

1912.

VICTORIA.

REPORT

FROM

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS**

OF THE PROPOSED

TALLANGATTA TO CUDGEWA RAILWAY;

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND BOOK OF REFERENCE.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 10th October, 1912.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1912.

9. TALLANGATTA TO CUDGEWA RAILWAY.—Mr. McBride, in accordance with the requirements of the Railways Standing Committee Acts, moved, pursuant to notice, That the construction of a 5ft. 3in. gauge railway from Tallangatta to Cudgewa be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for consideration and report.

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

(Tenth Committee.)

The Hon. E. H. CAMERON, M.L.A., Chairman ;

J. W. Billson, Esq., M.L.A.,
The Hon. A. Hicks, M.L.C.,
W. Hutchinson, Esq., M.L.A.,

The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C.
(Vice-Chairman),
E. C. Warde, Esq., M.L.A.

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REPORT.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS, to which the Legislative Assembly referred the question of constructing a 5ft. 3in. gauge railway from Tallangatta to Cudgewa, has the honour to report as follows :—

DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICT.

1. In July, 1911, the Committee presented a Report to the Legislative Assembly on the general question of railway connexion with the Upper Murray district, and therein gave its reasons for recommending the extension of the Tallangatta broad-gauge line by way of Koetong, Berringama, and Wabba to Cudgewa in preference to the route *viâ* Bethanga and the Murray River Valley, through Burrowye and Walwa to Tintaldra or Towong. It was stated in that Report that the Upper Murray district is in the extreme north-eastern part of Victoria, and, although it is an extensive one, it is practically isolated, owing to the absence of railway facilities and of good roads, the grades of the latter being in many places very steep. This country consists of numerous ranges, hills, and valleys, through which perennial streams flow. The land on the hills is well timbered, but it is, generally speaking, of poor quality, and is used for grazing sheep. Most of the timber is also inferior and of little value for milling purposes. Down the hill slopes the soil improves, and a large area of this land could, when cleared of trees, which are either stunted or of medium size only, be used for growing cereals. The district has a rainfall of from 30 to 40 inches per annum and a mild climate. Bordering on the Murray, on both sides of the river and on the numerous creeks flowing into that stream, are valleys containing very fertile soil suitable for the production of maize, potatoes, onions, &c., but the total acreage in Victoria of these rich flats is not more than about one-tenth of the area on the south side of the river which would be served by a railway running into the district. In New South Wales, across the Murray from Tintaldra and Towong, there are some broad fertile flats which would be within reasonable access of a railway terminating at Cudgewa. These rich lands are almost wholly used for grazing sheep, cattle, and horses, and for the production of crops for local consumption. As, however, the number of residents in the locality is not large, the cultivation is limited to a small area, on most of which fodder is grown for the dairy herds around Tintaldra and Corryong, and oaten hay is produced for the teams carrying goods between Tallangatta and the Upper Murray district. The fertile valleys referred to are at present from 50 to 70 miles from a railway station, and the cartage charges are an effectual bar to growing cereals or root crops for sale in the markets of the North-Eastern and Albury districts or in Melbourne, which is about 275 miles distant. Yields of wheat averaging 20 bushels per acre; oats, 35 bushels; barley, 30 bushels; maize, 70 bushels; potatoes, 5 tons; and onions, 7 tons, have been obtained. Nearly all the land-holders rely on grazing for their livelihood, but many of the smaller ones have dairy herds, there being butter factories at Corryong and Tintaldra, and a cheese factory at Walwa. A little mining is carried on in the district, but as the ores are refractory, and expensive machinery and plant is required to deal with them, the industry is at a low ebb. The cost of carting butter from Corryong to Tallangatta is 35s. a ton, while 40s. to 45s. per ton is charged for carrying merchandise from Tallangatta to that town, a distance of 50 miles by road. The cartage charges between Jingellic and Albury are from 35s. to 40s. per ton either way. Such rates are a drawback to the district, and land settlement and production are not likely to take place in the valleys of the Upper Murray until railway facilities are provided, with cheap rates of carriage. It is useless under present conditions growing cereals, potatoes, onions, &c., as such crops could not be marketed at a profit. All the fat live stock from the district have to be driven to Tallangatta, Ebdon (Bethanga), or Wodonga and trucked there to the

Melbourne market. The comparatively long distance which fat sheep, lambs, and pigs have to travel before they can be trucked reduces their condition and deteriorates their value, and the same may be said of fat cattle.

