

1926.

VICTORIA.

R E P O R T

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS

ON THE

COROP DISTRICT CONNECTING RAILWAY;

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 30th June, 1926.

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RAILWAYS STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT No. 5.—[6d.]—7923.

EXTRACTED FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

THURSDAY, 11TH DECEMBER, 1924.

12. COROP DISTRICT CONNECTING RAILWAY.—Motion made and question—That the question of connecting the district of Corop with the existing railway system by means of a 5-ft. 3-in. gauge railway be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for inquiry and report (*Mr. Eggleston*)—put and agreed to.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

(*Fifteenth Committee.*)

J. D. DEANY, Esq., M.L.A., Chairman.*

A. E. LIND, Esq., M.L.A., Vice-Chairman.†

The Hon. A. Bell, M.L.C.
The Hon. A. E. Chandler, M.L.C.

R. H. Solly, Esq., M.L.A.
The Hon. G. C. Webber, M.L.A.

* Mr. J. D. Deany, M.L.A., was appointed Chairman on 3rd February, 1926, in succession to the Hon. A. Bell, M.L.C., whose term of office expired on that date.

† Mr. A. E. Lind, M.L.A., was appointed Vice-Chairman on 3rd February, 1926.

APPROXIMATE COST OF REPORT.

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REPORT.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS, to which the Legislative Assembly referred the question of connecting the district of Corop with the existing railway system by means of a 5-ft. 3-in. gauge railway, has the honour to report as follows:—

DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICT.

1. The Corop district lies on the northern edge of Lake Cooper, about 10 miles south-east of Rochester and 12 miles north-east of Elmore. Colbinabbin, $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles direct south, is the nearest railway station to the township itself. The district is fairly flat, except for one long narrow range of hills near Corop, called the Colbinabbin Range, which runs almost north and south, commencing near Heathcote and tapering out as it reaches the Murray plain about 5 miles south-east of Rochester. This ridge was originally of silurian formation, but there has been an intrusion of igneous rock along nearly its whole length, overflowing the silurian rock, which is still outcropping along the base of the ridge on both flanks. This igneous rock is the matrix of the good soils along the ridge, and also of most of the alluvial soils in the Cornella and Mount Pleasant Creek valleys. From Corop, south along the western edge of Lake Cooper, through the Colbinabbin Estate, in the Parish of Burramboot, to Colbinabbin the dark red or chocolate soil, strongly resembling volcanic soil in appearance, is exceptionally rich in character. The whole area is good farming country, cleared and well improved, and all suitable for cultivation except a few low-lying patches where water lodges.

2. The Mount Pleasant Creek runs north and south on the west watershed of the Mount Pleasant or Colbinabbin Range, and joins the Campaspe River at Runnymede, about 2 miles south of Elmore. The Cornella Creek rises near Heathcote and flows directly north past Colbinabbin into Lake Cooper.

3. The roads throughout the district are good where metal or gravel has been used, but the earth formation has been frequently allowed to fall into a bad state of disrepair. The metal and gravel are both of excellent quality, the latter being of igneous origin and containing oxide of iron. There is little timber in the northern portion of the area, although further south in the direction of Heathcote grey box, ironbark, and stringybark may be plentifully obtained.

AREA AND PRODUCTION STATISTICS.

4. On an air-line basis, as calculated by the surveyors of the Railway Construction Branch, there is only a small triangular area of 4,500 acres to the east and north-east of Corop which would be over 8 miles from an existing railway. No part of the area is 10 miles from an existing line, all except about 200 acres being, in fact, within 9 miles. The figures taken out by the local Railway League were, however, reckoned on an area of 25,669 acres, which it was stated was estimated to be over 8 miles carting distance from a railway station.

5. It may with advantage be explained here that the 8 miles air-line is intended to be equal to approximately 10 miles carting distance on the roads, which is regarded as reasonable, and affords a ready and reliable method of calculation. It is appreciated that settlers cannot travel in an air-line with their produce, but the air-line basis of calculation gives an accurate idea of the exact acreage available as tributary to a proposed railway. The distance around the roads is certainly greater, but the tributary acreage is not greater.

