

1927.

VICTORIA.

---

# REPORT

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON RAILWAYS

ON

PROPOSED EXPENDITURE UNDER RAILWAY  
LOAN APPLICATION ACT, No. 3417

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

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

---

RETURN to an Order of the *House*,

Dated 14th July, 1927, 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, Locomotive Facilities, &c., at Mildura); together with Minutes of Evidence.

(*Mr. Tunnecliffe.*)

---

*Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 14th July, 1927.*

---

By Authority:

H. J. GREEN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

C.—No. 1.—[6D.]—2432.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

(Fifteenth Committee.)

The HON. A. E. CHANDLER, M.L.C., Chairman.\*

The HON. G. C. WEBBER, M.L.A., Vice-Chairman.†

The Hon. A. Bell, M.L.C.  
J. D. Deany, Esq., M.L.A.

A. E. Lind, Esq., M.L.A.  
R. H. Solly, Esq., M.L.A.

\* The Hon. A. E. Chandler, M.L.C., was appointed Chairman on 3rd February, 1927, in succession to Mr. A. E. Lind, M.L.A., whose term of office expired on 2nd February, 1927.

† The Hon. G. C. Webber, M.L.A., was appointed Vice-Chairman on 3rd February, 1927.

---

APPROXIMATE COST OF REPORT.

Printing (250 copies) .. .. .	£	s.	d.
	7	0	0

# 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 £41,375 towards the provision of Improved Station, Yard, Locomotive Facilities, &c., at Mildura, 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. Mildura railway station is not, strictly speaking, the terminus of the Mildura railway line, but from a traffic-operation point of view it is, to all intents and purposes, the terminus, because the trains to and from Melbourne commence or end their journeys at Mildura. A mixed steam train, as well as a petrol rail-motor service, is provided between Mildura and Yelta, serving, *en route*, the Merbein district. Mildura is  $351\frac{1}{4}$  miles from Melbourne, Merbein  $358\frac{1}{4}$  miles, and Yelta, a no-one-in-charge station at the actual terminus of the line, 364 miles. The Mildura borough has a population of about 5,100, or, within the boundaries of the shire, 8,080. Mildura is one of the principal irrigation and fruit-growing districts of the State; it has a regular aeroplane service for mails and passengers to Adelaide and Broken Hill; it is the starting point of coach services to Wentworth, Balranald, Menindie, Wilcannia, and Euston; and it is also a stop-over point for the boats on the Murray River routes between Swan Hill and Adelaide.

2. Recent railway extensions in the district comprise the construction of the line from Merbein to Yelta (previously called Abbotsford), which was opened in June, 1925; from Redcliffs to Werrimull, opened in April, 1924; and from Werrimull to Meringur (previously called The Hut), opened for traffic in October, 1925. These extensions are operated from the Mildura dépôt. In addition, under the Border Railways Act provision is made for an extension for 20 miles north from Mildura, crossing the Murray River via the new bridge now in course of construction adjoining Mildura township, on the eastern side. There is also a bridge nearing completion at Abbotsford Crossing, close to the site of the Abbotsford Punt, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the Yelta railway station, 14 miles from Mildura, and about 4 miles from Wentworth, at the junction of the Murray and Darling rivers. These bridges will enable traffic from the New South Wales side to more readily reach either Yelta, Merbein, or Mildura railway stations, and will, no doubt, have an appreciable influence in augmenting the volume of traffic to be carried over the line.

3. There is at present no locomotive shed at Mildura, and it is frequently necessary for five locomotives to remain in the open, with a consequent much greater rate of depreciation and much more discomfort to the staff attending to them than if shelter facilities were provided. The existing wooden or galvanized iron buildings—used as a locomotive store, rail-motor store, and the office of the driver in charge—are small and shabby. Practically no improvement has been made in the facilities at Mildura since the opening of the line in 1903, although the provision then made was regarded merely as an expedient, and was not in any way suitable to meet the growth of traffic.

4. The turntable in use is 52 feet in diameter, which is insufficient for turning an “A2” or “N” class locomotive. The working capacity of the existing coal stage is 50 tons, and the average cost of handling coal is 1s. 1d. per ton, plus the cost of coaling engines—11d. per ton—making a total cost of 2s. per ton.

