



1986

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

**PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**REPORT ON
PURCHASE OF IMPORTED
WOODEN BENCHES FOR THE
KINGSTON POLICE STATION**

Laid upon the Tables of both Houses of Parliament

The Committee was appointed under the provisions of section 2 of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1970 (No. 54).

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A. B. CAUDELL, Government Printer, Tasmania

POLICE STATION, KINGSTON
PURCHASE OF IMPORTED WOODEN BENCHES

Whereas most enquiries undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee arise from adverse comments appearing in the Auditor-General's Report, some matters of concern come to the Committee from other sources. An example of this occurred recently when the Committee heard of public discussion on the cost of park benches purchased for the new Kingston Police Station.

It was being said that 20 benches were imported from the United Kingdom at a cost of \$600 each.

As Tasmanian timber products are important to this State, it was puzzling that locally produced benches could not be used.

Upon enquiry to the Department of Construction, it was found that eight benches were purchased from the U.K. at \$476 each, a total of \$3 808, when the price at that time for an equivalent Tasmanian product was around \$270.

The Committee was told that the specification for the benches had been as follows:—

Park Benches to be installed as shown on drawings shall be as manufactured by Greenbrothers Ltd, England model No. 931 'Warwick 6'—as supplied by Parklane Garden Furniture, 87 Winston Avenue, Daw Park, South Australia.

(Local agents phone 003 44 7877)

or equivalent:

As manufactured by Trevor Cowell,
Main Road,
Perth, Tasmania.

Since the local product would have cost considerably less to employ, the Committee sought an explanation and received the following advice from the Department of Construction:—

Tenders were called in March 1985 for the project and specifications (which included the benches) were of course prepared some time before that. At the time of writing specifications, Mr Cowell, whom the Department believed manufactured a suitable garden seat, was approached by our consultants but was unable, at that time, to give definitive information sufficient for an acceptable specification. Accordingly, the specifications stated that 'Lister Warwick teak seat 1829 long ref. no. 931', an imported seat supplied by Parklane Gordon Furniture of South Australia through Launceston agents, was to be supplied.

Subsequently, during the construction period, when the building contractors wished to place the seats on order, they were advised to seek prices both from Parklane Gordon Furniture and again Trevor Cowell. However, the contractors also were unable to obtain information from Mr Cowell concerning his garden seat and reluctantly placed their order with Parklane despite the cost disadvantage involved.

Our consultants advise us that, now that Trevor Cowell's seats are properly established on the market, they form the basic reference in all current specifications. In addition, our consultant has been responsible for recommending their product to the Housing Department.

The Committee has to accept this explanation, although Mr Cowell is not aware of any efforts having been made to contact him. However, though the extra cost involved in purchasing imported benches was perhaps not as great as had been rumoured, the Committee believes that the main concern is the fact that Tasmanian timber products were not employed. It does seem that the extra attention to detail which could have avoided this incident would have been worthwhile. The Committee questions the purchasing procedure which in this case resulted in a dearer, imported product being used unnecessarily.

Committee Room No. 1,
Parliament House, Hobart
2 December 1986

N. M. ROBSON, *Chairman*