



1972

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

REPORT

relating to the proposed construction of a

PRIMARY AND PRE-SCHOOL

at

Tennant Creek, Northern Territory

(TWENTY-FIFTH REPORT OF 1972)

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

PRIMARY AND PRE-SCHOOL
TENNANT CREEK, NORTHERN TERRITORY

R E P O R T

By resolution on 29 August 1972, the House of Representatives referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report to the Parliament, the proposal for the construction of a Primary and Pre-school at Tennant Creek, Northern Territory.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:

THE REFERENCE

1. The proposal referred to the Committee is for the construction of a school for primary, infant and pre-school pupils in the newly developing area of Tennant Creek East. The school will be completed in two stages, the first in time for the commencement of the 1975 school year and stage 2, one or two years later. When complete it will accommodate 210 infant, 340 primary and 50 pre-school pupils.
2. The work in both stages is estimated to cost \$1.15 million.

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

3. The Committee received written submissions and drawings from the Departments of Education and Science, and Works and took evidence from their representatives at a public hearing in Canberra.

4. A Sectional Committee inspected the site of the proposed school when in the Northern Territory early in August.

5. The Committee's proceedings will be printed as Minutes of Evidence.

THE NEED

6. Population Growth Tennant Creek's population is largely influenced by developments in the nearby mines of Peko-Wallsend N.L. and Australian Development N.L. as these companies prefer their employees, particularly married personnel, to reside in the township. At the 1971 census, the population served by the Tennant Creek Area School was 2,634. The present figure is about 2,850.

7. The Committee were told that the town's population is expected to grow at about 10% per annum to approximately 3,850 by 1975. Seventy five residential allotments were released in 1971/72, 60 are programmed for development in 1972/73 and about the same number in 1973/74. This development is planned in the area to the east of the town.

8. Tennant Creek Area School The Area School caters at present for 70 pre-school, 420 infant and primary, and 75 secondary pupils. By 1975 these figures are expected to increase to 110, 620 and 160 respectively.

Primary grade enrolments are expected to further increase in the latter part of the 1970s to 665 and the secondary grades to 250.

9. The school accommodation has been added to as necessary over many years and some of the accommodation is now sub-standard. Recent building has concentrated on secondary education facilities with the aim of developing it mainly as a secondary school and perhaps eventually as a technical or community college. This plan envisages most or all primary education at other locations. In 1969 a craft block was added. Now under construction and planned for completion in March 1973 is a wing of secondary classrooms, science laboratories, a library, a covered assembly area and ancillary accommodation.

10. The permanent school buildings cannot adequately cater for the number of pupils and the accommodation shortage has been overcome by temporary arrangements including the use of transportable classrooms. The additional secondary education facilities under construction will ease the situation in 1973 and 1974 although it is expected that transportable classrooms will still be required. However, the solution of the problem beyond 1974 is seen as being the construction of another school.

11. The Committee were told that with the provision in 1975 of the first stage of the proposed primary and pre-school, and the second stage in 1976, some 270 pre-school and infant children could be accommodated at the new school initially, and over 500 by 1976. The numbers of primary children at the Area School would then be reduced to 400 in 1975 and to about 170 in grades 5 to 7 in 1976.

In the late 1970s therefore, the present school would accommodate upper primary and secondary pupils only.

12. Committee's Conclusion The Committee concluded that there is a need for additional facilities to meet the primary, infant and pre-school needs of Tennant Creek.

THE PROPOSED SCHOOL

13. Community education at all levels in the Northern Territory and the provision of buildings for such purposes are Commonwealth responsibilities. However, by agreement, the South Australian Government has in the past, provided teachers and its curriculum has been followed.

14. In 1970 the South Australian Government decided to withdraw its services over a five year period and the Commonwealth has gradually taken over the South Australian role. From the beginning of 1973, more than half the teachers in Northern Territory community schools will be Commonwealth employees.

15. Planning Outline The proposed school is designed for the education of primary, infant and pre-school pupils in the one building complex. School buildings will provide for functional separation of each department but easy access to common areas will be maintained.

16. Planning and the proposed accommodation will be similar to that in other primary schools under construction in the Territory and will represent continued development of the open learning area concept.

This concept was introduced to the Northern Territory on a partial basis in the Wagaman Primary School at Darwin, to be opened in 1973, and was extended to the whole of Nakara Primary School, Darwin, and Bradshaw Primary School, Alice Springs, to be opened in 1974. The proposals for Wanguri and Tiwi Primary Schools in Darwin, on which the Committee reported on 13 July 1972, further developed the open space concept by centralising and up-grading the library/materials centre and by introducing a greater variety in the shapes and sizes of the learning areas.

17. The proposal for Tennant Creek is similar to Wanguri and Tiwi except that a slightly higher proportion of the learning area is of the conventional one-teacher/one-class arrangement. We were told that this is due to the relative isolation of Tennant Creek where it could be more difficult for teachers who do not wish to adjust to open plan methods, to transfer to a nearby more conventional school.

