

DEPT. OF THE SENATE	
No.	909
Presented	5 SEP 1958
CLERK OF THE SENATE	

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

R E P O R T

Relating to the Proposed
Construction of Extensions to the

REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL AT HOBART,

TASMANIA.

For Senator O'Byrne.

I bring up the Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee
on Public Works, relating to the following works:-

The construction of Extensions to the Repatriation
General Hospital at Hobart, Tasmania,

and I move that the Report be printed.

1.10.58.

*Tabled
1-10-58
R.O.H.*

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL, HOBART

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 construction of extensions to the Repatriation General Hospital, Hobart, Tasmania, has the honour to report as follows:-

S E C T I O N I - I N T R O D U C T I O N .

Historical

1. The Repatriation General Hospital, Hobart, was originally known as No.9 A.G.H., and it was taken over from the Department of the Army in December, 1920. Since that time two buildings have been added to the establishment. A double-storey brick building, to accommodate 60 patients as well as two operating theatres and an x-ray department, was constructed in 1944; and a three-storey brick building, to provide quarters for the matron and nursing staff, was built in 1945.
2. With the exception of the erection of a mortuary and minor remodelling and timber frame additions to meet particular requirements, the remaining buildings are as taken over from the Department of the Army.
3. Various proposals have been considered by the Repatriation Commission for the replacement of sub-standard accommodation at the hospital, in the post-war years, but have not been proceeded with because of lack of funds and the priority of other departmental projects.

SECTION II - THE PRESENT PROPOSAL.

The buildings.

4. The proposal is to replace various buildings on the present site with two new buildings for ward and administration purposes, as a first step in a programme for ultimate replacement of all outmoded accommodation. The Ward unit block will comprise lower ground, ground and penthouse floors while the Administration block will contain a ground floor and part lower ground floor, making use of the rather considerable site falls.

The Cost.

5. The estimated cost of the Ward block is £147,500, and the Administrative block £72,500, - a total of £220,000 - based on costs as at August, 1958. The estimated time necessary to complete the plans, call tenders, and construct the buildings is stated to be 23 months.

SECTION III - THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

General.

6. The Committee studied the proposal and took evidence from the officials of the Department of Works responsible for preparation of the proposal and submission to the Committee. An inspection was made of the Repatriation General Hospital at Heidelberg, the existing Repatriation General Hospital in Hobart, and the whole of the site upon which the proposed buildings are to be erected. Evidence was also taken from responsible officials of the Repatriation Department concerned with the conduct of the Hospital, and from a number of independent witnesses interested in the project and in a position to give the Committee information helpful to its inquiry.

7. Plans of the proposal, as referred to the Committee, as well as a model and brochures illustrating the whole scheme, were used by the Committee in its consideration of the matter.

The Ward Unit Block.

8. The Ward Unit Block is to be a two-storey brick structure, located and designed to link up with the existing Ward 4. The accommodation provided in this block will consist of :-

- (i) Lower Ground Floor: Out-patients' Department, Medical Officers' consulting and examining rooms, Physiotherapy, Pathology Laboratory, Dispensary, Store, etc.
- (ii) Ground Floor: A 34 bed nursing unit, with fully supporting facilities by way of centrally located nurses' station, ward pantry, utility room, pan rooms, sterilising room, treatment, and patients' day room. The nursing unit consists of seven 4-bed wards, two 2-bed wards, and two single bed wards for disturbed and isolated patients.
- (iii) Penthouse floor: The penthouse, which will be above the ground floor level, and immediately over the main entrance, will provide a small area to house the lift machinery, and a plant room for the mechanical plant.

The Administration Block.

9. The Administration Block consists of a single storey brick structure for the administrative offices, with a recreation and staff section attached to the western end of the building. Contained in this section are the patients' recreation room and ancillary rooms, on the ground floor level, and rooms underneath at the lower ground floor level for staff luncheon room and lockers.

Future Plan.

10. A master plan was submitted showing suggested buildings to complete the scheme of which the present reference is the first step. This indicated that there would be a new Kitchen to replace the present one, and a new Chest Ward replacing the existing Ward Number One.

Construction.

11. Ward Block A will be constructed with brick walls and reinforced concrete floors. It is designed as an extension on the western end of the present Ward 4 Block, a brick building with which it will link up. When completed, the whole of this block will appear as one unit. The ground floor will be at the same level as the main floor of the present Ward 4 Block, and all wards will therefore be inter-connected. A wide cantilevered awning will protect the main entrance on the northern side.
12. The plan provides for a fire escape stair at each end of the ground floor to discharge at this level, and an automatic fire barrier will be provided at the opening between the present Ward 4 and the new extension.
13. The Administration Block. like the Ward Block, will be constructed of brick, with reinforced concrete and timber floors, and corrugated asbestos roof.