5. The present method of dealing with the ashes comprises three operations, viz. :—

- (1) Dropping the ashes from the engines to the ash pit;
- (2) Shovelling the ashes from the pit to ground level;
- (3) Shovelling the ashes from the ground level to the truck.

This primitive and slow method involves double handling, with an approximate cost of 3s. 9d. per ton.

6. The traffic at Mildura railway station is considerable, the revenue from outwards goods only for the last financial year amounting to £18,695, and outwards passengers to £23,970, or a total of £42,665.

## PROPOSED SCHEME OF IMPROVEMENT.

7. The question of providing improved accommodation at Mildura has been carefully investigated by the responsible officers of the Department, and it is considered that in the interests of efficiency and economical working the following improvements are urgently needed :—

- (a) A locomotive shed capable of accommodating five engines, with two outside radial roads ; also repair shop, store, and office accommodation ;
- (b) A 70-ft. turntable ;
- (c) A new coal stage ;
- (d) A depressed ash road ;
- (e) Track work incidental to the locomotive shed, and also extensions to existing sidings in the yard ;
- (f) Additional car siding, and a car shelter shed.

8. As there is no space available in the present yard, it has been found necessary to select a new site for the foregoing facilities, involving the purchase of approximately 8 acres of land, at a cost of £1,800. One and a half acres of the adjoining roadway (which is an infrequently-used continuation of 7th Street) is also being resumed, necessitating a reduction in the width of the street from 99 to 60 feet over a length of 400 yards. The consent of the Mildura Council has been obtained to this street resumption, and provision has been made also for a drainage easement towards the River Murray, at a cost of £50. The land adjoining the 8 acres purchased is now used as a vineyard, and there is little prospect of it becoming a residential area, so that if additional space should be required some years hence it could, no doubt, be readily obtained. However, the area proposed to be occupied will be sufficient, in the opinion of the officers of the Department, for 20 or 30 years to come, and possibly many more.

9. The 70-ft. turntable is stated to be necessary for the "N" class of locomotive, which it is desired to use on the Mildura line. The "K" class engines, which are being superseded by the "N" type, can be turned on the 52-ft. turntable, but there are only 10 locomotives of this class on the register, and it is not the intention of the Department to construct any more of them. Turntables of greater length than 70 feet are not necessary for any locomotive at present in use on the Victorian Railways, but 85-ft. turntables will be provided at certain important places on the main lines, such as at Ararat, when alterations to the existing facilities are being carried out. This length of turntable will be capable of dealing with any probable future type of locomotive on the Victorian Railways.

10. The present "Pacific" and heavy "Mikado" engines ("S" and "X" classes respectively) can just be handled on the 70-ft. turntables, and it is probable that after these types of engine are in general service a "Mountain" type (heavy passenger express engine) will be designed. This class will require an 85-ft. turntable. Seventy-foot turntables are already provided at Maryborough, St. Arnaud, Donald, Woomelang, and Ouyen, and when a similar size table is installed at Mildura "N" class locomotives may be operated freely right along the main line, as well as on the Murrayville-Pinaroo section. It was stated that there is regular use for two locomotives of the "N" class between Woomelang and Mildura all the year round. It was not considered likely that an 85-ft. turntable would be required at Mildura for the next 20 years ; it was contended that it would be more economical to instal a 70-ft. turntable to meet the present requirements, and, if it should be necessary, to substitute an 85-ft. table when required in the future.

## COST OF THE PROPOSALS.

11. The total cost of the scheme is calculated at £41,375, of which £2,240 should be charged against Working Expenses, and £39,135 against Capital, the details being as under—

Item.	Working Expenses.	Capital.	Total.
	£	£	£
Locomotive dépôt, including purchase of land, provision of turntables, and incidental tracks .. .. .	1,623	29,961	31,584
Extensions of sidings .. .. .	538	3,698	4,236
Additional car siding and car shelter .. .. .	79	5,476	5,555
Totals .. .. .	2,240	39,135	41,375

## VIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE.

12. The Committee visited Mildura and inspected the site for the proposed works in company with Mr. N. C. Harris, Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer, Mr. J. J. Gilchrist, Station and General Service Engineer, and Mr. E. Hinds, District Rolling-stock Superintendent. In the opinion of the Committee there is no doubt that the existing facilities at Mildura are inadequate for requirements, and, in addition, owing to the recent work on the locking of the Murray River, near the Mildura railway station, part of a siding has been completely cut out, making the existing lay-out even more cramped than formerly. It is not practicable to extend the present location, because of the limitations created by the Mildura-Yelta railway line and stockyards on one side, and the Murray River on the other, and the site proposed, which is 49 chains from the Mildura station, is suitable for the purpose, and as near to the station as can be obtained at a reasonable cost.