COST OF RAILWAY.

2. The mountainous and rugged nature of the country traversed makes railway construction both difficult and costly. The proposed railway would start from the terminus of the Wodonga-Tallangatta line and proceed eastwards for 21 miles up the range to Koetong, and thence down the hills through Berringama and Wabba to Cudgewa, which is $42\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Tallangatta. The ascent would be up the valleys of Dry Forest, Darbyshire, and Koetong creeks, and the descent down Boundary and Cudgewa creeks. To cheapen the cost of construction as much as possible the ruling grade of the line was made 1 in 30, which is the steepest used on the Victorian railways for either broad or narrow gauge lines. For the same reason, the curves are to be 8 chains radius, that being considered by the Railways Commissioners to be the sharpest for a 5ft. 3in. line over which their standard rolling-stock can be run with safety. The construction cost of the Tallangatta-Cudgewa railway is estimated by Mr. M. E. Kernct, Chief Engineer for Railway Construction, at £282,670. These figures are based on an average wage rate of 8s. 6d. per day for labourers. The chief item of expenditure will be the earthworks, which are estimated to cost £107,200. The cuttings will involve the removal of 633,750 cubic yards of material, at an average outlay of 2s. 9d. per yard. Side cuttings are set down at 300,900 cubic yards, at 1s. 4d. per yard. In answer to questions asked by the Committee the officers of the Construction Branch stated that the permanent survey had shown that rock would be met with in the granitic country both in the ascent to and descent from Koetong, and the expense of excavating it had to be provided for. Owing to the broken nature of the surface, spoil from the cuttings would have to be carted several chains to fill up depressions or to make embankments so as to obtain a 1 in 30 grade. Included in the estimate of the cost of the extension is close on 44 miles of new 60-lb. steel rails for the line and sidings at £850 per mile, and about 10 miles of check railing around the sharp curves to secure greater safety in working the railway. These rails will entail an expenditure of over £40,000. A sum of £24,000 is set down for bridges and culverts, numerous creeks and water-courses having to be crossed. Ballast, metalling, and gravelling station grounds and platforms are expected to cost £19,000; sleepers, £17,000; station buildings and residences for employées, £9,000; and surveys, engineering, supervision, and provision for general expenses and contingencies, £30,000. Mr. Kernct reported that if second-hand serviceable rails became available the cost would be reduced by about £250 per mile, or a total of upwards of £10,000 for the full length of the railway. On leaving Koetong township the permanent survey takes a southerly course up the valley of Koetong Creek. Approaching the head of that stream it bends towards the north, with a station about a mile south of the main road from Tallangatta to Cudgewa. The Committee inquired whether the survey, on reaching the summit at Koetong, could be carried along the north instead of the south side of the main road, so that the railway might better meet the requirements of those in the Murray Valley near Walwa. The surveyors, however, said they had tried that route, but had found the deviation would lengthen the line by 5 miles and add £33,000 to its cost, besides increasing the working and maintenance expenses. When the Committee reported in 1911 on the general question of railway connexion with the Upper Murray district and favoured the extension of the Tallangatta line, it thought that the first station on the new railway would be placed close to the junction of the Cudgewa and Tallangatta Valley roads, near Bullich post-office, about 4 miles from Tallangatta, so as to serve the farmers in that valley. On inspecting the plan of the permanent survey, however, it was seen that the site of the station was at the 5-mile peg on the east side of Granya-road, about a mile and a quarter east of the Tallangatta Valley-road. The surveyors explained that a station site at the 4-mile peg would be on ground subject to flooding. They had chosen the shortest route obtainable so as to lessen the capital cost of the railway. If the line had to be curved southwards nearer to the Tallangatta Valley-road it would add 32 chains to the length and £2,600 to the cost of the railway. Recognising the importance of having a station as close to the outlet of the Tallangatta Valley as possible, the Committee last week inspected an alternative site at the rear of an old dwelling about 45 chains east of the junction of the Cudgewa and Tallangatta Valley roads, and although the adoption of this site will add £2,500 to the cost of the railway, the Committee decided to recommend this deviation in the permanent survey so that the line may be of better service to residents of Tallangatta Valley.

