

PART VII

HOUSING AND LAND SUBDIVISION

HOUSING.

The housing of the people is a subject involving tremendous detailed investigation. To deal with it exhaustively would require a much longer period of investigation than the Commission has been able to give. While Housing and Town Planning are intimately related, they are being treated more and more as separate studies. Earlier legislation in various countries included Housing and Town Planning under the one Act, but subsequent legislation has coupled Town Planning and Development Schemes, while Housing is often the subject of separate legislation.

RELATIONSHIP OF HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING.

The term "housing" is generally used in relation to the methods whereby the actual buildings for the domestic accommodation of the people can be built to meet the varying demands of those for whom they are to be provided. The scope of the Commission's inquiry has not been directed towards this end, but the subject has been considered from the standpoints of open spaces around dwellings, the number of people who should be housed on each acre, and the layout and zoning of areas for housing purposes, whether by public authorities or private enterprise, all of which phases of housing come within the purview of Town Planning.



Old housing in North Melbourne.

crowding and insanitary conditions which unfortunately are to be found in isolated parts of this metropolis. The zoning scheme will also protect residential areas from the intrusion of incongruous uses which at the present time, in many of the older suburbs, make bad housing conditions worse on account of the dust, smoke, odours, or noise which usually accompany many industrial operations.

In the chapter on Zoning, the housing areas of the metropolis are dealt with at some length, and regulations are suggested which would have the effect of preserving a suitable density of housing in the three types of district into which the residential areas of this metropolis should be subdivided. If the zoning provisions outlined were given effect, housing areas would be protected against the over-



Old housing in North Richmond.

CAUSE OF INFERIOR HOUSING CONDITIONS.

The subdivision of land into allotments too small to permit the erection of houses with rooms large enough to ensure the health of the occupants, and yard space sufficient to maintain adequate circulation of air around the houses, has contributed largely to the undesirable housing conditions which exist in certain parts of this metropolis. Fortunately—as pointed out in the chapter on Zoning—these conditions in the older suburbs have to a large extent been lessened

by the industrial encroachment which has expelled the residents, who have found better conditions in other localities. The subdivision of land into such small allotments has not taken place to anything like its former extent, since the municipalities have had a certain measure of control over plans of subdivision and the power to pass by-laws declaring minimum frontages and areas.

The improvement of the existing unsatisfactory housing conditions can be gradually brought about by the strict enforcement of existing legislation, combined with the proposals outlined in Part IV.

EXISTING LEGISLATION.

The Health Act enables local authorities to exercise control over the housing conditions within their municipal boundaries. Upon receipt of a certificate from the Health Officer, Medical Officer, Surveyor, or Engineer, the Council may declare houses, or parts of houses, unfit for human habitation, compel owners to repair, or take down and remove them, and also prevent their occupation until the necessary improvements have been carried out. Powers are also conferred to prevent the overcrowding of houses, and the use of cellars, vaults, or underground rooms as dwellings is prohibited. The Health Act also debars the erection of dwellings on land liable to flooding.

Such legislative enactments, together with the standard of living sought in this country, have combined to bring the great majority of dwellings in this metropolis up to the standard of good housing conditions.

The problem of providing for those of small means, who are the usual inhabitants of the more unsatisfactory type of house, has also received attention, and "An Act relating to the providing of Dwellings for Persons of Small Means, and for the Reclamation and Improvement of Insanitary Low-lying or Overcrowded Areas," was passed in 1920, intitled The Housing and Reclamation Act. This Act empowers the State Savings Bank Commissioners to buy land and build houses, borrow money for such purposes, and to sell the houses to purchasers on extended terms.

Councils are also given authority under this Act to carry out housing schemes for persons of small means, and they may borrow money up to £100,000 in excess of the amount authorized by Local Government Acts for general purposes. The cost of houses erected under these provisions is limited to £800.

For the purpose of reclaiming insanitary, low-lying, or overcrowded areas, or for the improvement of areas abutting on streets less than 33 feet wide, or where land was subdivided prior to the Local Government Act of 1914, in such a manner as to become an insanitary or overcrowded area, the municipality was empowered by the 1920 Act to carry out the necessary works, erect buildings, and sell or let them.

No council has availed itself of the powers granted, the extremely unwieldy and complicated nature of the Act having largely contributed to the unwillingness of the municipalities to carry out housing or reclamation schemes in accordance with the procedure which the Act sets out. In many cases where small subdivisions have been approved by the councils in portions of these undesirable areas, the powers conferred by the Housing and Reclamation Act prevent any action being taken in respect of these new subdivisions. In consequence, a general scheme for the whole area cannot be carried out even if the Act referred to could be operated in other respects. This difficulty is particularly in evidence in the Maidstone area.

ENCOURAGEMENT OF HOME OWNERSHIP.

