

1916.

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VICTORIA.

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# REPORT

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON RAILWAYS

ON THE QUESTION OF

RAILWAY CONNEXION BETWEEN THE  
DOOKIE AND YARRAWONGA LINES ;

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND PLAN.

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*Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 9th November, 1916.*

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RAILWAYS STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT No. 2.—[6d.]—13351.

EXTRACTED FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

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THURSDAY, 17TH DECEMBER, 1914.

3. LINES OF RAILWAY REFERRED TO STANDING COMMITTEE.—Mr. Mackinnon moved, pursuant to notice, That the following questions be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for inquiry and report :—

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(11) The question of connecting the Dookie to Katamatite and the Benalla to Yarrawonga railways by means of a railway.

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Debate ensued.

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

*(Eleventh Committee.)*

S. BARNES, Esq., M.L.A., Chairman ;

The Hon. J. W. Billson, M.L.A.,  
The Hon. A. Hicks, M.L.C.,  
The Hon. D. Melville, M.L.C.  
(Vice-Chairman),

R. H. Solly, Esq., M.L.A.,  
R. F. Toutcher, Esq., M.L.A.

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\* The compilation was a portion of the work of the Secretary of the Railways Standing Committee, who is paid by annual salary.

# REPORT.

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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS, to which the Legislative Assembly referred the question of connecting the Dookie to Katamatite and the Benalla to Yarrawonga railways by means of a railway, has the honour to report as follows:—

## PROPOSALS SUBMITTED.

1. Four proposals for connecting the Dookie and Katamatite railway with the Benalla and Yarrawonga line by means of a broad-gauge railway were placed before the Committee by the local residents, namely, from near Cosgrove, a station on the Shepparton and Dookie line, to Chesney, a station a few miles north of Benalla; from Dookie to Goorambat; from Dookie to Devenish; and from Dookie to St. James. All these proposed lines would pass over fairly level country, so that the earthworks would not be costly. It would be necessary, however, to provide bridges over the Broken Creek of a sufficient height and length to prevent any likelihood of the railway being flooded and traffic interrupted. Mr. Kernot, Chief Engineer for Railway Construction, informed the Committee that the line from near Cosgrove to Chesney passing along the north side of the Broken River would be about 21 miles in length, and would have a ruling gradient of 1 in 80. Its cost was estimated at £78,000. He stated that the line from Dookie to Goorambat would be 15 miles 30 chains in length, and with a ruling gradient of 1 in 50 would involve an outlay of approximately £62,000. The Dookie to Devenish connexion would be  $12\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length, and with a ruling gradient of 1 in 66 would cost, roughly, £52,000. A trial survey showed that the line from Dookie to St. James would be 12 miles 61 chains in length, and with a ruling gradient of 1 in 83 would necessitate an expenditure of £51,500. The above costs were for fenced lines laid with new 60-lb. steel rails, and the prices were based on rates for material ruling just prior to the war. In computing these estimates the wage rate for labourers had been taken at 9s. per day. If serviceable second-hand rails became available the cost would be reduced by about £300 a mile.

2. It was urged in support of the Cosgrove—Chesney connexion that it would serve about 35,000 acres around Gowangardie, Nalinga, and Stewarton which were more than 10 miles from a railway station, and would tap a large area of alluvial land in the valley of the Broken River which would be closely settled if nearer railway facilities were provided, as it could be irrigated from that stream or from the Broken Creek, and could be used for the production of soft fruits, currants, raisins, &c. A large quantity of box timber which had been growing on this land had been mostly ring-barked, and could be cut for firewood and despatched over the new line to Melbourne. Some thousands of redgum and box sleepers for railway purposes could, it was said, be obtained in this neighbourhood. At present the greater part of the land is used for grazing, but if the timber were removed it would be put under cultivation and used for cereal and fruit growing. The average yield of wheat in this district was slightly over 20 bushels to the acre.