AREA SERVED.

3. From a few miles east of Tallangatta to within a short distance of Cudgewa, a length of nearly 30 miles, the line would pass over timbered hills. The timber, which is mostly stringybark, peppermint, and messmate, is of little value for milling purposes. From Cudgewa eastwards to the Murray River the country is fairly flat and lightly timbered. It is watered by Cudgewa, Nariel, and Thowgla creeks. Corryong, which is the leading township in the Upper Murray district, is 8 miles from the terminus of the proposed line, Towong being about 7 miles further on. Tintaldra can be reached in 13 or 14 miles from Cudgewa by following down the Cudgewa Valley-road. It was computed that close on 1,000,000 acres in Victoria and New South Wales would be benefited by a railway to Cudgewa. Included in that area on both sides of the Murray River were some 90,000 acres of fertile flats fit for intensive culture, as they could be irrigated from the neighbouring streams. Such land, it was urged, should be put to better use than grazing cattle and sheep. Mr. C. Barber and Mr. J. S. Mitchell, officers of the Traffic Branch of the Railway Department, who visited the district to estimate the traffic over the proposed railway from Tallangatta, *via* Koetong to Cudgewa, reported that the territory in Victoria tributary to this line was approximately 545,000 acres, which for the most part was rugged, mountainous country, of poor quality, fit only for grazing. They considered that about 60,000 acres of river and creek flats and foot-hills adjacent to the water-courses on the Victorian side were suitable for cultivation. A fair percentage, however, of the flats were subject to floods. The land across the Murray, with the exception of the flats, was, if anything, poorer in quality than that on the Victorian side of the river. They added that they did not expect any great development in cultivation would follow the construction of a railway into the Upper Murray district, but there would be a large expansion of the dairying industry. The Committee ascertained from the Lands Department that the total area of Crown lands in that district is 183,602 acres. There are no first or second class lands available for selection. A total area of 67,665 acres of third class Crown lands is available. The area held under pastoral leases totalled 47,200 acres, while 66,930 acres are reserved for forestry purposes, and 1,584 acres for mining. In addition, 175,976 acres are held under grazing lease, out of which the lessees or their wives or children can select various areas, according to the quality of the soil. Mr. J. M. Reed, Surveyor-General, informed the Committee that it was not possible to give any reliable information as to how much of this land is likely to revert to the Crown on the expiry of the leases, owing to the facilities afforded by recent legislation for family selection.

TOURISTS' TRAFFIC.

4. An additional reason urged in support of a railway to the Upper Murray was that there is some magnificent scenery in the district, and that these natural attractions would induce a tourists' traffic over the line, which would also give a shorter and easier route to Mount Kosciusko.

POPULATION, PRODUCTION, ETC.

5. The Traffic Officers of the Railway Department reported that about $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. only, or, say, 2,500 acres, of the 545,000 acres on the Victorian side of the Murray tributary to the Cudgewa line is at present under cultivation. The population within that area is approximately 2,000 persons, while on the New South Wales side not more than 100 people would be served by a line *via* Cudgewa to Tintaldra. Returns submitted by local witnesses showed that 10,000 head of cattle, mostly fats; 20,000 sheep, many of which were fats; and 500 or 600 horses were sent from the Upper Murray district in 1908. The Traffic Officers, whose figures were based on information furnished by the Government Statist and also by local residents, stated the number of live stock on Victorian territory which would be benefited by the railway was as follows:—Dairy cows, 3,500; other cattle, 18,000; sheep, 75,000; horses, 2,500; and pigs, 1,000. They considered that if the railway terminated at Cudgewa 800 trucks of live stock would be sent over the new line during the first year it was opened for traffic. This estimate of live-stock traffic was, they explained, based on the number of trucks despatched last year over the Tallangatta-Wodonga line. They added that the timber adjacent to the proposed line was of poor quality, and not more than 2,000 tons per annum were likely to be carried over the new railway. About 2,500 tons of