The problem of providing housing accommodation for the poorer classes will always remain a problem while high standards are maintained. It is a matter of building suitable accommodation at a price within the reach of the thrifty basic wage man, when such price is largely governed by the high cost of labour, materials, and land which prevail. These factors have contributed elsewhere to the building of multiple family dwellings and tenements, and housing schemes for building houses of standard design, in large numbers to lessen the cost. Tenement houses are hardly likely to be accepted in this new country where the conditions are not comparable with those of older cities. Nevertheless, **a modification of them under the safeguards laid down in the legislation recommended for residential districts in the Zoning Scheme would allow of much better housing in some of the overcrowded areas in this metropolis, at a cost which would ensure a reasonable return on the money expended.**

The State Savings Bank of Victoria has been empowered by State Savings Bank Acts and the Housing and Reclamation Act, to erect or purchase houses, and give liberal repayment terms in order to encourage purchases by individuals not already possessing homes. The

popularity of the terms offered by the State Savings Bank Commissioners is apparent, as from 17th December, 1910, to 30th June, 1929, loans amounting to £23,648,365 in respect of 47,951 houses and shops have been made under Crédit Foncier terms, by far the greatest proportion of which are houses, and from 1st January, 1921, to 30th June, 1929, 7,370 advances amounting to £4,824,841 under the Housing and Reclamation Act. It is estimated that 80 per cent. of the number of these loans and advances are on properties situated in the metropolitan area.

The average cost of the houses erected under the Housing and Reclamation Act is £843. The amount of the deposit varies with the distance of the property from tram or train. The minimum deposit is £50, but concessions may be made to applicants with children, provided the house is within three-quarters of a mile from a tram or train. In the latter cases the deposit may be as low as £25, and the balance of the purchase money, with interest at a low rate, is payable by monthly instalments over a period of 26½ years.

Considerable progress has been made in that part of Fisherman's Bend, Port Melbourne, which this Commission recommended should be utilized for housing. Seventy-two dwellings have been erected, and 134 more are in course of construction. In this section the high cost of the land and foundations necessitated a departure from the single-story, single-family house. Semi-detached houses of two stories have, therefore, been erected, and they are being sought eagerly because of their satisfactory design and of the easy repayment terms. The average cost of the dwellings already occupied, including land, road-making, drainage, and other expenses was £909 19s. The cash payment by purchasers averaged £87 7s. 1d. The balance of purchase money and interest at 6½ per cent. is payable by weekly instalments of £1 4s. 6d., and the home thus becomes the unencumbered property of the purchaser in 26½ years. In the latest area to be developed, the cost of the houses is estimated to reach about £1,050 in all. After the necessary deposit has been paid, the weekly payments will be £1 7s. 6d., but the term of repayment has been extended to 32½ years.



Bad housing in Port Melbourne.

In addition to the foregoing, the State Savings Bank now builds and purchases houses for returned soldiers under War Service Homes Acts. From 1st July, 1922, to 30th June, 1929, 4,145 advances were made to returned soldiers (under the provision of this Act) amounting to £3,032,208. In this case also it is estimated that 80 per cent. of the number of advances are made on properties situated in the metropolitan area.

The State Savings Bank Commissioners are to be commended for the efforts they have made to provide cheap houses and for increasing the number of home owners who, in the absence of the concessions granted by the Bank, would have been unable to purchase their dwellings.

The State Savings Bank scheme has supplemented the housing accommodation by better class homes to such an extent that many people have changed into improved conditions. The cost of the homes in the Fisherman's Bend area, however, is beyond the means of many, but it is believed that houses could be constructed at a cost which would permit their purchase by many persons now living in undesirable dwellings. Although the accommodation would not be as elaborate as that provided in the Fisherman's Bend group of houses, a considerable advance could be made on the conditions now obtaining in parts of the older suburbs.

An indication of the existing conditions of housing in this metropolis is given in the *Victorian Year Book 1927-28*, page 134, which shows that at the last census (1921) 44·5 per cent. of the houses in the metropolis were occupied by owners who had completed their purchases or were buying on terms. This proportion is likely to have increased in more recent years, because the erection of houses has proceeded at a rapid rate, and the more liberal terms offered to prospective purchasers have enabled many to commence buying their own homes.

PREVAILING HOUSING CONDITIONS.

The average housing conditions, more particularly in the newer suburbs, are entirely satisfactory from a health stand-point. The predilection for single-family dwellings on liberal allotments of land is demonstrated by the marked increase of this class of dwelling. Private enterprise and the State Savings Bank appear to be able to satisfy the demands made for dwellings of this type, and at present there is no apparent shortage of houses for those able to purchase or pay rentals which will ensure a reasonable financial return. The assistance rendered by the State Savings Bank and the increasing proportion of home buyers have also had the effect of increasing the numbers of houses available for letting, with consequent reduction in rents. There is no doubt that the shortage of houses experienced in the years immediately following the Great War has now been overtaken, and the numbers of flats which are "To Let" is evidence that many people have changed from this mode of living to the favoured single-family dwelling.



