

1926.

VICTORIA.

REPORT

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS

ON

PROPOSED EXPENDITURE UNDER RAILWAY
LOAN APPLICATION ACT, No. 3417

(IMPROVED STATION, YARD, AND LOCOMOTIVE
FACILITIES, ETC., AT ARARAT);

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

RETURN to an Order of the *House*,

Dated 30th June, 1926, for—

A COPY of the Report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways on Proposed Expenditure under Railway Loan Application Act, No. 3417 (Improved Station, Yard, and Locomotive Facilities, &c., at Ararat); together with Minutes of Evidence.

(*Mr. Eggleston.*)

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

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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.

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REPORT.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS has, in accordance with the requirements of Section 21 of the *Railways Standing Committee Act 1915* (No. 2717), inquired into the proposed expenditure of £85,763 towards the provision of Improved Station, Yard, and Locomotive Facilities, &c., at Ararat, authorized in the Schedule to the *Railway Loan Application Act 1925* (No. 3417), subject to the outlay being first approved by the Committee, and has now the honour to report as follows:—

EXISTING CONDITIONS.

1. Ararat is an important junction station, 131 miles from Melbourne, on the North-Western line, with tracks radiating therefrom to no less than five lines—viz., Melbourne, Serviceton, Hamilton, Geelong, and Maryborough. The present locomotive shed is very old and dilapidated, having been built in 1875, with some extensions in 1907. The roof is of galvanized iron, and as it is rusted through in several places the rain enters freely. The shed is small, with accommodation at present for nine engines, although during the week end preceding the Committee's visit 22 locomotives had to be stabled at Ararat, which meant, of course, that 13 were left out in the open exposed to the weather. The new and larger type of engines now in use cannot be accommodated under cover at Ararat, and the trips are accordingly usually made to terminate at Stawell, 19 miles further on, where accommodation is provided.

2. The office of the Locomotive Foreman is of wood, and is much too small for the staff, four officers being crowded into a room which should accommodate not more than two. There is also a small store built of galvanized iron, and here the lack of room necessitates portion of the stock being stacked in the open. A locomotive breakdown van is kept in the Ararat yard; but, consequent upon the insufficient number of tracks, it is not practicable to keep it on a through road so that in the event of being needed for an accident it might be immediately run out in either the up or down direction without involving a number of shunting movements and the removal of truck or carriage stock from intervening roads. There is no cover or siding available for car repair work, which is, perforce, carried out on open running tracks.

3. The present method of disposing of ashes from the locomotives is exceedingly primitive and uneconomical, being carried out in three stages, viz. (a) dropping the ashes from the engine to the ash-pit; (b) shovelling the ashes from the pit to ground level; and (c) again shovelling the ashes from ground level into ordinary "I" trucks, the top of the sides being approximately 7 feet from the ground. There are two turntables in use, one of 50 feet diameter, and one of 70 feet.

4. There is a level crossing over the Hamilton, Melbourne, and Maryborough lines at Albert-street, just on the up or Melbourne side of Ararat station, and over the Maryborough line at McLennan-street.

PROPOSED SCHEME OF IMPROVEMENTS.

5. The scheme proposed by the Railways Commissioners provides for—

- (1) A new locomotive shed equipped with all modern facilities, including a repair shop, an 85-ft. turntable, and all the requisite connecting tracks.
- (2) The installation of a mechanical coal-handling plant.
- (3) The necessary car repair roads.
- (4) The construction of a subway at the Albert-street existing level crossing.

It is proposed that the level crossing at McLennan-street be closed altogether. The site, which is on the up side of Ararat station between the Melbourne and Maryborough lines, has been selected with a view to providing for the future extension of accommodation, and is

intended to meet requirements for very many years to come. The carrying out of the scheme will constitute Ararat the most important locomotive dépôt on the main line to Serviceton. It is contended by the Railways Commissioners that as Ararat is geographically located in a position which lends itself with advantage to the mechanical working of the main-line traffic, as well as serving the radiating branch lines, and as it is, moreover, the Commissioners' policy to shortly introduce more powerful locomotives and run them for longer mileages than is practicable with the existing types, it is an eminently suitable location for the establishment of a large and important dépôt.

COST OF THE SCHEME.

