost expectations where industry is geared to particular levels

(5) Transcript, p. 1692

(6) Transcript, p. 851

(7) Transcript, p. 851

of activity. The fact that people are not being encouraged to migrate is just as important for urban resource allocation as an active immigration program. (8)

91. The New South Wales Government and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs stated that the main mechanism for co-ordination on immigration and population matters have been meetings of Commonwealth and State Immigration Ministers. Both the New South Wales Government submission and that of the New South Wales Planning and Environment Commission made reference to the need for joint planning and co-ordination mechanisms at the operational program level. As an example the Planning and Environment Commission directed the Committee's attention to the recently established Indicative Planning Council for the housing industry. The Council has sub-committees in each of the States and includes Commonwealth and State representatives as well as the significant sectors of the housing industry. (9)

92. The role of the Indicative Planning Council is to advise on a three year rolling program of desirable and advisable levels of housing construction. The Commission asserts that the Council has improved co-ordination between levels of government and between the public and private sectors and has encouraged discussion on many effects of government policies on housing which have not been previously canvassed. It is suggested that a similar arrangement in the area of population and immigration planning would have many advantages. (10)

93. Dr Neutze (11) suggested to the Committee that the States could have been more careful in projecting the distribution of migrants. Professor Borrie (12) told the

(8) Transcript, p. 1295

(9) Transcript, p. 1605

(10) Transcript, p. 1839

(11) Dr G.M. Neutze, Head of the Urban Research Unit, Australian National University.

(12) Professor W.D. Borrie, Professor, Demography, Australian National University.

Committee that State Planning Authorities could have done much more in predicting the impact of immigration and suggested that the employment of persons expert in population analysis by these authorities is a relatively recent development. He said that in general State Planning Authorities have given far too little attention to careful monitoring and continual analysis of trends in population.

94. The Committee was informed that there is a need for a major change in attitude, very much on the part of State Governments to recognise that there needs to be a continuous process of updating population projections and thinking through their consequences. There also needs to be a focus within the Commonwealth Government where States can check their work and make sure that methodologies and the underlying assumptions are the best and most acceptable. (13)

95. It was alleged that there was no mechanism for updating the population data on which the 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan was based and that there was no real relationship between the planners and the Commonwealth Department of Immigration. (14)

96. The Committee is convinced that many of the problems experienced in the past could have been avoided with greater consultation, awareness and research. In a submission EHCD said that:

- . in aiming at any target level and composition for for immigration the implications for immigration, the the implications of particular targets for the urban environment of major cities and for urban development needs should be fully appraised at all levels of Government.
- . immigration policy could be implemented in a manner which sought to influence the place of settlement of migrants, e.g. by emphasising preferred destinations

(13) Transcript, p. 1295

(14) Transcript, p. 1295

in recruitment programs for migrants and skills in demand at particular locations, and by other measures;

- associated with the growth of ethnic communities within Sydney and Melbourne has been the emergence of ethnicity as a marked dimension of problems relating to inequalities in standards of housing and social amenities available to residents of different areas within these cities;

- further analysis is required of the impacts of ethnic communities within Sydney and Melbourne on the process of urban renewal (particularly in relation to housing), and the impacts of the urban renewal process on ethnic communities; and

- there is scope for further analysis of the extent to which the financial and other resources of Local Government Areas (LGAs) have or have not kept pace with increased demands for LGA services attributable to immigration, and of the appropriate division of responsibilities between different levels of government with respect to the planning, implementation and funding of urban infrastructure and service requirements associated with immigration.

97. The Committee notes that State Ministers for immigration and ethnic affairs emphasised the importance of the differing population and occupational needs of each State and agreed that special arrangements between the Commonwealth Government and each State Government would be desirable.

98. Because the Committee believes that greater consultation, awareness and research is essential in population planning the Committee recommends that:

- *joint Commonwealth/State Advisory Committees on population and migration be established in each State;*

- *the Advisory Committees be made up of representatives from State and Commonwealth departments, local government and other interest groups. Commonwealth departments represented should include the Departments of Environment, Housing*

and Community Development, National Development and the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the recommended Population Bureau;

- . each Advisory Committee produce an annual report on population distribution trends and policies and projected population change and household formation; and*
- . Advisory Committees provide a focus for research and information exchange at the State level.*

Net Migration

99. Throughout the course of its inquiry the Committee was concerned at the emphasis on gross migrant intake, i.e. the number of settlers arriving in Australia in any one year.

100. The Committee was informed that in the period 1966 to 1974 a loss of former migrants has averaged 40,000 a year. Together with the loss of Australian-born persons, overall loss through emigration averaged nearly 60,000 a year. Loss of former migrants has been estimated to be 672,000 for the period 1947-74. If no settler loss and no emigration of Australian-born persons had occurred, post war population growth would have been about one million greater.

101. While the Committee recognises that the green paper on immigration policies⁽¹⁵⁾ places emphasis on net migration, i.e. arrivals minus departures, and that the Department of Immigration is conducting a survey of departures, it is not satisfied that there is sufficient community awareness of the relationship between arrivals and departures.