Mangalore-street, Flemington.



St. James-parade, Gardenvale.

Typical average housing conditions.

During the last decade or so, flats became a popular form of housing, and the demand for them was such that many people merely made structural alterations, which divided the original house into two or more units. Gradually, superior types of flats were erected in great numbers in the inner suburbs, and it would appear that at the present time there is a surplus of them. Nevertheless, they are freely used by those people who are nomadic and by married couples without children. The zoning recommendations made by the Commission have been designed to make the building or use of flats a less attractive proposition.

In view of the difficulty now experienced in disposing of the older house property, some enterprising builders have erected whole streets



Lempriere-avenue, East St. Kilda.

of houses of a superior type, and given very careful thought to the architecture and street amenities. Apparently, the experiments have been successful, because this type of development is increasing. From a town-planning point of view, this high class housing is commendable, and has again proved that those who can afford better homes in better surroundings are ready and anxious to change.

UNDESIRABLE HOUSING SITES.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the unsatisfactory subdivision into small allotments of areas in our older suburbs has contributed to the unsatisfactory housing conditions which are to be found therein. Most of these areas, which are close to the central area, are densely built upon, and unless reclamation schemes are undertaken, the betterment of the conditions will be a slow process, brought about by the operation of zoning schemes.

In the outer portions of the metropolis there are areas which were subdivided prior to the development of an Australian standard of housing, and which were copied from the layout of old world cities. Fortunately, however, in the municipalities in which these areas occur, by-laws are in operation which prevent the erection of houses on allotments which do not comply with the liberal standards prescribed. Such subdivisions are to be found in the Municipalities of Carrum, Oakleigh, Mulgrave, Blackburn and Mitcham, Ringwood, Northcote, Braybrook, and Footscray. The size of the allotments and the layout of these areas are entirely unsuitable for the housing development which should naturally take place.

The most noteworthy and extensive illustration of the type of subdivision referred to is situated in the shire of Braybrook, at Maidstone. The fact that it is on the fringe of the developed area of the metropolis, and is already being dotted with houses conforming to some extent to the old unsatisfactory layout, has caused the Commission to give it special attention and prepare a resubdivisional scheme.

The legislation required for this scheme would deal with other unsatisfactory subdivisions prior to the erection of buildings. Suitable provisions are outlined in Chapter X., which deals with legislation, and the following description of the Maidstone scheme is typical of such areas.

THE MAIDSTONE REPLANNING SCHEME.

Locality and Existing Conditions.

The area to which this scheme relates is shown on the Plan on page 252. It comprises about 1,020 acres in the Shire of Braybrook, as shown on the Plan—Sheet No. 6. Some of the existing subdivisions date back to 1852, and they include large numbers of allotments with dimensions of 20 feet x 50 feet and 26 feet x 68 feet.

Interspersed, however, with these old subdivisions are comparatively recent ones where the allotments are laid out with an area of 5,000 square feet in accordance with the Council's by-law, which prescribes a minimum of 5,000 square feet on which dwellings may be erected. This by-law has no doubt retarded the settlement in this area in recent years. The by-law has had the desirable effect of requiring at least three of the original small allotments of 26 feet by 68 feet to be combined before the necessary building area was reached, and in many cases four allotments have been combined to make a better-conditioned building site.

The area is at present sparsely built upon, there being approximately 250 houses on the section east of Ashley-street, while practically the whole of the section west of Ashley-street is vacant land.

As so many of the original allotments measure 26 feet x 68 feet the streets in a considerable portion of the area are only 136 feet apart, and as the combination of allotments has usually resulted in the new allotments having a depth of 136 feet, it has allowed owners the choice of building to either street. As a consequence, many houses have for their aspect the backyards of houses across the street. The conditions in this area will become aggravated if the existing unsatisfactory layout is not remedied.

Total Replanning Scheme.

Investigation showed that the difficulties involved in a scheme of total replanning were no greater than those in a scheme of partial replanning; in fact, the latter would probably occasion dissatisfaction among the owners of allotments having frontages to roads which it was decided to close.

The total replanning scheme for the whole area is shown on the Plan on page 252. This plan incorporates the Commission's proposals for main roads in the western municipalities so far as they affect this area, and includes—

- (a) Ballarat-road.—Width increased from 66 feet to 132 feet by widening on northern side between Summerhill-road and Ashley-street, and from 99 feet to 132 feet between Ashley-street and Boundary-street (or Duke-street).
- (b) Ashley-street widened from 66 feet to 99 feet between Ballarat-road and the Tottenham Station, and forming the southern continuations of Lyons-street, Braybrook, which is 99 feet wide.
- (c) A new parkway road 132 feet wide in a direct line between the intersection of Ballarat-road and Summerhill-road to link with Durham-road at Duke-street.
- (d) A new diagonal road from Hampstead-road to Sunshine, 84 feet wide, to connect with the new 132-foot parkway road across the area, and, in conjunction with it, to give direct access between Sunshine and the Maribyrnong-road Bridge and thence to northern suburbs.
- (e) From Ballarat-road at Northumberland-street a new road 84 feet wide, in a direct line to Ashley-street, Tottenham, at Barkly-street.