6. The total estimated cost of the proposed works is £85,763, of which £73,627 is chargeable to capital, and the balance of £12,136 (representing the cost of the replaced assets) to working expenses. The programme which has been prepared for the carrying out of the work provides for the capital expenditure being spread over a period of three financial years, viz. :—

1925-1926.		£	£
Carrying out earthworks to extent of 60 per cent. . . . .	.. .. .	6,000	
Mechanical coal-handling plant delivered on ground .. .. .	.. .. .	4,000	
		-----	10,000
1926-1927.			
Completing earthworks .. .. .	.. .. .	3,750	
Erecting coal-handling plant .. .. .	.. .. .	500	
Laying track work .. .. .	.. .. .	10,700	
Partly completing engine shed, repair shop, bins, &c. .. .. .	.. .. .	15,384	
Partly completing offices, shops, &c. .. .. .	.. .. .	3,000	
Drainage .. .. .	.. .. .	5,678	
Water supply .. .. .	.. .. .	2,844	
Electric light .. .. .	.. .. .	485	
Turntable .. .. .	.. .. .	4,659	
		-----	47,000
1927-1928.			
Subway and approaches .. .. .	.. .. .	8,339	
Completing engine shed, repair shop, bins, &c. .. .. .	.. .. .	7,100	
Completing offices, shops, &c. .. .. .	.. .. .	1,188	
		-----	16,627

VIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE.

7. The Committee inspected the existing facilities at Ararat and the site of the proposed works in company with Mr. J. M. Ashworth, Assistant Chief Engineer of Way and Works, and Mr. N. C. Harris, Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer, and examined these officers on various phases of the proposal. It was soon made abundantly clear that the present accommodation at Ararat for the clerical staff of the Rolling-stock Branch and for the Store is quite insufficient, while the locomotive shed is woefully dilapidated and inadequate. Before, however, arriving at a conclusion as to whether they should be replaced by up-to-date equipment and greater facilities provided the Committee gave consideration to the desirability of making Ararat the most important locomotive dépôt on the North-Western line, having regard to the apparent suitability also of Ballarat and Stawell for this purpose. From Melbourne to Serviceton is 287 miles, and Ararat, 131 miles from Melbourne, is nearly half way. Stawell at 150 miles is closer to a half-way point, but the few miles advantage are entirely discounted when it is remembered that Ararat forms the centre of a network of five lines, and in consequence lends itself readily to advantages and savings in locomotive and staff working. The Committee, therefore, agrees with the Commissioners' view that Ararat is suitably located for being constituted the most important locomotive dépôt on the North-Western line.

8. The matter of the water supply for engines at Ararat as compared with Ballarat and Stawell was also investigated. An analysis was obtained of the three waters, which showed that the order of excellence was Stawell, Ararat, and Ballarat. There was very little to choose between the two first-named towns, but the Ballarat water had more foaming tendency, and would, as a result, necessitate washing out the boilers of the locomotives more frequently. In 1915 there was a shortage of water at Ararat, but this is not likely to again occur, as the Ararat Water Trust has recently improved its supply, and is now further enlarging the reservoir, so that within twelve months' time an additional 90,000 gallons will be available, which will be abundant for all requirements.

9. Inquiries were made as to the working of the rosters and possible overtime payments for the train crews with an increased use of Ararat as a locomotive dépôt. On this point it was stated by the Commissioners that the Department is about to construct a new type of passenger engine, weighing 60 per cent. more than the "A2" class, mainly at first for Sydney Express running, but as the number is increased the new class will no doubt be utilized between Melbourne and Dimboola. The length and weight of the passenger trains on the Melbourne-Serviceton-Adelaide line are increasing at such a rate that the introduction within a few years of still heavier and more powerful engines is certain. The Commissioners state that these new engines will have axle loads up to 24 tons, as compared with $17\frac{1}{2}$ tons in the case of the "A2" locomotives, together with approximately double the tractive power, and more than double the boiler capacity. They will also have eight instead of six coupled wheels, and three cylinders, as compared with two on the present types, while, to provide for firing coal at the high rate necessary for such large units, automatic stokers will be used.

