

1943.

VICTORIA.

STATE DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE

FIRST PROGRESS REPORT
(HOUSING)

PRESENTED TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL AND LAID BEFORE BOTH
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE *STATE DEVELOPMENT*
ACT 1941 (No. 4875).

By Authority:

H. F. DAW, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

STATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE.

FIRST PROGRESS REPORT.

After giving careful consideration to the terms of reference set down in Act No. 4875 for its constitution and functioning, the State Development Committee unanimously agreed that the most important and urgent task confronting it lay in the preparation of a preliminary plan for the alleviation of the housing shortage throughout the State of Victoria. In arriving at this decision, the Committee was influenced by the fact that a home for every man and a house for every family was one of the essentials for happy and contented development of the State's resources. It was also found that the erection of houses throughout the State would provide a maximum of employment for skilled and unskilled workers, would enable continuity of employment to be provided in many localities widely scattered throughout the State, and would ensure further avenues of employment for the men returning from the front and would assist in the rehabilitation of themselves and their fellow citizens.

The following expert witnesses have been examined :—

Mr. J. N. O'CONNOR, Chairman, Victorian Housing Commission.

Mr. A. V. GALBRAITH, Chairman, Forests Commission.

Mr. L. W. VINCENT and Mr. V. W. BUTLER, Brick Manufacturers.

Mr. R. N. SOLLY, Tile Manufacturers.

Mr. N. R. WILLIAMS, General Manager, State Savings Bank.

Mr. L. C. BURN, President, Master Builders' Association.

Mr. J. W. ADAMS, Director and Mr. D. C. SWANSON, Chairman, Glen Iris Brick Works.

Mr. DOYLE, Representative, Building Industry Congress of Victoria.

Mr. JUDSON, Manager, Building Societies of Victoria.

Mr. ROSE, Building Contractor.

Witnesses unanimously agreed as to the shortage of houses, although differing in their estimates of the actual numbers.

After reviewing all the evidence that has been submitted the Committee recommends :—

That a programme designed to make up for the existing housing shortage and to cater for anticipated increased demands calling for the annual construction of 16,000 houses for a period of ten years be adopted—

(a) To provide for existing shortage	..	..	..	6,000
(b) Normal requirement	..	..	..	9,000
(c) To replace substandard houses	..	..	..	1,000
				<hr/>
				16,000

Up to the time of the compilation of this progress report, the Committee has been unable to determine in detail the location of these houses, but recommends that as a general principle a considerable proportion be built in country centres where new industries have been or are to be established. A further report on this matter will be submitted.

The Committee has sought to obtain evidence as to the supply of material for the erection of these houses. It is satisfied that there is not sufficient timber readily available in this State to provide for a programme of this magnitude, and, therefore, recommends that provision be made for the erection of a considerable number of such houses in other materials, e.g., brick, stone, concrete, &c.

The brick manufacturing capacity of existing works in this State is sufficient in normal times to provide for the erection of 10,000 brick houses per annum. Bricks are at present in short supply, but provided labour and coal are available, all manufacturers could recommence and expand production without delay.

Ample capacity exists in the tile manufacturing industry to cope with a housing programme of the magnitude recommended. The present tile manufacturers' output is able to cover 7,000 dwellings per annum; corrugated asbestos cement roofing capacity is available for 6,000 dwellings per annum. Cement roofing tiles can be produced to cover 1,000 dwellings per annum. With an extension and duplication of existing roofing tile facilities on clay sites, an increased capacity sufficient for an extra 2,000 dwellings will be provided—

Total—16,000—houses per annum.

The building industry considers that it can cope with this programme of 16,000 houses per annum.

In order to overcome the present and future timber shortage in this State, the Committee recommends:—

1. The quadrupling of the existing reforestation programme and establishment on an extensive scale of plantations of quicker growing softwoods.
2. A revision of the existing methods of use of timber, e.g., adoption within a safety margin of reduced specifications for constructional hardwood timbers as compared with imported softwoods, &c.
3. Establishment by the State or by private industry of pulping processes to promote utilization of the produce of the whole tree for fabricated board timber for use in manufacture of doors, linings, ceilings and other building fittings.

FINANCE.

The evidence submitted to the Committee led it to the conclusion that the majority of persons desire to own their own homes and, therefore, the Committee recommends that in any scheme provision be made for applicants to purchase their homes on rent purchase terms.

The Committee estimates that the following financial programme would need to be provided in order to ensure the erection of 16,000 houses per annum:—

1. The purchasers of half the number of houses erected through private enterprise would require easy finance on rent purchase terms. The estimated cost of house, land, and services could be averaged at £1,000 per unit. If 8,000 houses were built, Government assistance would be required for 4,000. If purchaser makes a 10 per cent. deposit, Government to provide 90 per cent. by way of loan—4,000 x £900	£ 3,600,000
2. Government to erect 7,000 houses for home buyers or tenants capable of paying economic rents—7,000 houses at £1,000 per unit ..	7,000,000
3. Government to erect 1,000 homes to replace sub-standard houses—1,000 homes at £900 per unit	900,000
	11,500,000

TRAINING OF ARTISANS.

The Committee had its attention directed by a number of witnesses to the need for long range planning in the preparation of the scheme outlined in the foregoing paragraphs. This related specifically to the training and supply of a sufficient number of skilled workers to enable construction to proceed without interruption.

The Committee is of the opinion that immediate steps should be taken to investigate the position with reference to the supply of trained artisans for the building trades, and proposes to report upon this aspect of its proposals in the near future.

At the time of compilation of this Report, the Committee is not in the possession of sufficient evidence to enable it to recommend the method of procedure, length of training, types of training, location of training schools, relation between numbers trained in various trades and other factors, but in this preliminary report it is of the opinion that this aspect of a housing scheme requires immediate and careful consideration so that when the programme is commenced, it will not be handicapped through insufficient supply of trained artisans.

In this connexion, it is strongly recommended that the State educational institutions, particularly the technical schools, should be utilized for the purpose of undertaking training of these building tradesmen.

RELAXATION OF REGULATIONS.

The Committee is also strongly of the opinion that the financial regulations of the National Security Regulations in relation to house building and purchase should be relaxed in order to give some relief for Government or private schemes.

Men are being discharged from the forces physically unfit. The tragic position revealed by many witnesses of the unfortunate position of those who have given their all for the cause of the nation is being greatly accentuated by their inability to obtain a suitable house in which to live.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION.

The Committee, therefore, cannot too strongly recommend that an immediate start be made in this scheme, so that some relief may be provided for men returning from the Armed Services.

J. H. LIENHOP, M.L.C. (Chairman).

W. DUNSTONE, M.L.A. (Vice-Chairman).

W. P. BARRY, M.L.A.

W. R. CUMMING, M.L.A.

W. G. MCKENZIE, M.L.A.

H. P. ZWAR, M.L.A.

} Members.

G. R. GILES, Secretary.