Residential Development.

After providing the main roads system, the areas lying between are planned to make a residential suburb. The streets are laid out so that houses erected in them will be within easy access of the various main roads, but the minor streets are so arranged as not to provide direct routes of travel for through traffic. By eliminating through traffic from the residential streets a less noisy, less dusty, and less expensive street is made possible, thus assisting to increase the comfort of residents in such streets. As far as practicable the residential streets have been designed to ameliorate the natural monotony of the landscape by providing angles and terminal features, thus affording a variety of outlook.

Within the residential area planned, it is estimated that 23,475 people could be provided with homes on allotments of not less than 5,000 square feet each.

Business Areas.

Business areas to serve the ultimate population are shown in selected locations in the replanning scheme. The length of business frontages set aside would provide one shop for every 50 of the estimated total population, which is considered to be a reasonable allowance for a suburb of this class. The principal shopping centres are planned along the proposed tram route in Ballarat-road, at its intersection with other roads, thus ensuring that the planned business areas will be readily accessible to the neighbouring residential area.

As the Tottenham Railway Station will be used by a considerable number of the residents, a business centre is planned in Ashley-street from Barkly-street to the Station.

Another business centre is located at the intersection of the three new roads across the area. It lies approximately in the centre of the area west of Ashley-street, and may become the community centre for a large portion of the area replanned.

Parks, Playgrounds, and Plantations.

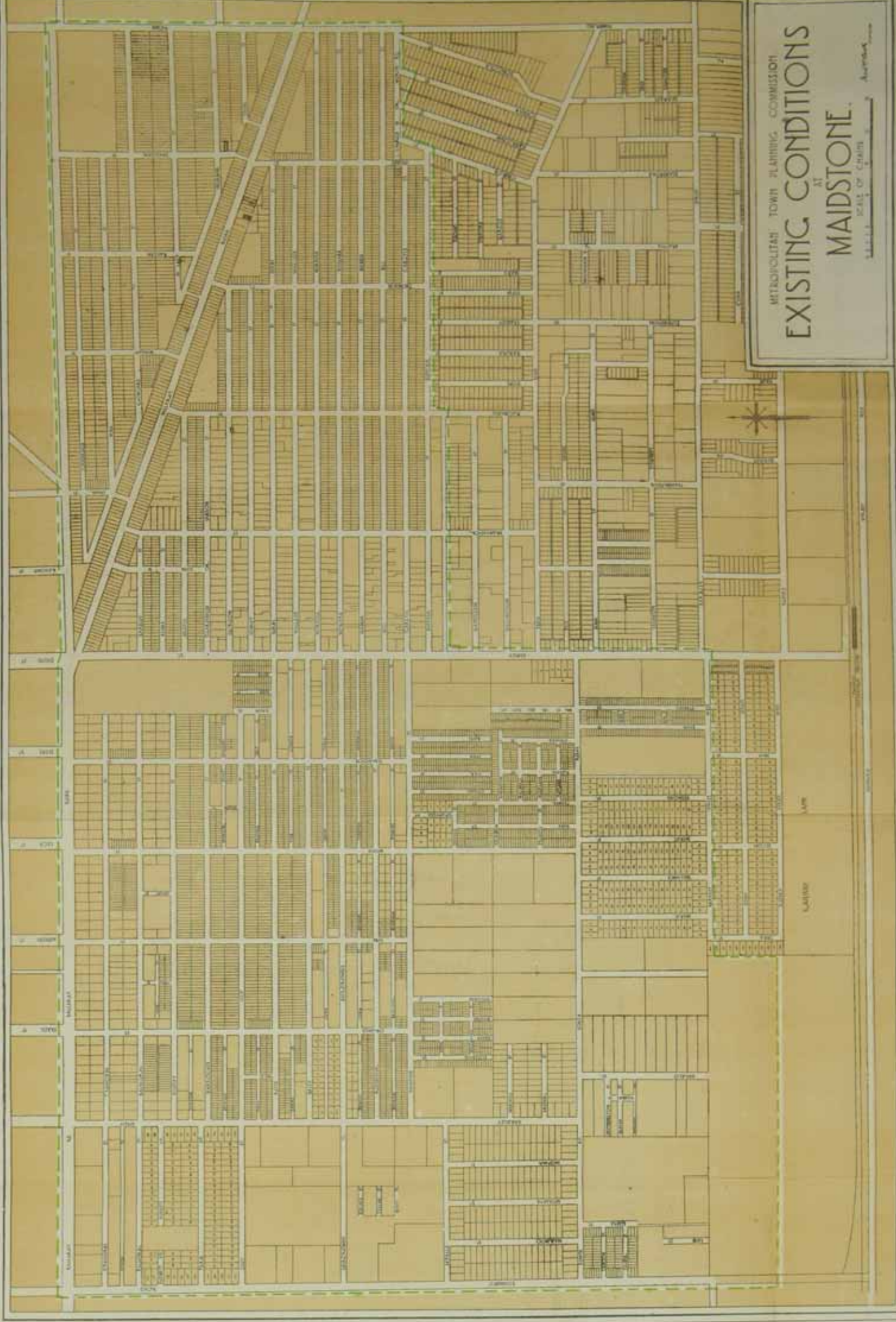
Seventy-seven acres are set aside for open spaces, including 17 acres of road plantations, in the widened Ballarat-road and the new parkway road, which forms the direct approach to Sunshine from the Ballarat-road. The remaining 60 acres are distributed in such a way that they will be conveniently accessible to the future residents. Two reserves are planned of sufficient size to accommodate full-sized ovals and still leave a considerable space for other recreation. Others, although not large enough to accommodate full-sized ovals, are sufficiently large to allow cricket, football, &c., to be played and leave sufficient space for games such as tennis and bowls.

