

1896.

VICTORIA.

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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON RAILWAYS.

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FOURTH GENERAL REPORT.

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PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE "RAILWAYS STANDING  
COMMITTEE ACT 1890" (54 VICT., No. 1177), SECTION 18.

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## MEMBERS OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE.

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### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The Honorable JAMES BUCHANAN  
The Honorable DONALD MELVILLE  
The Honorable EDWARD MOREY.

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### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

JOHN BALFOUR BURTON, Esquire  
EWEN HUGH CAMERON, Esquire  
ALBERT WILLIAM CRAVEN, Esquire  
ALBERT HARRIS, Esquire  
WILLIAM ARTHUR TRENWITH, Esquire  
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CHAIRMAN—EWEN HUGH CAMERON, ESQUIRE, M.L.A.

VICE-CHAIRMAN—THE HONORABLE DONALD MELVILLE, M.L.C.

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## FOURTH GENERAL REPORT.

*To His Excellency the RIGHT HONORABLE THOMAS, BARON BRASSEY, Knight Commander of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath; Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Colony of Victoria and its Dependencies, &c., &c., &c.*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

In accordance with the requirements of section 18 of the *Railways Standing Committee Act* 1890, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways have the honour to submit the following General Report of their proceedings since the 29th May, 1895, the date of their last General Report :—

1. When the Committee submitted their Third General Report, they had two important questions under consideration, viz., further extension of railways in the Mallee districts, and Narrow-gauge railways. These two subjects had been remitted to the Committee by the Legislative Assembly under the provisions of section 11 of the *Railways Standing Committee Act* 1893, No. 1350, by which either House of Parliament is empowered to refer railway questions—other than particular lines—for the consideration of the Committee.

Questions under consideration when Third General Report presented.

2. Owing to the number of extensions which were asked for by the holders of mallee land in different localities, the inquiry into the question of further extension of railways in the Mallee districts occupied the time of members of the Committee during nearly the whole of the parliamentary recess of 1895. In order to inspect the various routes, including a through line to Mildura, the Committee travelled 566 miles through mallee country, and they examined 90 witnesses. After fully considering the evidence, the Committee reported to the Legislative Assembly, on the 25th July, 1895, against further extensions in the mallee until Parliament had dealt with the land tenure and compensation questions, and as a Bill dealing with the settlement of the mallee country was then about to be submitted for the consideration of the Legislature, the Committee placed on record in their Report the very full information they had elicited during the inquiry, and also the statistics of settlement and production which they had collected in connexion with the different extensions asked for by the settlers. These statistics, together with the description of the country and the settlement, as well as the Committee's opinions regarding the quality of the soil in the vicinity of the various lines inspected, will, it is believed, be of use in indicating the directions in which any future extensions should proceed.

Mallee railway extension.

3. After seeking the fullest evidence on both sides of the question of Narrow-gauge railways, and obtaining information from Europe, India, and other countries where narrow-gauge lines have been built in recent years, the Committee passed the following resolution :—

Narrow-gauge railways.

“That this Committee, after fully considering all the evidence submitted, recommend the construction of 2-ft. gauge lines in districts where the traffic is not sufficient to justify the construction of broad-gauge railways.”

And, after dealing with the question in a full Report, the Committee concluded the same by recommending—

“1. That one or two trial lines, in suitable districts, be constructed on a gauge of 2 feet.

“2. That such districts be selected in the manner provided by the Railways Standing Committee Acts, the lines being submitted to the Assembly by the Minister for Railways, with the usual departmental estimate of the probable traffic, and the Engineer-in-Chief's estimate of the cost of constructing and equipping a 2-ft. line to carry that traffic, and to cope with any development that may reasonably be expected therein.

"3. That in addition to the departmental estimate of cost, tenders be invited for the construction and equipment (including rolling-stock) of the lines selected. Such tenders to be invited for the construction of lines—

(a) On the Decauville system.

(b) On the Bochumer-Verein system, with steel sleepers; and with 40-lb. steel rails and wooden sleepers;

(c) With wooden sleepers, and second-hand rails supplied by the Government."

"4. That the proposed lines, together with the estimates of traffic, cost, &c., and the various tenders sent in, be submitted to the Committee for inquiry and report."

This Report was presented to the Legislative Assembly on the 10th October, 1895.

Selection of localities for permanent surveys of narrow-gauge lines.

4. No action was taken to give effect to the Committee's recommendation until the 13th February, 1896, when the Legislative Assembly, on the motion of the Honorable the Minister for Railways, passed the following resolution:—

"That the question of selecting localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines of railway be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for consideration and report."