## CLAIMS FOR A CONNECTING RAILWAY.

3. The claims for the other three connecting railways rested mainly on the contention that any one of them, if built, would give a much shorter route by rail between the Goulburn Valley and the North-Eastern districts than the existing railroad by way of Mangalore, and thus lead to new trade connexions and the development of rural industries by making fresh markets available. In the case of the Dookie—Devenish connexion it was pointed out, however, that the line would pass close to an extensive deposit of limestone of good quality, and that the lime made there would give traffic to the railway, as there would be a large demand for it for building purposes and also for spreading over the irrigated lands in the Goulburn

Valley. It is essential that the lucerne fields at the irrigation settlements should receive a dressing of agricultural lime every few years. In addition to affording facilities for the interchange of products the connexion would, because of the shorter mileage, be of value to persons travelling between the North-Eastern district and the Goulburn Valley towns. Furthermore, the proposed line from Dookie to Goorambat would pass close to the Dookie Agricultural College, and would thus greatly convenience visitors to that institution.

4. Witnesses at Benalla stated that a railway linking up the Yarrawonga and Dookie lines would enable supplies of sawn timber, potatoes, and onions from the Tatong and Toombullup district to be sent at a much cheaper rate into the Goulburn Valley than by the present route *viâ* Mangalore. The distance from Tatong to Shepparton by the new railway connexion would be but  $64\frac{1}{2}$  miles, as compared with  $116\frac{1}{2}$  miles by way of Mangalore. The rate for the carriage of potatoes and onions by the shorter route would be 6s. 6d. per ton, as against 9s. 6d. per ton *viâ* Mangalore, whilst the charge for sawn timber would be 5s. 5d. per ton over the new connexion, as compared with 8s. 7d. by the existing route.

5. The principal reason urged by those along the Benalla-Yarrawonga line in support of the linking-up of the Yarrawonga and Dookie railways was that co-operative freezing works had recently been established at Shepparton, and that many of the farmers in the districts east of the Yarrawonga line were shareholders in that undertaking, and were desirous of trucking their lambs and sheep direct from their station *viâ* Dookie to the Shepparton works. These works were capable of dealing with 2,000 lambs a day, and had a storage capacity of 40,000 carcasses. In the 1914 season 27,000 lambs were purchased in the Benalla and Yarrawonga districts, and most of them were driven across to Shepparton by road, because when they reached Dookie the distance into Shepparton, 17 miles, was too short to truck them. It took from 7 to 12 days to drive the lambs from districts east of the Yarrawonga railway to Shepparton. This was too long, and resulted in the deterioration of the lambs and loss in value. The manager of the works explained, however, that if the connecting line were made all the lambs would be railed the whole distance, and the number purchased in the Yarrawonga and North-Eastern districts would be increased to at least 40,000 sheep and lambs annually.

6. It was also stated that it was the intention of the company to establish a fruit-canning factory in connexion with its freezing works at Shepparton, and that if the Dookie and Yarrawonga railways were linked up it would give the factory command of the markets in the North-Eastern and Albury districts for its canned fruits. The manager of the butter factory at Shepparton stated that a canning plant was also being installed at those works, and that the railway connexion between Dookie and Devenish would assist the development and encouragement of fresh trade. It was necessary that an outlet should be found for the increasing supplies of peaches, apricots, and pears, which were being extensively grown on the irrigation holdings around Shepparton. By having the canning factories close to the orchards it was expected that 65 per cent. of the fruit received at the works would be fit for canning. When railed to Melbourne or over a long distance not more than 25 per cent. was found suitable for canning on reaching the factory, and the remaining 75 per cent. had to be made into jam.