These large parks, which should become the principal ones, are located away from the main traffic routes, but the street system in the vicinity of them is so designed that they are easily accessible.

Smaller open spaces are provided in areas away from the main traffic routes so as to minimize the risk of accidents to the children using them.

The open spaces and road plantations have been arranged so that trees planted thereon will provide protection from winds and afford a great number of home sites the advantage of overlooking parks.

METROPOLITAN TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
EXISTING CONDITIONS
 AT
MAIDSTONE.
 SCALE OF CHAINS
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 METERS



METROPOLITAN TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION

REPLANNING SCHEME AT MAIDSTONE.

SCALE OF CHAINS

1/4" = 1 CHAIN



School Sites.

When the scheme is being carried out arrangements should be made with the Education Department for the purchase of areas for educational requirements. The parks and playgrounds are so spaced as to serve the prospective population with the least amount of walking, and educational sites can be allotted in their vicinity so that children will have the added advantage of the open spaces near the school grounds.

Services.

The nature and extent of services such as water supply, sewerage, lighting, &c., can be investigated at a later stage. Ordinarily, these are matters which the various controlling authorities would carry out, and they should be conferred with as the scheme was proceeded with.

Comparison of present and future conditions in the most difficult section of scheme.

The following figures show the distribution of land in the area of about 360 acres within that portion of the scheme east of Ashley-street, as compared with the existing conditions :—

	Existing Conditions.	Replanned Conditions.
Land included in allotments ..	254 acres	244 acres
Area of roads and streets ..	106 acres	(a) 95 acres
Area of open spaces ..	Nil	(b) 29 acres

(a) The 95 acres absorbed by roads includes the widening of Ballarat-road to 132 feet, and the new 132-foot parkway road direct to Sunshine, which are together 18 acres more than if Ballarat-road were retained 66 feet wide, and the new parkway road only a 50-foot street. The actual road space required to enable the planning of allotments only is 29 acres less than that under existing conditions. The wider roads through the area to cope with the prospective increases in traffic require 11 additional acres.

(b) The 29 acres of recreational area includes 8 acres of road plantations.

The above comparative figures show that in the most unfavorable section of this scheme, after supplying the necessary amount for main traffic routes and recreational needs, 244 acres are left to meet the claims of the original holders of 254 acres. In comparing these figures it should not be overlooked that at least 23 acres of land included in the 254 acres is at present held in parcels too small to allow of buildings being erected in conformity with the municipal by-law.

The Economy of Replanning.

Owing to the unsatisfactory conditions now prevailing in this area, the value of the land is considerably below that of similar land within the same, or even a greater radius of Melbourne.

An enhancement in value of upwards of £1 per foot of frontage subdivided may be expected if a complete scheme of replanning is carried out. If, however, instead of £1, a conservative estimate of only 10s. per foot increase in value is adopted, it would represent a sum total of £84,000. Further, it is estimated that if no replanning were carried out, the area wasted by unnecessary roads and streets and remnant parcels of land would be equivalent to 500 allotments of 5,000 square feet each. As these allotments will have the advantages planned in the new layout, it is considered that they may be valued at £150 each, or a total of £75,000.

The execution of the scheme includes the removal of about 200 houses, but as many would be shifted only a few yards on to the new allotments, the cost of their removal and re-erection, construction of chimneys, fencing, &c., should not average more than £100 per house, or a total sum of £20,000.