18. The significant characteristic of open learning is the emphasis placed on individual and group work, on teaching aids and on teachers in a role of "resource persons" who deliver lessons in a conventional way and assist individuals or small groups as required. Teaching space is not sub-divided into separate classrooms but a number of learning areas of various sizes are provided to allow a variety of approaches to teaching procedures.

19. Each of the open learning areas will be acoustically treated and have access to a practical work area which will be provided with a bench, and water and gas services to facilitate its use for art, craft, science and other practical activities.

There will also be carpeted special activities areas which will be acoustically separated from the open areas for very noisy activities. A further characteristic of open learning areas is the associated outdoor learning areas in the form of courtyards partly covered and sun-screened.

20. Learning areas will open directly on to a central library which, because of its location and the extent of audio and visual facilities, will be superior to the conventional primary school library.

21. Separate but linked covered assembly areas will be provided for primary and infant children and the canteen will be central to both areas. These facilities and associated toilets are located so that community use is practicable without encroaching on other parts of the school.

22. Other accommodation to be provided will be similar to recently constructed and planned Northern Territory primary schools and will include individual offices for senior staff, a medical/dental clinic, a pupil's sick room, staff rooms, store rooms and sporting facilities.

THE SITE

23. The site is in Staunton Street and covers about eight acres in the proposed Weaber Road sub-division of Tennant Creek. It is bounded on the west by an open drain and on the north by a proposed oval which will be available for both school and community use.

24. The Committee agree that the site selected is suitable.

THE BUILDING PROPOSAL

25. Design The siting and design proposals draw directly on the experience gained in planning the open space primary and pre-schools at Tiwi and Wanguri, and provides for an increase in the school's capacity to 800 pupils should this become necessary in the future.

26. To meet the requirement of open space teaching principles a design feature is the flexibility of usage of learning areas. This has been achieved by omitting permanent walls between the individual teaching spaces and sub-dividing them by mobile screens and furniture. Flexibility in single-teacher classrooms will be achieved by using light-weight easily dismantled walls between these rooms. Should educational requirements change in the future, the design will permit the school to revert to a more conventional classroom arrangement by partitioning the open learning areas.

27. The accommodation requirements of the school fall into clearly defined elements of administration, library/resource centre, infant department, primary department, assembly areas and pre-school. These elements have been arranged according to their functional relationships and are grouped around the library and resource centre as the hub of the school.

28. Acoustic Treatment Acoustic treatment will reduce the general noise level so that speech intelligibility is satisfactorily maintained in each open learning area. Treatment will include carpeting and acoustic ceilings where necessary.

29. Construction and Materials The building will be constructed with load bearing concrete masonry walls and reinforced concrete floor slabs. Roofs will be framed with light steel trusses and covered assembly areas will have steel portal frames. Materials and finishes have been selected for their suitability to the location and the character and function of the buildings.

30. Furniture and Fittings Built in fittings including shelving, cupboards and benches are included in the work but movable fittings and furniture will be provided separately in accordance with normal practice.

31. Engineering Services Mechanical services include evaporative cooling and heating systems, exhaust ventilation, domestic hot water, drinking water units and an incinerator.

32. Electrical services will include a sub-station, power and light services, a public address system, electric clocks and external security and car park lighting. Supply will be taken from the local authority.

33. Site Services Water, sewerage and stormwater services will be connected to the existing town systems. A lawn watering system will be installed. Internal service roads, parking areas and paths will be bitumen sealed.

34. Fire Protection A thermal fire alarm system will be installed and hose reels, portable fire extinguishers, hydrants and reticulation will be provided as required.

35. Committee's Conclusion The Committee recommend the construction of the work in this reference.

ESTIMATE OF COST

36. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$1.15 million made up as follows:

| | \$ |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Building work | 810,000 |
| Electrical services | 70,000 |
| Mechanical services | 180,000 |
| Hydraulic services | 25,000 |
| Civil works | 65,000 |
| | <u>\$1,150,000</u> |

PROGRAMME

37. The school will be constructed in two stages. Stage 1 will comprise the administrative area, infant department and pre-school and stage 2, the library/resource centre, primary department and assembly areas.

38. The preparation of contract documents and letting of a contract is estimated to take until August 1973. It is expected that stage 1 will then require 16 months for construction and will therefore, be available for the 1975 school year. Stage 2 construction will be completed in time for the 1976 school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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

| | <u>Paragraph</u> |
|---|------------------|
| 1. THERE IS A NEED FOR ADDITIONAL FACILITIES TO MEET THE PRIMARY, INFANT AND PRE-SCHOOL NEEDS OF TENNANT CREEK. | 12 |
| 2. THE SITE SELECTED IS SUITABLE. | 24 |
| 3. THE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE. | 35 |
| 4. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$1.15 MILLION. | 36 |


(C.R. KELLY)
Chairman

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

21 September 1972.