7. A further reason for the proposed connecting railway was that it would afford a shorter route for the transport of soft fruits from the Mooroopna and Ardmona orchards to Sydney. At present the supplies are sent by rail by way of Mangalore. The connexion by way of Dookie and Devenish would save close on 50 miles, and consequently was expected to give quicker despatch over the railways to Albury and Sydney. There would, however, be no reduction in the freight rate because of the lesser mileage over the new route, as by special arrangement the Railway Departments of Victoria and New South Wales had agreed to a joint charge of 30s. per ton on all fruit carried over the Victorian and New South Wales lines to Sydney, and this minimum rate could not be reduced. For some time, however, the Ardmona fruit-growers have been endeavouring to have their supplies railed to Sydney by way of Tocumwal, as this route would be only 20 miles longer than by way of Dookie, Devenish, Benalla, and Albury.

8. Extensive deposits of stone suitable for metalling country roads exist close to Dookie railway station. The Shepparton and Rodney shire councils have combined and purchased a quarry there. Supplies of metal are required for making roads in the district lying between Benalla and Yarrawonga, and it was pointed out that these could be obtained at Dookie and railed to Devenish, St. James, Tungamah, and Yarrawonga if a connexion were made between the Yarrawonga and Dookie lines. At present the metal supplied to the towns along the Yarrawonga line comes from Glenrowan. But it was stated that that stone was not so durable as the deposit at Dookie.

9. It was also urged that the linking-up of the Yarrawonga and Dookie railways would aid the decentralization movement, and would assist the Railway Department in the interchange of rolling-stock. A witness at Dookie stated that "Lots of root crops grown in the Tatong and Whitfield districts are sent to Melbourne, and eventually work their way back to Mangalore and then on to here. This means a greatly increased price to the consumer by the time the potatoes, &c., get to Dookie." Much of this increased price, however, could be avoided if the storekeepers at Dookie obtained their supplies direct from the growers or dealers at Tatong or Whitfield, thus obviating the needless expense of railway transport from Mangalore to Melbourne and back and the commission of the agent at Melbourne.

#### INTERCHANGE OF ROLLING-STOCK.

10. As to the interchange of rolling-stock the Railways Commissioners informed the Committee that the proposed connexion "would be no use to the Railway Department in so far as the interchange of rolling-stock is concerned, and it is doubtful, if the line were extended from Dookie to Devenish—the nearest point on the Yarrawonga line—whether the service could be so arranged that the train could leave Devenish on the return journey in time to make its connexion with the afternoon Goulburn Valley train at Shepparton." They added that, in view of the Dookie-Katamatite service having to be continued, a separate train and crew would be required to operate the Dookie extension to the Yarrawonga railway.

#### PROBABLE FINANCIAL RESULTS.

11. Estimates of revenue and annual charges obtained from the Railways Commissioners in 1909 showed that the proposed Dookie to Devenish connecting line would in the first year of operation cause a loss of £1,898 for a tri-weekly service, whilst the railway connexion from Cosgrove to Goorambat would, with a similar train service, earn £2,574 less than the interest charges and working expenses. No credit, however, was given for any revenue for the carriage of firewood over the Cosgrove-Goorambat line, as it was considered by the Traffic Officers of the Railway Department that the local rates of 2s. or 2s. 3d. a ton for the haulage of firewood from Nalinga or Gowan-gardie to Cosgrove would prevent any such traffic. As railway local rates have now been abolished, and as the demand in the metropolis for box firewood is increasing, it may be assumed that supplies of that fuel would be sent from near Nalinga over the new railway to Melbourne. This would, allowing for the cost of haulage on one hand, and crediting the Cosgrove-Chesney line on the other with 40 per cent. of the revenue earned from the carriage of that firewood over existing railways, reduce the estimated loss to about £1,900 during the first year of operation of the new line. Against these estimated losses has to be placed the increased estimated cost of construction compared with the figures given in 1909, when wages and the prices of rails and materials were less. In the case of the Cosgrove-Chesney line the additional capital outlay is put down at £17,000, which, at 4 per cent., means an extra interest charge of £680, and as the wages of the train crew and line-repairers and cost of fuel have also increased since 1909 the added annual charges may be stated roughly at £800. The additional capital expenditure on the Dookie-Devenish connexion would be £10,000. This would mean £400 a year in interest and, say, £80 more per annum for working and maintenance expenses.