These figures are sufficient to show that the cost of the scheme can be wholly met by a comparatively small portion of the increase in value within the area and leave a substantial portion of the increment to the former owners, providing the scheme is carried out on the basis of re-allocating the replanned areas among former owners and compensating with cash those former owners holding areas too small to be of use for home-building, or who otherwise cannot be allotted an equivalent area.

Alternative Method of Treatment Examined.

Having in mind the number of houses that would be interfered with under any scheme of total replanning, consideration was given to a scheme for a partial replanning of the area by a system of closing alternate streets. This involved the removal of 50 per cent. less houses than the complete replanning scheme, but it necessitated the inclusion of allotments considered to be too large for this particular area, and provided 17 per cent. less number of home sites than the comprehensive scheme. This loss in home sites for a section of 238 acres east of Ashley-street and south of Ballarat-road, was estimated at £27,300, while the saving in the removal of the reduced number of buildings was estimated to be £6,600 only. The scheme of complete replanning would result in greater monetary advantage in the remainder of the area where fewer buildings require removal than could be obtained by partially replanning the area.

The closing of alternate streets would cause the long straight streets to be retained, and this is to be deprecated, having in mind the monotonously level character of the locality.

Although this area is naturally uninviting, by correct planning this condition can be considerably improved, thereby causing a large enhancement in value of the whole area.

The Housing and Reclamation Act is too cumbersome and unnecessarily involved to be of assistance in carrying out the scheme planned. It is quite unnecessary for the Council or any other authority to be compelled to resume the whole of the land, although powers of compulsory acquisition are essential as to parts.

The Legislation Required.

If carried out under the provisions of the Town Planning legislation referred to in Part X., which incorporates provisions for the replotting and re-allocation of the land among former owners, the determination of compensation and the necessity for the raising of short-period loans of considerable sums will be largely avoided.

It has been suggested that there are difficulties in the way of securing legislation which will permit of a compulsory pooling, replanning, and re-allocation of the whole of the allotments. These difficulties are principally associated with the freehold titles. In the Commission's view there should be no reason for giving undue weight to this negative point. Beyond all reasonable doubt, the people with interests in the area will benefit materially from a scheme of replanning such as is submitted, and no individual need suffer financial loss under the operations of the legislation asked for in Part X. It is, therefore, considered that as it is the supreme authority in such matters, Parliament should pass the enabling legislation for the benefit not only of the area itself, but of the people generally. There is no reason for following the expensive procedure of compulsory acquisition of the whole of the properties in the district. A large number of the owners of small allotments cannot be traced. It is not a question of acquisition—it is merely a matter of adjusting boundaries of existing titles.

Legislation on the lines recommended have been in existence in many countries for years. The Town Planning Act of British Columbia is a notable illustration of the type of legislation that has been successfully operated under similar conditions to those obtaining at Maidstone. Further references to this legislation are made in Part X.

The Commission considers that the municipality, in conjunction with a Town Planning Department, should be given the necessary powers to carry out this scheme, and it could enlist the services of the State Savings Bank Housing Department in the building or remodelling of dwellings.

Need for Early Action.

The undesirable layout of this area, if allowed to remain, will have extremely uneconomical and unsatisfactory results. Although the conditions are so uninviting, its location on the fringe of the developed areas and the cheapness of land, have attracted many dwellings. Approximately 250 houses are erected, and there is sufficient land in the area to permit the erection of a total of 5,170 houses and shops. The two plans on page 252, which illustrate the existing conditions and the replanning scheme, emphasize the need for early action to avoid any increase in the number of houses erected.

Sufficient data are given in the foregoing pages to illustrate the benefits of the scheme from the economical town-planning stand-point. Many details would need to be finalized before it could be put into operation in accordance with the procedure allowed by the legislation referred to. Full details of the procedure which the Commission considers should be followed have been supplied to the Public Works Department and to the municipality concerned.

The Commission first urged this scheme upon the Government on 9th April, 1926, and has since frequently stressed the need for immediate action. The Municipality of Braybrook is in favour of it, and the only bar to its achievement is the lack of legislative powers.

HOUSING AREA AND GENERAL DEVELOPMENT AT FISHERMAN'S BEND.

The First Report of the Commission, issued in 1925, contained proposals for the development of Fisherman's Bend. The various authorities interested were communicated with during the preparation of the scheme which was subsequently recommended to the Government. The proposal embodied in the First Report aimed at the creation of an industrial suburb, of which 340 acres were planned for residential development, 420 acres for industrial purposes, and over 80 acres for open spaces and playing fields.

The design had the approval of the Melbourne Harbour Trust Commissioners, but subsequently that body desired a slight modification to include a road across the area in a northerly direction, which would be in line with the navigation lights and beacons defining the main shipping channel. This Commission offered no objection, as it did not interfere with any vital part of the scheme. A section of the houses under construction by the State Savings Bank were, however, affected, but negotiations between the Commissioners and the Harbour Trust resulted in the reservation of the necessary strip of land. This, together with the subsequent reconstruction of the Williamstown Short-road, led to the modified scheme shown on next page. Comparison of this scheme with that originally recommended, as shown on plan, Sheet No. 1, will disclose the small amount of alteration which was involved.



