

1931.

VICTORIA.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS

FORTY-SECOND GENERAL REPORT.

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE RAILWAYS STANDING
COMMITTEE ACT 1928 (19 GEO. V. No. 3761), SECTION 27, ON WEDNESDAY, 6TH MAY, 1931.

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MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTEENTH COMMITTEE.*

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The Honorable ALEXANDER BELL. †
The Honorable MARTIN MCGREGOR.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

ARTHUR ERNEST COOK, Esquire.
ALBERT ARTHUR DUNSTAN, Esquire.
THOMAS HAYES, Esquire.
ALBERT ELI LIND, Esquire.

CHAIRMAN—THOS. HAYES, Esq., M.L.A.

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

* The members of the Seventeenth Committee were appointed by the Legislative Council on 11th December and by the Legislative Assembly on 18th December, 1929.

† The Honorable Alexander Bell, M.L.C., died on 27th March, 1931.

FORTY-SECOND 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 No. 27 of the Railways Standing Committee Act No. 3761 (1928), the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways has the honour to submit the following report of its proceedings :—

1. Since 2nd April, 1930, the date of presentation of its last report, the Committee has held 192 meetings and examined 107 witnesses in connexion with various inquiries respecting new railways, non-paying lines, railway works, and tramways. In making these inquiries the Committee travelled approximately 2,325 miles by rail and 310 miles by road.

2. The Committee regrets to record the death, on the 27th March, 1931, of the Honorable Alexander Bell, M.L.C., who had been a member, and on two occasions Chairman, of the Committee since 25th September, 1923. Mr. Bell's wide business experience and financial knowledge were of great value to the Committee in its various investigations, and his death is a loss not only to the Committee but to the State of Victoria.

REPORTS PRESENTED DURING THE 1930 SESSION.

3. During the Parliamentary Session of 1930 the Committee presented the following reports, viz. :—

Specific References—

- (1) Meringur to Morkalla railway extension.
- (2) Kew to Doncaster electric railway.

Railway Works and Non-paying Lines—

- (3) Deviation of main Gippsland line through Yallourn.
- (4) Ferntree Gully to Gembrook non-paying railway line.
- (5) Koo-wee-rup to Strezlecki non-paying railway line.

Tramway Proposals—

- (6) Spencer-street Bridge electric tramway.
- (7) Glen Iris (High-street) electric tramway extension.
- (8) North Coburg electric tramway extension.

General Reports—

- (9) Forty-first General Report of the Committee.

REPORTS READY FOR PRESENTATION.

4. The Committee has prepared reports on the following matters, and will submit them to Parliament at the opening of the Session, on 6th May, 1931, or shortly thereafter, viz. :—

General Report—

(1) Forty-second General Report.

New Railway Construction—

(2) Proposed Deviation of main Gippsland line via Yallourn.

QUESTIONS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE.

5. The following additional matters are at present before the Committee for inquiry and report, viz. :—

Non-paying Railway Lines—

(1) Ouyen to Murrayville non-paying railway line.

(2) Colac to Beech Forest non-paying railway line.

(3) Bairnsdale to Orbost non-paying railway line.

6. The Committee has practically concluded its investigations into the Ouyen–Murrayville and Colac–Crowes lines, and will shortly present reports to Parliament upon these sections. The inquiry into the Bairnsdale–Orbost line is proceeding. The district has been visited and local evidence heard, and further information is now being obtained from officers of the Railways Department and the Forests Commission with reference to timber and other traffic on this line.

DEVELOPMENTAL RAILWAYS ACCOUNT.

7. The amount to the credit of this account at 30th June, 1929, was £294,752. During the present financial year the sum of £100,000 was transferred to the Consolidated Revenue account by Act No. 3836, and the position of the fund at 31st March, 1931, was—

	£	s.	d.
Investment	125,000	0	0
Cash	83,352	16	8
	<hr/>		
	208,352	16	8

There are commitments against this amount to the following extent in respect to lines partially constructed, viz. :—

	Amount Estimated to be Required.
	£
Meringur to Morkalla line	5,000
Nowingi to Millewa South line	25,000
	<hr/>
	30,000

