

1929.

VICTORIA.

REPORT

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS

ON THE

PORT ALBERT RAILWAY EXTENSION;

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE, PLAN, AND MAP.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 10th July, 1929.

By Authority:

H. J. GREEN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.
RAILWAYS STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT No. 2—[6D.]—6976.

EXTRACTED FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER, 1927.

5. PORT ALBERT—RAILWAY CONNEXION WITH TOWN OF.—Motion made and question—That the question of connecting the Town of Port Albert with the existing railway system be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for inquiry and report (*Mr. Tunnecliffe*)—put and, after debate, agreed to.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

(*Sixteenth Committee.*)

* A. E. LIND, Esq., M.L.A., Chairman.

† The Hon. H. BEARDMORE, M.L.A., Vice-Chairman.

The Hon. A. Bell, M.L.C.
A. A. Dunstan, Esq., M.L.A.

The Hon. M. McGregor, M.L.C.
R. T. Pollard, Esq., M.L.A.

* Mr. Lind M.L.A., was elected Chairman on 13th February, 1929, in succession to Mr. Dunstan, M.L.A., who succeeded Mr. Pollard, M.L.A., on 13th August, 1928.

† The Hon. H. Beardmore, M.L.A., was elected to the Committee on 12th December, 1928, in place of the Hon. J. W. Pennington, M.L.A. who retired on accepting office (22nd November, 1928) as a Minister of the Crown.

APPROXIMATE COST OF REPORT.

	£	s.	d.
Printing (250 copies)	9	0	0

R E P O R T

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS, to which the Legislative Assembly referred the question of connecting the town of Port Albert with the existing railway system, has the honour to report as follows :—

DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICT.

1. Port Albert is a small fishing village situated near the mouth of the Tarra River, at the commencement of the Ninety-Mile Beach. It is $136\frac{3}{4}$ miles by rail from Melbourne, and was the terminus of the South-Eastern line until 1921. In that year an extension was opened from Alberton to Yarram, and this has since been continued to Won Wron and Woodside. The effect of this has been to make the Alberton-Yarram-Woodside section the main line, and a small petrol rail motor now provides a service twice daily between Port Albert and Alberton, $4\frac{1}{4}$ miles distant.

2. The district of Port Albert has seen better days. Some 40 or 50 years ago it was the outlet for not only Gippsland but also all traffic coming from the southern portion of New South Wales, and a large number of vessels regularly traded at the Port. To-day, over the sand-bar at the entrance to the harbour, there is a navigable depth of only 5 or 6 feet of water, preventing any of the larger vessels entering. The residents of the town are largely dependent on the fishing industry, there being 45 members of the local Fishermen's Association, of whom 32 are actively engaged in that occupation. The population of the town is about 150.

3. The land surrounding Port Albert is mostly used for grazing. It is generally of rather a light type, but improves in quality going north towards Yarram. It is practically level country from the port to the junction with the main line at Alberton, and for some miles further north. The Railway Station at Port Albert is approximately a mile from the main part of the town and the wharf, there being very little settlement near it. The road leading to the wharf is in danger of sea erosion at its lower end, while the wharf itself, which was built some 40 or 50 years ago, has reached a stage when repairs have become urgently necessary.

LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS.

4. Mr. H. Avery, President of the Port Albert Fishermen's Association, stated in evidence that the men were labouring under a serious disability by not having the railway facilities extended to the wharf. He pointed out that it was necessary to have the boxes of fish conveyed by a horse-drawn vehicle to the railway station at a cost of 1s. per large box, and that the motor trolley then took them on to Alberton, where they were transferred to the "up" train which had come from Yarram. As an indication of their earnestness in the matter, the fishermen were prepared to pay an extra freight charge of 15s. per ton on the railway, during a period of three years, if the railway were extended to the wharf. The cartage on the ice, which came from Foster, and amounted to nearly 100 tons annually, was 2s. 6d. per ton from the station to the wharf, and with a through line this would be saved also.

5. They preferred that the extension should be to the existing wharf rather than to the suggested site at the back of the Bank of Victoria, known as Rutter's Jetty, a distance of only 53 chains from the railway station. Failing the wharf site, that near Rutter's Jetty would, however, be quite acceptable. They would be satisfied with a cool truck at Alberton, as they understood it would cost 6s. 8d. per ton more to bring that truck to the railway station at Port Albert.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON OUTER PORTS.