Aerial view of State Bank's Housing Scheme at Fisherman's Bend.

By "Airspy."]



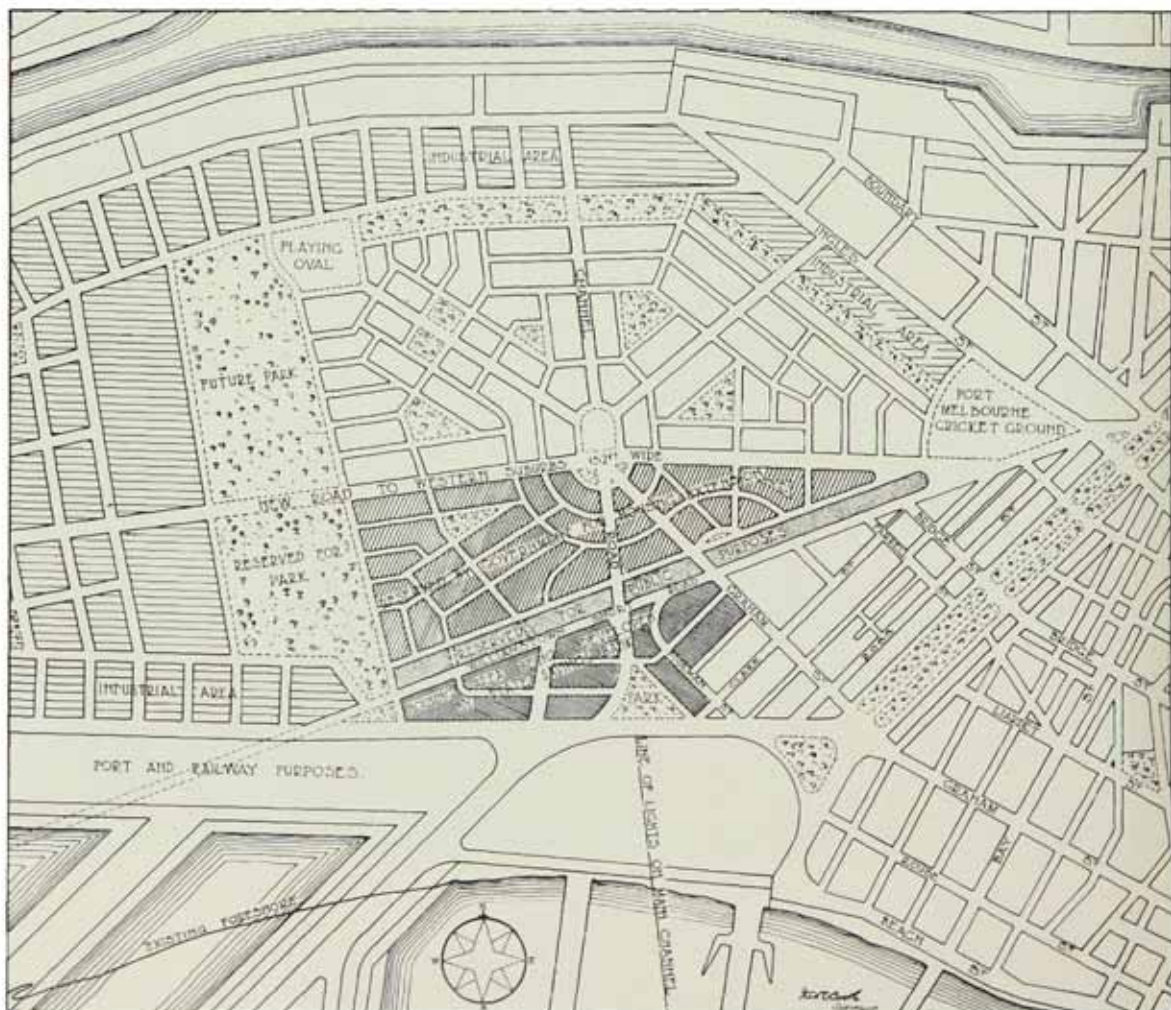
Crichton-avenue, Fisherman's Bend, Port Melbourne.

In the interim, between the issue of the 1925 and the present Report, the Commission has assisted in the development of this area along lines in accordance with a comprehensive plan, and to prevent unfavorable development, before the Government had the opportunity to consider thoroughly the whole of the proposals of the Commission.

It is pleasing to record that the State Savings Bank's Housing Scheme in this area is in accord with the ideas of the Commission. If extended, it will result in the creation of an ideal suburb of working men's homes, and this neglected area will thus be converted into a great asset.