102. The Committee is concerned that informed debate about Australia's future population and migration policies is clouded by an over-emphasis on the immigration intake and

(15) Parliamentary Paper No. 41 of 1977

recommends that:

- . *action be taken wherever possible to publicise the concept of migration in and out of the country.*

103. It is also recommended that:

- . *when the results of the survey of departures become available, they be circulated widely for debate and comment.*

Population Data

104. The Commonwealth has the primary responsibility for collecting, monitoring and disseminating population data through the auspices of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

105. The principal means is the five yearly Census of the Australian population which is the collection of indispensable demographic, social and economic data for the Australian population that forms the basis for planning by Governments at the Commonwealth, State and local levels, for industry and commerce and for scholarly teaching and research. The Census provides in excess of 1,000 pieces of information about the characteristics of areas which vary in scale from the small collection district to the local government area, State and nation.

106. Because of the importance of the Census and the concern expressed about the conduct of the 1976 Census by a wide range of witnesses a separate chapter on it has been included in this Report.

Growth Expectations

107. Over recent years there has been a growing volume of evidence that the growth of Australia's population will not

reach the levels previously envisaged at the turn of the century.

108. The Committee received much evidence to suggest that while long range population projections and forecasts are important guides for the formulation of population policies, short and medium projections for the next 5 to 10 years are more important to those responsible for the formulation of urban policy and the provision of services. The Committee is also concerned that the reduced expectations have given rise to a degree of complacency about the future demand for community infrastructure.

109. The Committee was informed that the first report of the National Population Inquiry⁽¹⁶⁾ projected a range of population for the year 2001 of between 16 million and 22 million. The Population Inquiry argued quite strongly, however, that in view of the rapid decline in fertility after 1971, the higher figures are unlikely to be achieved. Based on the assumed levels of fertility and on net immigration intake of around 50,000 a year the Inquiry argued that there will not be a population of more than 18 million by the turn of the century.

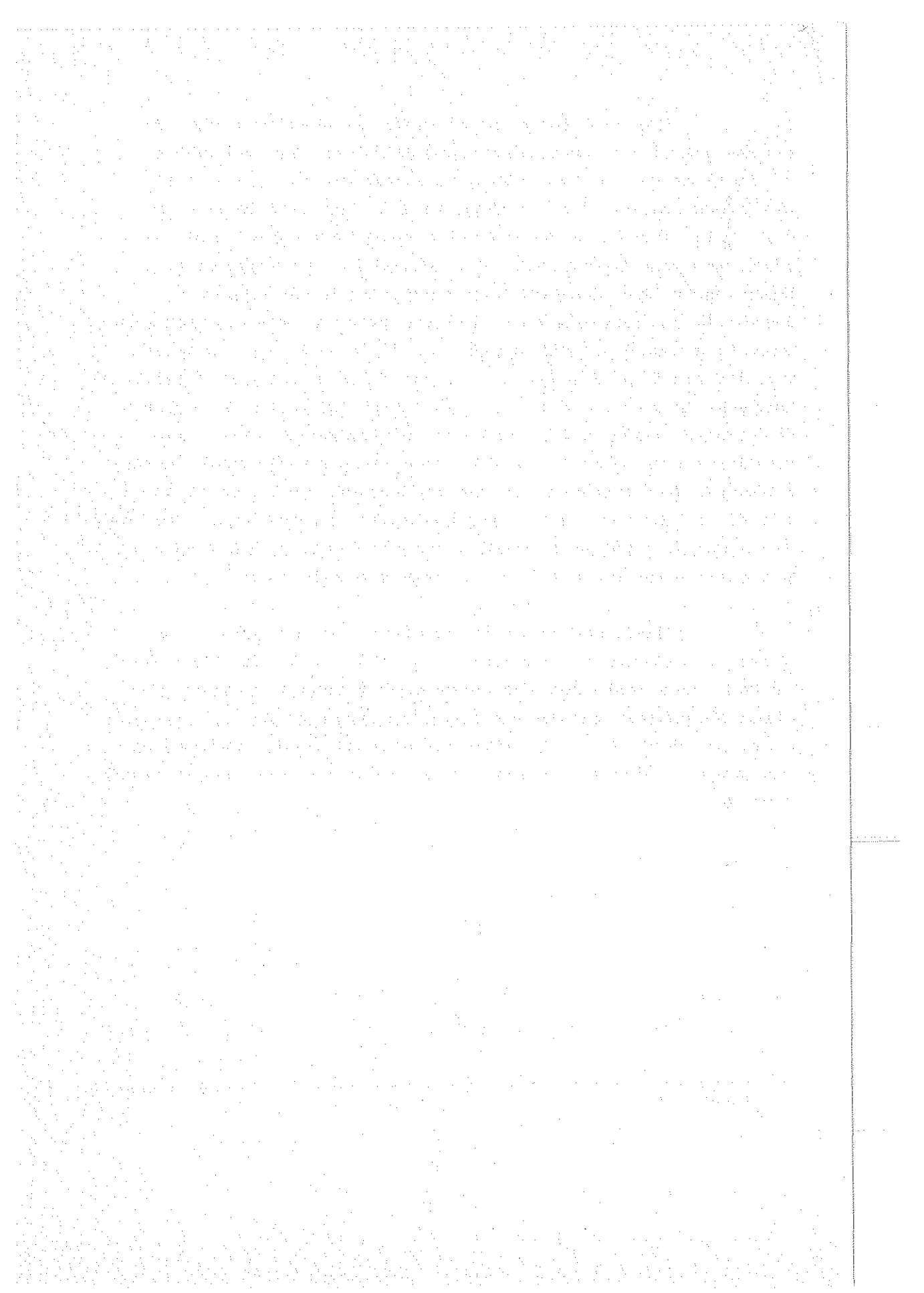
110. Demand for certain kinds of information is not, as has often been assumed, a simple function of aggregate population growth. The demand for housing, for example, is related more directly to household formation than overall population growth. An analysis of the age structure of the existing Australian population reveals that the number of people reaching twenty years of age in each year from 1973 onwards continues increasing until well into the 1980's. In other words, there will be more young adults reaching the age where they will form separate households, in the next decade, than in the decade just past.