Building services.

14. Electrical services to both buildings comprise incandescent and fluorescent lighting, power, and electric clocks. The Ward block will be provided with bed lights, night lights, call and signal systems, radio outlets, and electric sterilizers. An electric lift will be of a one-bed passenger type, with geared machine operating at 125 feet per minute, and 2-speed manually operated enclosure doors and floor levelling devices.
15. Mechanical services will include hot water and heating, by means of hot water radiators, from oil-fired water boilers in the pent-house floor. There will also be compressed air, gas, and filtered water supplied to the Pathology Department.
16. Fire protection: Both buildings will be fully protected internally against fire by automatic fire sprinklers, supplemented by hand chemical extinguishers, and fire hydrants at the stairs on both floors of the Ward block.
17. Civil engineering: The existing road and connecting paths to the south of the present Ward block will be modified to retain access to

Linden Avenue, and a new concrete road will be constructed to serve the main entrance on the north side of the Ward block,

Car Park.

18. Two small areas will be constructed for parking purposes. The larger, to hold six cars, will be at the eastern^{and} of the Administration Block, almost opposite the new main entrance to the Ward Block, and the other parking area will be at the western end of the Administration building, to hold four cars.

Accommodation.

19. Ward block A: Because of the contour of the site, the extension will be of three levels. The lower ground floor will provide 9050 square feet; the ground floor 9250 square feet; and the penthouse, providing for lift machinery and mechanical plant, will have area of 1200 square feet.

20. Administration block: The main administration and associated offices together with Recreation and Ancillary rooms will be on the ground floor, which covers an area of 4650 square feet. The lower ground floor will cover only part of the site, which will be partly excavated. It will provide accommodation for male and female staff locker rooms, toilets, and staff lunch room, in a total area of 1325 square feet.

Estimate of Cost.

21. Details of the estimate of costs, prepared on the basis of rates at August, 1958, are as follows:-

Ward Block:	£.
Building works, sewerage, water, roads, mechanical services, sprinkler system, lifts and electrical services.	147,500
<u>Administration building:</u>	
Building works, sewerage, roads, mechanical services, sprinkler system, electrical services	41,500
Car park, street lighting, heating & sprinkler system through to Ward 4, fire hydrant system, temporary access ways, maintenance of services, ground restorations and landscaping.	31,000
	<u>£220,000</u>

Need for the Buildings.

22. Standards required: It was submitted that the Repatriation Commission considers it important to maintain the various Repatriation Medical Institutions at a reasonable standard comparable with standards operating in State General Hospitals, and in keeping with overseas development. Sections of the Repatriation Hospital in Hobart fall far below acceptable standards. In addition, modern requirements are necessary to give separate accommodation for the nursing of very sick patients, greater concentration of the essential operative units of the hospital, and better administrative co-ordination.

23. Present position: All hospital facilities, with the exception of the Nurses' Home, 60-bed Ward, X-ray Department and Operating Theatre are improvised, as in the case of the Pathology Department, or housed in wooden-frame buildings about 40 years old. These are completely inadequate by modern standards, both administratively and medically, and are scattered in five separate locations containing Wards 1,2,2A, and 3, Out-patient Clinic, Administration, Dispensary and Stores.

24. Ward 3 is lacking in many of the essential facilities of a ward, having no single rooms, isolation facilities, pan-room, pantry, linen store, doctor's office, examination room, nor anywhere that they could be put. Toilet facilities are inadequate, and the sterilising room is open to the verandah passage, causing grave risk of airborne infection.

25. The Out-patient Clinic has only one room for a specialist to use, and it is so small that it is only possible to run two clinics, namely, Orthopaedic and Psychiatric - both conducted by State Government doctors who have no private rooms elsewhere. As the necessary outpatient facilities cannot be provided, approximately 2,000 patients a year have to be seen at doctors' surgeries in Macquarie Street, where delay is experienced through taking turn with the general public on waiting lists to see the doctors.

26. Even Wards 2 and 2A, which do receive sunshine, but block it from Ward 3, are without isolation rooms, and female patients have to be nursed in close proximity to, and separated only by a sheet of glass from the male patients in Ward 3.

