

1939.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA



PAPER

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THE SENATE.

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Clerk of the Senate*
21 SEP 1939

R E P O R T

of the

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Relating to the proposed erection of a

H O S T E L

at

C A N B E R R A,

A U S T R A L I A N C A P I T A L T E R R I T O R Y.

1938-39.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC WORKS.

R E P O R T

Relating to the proposed erection of a

H O S T E L

at

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(Ninth Committee.)

The Honourable Josiah Francis, M.P., Chairman.

Senate.	House of Representatives.
Senator Charles Henry Brand.	Thomas Joseph Collins, Esq., M.P.
Senator Gordon Brown.	Charles William Frost, Esq., M.P.
Senator Walter Jackson Cooper.	The Honourable Edward James Holloway, M.P.
	Walter Maxwell Nairn, Esq., M.P.
	John Lloyd Price, Esq., M.P.

EXTRACT FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, No. 103,
DATED 12th. SEPTEMBER, 1939.

6. PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE - REFERENCE OF WORK - ERECTION OF HOSTEL AT FORREST, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY. - The Order of the Day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the following motion of Mr. Perkins:- That, in accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1936, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report, viz.:- The erection of a Hostel at Forrest, Australian Capital Territory -

Question - put and passed.

LIST OF WITNESSES.

- Adamson, W.M., Officer-in-Charge, Commissariat Section, Department of the Interior, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Alexander, J.A., Journalist, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Downing, H. G., Representing residents of Hotel Kurrajong, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Dunbar, W.J.H., Director, Tourist Bureau, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Edwards, Canon W.J., Representing University Association, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Garran, Sir. Robert, " " " " " "
 Green, Miss Olive, Representing residents of Gorman House, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Leonard, R.B., President, Press Gallery, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Percival, A., Surveyor-General & Chief Property Officer, Department of the Interior, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Waterhouse, B.J., Architect and Member of National Capital Planning and Development Committee.
 Whitley, C.C.M., Acting Chief Commonwealth Architect, Department of the Interior, Canberra. A.C.T.
 Williams, J.H., Representing Lessees Acton & Brassey Guest Houses, Canberra, A.C.T.
 Woodger, W.G., President, Chamber of Commerce, Canberra. A.C.T.

ERECTION OF HOSTEL AT CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY.

R E P O R T .

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which the House of Representatives referred for investigation and Report the question of the Erection of a Hostel at Forrest, Australian Capital Territory, has the honour to report as follows :-

PROPOSAL.

1. The proposal submitted for the consideration of the Committee was for the erection of a Hostel on a site bounded by Canberra Avenue, Empire Circuit, Dominion Circuit and Franklin Street, Forrest, A.C.T. It was to be a two-storeyed building designed on a " W " plan, with a central lounge, dining, kitchen and staff block, and two wings containing the bedrooms, and to provide accommodation for 130 guests.

It was proposed that the building should be constructed of brick, rendered externally and plastered internally, and be roofed with tiles.

REASON FOR THE PROPOSAL.

2. It is represented that there is urgent need for an establishment to house lower paid public servants and to provide additional accommodation, which, owing to new appointments to the Public Service of typists and clerks, and the arrival of teachers from the various States, has become acute.

The only boarding establishments under the control of the Government - Hotel Kurrajong and Gorman House - are fully occupied, and the leased guest houses which are obliged to give preference to Government employees in respect of a percentage of their accommodation, are also said to be full.

ESTIMATE OF COST.

3. The estimated cost of the proposal as submitted to the Committee, including electric light, power, water & sewerage services, hot-water, kitchen refrigeration & heating equipment was set down at £42,400, and the time fixed for completion approximately 9 months from date of approval.

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4. In addition to the cost of the erection of this building it is estimated that the cost of furnishing the establishment will involve an additional amount of £5,500.

COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

5. The Committee visited the site proposed, carefully scrutinised the plan submitted, and took evidence from the Acting Chief Commonwealth Architect, the Commonwealth Surveyor-General, an architectural member of the National Capital Planning & Development Committee, a representative of the lessees of private guest houses, representatives of the University Association, of the press and of residents of Government guest houses, and others, and endeavoured to obtain a general grasp of the whole problem associated with the provision of accommodation in Canberra.

6. After carefully weighing the evidence received, and opinions expressed, the Committee is quite satisfied that urgent necessity exists for the provision of more accommodation within the reach of officials in the lower salary ranges. It therefore recommends, that steps be taken as early as practicable, to provide accommodation for approximately 130 guests in a hostel of such a class as will admit of the maximum tariff to be charged not exceeding 36/- per week.

Site.

7. The site in Canberra Avenue suggested by the Department, on inspection by the Committee was found to have an appreciable fall both from Franklin Street to Canberra Avenue and from Empire Circuit to Dominion Circuit. This would involve the expenditure of a large amount in excavations and foundations to make it suitable for receiving the building proposed. The Committee, therefore, inspected several other possible sites and eventually agreed to recommend that the building be placed on an area, 400 feet by 250 feet, fronting Brisbane Avenue, and bounded by Macquarie Street, Darling Street and Young Street. This area, the selection of which was endorsed by all expert witnesses examined, is several hundred yards nearer to Parliament House and the Government Offices,

is situated in a convenient residential locality, and is almost level. By the adoption of this site it is estimated that a saving on excavations &c would be effected of approximately £700.

Building.

8. In view of the contours of the site originally suggested, the plan submitted for the building was in the shape of a " W ". This fact, and the orientation of the building on the area gave such an aspect to a number of the rooms that many of them would be without sunlight at any time in the year.

The building also was designed with parapets which gave it rather an institutional appearance, and made necessary the construction right round the building of box gutters which besides being an added expense are always liable to create trouble because of the leakage of water. For these reasons the Department was requested to provide an amended plan more suitable to the level site suggested. At the same time the Committee indicated several features which it was thought might, with advantage, be included in the building. Through the ready cooperation of the Department an amended plan was submitted to the Committee. This, with some modifications is recommended.

Description of the Building as now designed.

9. In this plan the front of the building will be facing practically due north, which will allow for a more general admission of sunlight to the rooms.

10. In designing the building a " U " type plan has been adopted facing Brisbane Avenue with the Dining Room, Kitchen and Staff quarters wing extending back from the main group.

11. The building is to accommodate 130 guests located in 44 single and 8 double rooms on the ground floor, and 50 single rooms and 10 double rooms on the first floor - single rooms will be 12 feet by 9 feet and double rooms 13 feet by 12 feet with 9 feet ceilings. The staff quarters consist of 10 single rooms and 1 double room, a sitting room and lavatory accommodation for both sexes all on the first floor.

These quarters are connected with the kitchen by a staircase. The staff dining room is on the ground floor in the vicinity of the kitchen.

Each bedroom for guests is to be fitted with a lavatory basin supplied with hot and cold water. Provision is made for 4 toilets for male guests and 4 for female guests on each floor. The baths will be supplied with hot and cold water. Two rooms provided with fireplaces have been made for study purposes on the first floor. Four staircases, evenly distributed, have been provided.

12. The ground floor accommodation includes an office, 2 public telephones, a Lounge, a Recreation room, Writing room and Card room. Lavatory accommodation has also been provided adjacent to the main entrance hall for the use of visitors.

13. The Dining Room has been designed to accommodate 136 diners. The Kitchen has been designed to provide for through ventilation and is to be fitted with a fuel range, boiling pans, carving table & hot press, dish washer, pot sinks, tea and coffee urns, mixer, potato peeler &c. Provision has also been made for cool rooms and stores. Included in the 2 separate buildings adjacent to the Kitchen wing are the boiler room, laundry for the use of guests, and Garages. In addition to these features the Committee considers that owing to the climatic conditions of Canberra, a drying room should also be provided.