(16) The National Population Inquiry, *First Report*, Australian Government Publishing Service 1975

111. The conclusion to be drawn is that over the next decade all of the urban development in the past decade will probably be duplicated. This is a massive task, one with which governments did not cope well in the last decade, and one in which major attention will need to be given now, in terms of planning the efficient allocation of resources. EHCD stated that the problems associated with living in Australian cities and towns and the problems associated with the distribution of the population "have not gone away and are not about to go away".⁽¹⁷⁾ Yet despite this the Committee believes there is a degree of confusion about future urban development needs and a tendency to understate them. The community should not be lulled into complacency about future pressures for community infrastructure on the basis of superficial analysis of long term population projections. The real situation is much more complex and deserving of much more attention than appears to have been the case in the past.

112. The question of the distribution of population growth and change is also important, but it is the impression of this Committee that the concept of internal migration is often overlooked on the erroneous assumption that population growth or decline occurs more or less uniformly throughout the nation. The preliminary 1976 Census results support this conclusion.

(17) Transcript, p. 3



Introduction

113. The principal mechanism for the collection of indispensable demographic, social and economic data for the Australian Population is the 5 yearly Census. The method by which the data collected in 1976 was processed differed from previous collections. The particular differences were the size of the sample processed and the time taken in the processing of data.

Sampling

114. The 1976 Census was undertaken on 30 June 1976 at a collection cost of approximately \$8.5 million. After the data had been collected it was decided to process it on the basis of a 50 per cent sample of all Census characteristics other than age, sex and marital status. In the past all Census data has been processed. The Committee was told that the decision to process 50 per cent resulted in a saving of about \$2 million out of a total cost of over \$17 million.

115. The Committee received conflicting views on the adequacy of a 50 per cent sample for planning purposes, particularly at local government and collector's district levels.

116. The General Manager of the South Australian Housing Trust stated that while a 50 per cent sample may be ample for metropolitan planning purposes, a 50 per cent sample of a particular statistical district might be very biased. This view was supported by a number of other State witnesses including the New South Wales Planning and Environment Commission who suggested, for example, that if tabulations

were made in respect of the participation of women of a particular ethnic origin in the workforce inaccurate results might be obtained.

117. A similar view was expressed by Dr R.J. Stimson⁽¹⁾ of the Flinders University. Dr Stimson suggested that the decision to process only sample data means that sampling errors will increase considerably, the further cross-tabulated variables are disaggregated. He also suggested that the decisions was taken without adequate consultation with Census users or consideration of the effects it would have on both their needs and the needs of planners in the private and public sectors.

118. Dr Neutze stated that while he was in favour of full processing, because of problems of inaccuracies associated with sample data for small areas, he endorsed the view that a 50 per cent sample was better than further delays which would have jeopardised planning and work towards the 1981 Census.⁽²⁾

119. Professor Borrie commented that if sampling techniques are to be used they need to be planned from the outset. He said that in the case of the 1976 Census all the data had been collected, a great part of the expense had occurred and that a decision not to code and analyse the data was at best "unfortunate".⁽²⁾

120. On the other hand the Australian Bureau of Statistics informed the Committee that the degree of precision of a 50 per cent sample is very good in that with a cell as small as 6 people it is possible to say with 95 per cent confidence that the correct figure will lie somewhere between 2 and 10.⁽³⁾ EHCD supported this view and informed the Committee that for most purposes a 50 per cent

(1) Dr R.J. Stimson, 'Emasculating a Census Without Really Trying?', *Statistical Society of Australia Newsletter*, August 1977

(2) Transcript, p.1867

(3) Transcript, p.1355

sample would be adequate.⁽⁴⁾ The Bureau claimed that within the limits of tight time constraints most Commonwealth departments and States were consulted about the decision to process on the basis of a 50 per cent sample.

121. The Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development said that during the process of consultation three options were offered:

- . a three month postponement in the commencement of processing with the possibility of further deferral of Census tabulations and the possibility of no ad hoc tabulations;
- . a scaling down in the operation of the Census which would have taken a significantly longer time;
- . a 50 per cent sample.

122. Faced with these alternatives the Department chose the 50 per cent option given the difficulties inherent in the other two. The Department did however say that in the absence of a stratified sample⁽⁵⁾ in each collector's district there could be no guarantee that there would be a 50 per cent sample in each district.

123. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs informed the Committee that the decision to produce information using only 50 per cent of schedules, except in the case of the Northern Territory, reduced the usefulness of the data which will be forthcoming. Throughout Australia, each of a large number of Aboriginal communities consists of several hundreds of persons, or fewer, in a collector's district or local government area.

(4) Transcript, p. 1501

(5) In the case of the Census, a stratified sample is a sample which is carefully structured to ensure that all groups in the community are represented in true relation to their presence in the total population.

Standard errors on the characteristics of these communities, except in the Northern Territory, are expected to be very large. The Department said that in those cases where an Aboriginal community is the main component of a sample collector's district, its total population will be accurately estimated, but its characteristics other than the distribution of the sexes will still be highly suspect.

124. Both the Australian Bureau of Statistics and EHCD attempted to rationalise the decision to process 50 per cent of the data by referring to sampling techniques used in the U.S.A., Canada and the United Kingdom. The Committee doubts however that those countries would collect 100 per cent of the data at significant cost and effort, abandon half of it and take what appears to have been a hasty decision to process the other half. Against this background the alleged saving of \$2 million is questionable.

125. The Committee recognises that there are good technical arguments for the use of samples in the collection of statistical data, but believes that the practice can only be condoned within the Census context when it has been a consequence of a totally planned operation where Census users at all levels have been consulted on the relative merits of 100 per cent collection as distinct from the use of samples. Full Census counts and processing would still be required in respect of variables such as age, sex and marital status and special arrangements would need to be made in the case of minority groups such as Aborigines.

Processing

126. In addition to the decision to process the 1976 Census on the basis of a 50 per cent sample it was also decided to defer the processing of Census data from 1976/77 to 1977/78.

The effect of the decision was to reduce the budget deficit in 1976/77 and transfer the cost to 1977/78.

127. The estimated cost of processing the data in 1976/77 was about \$6 million. The cost in 1977/78 will be \$6 million, plus the cost of inflation and minor costs associated with the renegotiation of contracts concluded with private companies in 1976/77.

128. The implications of the delay in the processing of the data were first drawn to the Committee's attention by the Chairman of the South Australian Housing Trust who told the Committee that efficient resource allocation in housing was dependent upon the availability of data on demographic trends. The Chairman expressed hope that 1976 data would be available early in 1978; a rather optimistic target when considered against the views of other witnesses, including representatives of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

129. The Bureau told the Committee than in normal circumstances and in the absence of resource constraints there is a minimum period of about a year before detailed data is available for analysis. As a consequence of the decision to defer processing, detailed data would not become available until July/August 1978.

130. All States which gave evidence to the Committee were critical of the delay and referred to the serious implications for all aspects of urban resource allocation at all levels of Government. The Australian Bureau of Statistics told the Committee that State governments had "deplored" the delay.

131. Professor Borrie said that it might be 2 years, i.e. September 1979, before worthwhile analyses are available from the results of the 1976 Census on the nature of internal

migration, intra-state, between States and urban to rural and rural to urban. (6)

132. Professor Borrie told the Committee that it is a very great tragedy that when the whole nature of growth in our major cities is changing, policy-makers and planners are denied the essential data to try to understand the implications of such trends. He said that preliminary figures had revealed population declines in whole areas of major cities, not just in the inner city, but extending out into the middle range of suburbs and that important issues cannot be analysed because of the delay. He added that State Planning Authorities had been placed in a difficult position because of the delay.

133. In addition to the changes occurring within cities the Committee was told that changes are occurring in the pattern of population in non-metropolitan Australia. The Committee has received differing views on the reasons for change and it is unfortunate that properly reasoned judgments will have to await the processing of Census data.

134. Professor Borrie also commented that as a consequence of the delay the preparation of the final supplementary report of the National Population Inquiry had become an exercise in extreme frustration.

135. Similar concerns were expressed by EHCD which is responsible for the development, co-ordination and implementation of Commonwealth policies for the housing and building industries, decentralisation, urban infrastructure and local government and community services. In particular the Department referred to the fact that:

- . population variables such as fertility, age structure, family size and internal migration are important determinants in the demand for housing,

(6) Transcript, p. 1849

the composition of that demand and building industry activity;

- . changes in the rate of population growth, and the spatial distribution of that growth, affect the need for and the scope of decentralisation policies and programs and the feasibility of attaining decentralisation objectives;
- . efficient use of urban infrastructure and demand for additional infrastructure are conditioned by the structure, growth and mobility of the population;
- . policies for local government and community services are conditioned by population trends, particularly inter-regional population movements;
- . increasing populations means new and/or additional pressures on the environment. (7)

136. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs informed the Committee that programs of assistance for Aboriginal housing are being planned on the basis of information obtained from the 1971 Census, which refers to the situation which existed more than six years ago. (8)

137. The Department said that in contrast to the situation for the general population, no data at all about the Aboriginal population will be available until Census processing is complete, because racial origin was not one of the variables covered by preliminary processing.

