



1975

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

GENERAL REPORT FOR YEAR 1974-75

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

GENERAL REPORT FOR YEAR 1974-75

The Committee were appointed under the provisions of section 2 of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1970.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Mr Bisdee
Mr Gregory
Mr McKay

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr Mather (Chairman)
Mr Batt (Wilmot)
Mr Green

These members were appointed at the opening of the First Session of the Thirty-sixth Parliament on 7 June 1972, with the exception of Mr Green who was appointed on 3 April 1975, in the place of Mr Baldock and Mr Batt (Wilmot), who was appointed on 27 August 1974 in place of Mr Corby.

The functions of the Committee are set out in section 6—

(1) It is the function of the Committee to examine—

- (a) the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by Parliament to meet the public expenditure; and
- (b) such other accounts laid before Parliament as the Committee may think fit; and to report to both Houses of Parliament, with such comment as it thinks fit, on any matter arising in connection with those accounts or in connection with the receipt or disbursement of the moneys to which they relate to which it is of opinion the attention of parliament should be drawn.

(2) Where either House of Parliament refers to the Committee for examination any matter arising in connection with the accounts referred to in paragraph (2) of subsection (1) of this section, or any other accounts laid before Parliament, or in connection with the receipt or disbursement of the moneys to which any of those accounts relate, the Committee shall, as soon as practicable, carry out that examination, and report thereon to both Houses of Parliament, with such comment as it thinks fit.

During the year a report was presented on matters arising from the Auditor-General's Report 1973, (Paper No. 28 of 1974). The General Report for 1973-74 (Paper No. 50 of 1974) dealt with a number of matters including progress on mechanical services at the Department of Agriculture Laboratories, New Town. A further report on this matter appears below.

Observers from the Audit and Treasury Departments have attended by invitation during the taking of evidence. Their assistance, and also that of the two Departments, is gratefully acknowledged.

The Committee wish to record our appreciation of the assistance given by the Secretary, Mr P. T. McKay.

The Committee conducted enquiries on a number of matters arising from comments made by the Auditor-General in his 1974 Report. These are set out in a separate report (Paper No. 42 of 1975).

An enquiry on public service motor travel has been conducted. The hearing of evidence has been concluded and a report is being prepared.

Department of Agriculture: New Town Research Laboratories

The mechanical services for this building which was occupied in 1970 were dealt with in a report by the Committee in 1972 (Paper No. 60). Progress reports were given in General Reports in 1973 and 1974. After some five years, it still cannot be reported that the cool rooms, especially important for fruit research, are functioning properly.

A year ago the Committee reported that in April 1974 the Director of Agriculture had said that \$19 000 had been allocated for further works to bring the cool rooms into satisfactory operation and that 'at this stage it would appear that it could be several months before the cool rooms and plant room are operating successfully'.

Throughout the year under review, the Committee have sought and received regular progress reports from the Public Works Department, the first in July 1974:—

In response to the authorisation of funds to the value of \$19 000 by the Department of Agriculture in April, the compilation of the appropriate designs, specifications and tender documents was commenced.

Owing to the specialised nature of certain items of the replacement equipment, it was considered necessary to consult with manufacturers from the mainland to ensure that failures associated with the operation of the plant were not to be repeated.

Such consultations have inevitably resulted in delays and this factor, together with the extensive workload of the Department's Mechanical Services Section has prevented this matter from receiving the attention that was desired.

However, final design parameters have now been determined in respect of the items of replacement equipment and tender documents, it is anticipated, these will be available by the end of August.

The Committee were later told that after delays in the completion of documentation caused by design changes, tenders had been advertised to close on 18 December 1974. At this stage the cool rooms were expected to be ready for commission by mid 1975.

In the event, only one tender was received for the work and the Tender Board recommended that 'local offers' be obtained. As a result a contractor was selected, work to commence on 8 April 1975.

The Committee hope to be able to report that the problems with the mechanical services at the laboratory have been overcome.

Ministerial Party Room,
Parliament House,
12 August 1975.

R. MATHER, Chairman.