27. Toilet facilities are inadequate, there being only one bath for female patients, so that separate bathing facilities for skin cases cannot be maintained, and the sterilizing room is open to the verandah passage, causing a grave risk of airborne infection.
28. Wards 2, 2A and 3 are unheated, and each is on a different level, requiring the use of portable ramps for movement of patients and equipment.
29. While the newer brick buildings, comprising Ward 4 and the nurses' home, are in good condition, it is evident that the wooden wards, which are to be replaced as planned in this proposal, will not last much longer. The Committee observed the irregular appearance of many parts of the buildings, caused by subsidence, though every effort has been made to maintain the efficient use of the buildings and a cheerful atmosphere by painting, colourful decoration, and fittings.
30. Staff.- While living conditions are attractive in the nurses' home, other sections of the establishment offer poor facilities for the staff. Working conditions that suffer severely by comparison with other hospitals place the Repatriation Department at a disadvantage when recruiting staff which are, from time to time, in short supply.
31. Every witness emphasized the unsatisfactory conditions and the urgency of the need for replacement of the old sections of the hospital, and the evidence shows that many of the references are couched in the strongest terms. The Committee is fully in agreement that there is an urgent need for replacement, and recommends that the first stage should be carried out as planned.
32. Advantages of a new building: An adequate Out-patient Clinic would provide the opportunity to house out-patient staff, admission staff and records in one area. Physiotherapy, dispensary, out-patient clinic and admissions on the one floor would save patients having to go from one ward to the others in all weathers.
33. Adequate interviewing and examination rooms for specialists would enable a more efficient and economic service than at present, with a probable saving of £2,500 annually. The provision of a new administration building would provide, for the first time, adequate office

accommodation for the Medical Superintendent and other officers, ablution facilities for living-out staff, together with proper dining-room and recreation facilities for patients.

34. Present accommodation: There are three main groups of patients, accommodation for which is not interchangeable for medical reasons. These groups are: tuberculous patients (34 beds now available), female medical and surgical patients (9 beds now available), and male general medical and surgical patients (87 beds now available - including 8 emergency beds). There is therefore a total of 130 beds available. What is now proposed is a planned capacity of 127 beds with accommodation available for up to 5 emergency beds on the verandah of the present Ward 4.

35. Long term trend: It was pointed out that general predictions are subject to treatment trends, but basic predictions of the Department's needs had been made. Those showed that, in regard to medical and surgical cases, 1914 war male bed requirements would fall steadily from 1954, and that 1939 war male bed requirements would rise slightly from 1957, but would not, in the next 20 years exceed the 1950 level.

36. As some evidence pointed to the opinion that a rise would be expected in the future in regard to the needs which would become apparent in men from the 1939 war, the Committee sought further evidence on the matter. Graphs of the day to day occupancy of beds in the hospital confirmed the general trend, and it is considered by the Department that, while no lesser number of beds than is now available should be provided, additional beds are not warranted at this stage.

37. It was pointed out that, if conditions alter in the future, either through the introduction of additional classes of patients, or by other factors changing the predicted trend, additional accommodation could be provided by including it in the later stage of the programme of reconstruction. The Committee is satisfied that the close consideration given to this matter has produced as accurate an estimation of future requirements as is possible at the present time, and it is agreed that no further beds should be provided than are included in this proposal.

General Parking Facilities

38. Some of the evidence indicated considerable concern that the proposal does not provide an adequate area for parking vehicles for visitors to the hospital. Two small areas are planned, providing for a total of 10 cars, but it is expected that these are to be reserved for hospital use. A good deal of difficulty is experienced at the present time in finding parking space near the hospital, with consequent discomfort and inconvenience to patients and visitors alike. The problem of city parking is becoming more acute, and many schemes have been considered in efforts to alleviate the trouble.

39. The Committee took evidence in regard to this matter, but it is emphasized that the provision of parking space in the hospital grounds for general use could only be made at the expense of the gardens, lawns and trees forming essential parts of the hospital planning. In addition, the steepness of the contours of the site would make it difficult to find suitable areas for extensive parking facilities. The Committee considers that the site does not lend itself to further parking facilities, but, if it becomes essential to provide such space in future, an approach might be made by the Repatriation Department to the Department of the Army, with a view to exploring the possibility of securing the use of a suitable portion of the adjoining military property.

The Kitchen.

40. Members of the Committee were struck by the fact that the present Kitchen is at some distance from the wards, and meals have to be taken by heated trolleys down sloping ramps to the patients. Replacement of the Kitchen was foreshadowed in the master plan for the later stage of the replacement scheme, and the Committee was informed that a rough estimate of the cost would be £50,000. It is understood that about £13,000 is to be spent in the meantime in renovating the present kitchen, which is said to have a life of 10 to 15 years. It was noted that the new Kitchen, when it is constructed, is to be placed in a similar position to the present one, and it will still be necessary to transport the meals in the open by means of heated trolleys.

