

1928.  
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VICTORIA.

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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON RAILWAYS.

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THIRTY-EIGHTH GENERAL REPORT.

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PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE RAILWAYS STANDING  
COMMITTEE ACT 1915 (8 GEO. V., No. 2717), SECTION 27.

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# MEMBERS OF THE SIXTEENTH COMMITTEE.

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The Honorable ALEXANDER BELL.

The Honorable ALFRED ELLIOTT CHANDLER.\*

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

ALBERT ARTHUR DUNSTAN, Esquire.

ALBERT ELI LIND, Esquire.

The Honorable JOHN WARBURTON PENNINGTON, C.B.E.

REGINALD THOMAS POLLARD, Esquire.†

CHAIRMAN—R. T. POLLARD, Esquire, M.L.A.

VICE-CHAIRMAN—A. A. DUNSTAN, Esquire, M.L.A.

\* The Hon. A. E. Chandler was appointed Chairman of the Committee on 14th July, 1927.

† Mr. R. T. Pollard was appointed Chairman of the Committee in succession to the Hon. A. E. Chandler on 12th January, 1928.

# THIRTY-EIGHTH GENERAL REPORT.

To His Excellency LIEUTENANT-COLONEL THE RIGHT HONORABLE ARTHUR HERBERT  
TENNYSON, BARON SOMERS, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C., *Governor of the State of  
Victoria and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia, &c., &c., &c.*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

In accordance with the requirements of section 27 of the *Railways Standing Committee Act 1915*, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways has the honour to submit the following Report of its proceedings :—

1. Since the 1st March, 1927, the date of its last Report, the Committee has held 151 meetings and examined 214 witnesses in connexion with the various proposals for new railways, railway works, and tramways. In making these inquiries the Committee travelled approximately 3,565 miles by rail, and 3,025 miles by road.

2. The Committee records with deep regret the death on 20th March, 1927, of the late Mr. J. D. Deany, M.L.A., who rendered valuable service to the Committee and to the State of Victoria during his term of office as a member and Chairman of the Committee.

3. Shortly after the re-assembling of Parliament on 6th July, 1927, a new Committee (the Sixteenth) was elected. The Hon. A. E. Chandler, M.L.C., was appointed Chairman of the Committee on 14th July, 1927, and on 12th January, 1928, Mr. R. T. Pollard, M.L.A., succeeded Mr. Chandler in that position.

## REPORTS PRESENTED DURING 1927 SESSION.

4. During the 1927 Session of Parliament the Committee presented the following reports, viz. :—

### *Specific References—*

- (1) Red Hill to Red Hill South.
- (2) Nowingi to Millewa South.

### *General References—*

- (3) Gormandale, Callignee, and Carrajung districts connecting railway.
- (4) Myrniong and Greendale districts connecting railway.
- (5) Purchase of McIvor timber tramway, near Tooborac.
- (6) Edenhope district connecting railway.
- (7) Charlton to Wycheproof and St. Arnaud to Birchip railways connexion.
- (8) East Gippsland district connecting railway.
- (9) Mallee railway extension (Millewa railway).
- (10) Pine Plains district connecting railway.

### *Railway Works—*

- (11) Improved station, yard, and locomotive facilities at Mildura.
- (12) Provision of vehicular subway at Heidelberg-road, Clifton Hill.

### *Tramway Proposal—*

- (13) Burwood and Camberwell Roads (Hawthorn) electric tramway.

### *General Report—*

- (14) Thirty-seventh General Report.

### REPORTS READY FOR PRESENTATION.

5. The Committee has prepared reports on the following matters and will submit them to Parliament at the opening of the 1928 Session or shortly thereafter, viz. :—

*General Report—*

- (1) Thirty-eighth General Report of the Committee.

*General References—*

- (2) Tolmie district connecting railway.
- (3) Wallaloo, Navarre, and St. Arnaud district connecting railway.

*Tramway Proposal—*

- (4) Racecourse-road (Melbourne) electric tramway proposal.

The Report of the Committee on the Racecourse-road tramway proposal was sent direct to the Minister of Public Works on 23rd April, 1928, in accordance with the terms of section 34 of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act, No. 2995.

### QUESTIONS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE.

6. The following questions are at present before the Committee for inquiry and report, viz. :—

*General References—*

- (1) Macarthur, Yambuk, Orford, Bessiebelle, Byaduk, and Warrong districts connecting railway.
- (2) Outer Eastern Suburbs (Doncaster and Warrandyte) connecting railway.
- (3) Black Rock to Beaumaris electric street railway.
- (4) Welshpool—Railway connexion with port of.
- (5) Port Albert—Railway connexion with town of.
- (6) Laanecoorie district connecting railway.
- (7) Darriman, Seaspray, and Stradbroke district connecting railway.