6. The Royal Commission on Outer Ports, when investigating the suitability of a port for South Gippsland, visited Port Albert, and reported that the port works since the extension of the railway from Alberton, and the restriction to navigation "have greatly decayed and present a scene of dilapidation. The traffic from the Port Albert station, which is situated $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the wharf, is quite negligible." The Commission, after investigating certain other ports also, selected Welshpool as the site for a central port for South Gippsland.

VIEWS OF PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

7. The Committee heard evidence from Mr. G. Kermode, Chief Engineer for Ports and Harbours, on the matter of the repairs necessary at the existing wharf, and the probability of the Department providing a wharf or pier at the new site near Rutter's Jetty.

8. Mr. Kermode pointed out that no local Harbour Board had been created under the authority provided by the *Harbor Boards Act 1927*. The wharf was in a bad state, and would require the expenditure of approximately £2,000, or possibly more, in repairs. He did not consider there was any hope of having a pier or wharf constructed at the new site near Rutter's Jetty unless a railway line were provided to it, in which event the Department would consider the proposal. The approach from deep water was most unsatisfactory at Port Albert owing to the presence of the sand bar, which limited the available depth of water to 5 feet. In his opinion it was not worth while building either a jetty or a railway there, having regard to the amount of trade that would be offering. A new wharf with one berth near Rutter's Jetty would probably cost £3,000, as compared with about £2,000 which would be required to put the old wharf in order. If it were decided to extend the railway line at all, he considered it should go to the site near Rutter's Jetty. At the same time he did not think the extension of the railway line and the construction of a new jetty would bring any further trade there.

ESTIMATED LENGTH AND COST OF CONSTRUCTION.

9. Mr. C. H. Perrin, Chief Engineer for Railway Construction, supplied the Committee with the following figures relating to the proposals, viz. :—

Route.	Length to Construct.		Ruling Grade.	Sharpest Curve	Total Cost including Sidings at Alberton and Terminus.
	M.	Ch.	One in	Chains Radius.	
Port Albert to the existing wharf	1	0	200	10	£6,000
Port Albert to proposed new jetty	0	53	200	40	£4,500

If land should be purchased there would be an additional sum of £1,000 land compensation for the longer proposal and £750 for that terminating near Rutter's Jetty.

REPORT OF SPECIAL TRAFFIC OFFICER.

10. At the request of the Committee, the Railways Commissioners arranged for Mr. J. H. Olsson, Chief Special Officer, to visit the district and report on the present and prospective traffic, and operating costs. Mr. Olsson stated that in 1922, following upon a request from the Yarram and District Co-operative Society Limited, the Commissioners furnished a report to the Honorable the Minister on the matter of extending the Port Albert line from the railway station to the wharf, as is at present proposed. At that time the Commissioners stated :—

“It would appear from the reports that the real object of securing the extension from Port Albert to the wharf is to facilitate the transport by boat of goods for Yarram and the surrounding districts in competition with the railways, and in the circumstances the Commissioners cannot see their way to entertain the proposal.”

11. Dealing with the present proposal, it is stated that the type of rail motor now in use on the Port Albert line is capable of hauling two trailers with a total maximum permissible load of 35 cwt. In addition to the above service, a louvre truck is retained at Port Albert, and on occasions when the quantity of fish offering exceeds 35 cwt., arrangements can be made for the fish to be cleared by goods train. The following statement shows the financial results of operating the rail motor service between Port Albert, Alberton, and Yarram for the year ending June, 1928, viz. :—

<i>Expenditure</i> (Transportation Branch £492, Rolling-stock Branch £36)	£528
<i>Revenue</i> (Passengers £61 ; Parcels, including Fish, £38)	99
<i>Loss on operation</i>	£429

12. The greater portion of the traffic between Alberton and Port Albert is handled by the rail motor, but it is occasionally necessary to provide an engine service when the quantity of fish or other traffic offering is in excess of the capacity of the rail motor. In the year ending June, 1928, 42 special trips were run by the engine of the Yarram to Melbourne steam goods train, the train waiting at Alberton while the trip was being run in each case. If the desired connexion were constructed, it was proposed by the Department to continue this practice.