Further progress was made by the action of the Government in calling a conference of bodies interested in the development of this area on the 2nd May, 1929, to discuss proposals for the reclamation of certain of the Crown lands at Fisherman's Bend. So that the cost of such works should be directed towards the creation of a permanent asset, a definite policy regarding the future of this area was aimed at. The conference was attended by members of the Government, representatives of the State Savings Bank, the Melbourne Harbour Trust Commissioners, the Lands and Public Works Departments, and of this Commission. A plan for the future development of the area, as modified by the Commission, portion of which is shown on this page, was the basis of discussion. The Conference agreed to the following:—

- (a) 119 acres (shown on plan below, as Reserved by the Government for Housing Extension) to be reserved for sale by the Lands Department to the State Savings Bank as residential sites on terms to be arranged.
- (b) The areas (shown as industrial area) to be set aside as sites for factories.
- (c) The portion (shown as Reserved for Park) to be set aside for recreation.
- (d) That levels should be determined in accordance with the scheme of road construction.
- (e) That the Public Works Department be asked to submit a definite proposal for the reclamation of the areas in question, including portion of the park reserve (c) in the vicinity of the proposed residential area.
- (f) That the reports when prepared should be submitted for consideration at a further meeting to be arranged.



Plan of Development of Fisherman's Bend.

The Public Works Department, in accordance with the decision of the Conference, prepared a scheme for the reclamation of the area, submitted it to Cabinet, by whom it was approved, as were also the decisions reached by the Conference. The State Savings Bank duly entered into negotiations for the purchase of the 119 acres referred to.

The Lands Department, however, has continued to sell sand from the area which it was agreed should be acquired by the State Savings Bank Commissioners for housing purposes. A check made during July, which is a slack period of the year, showed that over 1,400 tons of sand per week were being removed. Although carters of sand are supposed to replace each load taken by an equivalent load of suitable filling, the huge sand pits which are in evidence afford sufficient proof that this stipulation has not been adhered to. This practice of stripping the sand from the 119 acres which the Government decided should be sold for housing will have the effect not only of requiring the deposit of much more filling in this area, but also will considerably increase the cost of the foundations of the houses to be erected. The State Savings Bank's Housing Department considers that the increase per house would be approximately £75, and as this raises the cost of the houses above the means of those most desiring housing accommodation, the Bank will not proceed with the purchase of the whole of the area, but is prepared to purchase a lesser area—about 50 acres—providing it is not stripped of the sand.

The action of the Lands Department in allowing the cartage of sand from this area, which has rendered it unsuitable or too costly for development as a working men's housing scheme on the lines so creditably commenced by the State Savings Bank, is consistent with the expressed opinions of the officers of the Lands Department that the whole area of Fisherman's Bend should be used for industrial development. This view has apparently been maintained by the Department, and measures have been adopted which will prevent the economical use of the area for housing purposes, notwithstanding the fact that a Conference of interested bodies, and subsequently the Cabinet, approved of a definite policy in accordance with the Commission's plans for the development of this area.

The Commission desires to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that nearly 200 houses have been erected and allotted to purchasers by the State Savings Bank. The Bank desired to extend its housing activities over approximately 150 acres, and thereby create an industrial garden suburb on the lines recommended by the Commission in its 1925 Report, in which 460 acres were suggested as sufficient for industrial development. Although the Lands Department has had the administration of this area for many years, no appreciable allocations have been made for factory sites.

It would, therefore, appear that while the demand for working men's homes exists and the State Savings Bank is prepared to develop the area, the Government should make the land set apart for housing available at a cost which would offset the damage caused by the carting of sand. That institution, which was given power by Parliament to assist the workers in securing homes, could then build houses at a cost comparable with those already erected, rather than allow the greater part of the area to remain unproductive, in the hope that in the dim future the whole of Fisherman's Bend will be required for industries.

Educational Sites.

Early in 1927 the Education Department communicated with the Commission with a view to a reservation of 10 acres being made in the residential area for secondary education purposes, in addition to reservations for elementary schools. The Commission's original plan incorporated sites for educational requirements and details of two suggested sites were supplied to the Education Department. The Department was invited to approach the Lands Department with a view to allocating the desired areas before any action is taken which would conflict with the general or detailed scheme.

WILLIAMSTOWN RIFLE RANGE LANDS.

The expansion westwards of the best residential portion of Williamstown is blocked by the Williamstown Rifle Ranges, which occupy 332 acres of land lying between Kororoit Creek-road and the beach. Its proximity to the developed residential areas is a source of danger and a nuisance to nearby residents. The land is close to the extensive railway workshops at Newport and other large industrial undertakings, and is practically the only land available at Williamstown where a housing scheme could be put into operation. The Commission recommended in its First Report that the Rifle Ranges should be transferred to a suitable location where it would not form a barrier to future metropolitan expansion, and that the present area occupied for this purpose should be thrown open for housing development. This recommendation is again submitted.