13. The Border Railways Act provides for a line being constructed from Mildura to a point 20 miles north, and as the combined road and rail bridge now in course of construction is on the eastern side of Mildura station, the Committee was careful to see that no impediment was offered by any suggested sidings or buildings against coming in on a reasonable curve to the Mildura station platform. The proposed works are all on the western side of the station, and no hindrance will, therefore, be offered to the construction and joining up of the proposed New South Wales line at any future date.

14. The proposed methods for dealing with coal and ashes are on sound lines, and will bring into effect a much-needed improvement. The cost per ton for coaling engines will be reduced from 2s. to 1s. 8d. per ton, and for dealing with ashes from 3s. 9d. to 2s. 6d. per ton. A complete gravity system for both ashes and coal was not favoured by the Department, as the amount of work to be done at Mildura at present would not justify the expenditure involved in the provision of a gravity plant. Another important factor that had to be considered was that coal for places such as Mildura will always be sent to its destination in ordinary "I" trucks, which would be unsuitable for discharging by gravity. Hopper trucks would not be used, because it would cost too much to haul them back empty, as they would not be suitable for return loading with wheat, fruit, or general goods.

15. The Committee inquired into the suitability of the water supply at Mildura, and was informed that it is satisfactory in regard to both quantity and quality, being supplied by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission from the Murray River. At Hattah and St. Arnaud the supply is also good, but this is not the case at Ouyen, Woomelang, and Birchip, where the water contains double carbonates, for which no effective treatment has yet been found. The use of this water causes foaming and produces acid in the boilers, necessitating a thorough washing out after every 600 or 800 miles of running. The washing out and preparation of an engine for putting it into running again usually occupies from eight to ten hours. Owing to this inferior water being supplied along the line the locomotives have to be cleaned at Mildura, and the existing facilities for this purpose are obviously quite unsuitable and insufficient.

16. On the matter of increasing capital expenditure without a compensating saving being effected to meet wholly the interest charges, the Committee is of opinion that while an improved lay-out and more efficient methods of handling coal and ashes (as well as the provision of a 70-ft. turntable, which will allow of the more economical operation of the line by an "N" class engine) will result in substantial economies, the growth of the railway system and its traffic generally must from time to time warrant increased capital expenditure of this nature to keep pace with the traffic requirements and deal competently with the freight offering. The Mildura plant, which was provided in 1903, nearly a quarter of a century ago, was then regarded as of a temporary nature, and no efficient business house endeavours to keep in step with a rapid growth of business by the use of small and obsolete equipment, resulting in poorer service to customers and higher comparative costs.

17. It is, of course, appreciated that, on the other hand, neither the railways nor any other business undertaking can carry excessive overhead costs, either in the shape of interest on capital expenditure which could have been deferred or avoided, or in any other manner. The Committee is, however, satisfied that these proposed works are necessary. A continuance of the present unsatisfactory methods at Mildura will result in high working costs, inefficient operation of its rolling-stock and traffic by the Department, and consequent dissatisfaction to its customers. For these reasons, and because of the more expeditious and economical handling of traffic that will ensue with the provision of the proposed facilities, the Committee considers their installation justified.

## RECOMMENDATION.

18. The Committee is of opinion that the proposed expenditure at Mildura is warranted, owing to the inadequacy of the present facilities and the impracticability of reasonably increasing them in their present location, and accordingly recommends to Parliament that approval be given for the proposed expenditure by the Railways Commissioners on improved station, yard, locomotive facilities, and other accommodation (including the purchase of land) at Mildura of £41,375, of which £39,135 is chargeable to Capital Account, and £2,240 to Working Expenses.

A. E. CHANDLER,  
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,  
State Parliament House,  
Melbourne, 1st March, 1927.

*[Minutes of Evidence are not printed.]*