On the publication of this resolution the Committee received a large number of applications from all parts of the colony for a visit of inspection, and the claims of numerous districts, in comparatively level as well as in hilly country, were pressed on the Committee.

In order to limit the number of inspections as much as possible, the Committee, on the 20th February, 1896, passed the following resolution:—

"That districts desiring an inspection by the Committee be called on for a statement of their claims to a narrow-gauge railway, including statistics of population, cultivation, and other sources of traffic, in order that the Committee may form an opinion of the resources of each district before deciding to visit it."

With the aid of the information thus obtained, and the data contained in the Reports of the first Railways Standing Committee, as well as the knowledge of the colony gained during recent years by members of the present Committee, a number of localities have been selected for inspection. Full inquiry has been made into the prospects of the various districts visited, and evidence has been taken and statistics obtained with reference to each line inspected; this course has been followed in order that it may not be necessary to re-visit the districts and take further evidence when the construction of any of the lines is decided upon.

As soon as possible after Parliament meets, a Report will be presented to the Legislative Assembly, in which districts will be selected where the Committee think a fair test may be made of the value of 2-ft. gauge lines for opening up country where the expenditure necessary for the construction of a broad-gauge railway would not be justified.

The districts which have been inspected are as follows:—

The Beech Forest.

The Wandin and Warburton district.

The Gembrook district.

The Orbost and Snowy River district.

The Gunbower and Cohuna district.

The valley of the Upper King River.

The Carrajung district.

The Bass River Valley.

The Macdonald's Track district, between the main Gippsland and Great Southern lines.

5. During last Session three broad-gauge railways were remitted to the Committee for consideration and report.

The first of these was a line from Glenrowen to Edi, which was referred to the Committee on the 6th August, 1895, and reported upon on the 26th November. The Report was adverse to the construction of the line.

The second proposal—a short extension of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Shelbourne to Cousens' Corner—was remitted to the Committee on the 29th November, 1895, and reported upon on the 13th December. The construction of this railway was also reported against.

Broad-gauge railways remitted to Committee for inquiry.

Glenrowen to Edi Railway.

Shelbourne to Cousens' Corner Railway.

The third railway—an extension of 20 miles from Rupanyup to Marnoo—was remitted to the Committee on the 13th February, 1896, shortly before the close of last Session. During the recess the Committee have inspected this line and other alternative routes, and have almost completed the taking of evidence relative thereto. Shortly after Parliament meets they will present their Report on the proposal to the Legislative Assembly.

Rupanyup  
to Marnoo  
Railway.

6. On the 13th March last the Committee were requested by the Honorable the Minister for Railways to inquire into and report upon the suitability or otherwise of the plan adopted by the Acting Railways Commissioners for a new railway station at Flinders-street. As Parliament had been informed that the Committee would be consulted about the plan, it was decided to comply with the Minister's request, although the reference was outside of the Railways Standing Committee Acts, and as the Government were anxious to have the question dealt with as early as possible the Committee gave it precedence over all other business, as far as their engagements in connexion with the inspection of narrow-gauge lines would permit. They furnished a full Report to the Minister on the 27th May. The Committee were unanimously of opinion that the plan submitted to them for a central passenger station at Flinders-street was unsuitable.

Plan for new  
railway station  
at Flinders-  
street.

7. During the past year the Committee have held 127 meetings, of an average duration of 7½ hours per day, including the actual time spent in travelling. Witnesses to the number of 453 have been examined, while 5,082 miles have been travelled by rail, 1,484 miles by road, and 125 miles by steamer, in connexion with the inquiry into the questions which have been under the consideration of the Committee. Seven separate Reports have been compiled during the same period, viz. :—

The work of the  
past year.  
Meetings held.  
Witnesses  
examined.  
Distance  
travelled.  
Reports  
compiled.

Third General Report.

Report on the question of further extension of Railways in the Mallee Districts.

Report on the question of Narrow-gauge Railways.

Report on the Glenrowen to Edi Railway.

Report on the Shelbourne to Cousens' Corner Railway.

Report on the Plan of the New Flinders-street Station.

Fourth General Report.

The only questions now before the Committee remaining to be dealt with are—

Inquiries  
proceeding.

The Rupanyup to Marnoo Railway, and

The selection of localities for the permanent survey of narrow-gauge lines.