41. It was felt that the expenditure of £13,000 on the kitchen , which would only have a short life before the further \$50,000 would be required, was not an economic proposition. Inquiries were made from the hospital and Repatriation authorities in order to ascertain whether it would be better to include the new Kitchen complete in the present proposal.

42. The consensus of opinions appears to be that, in the case of a pavilion type of hospital, such as the Hobart Repatriation Hospital it is necessary to transport meals from the Kitchen to the various pavilions in any case. The Repatriation Department has also considered the position, and has included only minimum requirements in this proposal, in order to be able to provide reasonable funds for the many other projects awaiting attention in all parts of Australia.

43. The Committee is of opinion that the present Kitchen is out-of-date, inappropriate, and a considerable fire hazard, and further consideration should be given to the possibility of including a new Kitchen in conjunction with the present proposal. However, the addition of a new kitchen to this proposal should not be made if it will prejudice the urgent construction of the present project.

Fire Protection.

44. A visitor to the present institution is immediately impressed with the imminent fire risk in these old wooden buildings, and attention was drawn to the desirability of providing very adequate safeguards in the new buildings. Some very useful evidence on this matter deals with the possibility of fire in the long building which will result when the new structure is joined to the end of the present brick Ward 4. The provision of some additional fire doors, and a ramp for wheeled patients, to establish extra safety precautions in the completed building were suggested, and the Committee recommends that special attention be given to this portion

of the evidence when the final drawings for the project are being prepared.

Cost.

45. The Committee gave consideration to the estimate of costs, as shown in an earlier section of this Report. The evidence from independent witnesses agrees that the amounts proposed appear to be reasonable. The costs are based upon rates ruling at August, 1958, and the Committee recommends that the proposal, at the cost of £220,000 on that basis, should be proceeded with.

Site.

46. The site is very conveniently situated, a short distance from the heart of the city. It is adjacent to Angloesea Barracks, and comprises an area of $4\frac{3}{8}$ acres, being bounded on the north by Hampden Road, by Ellerslie Street on the east, Davey Street on the West, and Linden Avenue on the south. The site is a relatively steep one, and soil tests show that it is suitable for the type of buildings proposed for it. All the witnesses questioned regarding the site are of opinion that it is suitable, and the Committee, after making its inspection, is satisfied that the site is convenient and appropriate for the purpose.

Design.

47. The design of the building conforms to modern hospital standards, and the buildings are planned to fit in with the existing parts of the establishment. The exterior will be of brick to harmonise with the present buildings, and the Committee is of opinion that the plans indicate a completed structure which will be pleasing and adequate.

SECTION IV - THE COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS.

Summary of Recommendations.

48. The following is a list of the Committee's conclusions, in summary form only, arrived at after study of the proposal, models, plans, and evidence involved. The full recommendations are contained in the body of the Report, and may be referred to in the paragraphs quoted at the close of each of the following recommendations:-

- (1) There is an urgent need for the replacement of the old

wooden buildings, and the first stage of the proposal should be carried out as planned. (Paragraph 31.)

- (2) In view of past experience and estimates of trends for the future, it is recommended that the proposal to maintain a similar number of beds to those at present available should be adopted. (Paragraph 37.)
- (3) The site does not lend itself to further parking facilities, but, if it becomes essential to provide such space in the future, an approach might be made by the Repatriation Department to the Department of the Army, with a view to exploring the possibility of securing the use of a suitable portion of the adjacent military property. (Paragraph 39.)
- (4) The present kitchen is out-of-date, inappropriate, and a considerable fire hazard, and further consideration should be given to the possibility of including the new kitchen in conjunction with the present proposal. However, the addition of a new kitchen should not be made if it will prejudice the urgent construction of the present proposal. (Paragraph 43.)
- (5) Special attention should be given to the portion of evidence relating to fire precautions, when final drawings for the proposal are being prepared. (Paragraph 44.)
- (6) The estimated cost of £220,000 is regarded as reasonable on the basis of rates at August, 1958. (Paragraph 45.)
- (7) The site is convenient and appropriate for the purpose. (Paragraph 46.)
- (8) The plans indicate a structure which will be pleasing and adequate. (Paragraph 47.)

W. R. LAWRENCE.
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
Canberra, A.C.T.
~~22nd September~~, 1958.
1st October.