

FOR SENATOR ~~BRANSON~~

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DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE	
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Let's of the Senate	

I present the Report of the Parliamentary Standing
Committee on Public Works relating to the following proposed work,

ERECTION OF COMMONWEALTH OFFICES AT
LISMORE, NEW SOUTH WALES.

I ask for leave to make a short statement.

(WHEN LEAVE GRANTED)

The summary of recommendations and conclusions of the
Committee is as follows:

1. There is a need for the construction of a new Commonwealth Office building in Lismore.
2. The site is appropriately located for the proposed building.
3. The construction of the work in this reference is recommended.
4. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$600,000.
5. The Department of Works should closely examine the possibility of reducing the contract period in this instance.

23 August, 1967.

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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

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES

at

LISMORE, NEW SOUTH WALES

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

COMMONWEALTH OFFICES, LISMORE, NEW SOUTH WALES

R E P O R T

On 7 July 1967, His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report the proposal to erect Commonwealth Offices at Lismore, New South Wales.

The Committee have the honour to report as follows:-

THE COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATION

1. The Committee received statements from the Departments of the Interior and Works and took evidence at a public hearing in Lismore from representatives of these departments and from the Mayor of Lismore. We inspected the site of the proposed building and office accommodation now occupied by Commonwealth departments in Lismore.

THE PROPOSAL

2. The proposal submitted to the Committee is for the construction of an air conditioned building providing two floors of office accommodation for the regional or district offices of the Departments of Social Services, Labour and National Service, the Interior and the Postmaster-General's Department. The proposal is designed to bring together under the one roof all Commonwealth activities in the Lismore area requiring office accommodation and to permit the future expansion of these activities in the same building when required.

3. To provide security against possible flooding, the lower floor is to be lifted above pavement level, providing a ground level parking space in the undercroft. The building is planned to carry

an additional storey if the future demand for office accommodation by the Commonwealth makes this necessary.

LISMORE - THE REGIONAL CENTRE

4. The City of Lismore, which is about 500 miles north of Sydney and 160 miles south of Brisbane is an important and growing city in the Richmond River valley. It is the centre of one of the more densely populated rural areas in New South Wales, combining both farming and industrial pursuits. The population of Lismore itself grew from just over 16,000 in 1947 to nearly 20,000 in 1966.

5. A number of important regional functions of the Commonwealth are centred on Lismore, the most important being those of the Department of Social Services and the Postmaster-General's Department. The Regional Office of the Department of Social Services, for example, is responsible for an area extending over 350 miles from the Queensland border in the north to Taree in the south. The population in this region has increased by over 16,000 to 188,000 in the period 1947 to 1966.

EXISTING OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

6. Department of Social Services The Regional Office is located in a Commonwealth owned, air conditioned, two-storey building in Green Lane. The 3,500 sq. ft of accommodation provided is satisfactory but the frontage is to a narrow lane and the building is subject to periodic flooding.

7. The Department has an immediate need for an additional 250 sq. ft of space and within 10 years will require a further 350 sq. ft. Further development of the site is not practicable without the acquisition of further land but, in any event, we believe that this would not be desirable in this locality.

8. The intention to dispose of these premises when the proposed offices are occupied is supported by the Committee.

9. Department of Labour and National Service The District Employment Office occupies 810 sq ft of sub-standard, leased accommodation in an old wooden building at the corner of Woodlark and Molesworth Streets. The space is overcrowded and is incapable of containing the growing needs of the office.

10. Department of the Interior The Electoral Office is located in 620 sq ft of accommodation leased on a monthly basis in a building at 66 Magellan Street. The accommodation is of a satisfactory standard but it is too small for current and future requirements.

11. Postmaster-General's Department Elements of this Department are dispersed in three separately leased premises - two in Woodlark Street, the other in Molesworth Street - providing a total of 3,260 sq ft of office space. The accommodation is satisfactory but again there is no room for expansion. Furthermore, the Divisional Engineer's Office in the telephone exchange building is needed immediately for the expansion of exchange facilities and his office is about to be re-located in 2,000 sq ft of leased space.