The various questions remitted to them have occupied the time and attention of members almost continuously on days on which Parliament has not met, to the almost total exclusion of other business, both public and private. During the comparatively short recess, which has now lasted 86 days, and which followed a prolonged and arduous Session, the business of the Committee has occupied 65 days, on 50 of which the Committee have been absent from Melbourne.

In addition to the actual time the Committee have been engaged in their work, members have had to spend a large amount of time in travelling to and from the various meetings. Owing, moreover, to the late period of the year to which Parliament sat, most of the inspecting has had to be done during the winter months.

8. The work of the Committee has been greatly increased by reason of the difficulty experienced in obtaining reliable statistics and other information as to the probable traffic on proposed lines. In view of the large expenditure involved in building a railway, and the cost of working it after it is constructed, it is of the utmost importance that a sound system should be enforced for gauging the probable traffic.

Mode of  
estimating  
prospective  
traffic on new  
lines.

The Committee have endeavoured to secure reliable and full reports on the prospects of new railways, by framing a regulation prescribing the facts which are to be supplied by the Department when submitting a line, but the information hitherto given has been meagre, and the particulars on which the estimates of traffic have been based have been so hurriedly collected, and in such a perfunctory manner, that they have not been able to stand investigation.



In New South Wales an experienced railway officer, with a knowledge of the quality of land and of the freight value of the varying products grown in different districts, is sent to inspect a projected line. He spends as much time as is requisite in going carefully through the district to be served by the extension; he personally collects statistics of the probable traffic from each holding, computes its freight value, and estimates the prospective development of the district by reason of the railway facilities to be afforded. He then reports to the Commissioners, who carefully review the returns. A full report by the Commissioners is then placed before the Public Works Standing Committee, whose duties in dealing with the line are thus greatly facilitated.

The Committee strongly urge that such a system be at once adopted in this colony.

New railways  
and "better-  
ment."

9. The numerous holders of land who have been examined as witnesses during the past year have, almost without exception, expressed their readiness to accept some responsibility in connexion with the construction of new railways which will enhance the value of their property and enable them to use their land to the best advantage.

Most of those who are depending on their land for a livelihood, and who are living on their holdings, but cannot, at present, cultivate to any extent owing to the absence of means for getting their produce to market, state their willingness to guarantee a certain number of tons of freight per annum in proportion to the area held, and it is urged by such settlers that those who do not use their land should be subjected to a special rate per acre, in the event of a line proving unremunerative when constructed. There is in almost every district visited a considerable area of land which is not put to any use which would furnish freight for a line.

Area of selectors'  
holdings in  
forest country.

10. In several districts, more especially in forest country, such, for instance, as the Beech Forest or the Tolmie district beyond Mansfield, many of the occupiers of land who are in course of acquiring their freehold have informed the Committee that they find their holdings far too large, and that they could do very much better by concentrating their energies on a smaller area and having a less sum to pay for rent. Several persons so situated have expressed a readiness to relinquish part of their holdings with a view to an increased settlement, which would improve the claims of the districts to railway facilities.

The acquisition  
of land for new  
railways.

11. The Committee have observed a statement in the public press that the line from Nathalia to Picola, the construction of which was authorized some time ago by Parliament, is to be proceeded with, notwithstanding the fact that the provisions of the Railway Lands Acquisition Act have not been complied with. The Picola Railway League, it is stated, has deposited with the Honorable the Treasurer sufficient money for the purchase of the land required. It would appear from this that the Railway Department will have to acquire the land. This line was recommended by the first Railways Standing Committee on condition that "previous to its construction all land required shall be handed over to the Railway Department free of cost and without any compensation for severance or otherwise"; and that Committee pointed out very forcibly, in paragraph 22 of their First General Report, the exorbitant prices which the State had to pay in acquiring land for railway purposes, a sum of £1,233,192 being paid for the land taken for the lines authorized under the Railway Construction Act of 1884. Judging by the experience of the past the State will probably have to pay considerably more for the land for the Picola line than the local estimate of its value.

Conference with  
the New South  
Wales Railways  
Commissioners.

12. In connexion with the inquiry into the plan for the new Flinders-street station previously referred to, the Committee proceeded to Sydney to consult the Chief Commissioner and his colleagues there and to inspect the Redfern terminus, and they desire to take this opportunity of expressing their indebtedness to those gentlemen for the valuable information afforded to the Committee, not only in connexion with the proposed plan for the new station, but on matters of railway construction and management generally. Under the guidance of the Chief Out-door Traffic Superintendent, the Committee inspected the terminus at Redfern, and the goods shed, agricultural produce shed, and parcels offices there; also the new outward-goods shed at Darling Harbor and the wool shed at the same place, where the wool traffic of Sydney is now

dealt with. Accompanied by Mr. Eddy and his colleagues, they also inspected a portion of the suburban system and the through line from Sydney to Bathurst, on which important regrading works are being carried out.