6. Taking, however, the figures supplied of 25,669 acres over 8 miles carting distance from a railway station the number of farmers was stated to be 40, of whom 31 had sent in returns. With that total the proportion of land cultivated was 4,705 acres; and it was estimated that with nearer railway facilities the amount cultivated would be increased to 9,880 acres. The price of the land in the district varies from £4 to £17 per acre, a fair general average being about £12 per acre. The distance for cartage to a station was reckoned from 7 to 11 miles, and the cartage cost from 9s. to 14s. per ton. The crops grown were mainly wheat, oats, barley, and lucerne, the estimated total annual production of the whole district being given as 28,000 bags of grain, and 500 bales of wool. There were also in the district 15,000 sheep and 400 cattle. The annual rainfall has averaged about 20 inches over a period of years. A little dairying is also carried on, the cream being carted to the butter factory at Rochester, 9 or 10 miles distant.

LENGTH AND COST OF PROPOSED RAILWAYS.

7. Mr. C. H. Perrin, Chief Engineer for Railway Construction, informed the Committee that an extension from Colbinabbin to Corop, a distance of 9 miles 30 chains, could be obtained,

with a ruling grade of 1 in 100 and with the sharpest curves of 40 chains radius, for £53,200. This is based on a cost of £5,670 per mile, and provides for an ordinary third class line. With the ballast reduced to 4 inches in thickness the cost would be £5,270 per mile, or a total of £49,400; but such a line would require to be worked at a reduced speed during the wet season.

8. This route is that followed by an old trial survey, curving from the down end of Colbinabbin station and running due north on the west side of Lake Cooper and the Waranga main outlet channel, and terminating at a station site on the south side of the 3-chain Mooroopna-road, and just outside the western boundary of Corop township.

9. Timber for the construction of the extension would have to come from outside timber areas, as the surveyed route runs through country practically clear of timber. Ballast could be obtained along the Colbinabbin Range. There would be gravel in limited quantities, but the ballast would be principally igneous rock, which would, of course, need to be broken. Corop is supplied with water from the Waranga channel, and a supply for the railway terminus could come from the same source.

VIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE.

10. The Committee has inspected the district and heard local evidence regarding this proposed connexion. In previous requests for the construction of the Corop line and a railway to serve the district north of Heathcote it was represented that these services should form part of a through line from Echuea or Elmore to Melbourne, thus avoiding a slight detour through Bendigo. The reference to the Committee on this occasion was not for a through line, and consequently it has not been practicable to deal with the matter from that aspect. In any case the Committee in 1923 reported against a proposal to construct an Elmore-Heathcote line to serve the through traffic.

11. During this inquiry, however, many witnesses represented that the best route to serve the district was one running from about Heathcote north through Mount Camel and Colbinabbin to Corop, and then on to Rochester on the Echuca line, or to Koyuga or Tongala on the Toolamba-Echuca section. Others advocated a direct connexion from Rochester to Corop, or from Colbinabbin to Corop.

12. The construction of the line from Rushworth to Girgaree has, however, left little gathering ground for a line from Colbinabbin to Corop, as the average distance between these routes is only 12 miles. This would mean that each railway could gather its traffic from a strip of land only 6 miles wide, and while such conditions may be justifiable in country where hills or other topographical features prevent direct access to lines, in the opinion of the Committee a railway traversing a district as level as that at Corop and Girgaree should serve a much larger tributary area than 6 miles. On fair average country it is usually considered that the limit for reasonable road cartage is 10 to 12 miles.

13. The suggested line from Corop to Rochester is in much the same position, as for practically the whole of its length of 10 miles it is within an area served by existing lines, and at the terminus at Corop it is also within $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles of Colbinabbin.

14. There are also a few farmers in the Parish of Timmering, 7 or 8 miles north of Corop, who would probably cart to a station at that township, but they would also be approximately the same distance from existing stations at Rochester, Tongala, or Girgaree, so that it cannot be contended that they are undergoing any great hardship at present, or would be inconvenienced to a very great extent by a new station at Corop. Approaching the top of the triangle of 4,500 acres of land over 8 miles air-line from a railway a few farmers may have to travel 10 to 12 miles by road to existing stations, but the inconsiderable acreage so situated makes it quite impracticable for the Committee to recommend any extension to serve such a small area.

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE.

15. The Committee, for the foregoing reasons, is of opinion that it is not expedient at the present time to connect the district of Corop with the existing railway system.

J. D. DEANY,

Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne, 10th June, 1926.

[*Minutes of Evidence are not printed.*]