12. As with other regional offices, it is desirable to centralise the Department's functions for maximum efficiency.

THE NEED FOR A COMMONWEALTH OFFICE BUILDING

13. It was clear to the Committee that there is a need for the construction of a new Commonwealth office building in Lismore to -

- (a) replace that portion of the existing accommodation which is sub-standard;
- (b) relieve the overcrowding that currently exists; and
- (c) permit the expansion of services created by the growth of the area.

14. There are distinct advantages to be gained by the Commonwealth, in regional centres such as Lismore, from concentrating its activities in one building. Apart from an improved service to the public, the opportunity is provided for mutual assistance between various groups as well as more economical use of space and staff and better supervision can be achieved.

THE SITE

15. A site of 1 rood $6\frac{1}{4}$ perches at the corner of the main street, Molesworth Street, and Conway Street, was acquired in 1966 for this building. It is located in the civic centre of Lismore with the Town Hall and Council Chambers immediately opposite in Molesworth Street and they are adjoined by a small public park. The Fire Station, Post Office and other government offices are in the area and the main shopping centre is one block to the north.

16. The site is level and has frontages of 132 feet to Molesworth Street on the west and 93 feet to Conway Street on the south. A two-storey brick bus terminal building adjoins the northern boundary and a 20 feet laneway runs along the southern side to within 35 feet of Conway Street, giving access to Carrington Street. Access from the laneway to Conway Street will be provided over Commonwealth property.

17. The site is now occupied by an old single storey weatherboard and fibro building with an earth floor, and a brick and stucco two-storey building of little value. Both will be demolished to clear the site for the proposed offices.

18. The Committee believe that the site is appropriately located for the proposed building.

OCCUPANCY OF THE PROPOSED BUILDING

19. It is intended to allocate the office space in the new building in the following way. The table also shows the number of staff who will

occupy the various areas initially, with projected staff increases in the next 10 years shown in brackets.

Department	Floor Level	Office Area (sq ft)	Staff	
			Male	Female
Department of Social Services - Regional Office	Lower	4,116	17(2)	16(2)
Department of Labour and National Service - District Employment Office	Lower	1,260	4(2)	2
Department of the Interior - Divisional Returning Office	Upper	729	2	-
Postmaster-General's Department - Divisional Engineer	Upper	2,556		
- District Postal Manager		1,224		
- District Telephone Officer		<u>1,947</u>	36(5)	12(2)
Total		11,832	59(9)	30(4)

20. In addition to the space referred to in the table, there is to be a common usage conference room of 216 sq. ft on the upper level and an amenities/lunch room of 696 sq. ft at the lower level.

THE BUILDING PROPOSAL

21. Design Externally, the design of the building has been influenced by two major factors, viz. the need for sun protection on the east and west facades and possible site flooding.

22. The first has been met by providing wide projecting sun hoods for the two facades which will be exposed to the sun. As well as shading the building, the hoods will facilitate access for window cleaning and maintenance.

23. To provide security against flooding, it is proposed to lift the ground floor 9 feet above pavement level. In this connection, we noted that during the peak of the major 1954 flood, water rose 5 feet

4 inches above this point. The area at pavement level created by lifting the building will provide covered and enclosed parking space for 16 cars. Access will be from the laneway at the rear of the building.

24. To give easy walking access to the elevated ground floor, a six-foot wide ramp will lead directly from the Molesworth Street footpath, rising in two stages to the main entrance.

25. The eastern and western facades of the building will have a strong horizontal character created by the projecting sun hoods casting shadows over window areas. The car park at ground level will be enclosed by a screen wall located behind the columns which support the upper part of the structure. The free-standing ramp rising from the landscaped forecourt will add interest to the main facade and serve to emphasise the entrance from Molesworth Street.

26. Internally, a wide foyer will give access to the offices at the lower level, viz. the Departments of Social Services and Labour and National Service. The amenities/lunch room, which will be shared by the occupants of the building, is also on this floor.

27. Two internal stairs will lead to the upper floor level, where the Postmaster-General's Department and the Department of the Interior will be located. The conference room will be at this level.