138. The cost of the delay is impossible to quantify in money terms but the Australian Bureau of Statistics told the Committee that there is no question that the data should be

(7) Transcript, p. 1451

(8) Letter from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs

available in published form as soon as possible after collection and that the older it gets the less valuable it becomes. (9)

139. EHCD suggested that while in periods of greater certainty such as the 1950's and 60's it was considered professionally proper to extrapolate using simple mechanisms, the changes that have occurred in recent years make the speed and processing of Census data more and more important. It was also pointed out that the costs of the delay are being borne by all sections of the community.

140. The Committee believes that the costs associated with the delay in terms of the relative usefulness of the data, the continued use of outdated figures, the possible mis-allocation of resources and the additional processing costs due to inflation far outweigh any benefit that may have been gained by the reduction of the Federal deficit by about \$6 million in 1976/77.

141. The Committee considers that the decision was short-sighted and taken without proper recognition or understanding of the implications for the efficiency of decision-making at all levels of Government and the private sector. It should not happen again.

Undercounting and Community Awareness

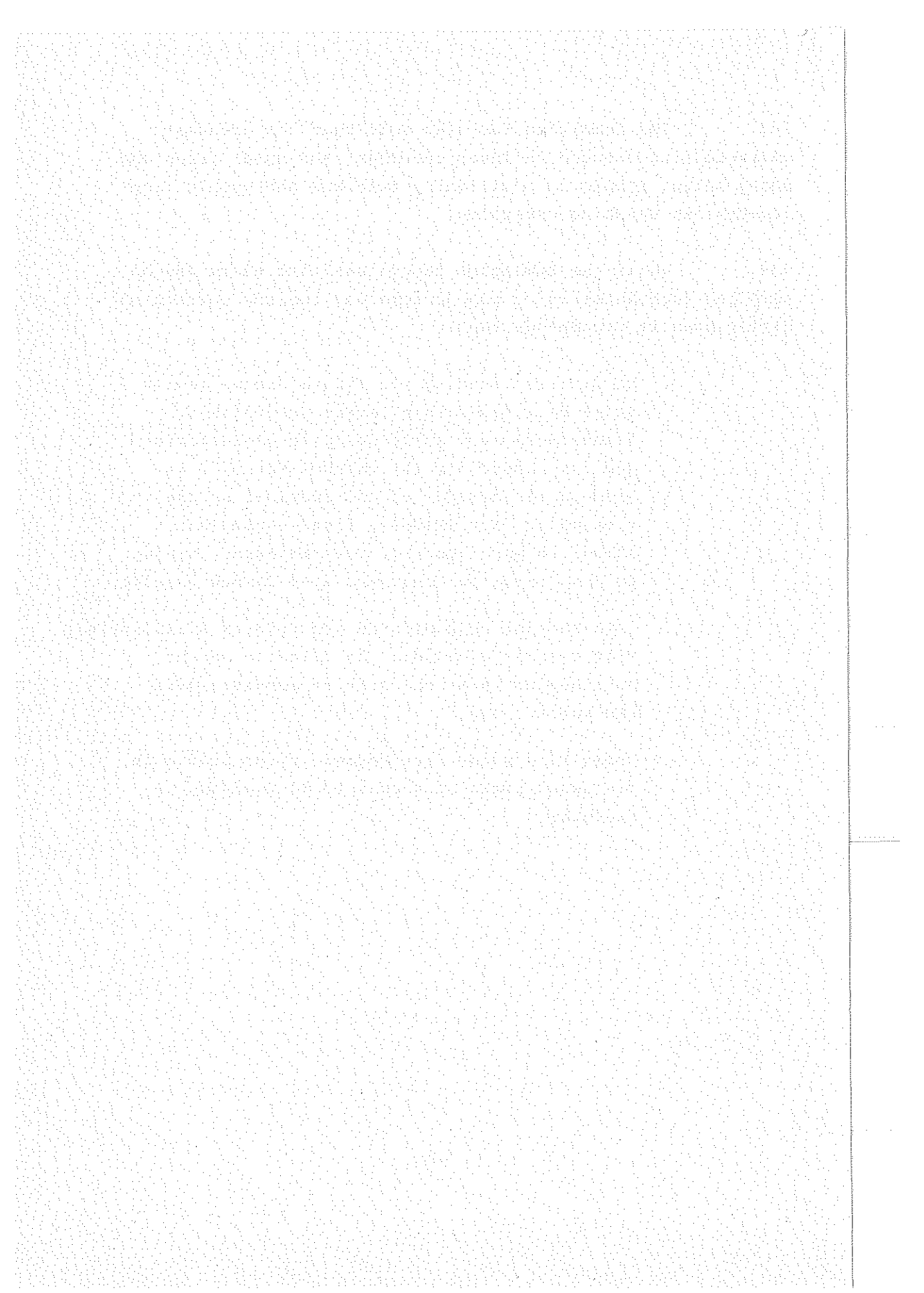
142. A preliminary analysis of the results of the 1976 Census showed that an estimated 367,000 people (about 1 in 40) were not included in the Census. This is about twice the level not included in 1971. The undercounting varied markedly by State, with the highest being in Queensland (3.7 per cent against the Australian average of 2.7 per cent).