12. Assuming that the establishment of the freezing works at Shepparton would add £400 or £500 a year to the railway revenue of the new line, it will be seen that the Dookie-Devenish connexion would still show a loss of about £1,900 a year, even if the money required for its construction could be borrowed at 4 per cent. interest. If 5 per cent. had to be paid for the loan funds the loss would be approximately £2,400 in the first year following the opening of the connexion. It is doubtful if the Cosgrove-Chesney line would secure the same through live-stock traffic as the Dookie-Devenish connexion, being a longer route from the Yarrawonga district to Shepparton. But assuming that

it did the estimated loss on the first year of operation would in that case, after allowing for the firewood traffic, be about £2,200 if the money were borrowed at 4 per cent. If 5 per cent. interest had to be paid the deficiency would reach close on £3,000. These losses would be further increased if, as stated by the Railways Commissioners, a separate train and crew had to be employed to operate the connecting line.

13. As there were upwards of a million sheep and lambs in the North-Eastern district immediately prior to the drought of 1914-15 there should be an opening for the establishment of freezing works at Benalla. If this were done it would largely reduce the expected traffic in sheep and lambs over the proposed connecting railway.

#### TIMBER TRAFFIC.

14. The Committee does not concur in the opinion expressed by several witnesses that there would be a fair traffic in sawn timber over the suggested connecting line between the Dookie and Yarrawonga railways, as the Tatong and Toombullup sawmillers would then be able to send hardwood to the Goulburn Valley towns and into Riverina through Tocumwal. All the allotments at the closer settlements around Shepparton have been occupied and dwellings and outbuildings erected thereon, so that the demand from that source for sawn hardwood cannot now be large. The only irrigable estates resumed by the Government awaiting settlement are in the Rushworth-Stanhope district, and the settlers there will be able to get their supplies of building timber as cheaply from the sawmills at Cheviot, on the Mansfield line, as they could from the mills at Tatong and Toombullup, even if the proposed Dookie-Devenish or Cosgrove-Chesney connecting railway were constructed. With the opening of the line from Wagga to the timbered country at Tumberumba there is but little likelihood of the Toombullup sawmillers being able to successfully compete for the timber requirements at Yanco Irrigation Settlement or at towns along the Narrandera-Jerilderie railway, because of the railway rates in the two States operating on their consignments in addition to the junctioning or transfer charge at Tocumwal.

#### ROAD METAL AND LIME DEPOSITS.

15. As to the carriage of road metal from the quarries near Dookie to stations on the Yarrawonga railway it must not be overlooked that stone for municipal requirements is carried over the railways at an exceptionally low rate, being barely sufficient to cover working and maintenance expenses and interest on the cost of the trucks so employed, so that the profit arising from such traffic would be small. But in any case the activities of the Country Roads Board will be for a few years only, after which most of the traffic in metal will cease, owing to the main roads being made and only small quantities of stone for maintenance being required from then onwards.

16. With regard to the deposits of limestone within 6 miles of Dookie, the Committee considers it cannot be solely due to the absence of nearer railway facilities that they are not worked. Lime for use in the Goulburn Valley has to be brought from such distant districts as Lilydale, Lara, and Curdie's River, and the rates for carriage from those stations should sufficiently counterbalance the cartage charge into Dookie, and thus offer inducement to local enterprise to develop the Dookie deposits if that were the only difficulty to be overcome. Limestone deposits at Dutson are being worked, although the lime has to be carted about 6 miles to Sale railway station.

#### DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE.

17. In view of the foregoing statements and the large annual loss that would result from the construction and operation of any of the proposed railways, the Committee is of opinion that it is not expedient to construct a railway connexion between the Dookie to Katamatite and the Benalla to Yarrawonga lines.

SAMUEL BARNES,

Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,  
State Parliament House,  
Melbourne, 8th November, 1916.

[*Minutes of Evidence are not printed.*]