13. An important factor to be considered is that of abolishing the present high cartage cost. Twenty-five large boxes of fish are carried as 1 ton, and the cartage rate from the wharf to the station is now 1s. per large box, or 25s. per ton, which, added to the rail rate from Port Albert to Melbourne, makes a through charge of £3 9s. 11d. per ton. In comparison with this figure, the through rate to Melbourne from the proposed site near Rutter's Jetty would be only £2 5s. 2d., or 3d. more than the rate from Port Albert station, showing a saving of £1 4s. 9d. per ton. The Secretary of the Fishermen's Association informed Mr. Olsson that the fishermen would willingly pay a surcharge of 20s. per ton in order to secure the improved facilities, and the increased revenue that would be brought in by these means has been shown separately in the estimates supplied. When the Committee heard evidence in the district, the proposed additional charge suggested was 15s. per ton, but even at £1 per ton there would be a saving to the fishermen of 4s. 9d. as compared with the existing conditions, while in addition the cartage charge of 2s. 6d. per ton on 100 tons of ice per annum would be saved.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL CHARGES AND REVENUE.

14. The Railways Commissioners furnished the Committee with the following estimates of annual charges and revenue of the proposed railway based on a service with an "A.E.C." rail motor equipped with 35 seats:—

PORT ALBERT STATION TO A SITE NEAR RUTTER'S JETTY.

Annual Charges.

Interest at 5½ per cent. per annum on £8,441, being cost (£4,500) of constructing 53 chains of 5-ft. 3-in. railway from Port Albert station to a site near Rutter's Jetty, with £3,941 added for rolling-stock	..	..	..	..	£443
Working Expenses, Transportation and Traffic Branches	..	..	..	..	449
" " Way and Works Branch (Maintenance, &c.)	..	..	..	..	535
" " Rolling-stock (Locomotive expenses, repairs, and renewals)	..	..	..	..	889
General Expenses (Administration, Printing, Auditing, &c.)	..	..	..	..	47
					<u>£2,363</u>

Revenue.

	On New Line.	On Other Lines from New Traffic from New Line.	
Passengers, 1,450 journeys	£58	£53	
Parcels	10	..	
Mails	10	..	
Class goods, 367 tons	36	..	
Fish, 400 tons	33	348	
All other traffic	5	..	
	<u>£152</u>	<u>£401</u>	£553

Estimated loss first year of operation .. £1,810

PORT ALBERT STATION TO PORT ALBERT WHARF.

Annual Charges.

Interest at 5½ per cent. per annum on £9,950, being cost (£6,000) of constructing 1 mile of 5-ft. 3-in. railway from Port Albert station to Port Albert Wharf, with £3,950 added for rolling-stock	..	..	..	..	£522
Working Expenses, Transportation and Traffic Branches	..	..	..	..	449
" " Way and Works Branch (Maintenance, &c.)	..	..	..	..	562
" " Rolling-stock (Locomotive expenses, repairs, and renewals)	..	..	..	..	942
General Expenses (Administration, Printing, Auditing, &c.)	..	..	..	..	49
					<u>£2,524</u>

Revenue.

	On New Line.	On Other Lines from New Traffic from New Line.	
Passengers, 1,450 journeys	£59	£53	
Parcels	10	..	
Mails	10	..	
Class goods, 367 tons	38	..	
Fish, 400 tons	34	348	
All other traffic	5	..	
	<u>£156</u>	<u>£401</u>	£557

Estimated loss first year of operation .. £1,967

VIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE.

15. The Committee, after visiting the district and hearing local as well as Melbourne evidence, is of the opinion that the amount of traffic offering would not be sufficient to warrant the construction of this extension. There is no doubt the Port Albert station is inconveniently situated so far as traffic from the town and wharf is concerned, but with the limited quantity of fish and other goods coming forward, and even making every allowance for prospective development, the revenue obviously would not by any means meet the operating expenses, apart from the interest charges on the capital cost involved.

16. The offer of the fishermen to pay an additional surcharge of £1 per ton for a period of three years is at first glance liberal, but it is sound business, and would show them a saving. At the same time, this extra revenue would not by any means offset the annual charges that would be debited to the proposal.

17. The fishermen are undoubtedly inconvenienced to some extent by the journey of approximately 1 mile to the railway station at present, and though it may not alleviate the position, it may be consolatory to reflect that their plight is not nearly so bad as that, for instance, of the Mallacoota fishermen, who cart 94 miles to Orbost, while others again cart from Lower Bemm, 35 miles, and Tamboon, 80 miles, to the same station, which is 240 miles from Melbourne, as compared with Port Albert 136 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Fish from Port Franklin is also conveyed 2 miles by horse tram to Bennison *en route* to Melbourne.