*Railway Works—*

- (8) Provision of new erecting shops at Newport, £207,600.

*Tramway Proposals—*

- (9) Nicholson-street (East Brunswick) electric tramway extension.
- (10) Buckley-street (Essendon) electric tramway extension.

7. The Committee has visited the district and heard local evidence in connexion with the proposed Macarthur district railway and also the proposed Outer Eastern Suburbs (Doncaster and Warrandyte) railway, and reports will be presented to Parliament at an early date in regard to both these proposals. The provision of new erecting shops at Newport has also been investigated at length, and in this connexion evidence has also been heard at the Railway Workshops at Ballarat and Bendigo, with a view to seeing whether any of the work now carried out at Newport could with advantage be transferred to those centres. The Committee is making further inquiry into certain aspects of these proposals, and will report upon them to Parliament at an early date.

### FORESTS COMMISSION TRAMWAYS.

8. During last Session an Act (No. 3549) was passed amending the Forests Act and incorporating in section 15 the provision that in connexion with the proposed "construction or purchase of tramways or other works . . . where the estimated cost of building the same exceeds the sum of £20,000" the matter shall be referred by the Minister to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for inquiry and report. The Committee has during the whole of its existence investigated all proposed new-line construction by the Railway Department, and now that the Forests Commission has power to purchase or construct and operate tramways (which are really railways worked with a steam locomotive), it appears only logical that such a provision as this should exist.

### ANOMALIES IN TRAMWAY CONSTRUCTION.

9. To a certain extent an anomalous position still prevails however in respect to the foregoing provision under the amending Forests Act, and also in regard to new-line expenditure in excess of £20,000 by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board, because, while the Railway Department may not embark upon new-line construction to the smallest extent without having the scheme inquired into and approved by this Committee, in each of the other cases

referred to short sections costing a little under £20,000 may be proceeded with and completed on the assumption that that particular length of construction will suffice. A little later, however, circumstances may warrant an extension of the line, again costing less than £20,000, and so it is conceivable that eventually quite a length of expensively-constructed line is in existence, which might or might not have been approved if it had been investigated by the Railways Standing Committee.

#### COST OF RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION.

10. The cost of railway construction has not varied to any appreciable extent during the past twelve months. Steel rails still average approximately £12 per ton, and very little variation has occurred in the wages rate. There does not appear any reason at present to justify an assumption that cheaper railway construction in Victoria is an imminent or even a deferred probability.

#### NARROW-GAUGE LINES.

11. The experience of the State with its four narrow-gauge lines continues to be such as to make any extension of the 2-ft. 6-in. gauge exceedingly improbable, the losses on the four lines last year totalling £42,284. Since the practice was commenced in 1918 of claiming a reimbursement from the Treasury for non-paying lines, the total losses on the narrow-gauge lines have been as under, viz. :—

Narrow-gauge 2-ft. 6-in. Line.	Total Loss for Ten-year Period ending June, 1927.
	£
Colac to Crowes .. .. .	108,816
Ferntree Gully to Gembrook .. .. .	112,681
Moe to Walhalla .. .. .	66,091
Wangaratta to Whitfield .. .. .	34,645
Ten-year aggregate loss .. .. .	322,233

12. The total construction cost for the four lines when completed amounted to £355,027, or comparatively little more than the sum lost in the last ten years, so that unless the recently-imported Garrett locomotives show very substantial savings in operating costs, it appears reasonable to infer that for each period of ten or twelve years an amount approximately equal to the cost of constructing these lines will be lost. The total capital cost debitable to the various lines has since been increased by various improvements and additions, and at 28th February, 1927, represented £461,248, no interest being charged on £52,383 of this amount. While the Committee has not considered the matter, and is certainly not now recommending the closing of these particular lines, it is obvious that to close them altogether would result in interest losses of less than half the loss now sustained, the figure for last year on account of interest only being £16,307, as compared with the loss of £42,284 due to interest charges, plus operating losses. A somewhat similar position, of course, prevails with many other broad-gauge lines on the non-paying list, but the narrow-gauge lines appear to be particularly and uniformly unprofitable.

#### CO-ORDINATION OF TRANSPORT FACILITIES.

13. The Committee has been impressed during the course of its inquiries with the necessity for the establishment of a controlling body in respect to the transport facilities provided for the community. Unregulated competition between trains, trams, and buses obviously leads to great economic waste, and the Committee notes with satisfaction that in New South Wales the report of the recently-appointed Traffic Advisory Committee includes a recommendation to the effect that a Ministry of Transport be appointed—

“ to study the transport and traffic requirements of the State, to determine the transport policy of Government or quasi-Government institutions which at present constitute a component part of the transport system of the State, and to ensure—or, where necessary, to require—co-ordination between them all.”