During the visit Mr. Eddy drew the attention of the Committee to what they consider an excellent suggestion made by the Railways Commissioners to the Government of New South Wales with a view to "the whole of the colonies obtaining the benefit of the united ability employed by the various Governments." The suggestion is as follows :—

"We have held the view that great advantage could be obtained by all the Railways of Australasia if an annual meeting of the principal officers were held to discuss various matters of importance in connexion with the working of the lines; these meetings to be followed by a meeting of the Commissioners, or by the Chairmen of the respective Boards, so as to give executive effect to any recommendations which might be made. At these meetings all questions of importance affecting the economic and efficient working of the various branches of the service could be discussed, and the whole of the colonies would obtain the benefit of the united ability employed by the various Governments. Such meetings would also, in our opinion, bring about a broader view on all railway questions and promote harmonious working.

"Beyond a special meeting in regard to the adoption of a uniform rule book and the discussion of a uniform classification of goods, nothing has been done, principally owing to the change in system of railway control in Victoria.

"The question, however, is of such great importance to the whole of the colonies that it is brought forward again in this manner in the hope that the idea may bear fruit in the future."

No railway officer could travel over the New South Wales lines without learning a good deal which would be of advantage to the users of the Victorian railways.

Many improvements which affect the safety and comfort of the travelling public, as well as the financial results of the railway system of New South Wales, have been carried out there during recent years, and the Committee were greatly impressed with much that they saw during their visit. The improvement in the condition of the permanent way must strike the most casual observer. In all renewals on main lines a heavier rail is used in place of that taken up; the best ironbark sleepers are substituted for those previously in use; and bluestone or other hard metal ballast has been laid over many miles of line. The road is kept in splendid order, although it is stated that the permanent-way staff is some hundreds less now than when the present Commissioners took office.

A thorough system of outdoor supervision by means of Outdoor Traffic Superintendents has been initiated, and it is the custom of the Commissioners to travel at frequent intervals over the lines.

The Committee looked over a large number of roadside stations, and they found the arrangement of the various buildings—ticket offices, waiting rooms, and retiring rooms—very convenient and simple. The strictest attention is paid to the cleanliness of all the retiring rooms; the condition of those the Committee saw could not be improved upon.

The accommodation at the railway refreshment rooms, as well as the time given to passengers to get a meal and the promptness with which meals are served, are such as to be appreciated by travellers on long journeys.

Special efforts are made to secure the punctuality of the various train services, and frequent periodical reports have to be made to the Commissioners, showing every delay and the reason for it.

The carriages are lit by means of gas, manufactured at the departmental gas-works. The Committee were informed that the cost of the gas was very reasonable, and the light is effective.

The passenger carriage stock is kept under cover for economical reasons, and admirable arrangements for cleaning the cars by means of long troughs, hoses, and other appliances exist at Redfern station.

The organization and discipline of the staff appears excellent, and the *esprit de corps* which exists adds greatly to the efficiency of the service. A handsome institute, which the Committee had much pleasure in inspecting, has been built at Redfern for the recreation and improvement of the Railway staff. There is a reading room, lecture room, class rooms, and an excellent library in the building.

13. The Committee intimated in their Third General Report that, as any divisions which take place have to be stated in their Reports, which are always printed, and as the minute-book is available for inspection at any time, they had discontinued the practice of attaching to the General Report printed Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee.

During the past year the practice of reporting the evidence of witnesses in the form of question and answer has been discontinued to a large extent ; a simple report of the statements elicited from the several witnesses being substituted. This mode of reporting has been concurred in and admirably given effect to by the Government Shorthand Writer.

As 127 meetings have been held during the year, and 453 witnesses have been examined, the practice adopted by the Committee has resulted in a very considerable saving in the cost of printing.

E. H. CAMERON, Chairman. (L.S.)

D. MELVILLE, Vice-Chairman. (L.S.)

J. BALFOUR BURTON. (L.S.)

A. W. CRAVEN. (L.S.)

ALBERT HARRIS. (L.S.)

E. MOREY. (L.S.)

JOHN S. WHITE. (L.S.)

THOS. G. WATSON,  
Clerk of Committees.

Railways Standing Committee Room,  
Parliament House, Melbourne, 16th June, 1896.