(9) Transcript, p. 1384

143. The Committee was also told that the greatest undercounting occurred in inner suburban and rural areas and among males, people in their early twenties and people from non-English speaking countries.

144. While the Committee recognises that there may be sampling techniques which can go some way towards correcting differences it recommends that:

- . *as part of planning for future Census counts there be adequate pre-Census publicity to demonstrate more effectively to organisations and the public how the information will be used to the benefit of all sections of the community. For example, local government should be made aware of how municipal funding in many areas is dependent upon Census results;*
- . *departments, universities and private institutions that request questions, be asked to appear publicly at their own cost to support their inclusion; and*
- . *there be a wider involvement of the public in the development of topics to be included or excluded.*



Introduction

145. The Commonwealth *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act* 1974 (see Appendix 5) was proclaimed on 17 December 1974, but the administrative procedures for the implementation of the Act were not adopted until June 1975. The Act has been in operation for a little more than 2 years, but recognition of the need for environment assessment preceded its introduction in some areas.

146. During the course of the inquiry the Committee took evidence on the scope of the Act and while it was apparent that EHCD interprets its scope in very broad terms there appears to be a degree of confusion on the part of other Departments as to scope and application of the Act.

147. ECHD advised that while no specific legal advice had been sought on the overall scope of the Act a former Attorney-General, Mr R.J. Ellicott, had stated in the course of advice on a particular aspect of the Act's application, that in his opinion the object of the Act applies generally throughout the range of Government action and Ministers and officials therefore need to keep in mind the requirements of the Act in all areas of Government decision-making. (1)

148. Against this background, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the Committee's comments on the Act are based on the assumption that its provisions relate generally to all areas of Government decision-making.

(1) Letter from Department of EHCD dated 15 May 1978, (see Appendix 6)

Scope and Purpose

149. The Act requires that matters affecting the environment to a significant extent are fully examined and taken into account in the:

- . formulation of proposals;
- . carrying out of works and other projects;
- . negotiation, operation and enforcement of agreements and arrangements;
- . making of, or in the participation of making, decisions and recommendations; and
- . incurring of expenditure

by or on behalf of the Australian Government and authorities of Australia, either alone or in association with any other Government.

150. The definition of "environment" for the purposes of the Act includes all aspects of the surroundings of man, whether affecting him as an individual or in his social groupings.

151. The definition in the Act encompasses all aspects of the urban environment. It empowers environmental examination of a range of activities subject to the qualification that they affect the environment to a significant extent, and that they involve the Commonwealth Government. It is not limited to proposals being developed by the Commonwealth. It extends to projects partly financed by the Commonwealth and to private sector activities where these require Commonwealth approval.

152. The Act is an important mechanism available to the Commonwealth to identify, evaluate and co-ordinate direct and indirect impacts on the urban environment. One purpose is to ensure that those responsible for formulating proposals and those responsible for taking decisions, think about and take

account of environmental factors. It endeavours to ensure that planners and decision-makers at all levels think more carefully than they have in the past about the consequences of their actions.

153. A longer term objective of the Act is to educate decision-makers and the community in order that environmental constraints are seen in the same way that financial constraints are presently perceived and analysed. The Act also helps to close the gap between Canberra-based decision-makers and the people who have to live with the consequences of particular decisions. If a decision-maker is once removed, as it were, from those who are effected by decisions there is a possibility for the full consequences of decisions to be either ignored or under-played.

154. EHCD stated that the effect of the legislation should not be exaggerated.⁽²⁾ The Act does not give those responsible for its administration a right to stop developments when they are likely to have adverse environmental effects. The Act will not ensure that bad decisions are not taken, but it is intended to ensure that decision-makers are aware of the effects of these decisions.

155. As its title indicates, the legislation is concerned with the "impact of proposals". This is not synonymous with the preparation of impact statements. In fact, the Act and its Administrative Procedures provide for three different levels of environmental assessment. At the first level it may be determined that a particular proposal does not require detailed environmental examination. At the second level an impact statement may be required, and at the third, reserved for the most environmentally important and controversial proposals, a public inquiry may be conducted.

(2) Transcript, p. 9

156. The legislation is essentially concerned with consultation and co-ordination in an environmental sense. Financial decisions are often taken rapidly, are thought to be easy to measure, have direct identifiable impacts and as a consequence tend to receive frequent and continued attention. Consideration of slow moving areas with longer term indirect impact and where costs and benefits are not easily identified are often less carefully attended, notwithstanding the fact that their impacts may be more significant in the long term.

Commonwealth Departments and Instrumentalities

157. The legislation places proposals under scrutiny to a much greater degree than before and has led to tensions. A number of departments told the Committee that while there was some initial opposition to the legislation and its requirements, good co-operative arrangements have developed between proponents of particular proposals and those responsible for the legislation.

158. The Department of Construction stated that, provided environmental consequences are looked at and considered from the outset, and provided there is consultation with EHCD in the early stages of the planning process, no Department should be hindered or projects unduly delayed because of environmental considerations. (3)

159. The Department of Defence stated that the Department has developed good working relationships with EHCD and that environmental assessment has become an accepted part of the planning process.