An amount of £178,352 is thus available for use in the event of any recommendations being made by the Committee for railway construction costs being met from this fund. There are, however, in addition, possible commitments of a less imminent nature. The Committee when approving the construction of a line from Casterton to Nangeela in 1926 recommended that £15,000 be contributed from the Developmental Railways Account, and in November, 1927, Act No. 3531 was passed authorizing the construction of this line with that provision. No action has, however, been taken in the direction of constructing the line. In 1921 the Port Fairy to Yambuk Railway Construction Act (No. 3152) was passed, authorizing the construction of that line at a cost of £80,000, to be paid out of the Developmental Railways Account. No action was taken in connexion with the actual construction of the line, and in 1928 the Committee, in a further report to Parliament, disapproved of connecting Yambuk with the existing system. The Committee also recommended, in 1923, the construction of a line from Kanagulk to Edenhope, with the provision of £35,000 out of "The Public Account," as a free gift. In a subsequent report, in 1927, the Committee recommended, however, that it was not expedient to serve Edenhope with railway facilities. A further commitment from this fund is that of meeting an amount each year for interest on loan money for developmental roads, in accordance with section 83 of the Country Roads Act, No. 3662. Last year this amounted to £13,487, and as a set off against it there was credited to the fund from payments by shires in this connexion an amount of £8,919.

LOSSES ON NON-PAYING LINES.

8. A factor frequently lost sight of in considering the loss on a non-paying line is the length of the section. Taking the Bairnsdale-Orbost line as an example, while the aggregate loss of £24,202 last year was the highest of the group for which reimbursements were claimed from the Treasury, the loss per mile of line worked (60½ miles) was only £401. In the case of the short semi-suburban section of line from Eltham to Hurstbridge the aggregate loss of £9,385 spread over only 6½ miles of line shows a loss per mile of £1,442, roughly three and a half times as great. The Ferntree Gully to Gembrook line shows a loss per mile of £897, which is more than twice that of the Bairnsdale-Orbost section. The following table has been compiled on the basis mentioned, and is arranged in the order of the annual loss per mile of line worked instead of on the total amount lost for the year, viz. :—

Section.	Approximate Annual Loss per Mile of Line Worked.	Total Loss on Line or Year ending 28.2.1930. (including Interest).	Interest Charge on Line for Year ending 28.2.1930.	Length of Section.
	£	£	£	Miles.
<i>Electric Tramway Line—</i>				
Black Rock-Beaumaris	2,070	4,616	2,641	2¼
<i>Railway Lines—</i>				
Eltham-Hurstbridge	1,443	9,385	4,584	6½
Ferntree Gully-Gembrook	897	16,156	5,157	18
Fawkner-Somerton	517	2,715	192	5¼
Koo-wee-rup-Strezlecki	514	15,681	14,664	30½
Linton-Skipton	483	6,160	3,062	12¾
Neerim South-Noojee	464	6,500	6,603	14
Newport-Altona	407	1,731	1,365	4¼
Bairnsdale-Orbost	401	24,202	22,907	60½
Tallangatta-Cudgewa	399	16,955	14,697	42½
Alberton-Won Wron	375	4,506	4,968	12
Annuello-Robinvale	323	6,308	4,637	19½
Kerang-Murrabit	319	4,790	5,622	15
Bittern-Red Hill	306	3,740	3,646	9¾
Koolonong-Yungera	298	2,009	1,248	6¾
Werrimull-Meringur	271	4,133	3,111	15¾
Piangil-Koolonong	260	4,091	3,584	15¾
Colac-Crowes	257	11,258	7,869	43¾
Merbein-Yelta	240	1,441	1,657	6
Moe-Walhalla	228	5,938	3,797	26
Heywood-Puralka	204	7,894	7,334	38¾
Sea Lake-Nandaly	199	3,526	2,373	17¾
Nandaly-Kulwin	189	3,693	3,875	19½
Hopetoun-Patchewollock	176	4,762	5,150	27
Marnoo-Bolangum	172	1,118	1,789	6½
Benalla-Tatong	166	3,040	2,490	18¼
Wangaratta-Whitfield	166	5,033	2,597	30¼
Goroke-Carpolac	144	1,301	2,355	9
Manangatang-Annuello	134	1,916	3,363	14¼
Redcliffs-Werrimull	128	6,496	6,804	50¾
Cavendish-Toolondo	125	5,524	10,058	44
Rushworth-Girgaree	119	1,671	2,628	14
Won Wron-Woodside	92	876	128	9½
Colac-Alvie	61	599	2,829	9¾
Beeac-Newtown	57	2,055	6,185	35¾
Elmore-Cohuna	36	2,050	8,233	57
Ben Nevis-Navarre	31	704	3,590	22¾
Ouyen-Murrayville	30	2,012	8,666	68
Chillingollah-Manangatang	27	497	2,154	18½
Noradjuha-Toolondo	22	252	1,553	11¼

9. The average loss per mile of line for the whole system (including "paying" and "non-paying" lines) was £220 for the year ending 30th June, 1930. The deficit for the year was £1,036,997, and the average number of miles open for traffic for the year, 4,708. On this basis, therefore, the twenty lines in the foregoing list, with losses from £204 downward, may be regarded as better than the average of the whole system, while the first twenty show losses greater than the average.