18. It would seem that the necessity for the proposed line might be lessened if the fishermen, by co-operative effort, provided for the transport of their fish at a much lower rate than the 25s. per ton at present paid, which appears absurdly and abnormally high. In most parts of this State road haulage may be obtained for about 1s. per ton per mile, and while the short distance of 1 mile in this case does not admit of an equitable comparison because of the disproportionately high terminal service, it does undoubtedly appear that a concerted or co-operative effort would result in a very substantial reduction in this charge. With this secured, a large measure of the dissatisfaction with the existing rail facilities would probably vanish.

RECOMMENDATION.

19. The Committee, for the foregoing reasons, is of the opinion that it is not expedient to recommend the construction of a railway from Port Albert station to the town of Port Albert.

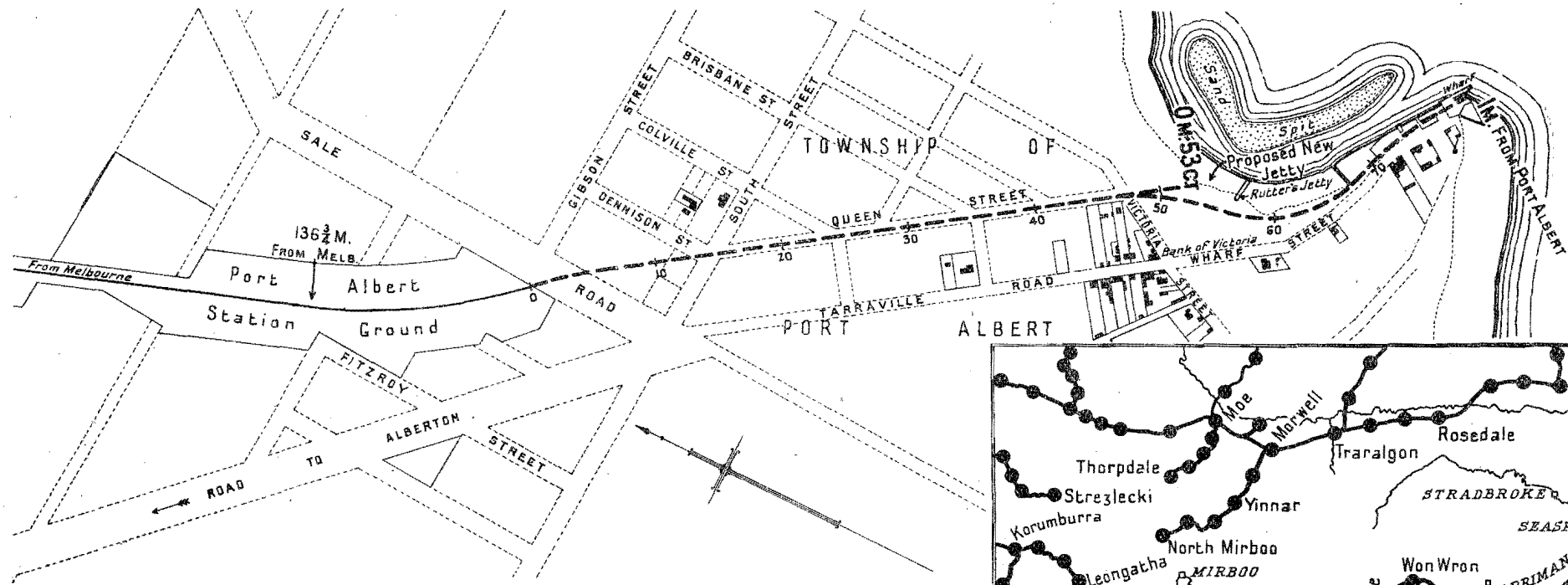
20. Section 14 of the Railways Standing Committee Act, No. 2717, prohibits a member of the Committee taking part in its proceedings when any proposed line running into or through his electoral district is being considered or reported on by the Committee. Consequently the Hon. M. McGregor, M.L.C., did not take part in the deliberations of the Committee when this question was being considered.

A. E. LIND,
Chairman.

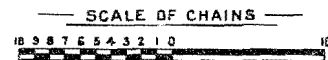
Railways Standing Committee Room,
Parliament House,
Melbourne, 22nd May, 1929.

(Minutes of Evidence and Plan are not printed.)

By Authority: H. J. GREEN, Government Printer, Melbourne.



PORT ALBERT — PROPOSED RAILWAY CONNECTION —



Proposed Route to Proposed New Jetty	-----
" " Existing Wharf	- - - - -
Distance in Chains	10 20 30 ETC.
Existing Railway Line	—————

Chas. H. Perrin.
CHIEF ENGINEER FOR RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION
MAY 1929