10. As a result of the use of more powerful engines, and consequent upon a re-arrangement of the time-table, with the provision of more trains to cope with the gradually but steadily expanding traffic on this line, it is considered there will be suitable opportunities for introducing economical rosters and supplying much more locomotive power from Ararat. At present mixed and regular goods trains on this line are almost wholly worked on the change-over principle. Ballarat and Stawell crews change over where the trains meet, in the same way as the Stawell and Dimboola crews. These runs average about eight hours, ranging from five hours minimum to ten hours maximum, according to the mileage run. In addition to regular goods trains the running of "conditional" and seasonal goods trains between Dimboola and Ballarat prevails in a marked degree, and the fact that Ararat is not able, under existing conditions, to assist in the demands which this emergency running places on Ballarat and Stawell dépôts operates very adversely. On the whole, it is contended by the Commissioners that there should not be any greater likelihood of incurring overtime rates than at present; but, on the other hand, with an expansion of the facilities at Ararat, and an increase in the business on the main line, conditions would become more favorable to the creation of rosters more closely approaching the ideal than is at present practicable.

11. There has been a considerable increase in business through Ararat since the Maroona-Gheringhap line was built, but the Ararat engine-shed has not been capable of supplying power for more than a very small proportion of this increase. The large "C" class engines now running between Geelong and Ararat cannot be brought into the Ararat shed, and the trains must be so scheduled as to permit of their running through to Stawell.

12. Because of the much greater use that will be made of the dépôt under the new scheme, the Commissioners propose the installation of a mechanical coal-handling plant, at a cost of £4,000, delivered on the ground, plus £500 for erection. The Committee was informed that the average cost of handling coal at the present time at Ararat is 1s. per ton. With the proposed mechanical plant the labour cost is expected to be much less than 6d. per ton, but when interest, depreciation, and maintenance are allowed for, the rate per ton on the basis of the present annual turnover will be very nearly 1s. It is, however, reasonable to assume a gradual growth in turnover, so that, with the capital charges remaining constant, the rate per ton for handling will fall to a figure substantially lower than the present cost. In addition, there will of course be the immediate indirect advantages resulting from reduced delays to coal trucks and more prompt coaling of the engines. Similar coal-handling plants are now in operation at various places in South Australia and Western Australia.

13. The present method of dealing with the ashes from the locomotives is, as already stated, very slow and uneconomical, involving double handling, and it is proposed to supersede the existing system by the provision of a depressed track alongside the ashpit at a level which enables the ashes to be readily shifted into the trucks in one operation.

14. It is proposed to provide an 85-ft. turntable for the engine-shed to replace the present 70-ft. and 50-ft. turntables. The latter, which is obsolete, will be scrapped, while the 70-ft. turntable will be used elsewhere. Provision is made for a new circular engine-shed, but it is intended to roof only half the shed at present. This will afford cover for 24 engines, and, in addition, five may be stabled on open lines-of-way adjoining the shed. It is considered that this provision will be sufficient for eight or ten years; the shed can then be completed, and will afford cover for 42 engines. It is not likely that greater facilities will be required for, say, ten to twenty years hence, but sufficient land is being resumed to permit of a duplicate shed being erected on an adjoining area should this be needed in years to come.

15. There is now a level crossing at Albert-street, and it is intended to replace this crossing with a vehicle and pedestrian subway, with a grade of 1 in 12 towards High-street, and 1 in 20 approaching Palmerston-street. McLennan-street will be closed altogether, owing to the number

of tracks at this spot, and also because the mechanical coal-handling plant and staging will extend right across the street. The Ararat Borough Council has already intimated in writing that no objection will be raised to this proposal.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE.

16. Surveying the whole scheme broadly, and having particular regard to the geographical position of Ararat on the Melbourne-Serviceton section, to its central situation in relation to the radiating main and branch lines of the district, and to the economic and financial soundness of the scheme proposed by the Commissioners, the Committee recommends to Parliament that approval be given to the proposed expenditure by the Railways Commissioners on improved station, yard, locomotive, and other facilities at Ararat of a total sum of £85,763, of which £73,627 is chargeable to capital account, and £12,136 to working expenses, the expenditure to be spread over a period of three financial years, as outlined in paragraph No. 6 of this Report.

J. D. DEANY,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne, 12th May, 1926.

[Minutes of Evidence are not printed.]