14. Economy has been observed in the design both as regards construction and finishings. All walls are to be in brick 11 inch hollow to external work, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inch internal, rendered externally with an exposed brick base. The roof is to be covered with Marseilles pattern tiles with projecting eaves. Tiled dadoes & floors will be included in the toilets and Kitchen and all baths will be built in. The partitions to the toilets are to be in pre-cast terazzo slabs.

Floors generally will be of radiata pine cut from the Stromlo forest, and ceilings in the main will be of fibrous plaster.

15. The estimate of this amended design was set down at £43,712.

Study Rooms.

16. Representations were made on behalf of the University Association that a number of officials are undertaking university courses with the encouragement of the Government for the purpose of fitting them for more responsible positions. It was suggested that one section of the bedroom accommodation might, with advantage, be reserved exclusively for University students. The Committee considers this may be impracticable, but recommends that 2 small adjoining rooms with facilities for heating, be provided as study rooms for University and other students resident in the hostel.

Trunk Rooms.

17. In the amended design submitted, provision was included, at the request of the Commissariat Department, for 3 rooms for the storage of trunks, suit cases, etcetera. Although it agrees that facilities of this description might be an advantage under certain circumstances, the Committee considers, that these should not be additional to the original number of rooms suggested, and provision for this service might, more advantageously, be placed in a less valuable portion of the establishment.

Recreation Room.

18. At the request of the Committee the original writing room provided was enlarged and altered to a recreation room sufficiently extensive to hold a billiard table, and or ping-pong table, and a smaller writing room provided.

General.

19. The amended estimate of £43,712 included the provision of 3 additional Trunk rooms, which as indicated above, the Committee considers unnecessary. The alterations in the original plan, suggested by the Committee, comprise the provision of hot-water in the bedrooms, 2 study rooms, a drying room in conjunction with the laundry, a lavatory on the ground floor for the convenience of visitors,

a Card room, a small writing room and the enlargement of the original writing room to provide a recreation room. These alterations will have the effect of increasing the cost of the establishment to some extent, but the Committee considers that the elimination of parapets and box drains, together with the saving effected by the new site requiring less excavation and expense for foundations, will more than cover such increases, so that it is expected that the original estimate of £42,400 set down for this building need not be exceeded.

20. It is within the knowledge of the Committee that most of the privately run guest houses and hotels in Canberra are leased at a figure which returns a very low rate of interest on the capital cost incurred by the Commonwealth. With this advantage, it has been stated, that such establishments are returning the lessees a reasonable profit on their activities. In the case of an establishment of the nature contemplated in this proposal, which is expected to be always full of permanent residents, there should be no uncertainty as to the amount of revenue it might be expected to return, and figures supplied to the Committee indicated that if a rental were charged based on 5% of the capital cost, it would prove a reasonable business proposition. The Committee, therefore, is of the opinion that they can recommend the establishment of this hostel in the confidence that, with capable management, it should be run without loss to the Commonwealth.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

21. Briefly summarised the recommendations of the Committee are as follow :-

- (a) That urgent necessity exists for the provision of more accommodation within the reach of officials in the lower salary ranges. (Paragraph 6.)
- (b) That steps be taken as early as practicable to provide accommodation for approximately 130 guests in a hostel of such a class as will admit of the maximum tariff not exceeding 36/- per week. (Paragraph 6.)

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- (c) That the building be located in the area bounded by Brisbane Avenue, Macquarie Street, Darling Street and Young Street. (Paragraph 7.)
- (d) That for the purpose of study, 2 rooms with facilities for heating be provided. (Paragraph 16.)
- (e) That provision for storage of trunks etcetera be made in a less valuable portion of the establishment. (Paragraph 17.)
- (f) That the original estimate of £42,400 for the building be not exceeded. (Paragraph 19.)
- (g) That the establishment be run without loss to the Commonwealth. (Paragraph 20.)

JOS. FRANCIS,

Jos. Francis
CHAIRMAN.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee
on Public Works,
Parliament House, Canberra. A.C.T.
21st. September, 1939.