10. The following statement, supplied by the Railways Commissioners, indicates that many lines, which were constructed prior to 1896, and in respect to which no reimbursement allowance may, therefore, be claimed from the Treasury, are also making heavy losses, the figures for varying periods of a year or less ending 28th February, 1930, being as under, viz. :—

Section.	Approximate Annual Loss per Mile of Line Worked.	Total Loss on Line for period ending 28th February, 1930 (including Interest).	Length of period for Two Preceding Columns.	Interest Charge on Line for period ending 28th February, 1930.	Mileage of Section.
	£	£	Months.	£	Miles.
Ballarat East-Buninyong ..	1,096	8,218	12	3,695	71½
Lilydale-Healesville ..	750	6,783	7	6,601	15½
Moe-Thorpdale ..	657	6,826	11	5,250	11¼
Everton-Yackandandah ..	624	3,159	11	8,970	23
Warragul-Neerim South ..	507	6,326	11	5,795	13½
Timboon Junction-Timboon ..	380	8,462	12	5,990	22¼
Tallarook-Mansfield ..	369	27,820	12	26,641	75¼
Linton Junction-Linton ..	333	7,291	11	6,744	21
Redesdale Junction-Redesdale ..	331	4,974	11	4,074	16¼
Birregurra-Forrest ..	308	5,630	11	6,829	19¾
Branxholme-Casterton ..	278	8,913	12	9,649	32
Maffra-Briagolong ..	256	2,902	11	2,856	12¼
Terang-Mortlake ..	234	3,042	12	2,971	13
Cathkin-Koriella ..	225	956	12	914	4¼
Hamilton-Koroit ..	196	10,218	12	10,713	52
Clarkefield-Lancefield ..	189	2,785	12	3,577	14¾
Hamilton-Coleraine ..	174	4,136	12	5,769	23¾

The total loss claimed from the Treasury by the Railways Commissioners last year in respect to non-paying lines was £199,929.

11. On the subject of guarantees from residents the Committee communicated with the Secretary for the Queensland Railways, and were informed that—

“Several branch lines were built under the guarantee system whereby the ratepayers in the areas declared as benefiting from the railway were taxed to make up loss in meeting working expenses, and 3 per cent. interest on capital cost. This system is not now in force, and the Consolidated Revenue has to bear the deficits.”

It will be noted that this was really an extension of the Betterment Rate or Guarantee System, which is in operation in Victoria in respect to the Black Rock and Beaumaris Tramway, the Fawkner to Somerton rail motor service, and the Darling-Glen Waverley electric train service.

AUSTRALIAN RAILWAYS STATISTICS.

12. An interesting comparison with the results of working the Victorian lines is afforded by the following summarized statement relating to each State for the financial year ended 30th June, 1930, viz. :—

State.	Railway Deficit.	Percentage of Working Expenses to Earnings.	Working Expenses per Train Mile.	Average Cost per Mile of Line Open.	Gauge.
	£		s. d.	£	
Victoria ..	1,036,996	79·27%	10 9¼	15,882	5' 3" and 2' 6"
New South Wales ..	2,756,374	76·36%	10 11¼	20,930	4' 8½"
Queensland ..	1,658,189	81·43%	10 0¼	9,543	3' 6" and 2' 0"
South Australia ..	1,796,678	112·04%	13 3¾	11,003	5' 3" and 3' 6"
Western Australia ..	404,489	85·07%	10 6¾	5,744	3' 6"

13. It is not practicable to show separately the losses in respect to particular non-paying lines, because statistics giving this information are not published in each State. In New South Wales, however, the losses on Branch Lines (including developmental railways) amounted for the last financial year to approximately £1,950,000. The Railway accounts in that State are credited with a Government contribution of £800,000 per annum for the losses on these lines. In

Queensland, the earnings of Branch Lines were not only insufficient to meet any payment for interest on capital (£24,715,450), but were short of working expenses by £381,641. The Victorian system compares well with a train mile cost of 10s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d., seeing that nearly the whole of the mileage is 5 ft. 3 in., the Western Australian train mile figure of 10s. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. and the Queensland figure of 10s. 0 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. being both achieved on a 3-ft. 6-in. gauge. The percentage of working expenses to earnings is slightly lower in New South Wales than Victoria, but the deficit in the former State is very much greater than that of Victoria.

THOS. HAYES,
Chairman.

Railways Standing Committee Room,
Parliament House,
Melbourne, 9th April, 1931.