28. Because of Lismore's sub-tropical climate, the office accommodation is to be air conditioned. The plant room will be located at roof level.

29. The building is to be set back 30 feet from Molesworth Street to give space for a paved and landscaped forecourt. Planter areas for shade trees are proposed as well as a planter box on the northern boundary.

30. Structure The frame of the building will be reinforced concrete supported on piled foundations. Floors will be of reinforced concrete and the projecting hoods will be off-form or precast concrete, integrally coloured. The ramp and stairs will also be of reinforced concrete. The frame is to be designed to permit the future construction of an additional office floor if this becomes necessary.

31. The southern facade to Conway Street and the enclosing walls to the roof level plant room will be of face brick and the car park will be enclosed by walls of open concrete screen blocks.

32. A lightweight metal roof will be provided over a concrete roof slab to the upper floor level. This slab will form the floor of the future additional storey.

33. Finishes Finishes have been selected to provide economy consistent with durability and low maintenance costs.

34. Floors will generally be covered with vinyl tiles laid on the concrete slab and in toilet areas ceramic tiles will be used.

35. In office areas, permanent walls will be cement rendered and sprayed with vinyl and partitioning will be lightweight demountable units. Ceramic tiles are to be used on walls in toilet areas where internal partitions will be terrazzo.

36. The ceilings in office areas are to be of the suspended acoustic metal pan type. In toilet areas, they will be rendered and painted.

37. In the internal stairways, floor surfaces will be of reinforced concrete, walls of faced brick and ceilings in off-form concrete.

38. Engineering Services The space being air conditioned will be zoned, each zone having independent temperature controls. Cooling

will be provided by a refrigeration system of 50 tons capacity and heating will be by a gas-fired hot water boiler supplying hot water to coils in the duct work. Toilet areas will be mechanically ventilated.

39. Hot water is to be provided to basins and sinks from a mains pressure electric hot water system.

40. Electricity will be supplied by the Northern Rivers County Council through a sub-station located at ground level. The sub-station is to be constructed to withstand flood conditions. Lighting generally will be by means of fluorescent fittings.

41. Hydraulic and gas services will be connected to mains in adjacent streets.

42. A system of thermal fire alarms will be installed and connected to the Lismore Fire Station. An adequate fire hydrant system is available adjacent to the building which will be also provided with hose reels and fire extinguishers at strategic points.

43. We recommend the construction of the work in this reference.

ESTIMATE OF COSTS

44. The estimated cost of the work when referred to the Committee was \$600,000 as follows:

Building work	\$480,000
Engineering services	<u>\$120,000</u>
	<u>\$600,000</u>

45. Supplementary information provided to the Committee indicated that overall the building cost is \$2,000 per square (including the economical undercroft parking space) and that had it not been necessary to raise the ground floor this figure would have been close to \$2,300 per square. We noted that the latter figure compares fairly favourably with the cost of building similar Commonwealth offices in other provincial centres.

PROGRAMME

46. The Committee were told that after an approval to proceed is given, 10 months will be required for the preparation of working drawings and tender documents, the invitation of tenders and the letting of a contract. We were also informed that the building work is expected to be completed 18 months after the contract is let.

47. On the evidence available, the latter period seemed excessive for a relatively straightforward structure on a good building site. Whilst we appreciate that shortening the contract period can result in high tenders, we believe that in this case, the matter warrants further study.

48. We therefore recommend that the Department of Works closely examine the possibility of reducing the contract period in this instance.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

49. 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 THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW COMMONWEALTH OFFICE BUILDING IN LISMORE.	13
2. THE SITE IS APPROPRIATELY LOCATED FOR THE PROPOSED BUILDING.	18
3. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK IN THIS REFERENCE IS RECOMMENDED.	43
4. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE WORK WHEN REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE WAS \$600,000.	44
5. THE DEPARTMENT OF WORKS SHOULD CLOSELY EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF REDUCING THE CONTRACT PERIOD IN THIS INSTANCE.	48

F.C. Chaney
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Chairman.