agricultural produce, principally potatoes, oats, and maize, would be consigned from the Upper Murray district in the first twelve months following the completion of the railway. The other chief items of outwards traffic were:—Wool, 325 tons; dairy produce (butter, cheese, eggs, &c.), 700 tons; and rabbits, 400 tons. The inwards traffic was set down by them at 5,300 tons, consisting mainly of groceries, drapery, ironmongery, fencing wire, and wire netting. When questioned by the Committee as to why they had not allowed for more than 2,500 tons of agricultural produce to be sent by rail out of the district during the first year the line was opened, the Traffic Officers said that a large portion of the crops grown would be consumed locally by the dairy herds, and that a fair percentage of the rich flats, being liable to periodical inundations, would not be cultivated, as once the covering of grass was broken up and the land tilled the floods would wash away the loose soil. Moreover, there were similar rich flats in the Tallangatta and Mitta valleys within a few miles of existing railway stations, and they were mostly used for grazing and not for cultivation. There was no reason, therefore, for assuming that the fertile lands adjoining the rivers and creeks around Cudgewa, Tintaldra, and Corryong, which were further away from the markets of the North-Eastern and Albury districts and more remote from Melbourne, would be used differently.

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND WORKING EXPENSES.

6. The estimates of annual working expenses, interest charges, and revenue, as furnished by the Railways Commissioners, were as under for a daily train each way over the new line:—

ANNUAL CHARGES.

Interest at 4 per cent. per annum on £284,115, being £282,670, cost of constructing 42 miles of 5ft. 3in. railway, with 8-chain curves, from Tallangatta to Cudgewa, with £1,445 added for rolling-stock	£11,364	12	0
Traffic expenses	710	1	4
Maintenance charges	3,187	10	0
Locomotive expenses, including repairs and renewals of rolling-stock	1,932	18	2
General charges	145	15	3
Total annual charges	£17,340	16	9

REVENUE.

(Based on local rates on New Line.)

	On New Line.	On other Lines from New Traffic from New Line.	
Passengers	£1,832	£240	10 0 0
Parcels	370	20	0 0 0
Mails	315	..	0 0 0
Class goods	3,609	303	1 3 0 0
Wool	190	51	3 9 0 0
Live stock	1,219	121	4 0 4 0
Timber	250	50	0 0 0 0
Agricultural produce	415	146	12 6 5 0
Dairy produce and rabbits	404	376	15 10 15 0
All other traffic	110	..	0 0 ..
	£8,716	£1,308	7 4 4 0 10,024 11 4
Estimated annual loss	£7,316 5 5

RECOMMENDATION OF COMMITTEE.

7. When the Committee in July, 1911, recommended the construction of a railway from Tallangatta to Cudgewa, showing an estimated loss of upwards of £7,000 for the first year following the opening of the line, it did so conditionally on the land-owners in Victoria who would be benefited by the building and working of the railway being rated to meet half the annual deficiency, the reference by the Legislative Assembly on that occasion having provided for a "deficiency rate." The present reference contains no such provision. Under these circumstances, the Committee had to consider whether it should not set aside its former recommendation because the line has no prospect of paying for several years. After inspecting the Upper Murray country again, however, the Committee is still of opinion that this extension has every claim to be regarded as a developmental railway. It will give a rapid and cheap means of transport to an extensive district which is from 50 to 75 miles from a railway. It will make a

large area of Crown lands more accessible, and will afford facilities for settlement and increased production. The fertile river and creek flats and also the foot-hills which contain soils of fair quality should be put to better and more profitable use than grazing cattle and sheep, and this will be done if a railway is made to Cudgewa, giving the land-owners encouragement to cultivate their holdings to a much greater extent than they do now. The line will also secure to this State trade from an important part of New South Wales. Viewing the proposal from its developmental aspect, the Committee recommends the construction of a 5ft. 3in. railway from Tallangatta through Koetong to Cudgewa, a length of 42 miles 3 chains, at an estimated cost of £282,670, with £2,500 added for the station site nearer Tallangatta Valley-road, and also £1,445 for rolling-stock.

E. H. CAMERON,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne, 10th October, 1912.

[Minutes of Evidence are not printed.]