160. The Department of Defence, perhaps more than any other Commonwealth Department or agency that appeared before

(3) Transcript, p. 505

the Committee, exhibited informed understanding of the Act and its procedures, particularly as regards the need for consultative mechanisms to increase awareness, minimise conflicts and delays and to avoid the need for impact statements in circumstances where environmental considerations have been attended to as part of the planning process. The assessment and consultative mechanisms include an environmental cell and other specialist officers and an environmental board on which EHCD is represented.

161. On the other hand the National Capital Development Commission expressed a number of concerns about environmental impact statement procedures. The Commission said that the introduction of the EIS into the urban planning process tends to cause delays. It also causes administrative problems because of the need to consult other Departments in the preparation of impact statements. (4)

162. While this Committee commends the Commission for its comprehensive approach to the planning of Canberra and for the Technical Paper it has prepared to ensure that project officers are aware of the requirements of the legislation, it cannot accept any suggestion that the Commission have a monopoly of advice to Government on the environmental implications of proposals related to the planning and development of Canberra.

163. The Committee was informed by EHCD that steps are being taken to improve the administration of the Act by developing "Memoranda of Understanding" between the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development and other Ministers of the Commonwealth Government.

164. Memoranda of Understanding are seen to be necessary primarily because of the lack of any precise demarcation in the

(4) Submission, Appendix D

Act as to what is and what is not covered by its provisions. The Act confines itself to matters affecting the environment to a "significant" extent, but it was not possible to define significant in any meaningful way in the drafting of the legislation. The Committee was informed that Memoranda of Understanding are intended to reduce this problem by providing carefully defined guidelines on the question of significance for each particular area of Government activity.

165. While the Committee can see merit in Memoranda of Understanding in areas where there are readily identifiable physical impacts it has difficulty in perceiving a situation where these memoranda could reasonably be applied to the activities of all Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities.

166. The definition of environment for the purposes of the Act comprehends much more than the aesthetics and readily identifiable physical impact of proposals. The Committee believes that a great deal more attention needs to be given to the indirect social and psychological impacts of basic policy decisions and strategic planning processes throughout the whole spectrum of Commonwealth administration in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

167. Some departments, including key policy departments appear to be unaware of the nature and character of the legislation and the responsibilities and obligations it places on them.

168. The Committee is concerned to ensure that proposals are considered from the outset of the planning process and to avoid problems associated with the consideration of ad hoc proposals which form part of wider programs such as comprehensive leasing, acquisition and civil works programs.

169. The Committee recommends that:

- . *in accordance with the 'Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974' and its procedures all Ministers advise the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development at the earliest possible stage in the planning process of proposals which will have a significant impact on the environment; and*
- . *all civil works, leasing and acquisition programs be referred to the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development in their formulative stages to allow for a comprehensive co-ordinated assessment of programs as a whole.*

170. While the Committee was not in a position to undertake a detailed assessment of the resources and skills available to the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development to administer the Act, it was concerned at the small number of persons in the environmental assessment units of his Department.

171. The Committee recognises that environmental assessment units must necessarily be limited in numbers because of departmental staff ceilings, but believes that appropriate arrangements must be made to upgrade the resources of the assessment units. The upgrading of resources could be achieved in two ways; an increase in the establishment and/or secondment arrangements with other departments, the private sector and the States.

172. The Committee favours the latter approach whereby other Departments would second middle ranking and senior officers to serve in these assessment units for periods of

say one year. In addition to increasing the level of resources this approach would encourage greater rapport and understanding between proponent departments and the department administering the legislation. There is scope for exchange of officers as between the Commonwealth and the States for agreed periods to widen the perception of the officers concerned and to facilitate a greater understanding of the constraints at all levels of Government and a closing of the gap between Canberra and the States.

173. There could also be advantages in the private sector providing officers to work in the impact assessment units for agreed periods of time to facilitate a greater understanding of environmental procedures and to improve working relationships between private proponents of projects and those responsible for the ongoing administration of the legislation.

174. The Committee notes that the Advisory Council on Inter-governmental Relations is considering the question of exchanges, secondments and transfers of staff between the public and private sectors and between departments within the Commonwealth Public Service.

175. The Committee therefore recommends that:

- . *appropriate arrangements be made to upgrade the staff of the environmental assessment units of the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development and that this be achieved by secondments from -*
 - (a) *other departments and agencies for agreed periods; and*
 - (b) *State officers and the private sector where mutually acceptable conditions can be agreed.*

The States

176. The constitutional arrangements which leave environmental responsibilities in the hands of both the Commonwealth and State governments have complicated the implementation of the Act. The Committee was informed that in many situations both spheres of government have responsibilities in relation to the environmental assessment of a particular proposal and that this situation has, on occasions, created considerable uncertainty. For example Commonwealth Government approval is required where a company's product is for export and is subject to the requirements of the *Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations* or where a company requires exchange control approval for the import of foreign capital for a development project.

177. To overcome this uncertainty the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development is in the process of negotiating arrangements with this State counterparts to increase co-operation and to avoid duplication of effort.