The Traffic Advisory Committee further observes that—

“ To make a comprehensive survey of the transport needs of the State as a whole (excluding perhaps metropolitan agencies) and the correlation of the various transport agencies, viz., railways, shipping, motor transport, roads, &c., either a State Committee of Transport or a Commission should be appointed.”

14. For comparative purposes it may be noted that the Ministry of Transport in England was created in 1919, and while the Minister has wide powers, in many instances it is specifically laid down that before exercising those powers he should seek the advice of an Advisory Committee appointed under the Act which, *inter alia*, makes provision for the transfer of certain of the powers of other Government Departments in relation to—

- (a) railways ;
- (b) light railways ;
- (c) tramways ;
- (d) canals, waterways, and inland navigations ;
- (e) roads, bridges, and ferries, and vehicles and traffic thereon ; and
- (f) harbours, docks, and piers.

#### PARLIAMENTARY PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEES.

15. During November last in South Australia the Act relating to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways was repealed by a measure constituting a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (S.A. Act No. 1795), charged with the duty of investigating all expenditure in excess of £30,000 on public works, power being also taken for Parliament to refer to the Committee the investigation of any public works, irrespective of the estimated cost. This places South Australia in line with New South Wales and the Commonwealth, where the Parliamentary Standing Committees on Public Works have for some years also investigated all new railway proposals.

#### MOTOR COMPETITION WITH RAILWAYS.

16. Recent legislation has had the effect of restricting certain passenger motor services, but figures are not yet available to indicate what the financial effect has been. The railway experience in England and America has been much the same as in Australia, and, as a matter of fact, for the year 1927 the total passenger earnings for all the railways of the United States declined by approximately £14,000,000, or 6·5 per cent. as compared with the previous year, and represented the smallest passenger earnings for any year since 1917. That that serious decline is continuing is evidenced by the further fact that in January of this year the total earnings of the U.S.A. railways were 9·5 per cent. less than in January, 1927. In Victoria there was a decrease of 381,762 passenger journeys, or 4 per cent., for the year ended 30th June, 1927, as compared with the previous year.

17. Quite a noteworthy development in connexion with local motor transport for goods was that of 23rd April last, when, according to a report issued by the Development and Migration Commission, a 5-ton motor lorry equipped with a Diesel oil engine, burning crude oil in lieu of petrol, made the journey from Melbourne to Castlemaine and return, a distance of 150 miles, for a total fuel cost of 5s. 1¾d., or ·41d. per mile. The crude oil consumption was 13 gallons, equalling approximately 11½ miles per gallon. The average speed was 13·5 miles per hour, and allowing 30s. for the driver's wages and 5s. for all other expenses the cost works out at ·64d. per ton mile. A petrol lorry of equivalent tare and carrying capacity would, it was stated, consume 30 gallons of petrol, costing £2 15s. The test was carried out on behalf of the Committee on Mechanical Transport of the Development and Migration Commission, and was supervised throughout by representatives from the Commission and the Defence Department.

18. It is difficult to forecast just what development is imminent in this respect, but it certainly seems probable that this form of transport is destined to play in the future an increasing part in the transportation work of this and other countries of the world. Of course, such factors as depreciation and interest on capital cost would need to be also taken into consideration before any effective or definite conclusion could be arrived at; but it will be appreciated that the position in connexion with new railway construction, especially where competition appears a probability, is one that calls for exceeding care and much consideration.

#### DEVELOPMENTAL RAILWAYS ACCOUNT.

19. The amount at the credit of this fund at 31st January, 1928, was £260,000, and the high cost of railway construction makes it appear probable that any future recommendations of the Committee will need material assistance from the fund. During the year the Committee recommended the construction of a line from Nowingi 35 miles westward to Millewa South, conditionally upon a gift of £35,000 being made from this account in order to reduce the total capital debit for construction from £132,378 to £97,378.

## DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION COMMISSION.

20. This Committee has given consideration in each proposal before it to the possibility of cheap money loaned under the Migration Agreement being used for construction work, and in the case of the Nowingi to Millewa South railway the Committee recommended that endeavours should be made to borrow under the terms of the Migration Agreement (1 per cent. interest for the first five years and one-third of the prevailing rate for the next five years) the sum of £97,378. It is estimated that, with money obtained at this low rate of interest, the line will show a profit from the commencement of operations, instead of the small loss estimated (with a gift of £35,000 from the Developmental Railways Account) for the first year of operation.

R. T. POLLARD,  
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,  
Parliament House,  
Melbourne, 4th June, 1928.