178. The objectives of these arrangements are to:

- . co-ordinate the environmental assessment of proposals which require both Commonwealth and State approvals;
- . avoid duplication of effort both by proponents and Government agencies;
- . ensure that a single environmental impact assessment procedure only is required;
- . make environmental assessments at the earliest feasible stage;

- . gain the benefit of expertise and local knowledge in the States;
- . leave purely local issues to be dealt with by State Governments; and
- . retain Commonwealth Government involvement in assessment of only those proposals that raise significant environmental concerns and in this respect to clarify those instances when an environmental impact statement would be obtained by a State Government and when it would be obtained by the Commonwealth Government.

179. Each State Government's approach to environmental protection is different but none of the approaches are so different from the Commonwealth Government's as not to permit a co-operative use of Commonwealth and State procedures in the assessment of particular proposals where this is necessary. In four States; Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, there are published procedures for the environmental assessment of proposals. In South Australia and Western Australia there are no published procedures yet available, although impact assessment processes are in use in those States. In Queensland and New South Wales a major element of responsibility remains with agencies other than the environment agency. In no State is there legislation equivalent to that of the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*.

180. The Committee recommends that:

- . *the environmental assessment arrangements negotiated between the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development and the State counterparts be made public.*

The Effectiveness of the Legislation

181. The *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974* and its administrative procedures provide for the public to comment and influence decision-making. Section 10 of the Act provides that:

any person may by notice in writing, require the Minister to inform him in writing as to what action, if any, has been taken, or is proposed, for ensuring consideration of the environmental aspects of the matter, and the Minister shall promptly inform the person in writing accordingly.

In addition a major part of the Act is concerned with public inquiry.

182. The Administrative Procedures provide a mechanism for public involvement different to the formal public inquiry provisions of the Act. This mechanism requires draft impact statements to be advertised for public comment and for any public comment received to be taken into account in the finalisation of the impact statement. The Committee was informed by EHCD that public response has been less than anticipated and that this could reflect:

- . the fact that proposals coming forward are, in effect, acceptable to the public; or
- . a general indifference on the part of the public to environmental issues; or
- . a belief that the Impact Statement process is merely window-dressing, that there is no real need for the public to influence decisions and that there is no point in commenting to the authorities concerned; or
- . the costs in money, time and effort required of individuals and groups to prepare, lodge and argue their case.

183. EHCD stated that it is difficult to provide tangible evidence that the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974* is assisting in the protection of the environment.

184. ECHD informed the Committee that it is not possible to measure the extent to which impact statement requirements causes departments or organisations not to proceed with planning of environmentally harmful proposals which would have proceeded in the absence of the Act.

185. However, EHCD stated that on a number of occasions it has received oral advice that proposals or alternatives were not considered because of the EIS requirements. Modifications to a particular proposal, because of the legislation, are equally difficult to contribute to the requirement itself, particularly where the proponent is reluctant to admit that the need to prepare the impact statement was responsible for the modification.

186. Despite these comments the Department provided the Committee with an extensive list of cases where it considered that the Act and an awareness of the need for environmental assessment had an important influence in the development of particular proposals. These proposals are listed at Appendix 7.

187. The Victorian Director of Conservation informed the Committee that the legislation is essentially concerned with proposals and does not solve problems associated with the aggregate effect of a number of proposals on a particular urban community.⁽⁵⁾ While the Committee agrees that the Act itself is not the only answer to the problems of the urban environment is it an important mechanism for increasing awareness and ensuring that environmental implications are not ignored.

(5) Transcript, p. 1055

188. One measure of the success of the legislation was given by the Department of Construction which acts as agent for client departments in the construction process. The Department stated that since the Act came into operation there has been a definite trend towards an earlier consideration of environmental issues in the planning and decision making processes, and perhaps more importantly that there has been an ever increasing spirit of genuineness and co-operation. (6)

189. The Committee is not satisfied that the nature and character of the Act, and more particularly the responsibilities it places on decision-makers has permeated all levels of policy making and implementation. This conclusion is supported by the Department of Construction which stated that it did not believe that everyone has come to grips with the process and that the legislation should not be changed until this occurs.

190. Against the background of current levels of environmental perception in many areas of Commonwealth administration, the Committee believes that there will be a continuing need for independent environmental assessment for the foreseeable future. Most departments and their Ministers appear well versed on the financial constraints that place limitations on policy making and the implementation of programs. The Act provides a mechanism for encouraging, by a process of education, a similar appreciation of environmental concerns.

191. The Committee concludes that the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974* is the most effective means yet developed for ensuring:

- . the broad examination of a proposal and/or alternatives;

- . community involvement; and
- . meaningful participation and perception by Commonwealth departments with environmental responsibilities.

192. Because of the broad scope of the Act the Committee believes that where there are particular major areas of environmental concern such as uranium, historic sites, etc. the opportunity should be taken to introduce more specific legislation on such particular areas of activity.

193. The Committee therefore recommends that:

the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development embark on a major educative campaign, which should include:

- . *the preparation and distribution of pamphlets and other material detailing the purpose and scope of the 'Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974' and the responsibilities and obligations it confers;*
- . *an ongoing series of seminars for*
 - (a) officers of other departments and instrumentalities*
 - (b) all new Commonwealth employees of the Commonwealth Public Service; and*
- . *provision of speakers for meetings of community interest groups and other organisations.*