

PART IX

MISCELLANEOUS

TREE PLANTING AND CROSS SECTION OF GEELONG ROAD.

The Melbourne to Geelong Road is, constructionally, one of the best highways in the State, and is an arterial route of great importance. Excepting for those portions of the road between Footscray and Melbourne, and between North Geelong and Geelong, it is 198 feet wide. The Commission has recommended that the Melbourne end of it should be diverted into the City via a new route, as described on page 64. Beyond the metropolitan area this south-western highway is under the control of the Country Roads Board for approximately 40 miles, excepting in the township of Werribee. There are no footpaths, and the constructed roadway is generally only along the centre of the 198-ft. reservation. The greater part of the country through which the road passes is a bleak, windswept, and uninteresting plain.

With a view to making the highway more attractive, and as a lasting tribute to the late Mr. W. Calder, who was the first Chairman of the Country Roads Board for a number of years, a movement for the planting of an avenue of trees along the road was successfully inaugurated by the Victorian Tree Planters' Association. The Association invited the Commission to be represented at the first Conference. The short notice given prevented the acceptance of the invitation, but an offer was made to confer with the Association and the Conference delegates at a future date as to the layout of the road.

Subsequently, the Secretary to the Conference submitted to the Commission three alternative schemes for the treatment of the road as designed by the Country Roads Board, and the opinion of the Commission was invited. By letter, dated 23rd May, 1927, the Commission defined its views as follow :—

“In accordance with your request, the Commission has given consideration to the question of the best future design for the layout of Geelong Road. It is impossible accurately to forecast the settlement along the Geelong Road or the probable nature and volume of the traffic which this main inter-city highway will be required to accommodate.

The Commission welcomes the scheme to beautify Geelong Road by the planting of trees or shrubs. It is considered that the class of tree or shrub which should be planted in this or any other road is a matter to be decided by experts, and no recommendation will be made in this direction.

The fact that any trees planted now will be reaching their most beautiful stage when the conditions now existing along this highway, both as regards traffic and settlement, will be materially different, demands a long-sighted view in regard to the layout of the road. The proposed layout, as recommended by this Commission for the section between Kororoit Creek and Point Cook Road, is defined on the plan forwarded herewith, and is designed to afford a cross-section which will meet all anticipated future requirements.

It will be seen from the typical cross-section that the inner rows of trees would be about 80 feet apart, and would not therefore preclude the drying action of the sun on the central road surface. The outer rows of trees are 45 feet distant from the inner rows, and provide ample space for stock routes or access roads to private entrances. They would serve equally well for large holdings or residential allotments, and also possible one-way traffic roads if such ever become necessary.

The length of the plantation, as shown on the plan, would be satisfactory, but these could be slightly altered when actual planting takes place. It is advisable that no plantation should exceed 1,500 feet, or be less than 1,000 feet in length.”

The cross section referred to in the above letter provided for a parkway road for tramway, light, and heavy traffic, as on page 61.

The following reply was received under letter dated 2nd June, 1927 :—

“On behalf of the Geelong Road Plantation Scheme Committee, I desire to express appreciation for the able support accorded by your Commission in the preparing of the plan and details of the layout of the roadway.

I regret to have to inform you that the Country Roads Board of Victoria, who control the road, are of opinion that as the roadway is a rural one, and constructed to meet all future and probable traffic requirements, it does not warrant the treatment as set out on your plan, which, therefore, has been rejected.”

Although the Commission had decided to take no further action, much as it regretted the decision made, it decided to accept an invitation extended by the Werribee Council to a Conference at Werribee, which was held on 30th June. At that Conference, which was widely representative, it was decided that the Commission and the Country Roads Board should confer with a view to reconciling the divergent views as to the best layout of the road. That meeting of representatives took place on 11th July, 1927, and the members of the Country Roads Board adhered to their view that there would never be occasion for more than one central roadway, and, consequently, they could not see their way to plant the avenues of trees in positions desired by this Commission, which would allow of their retention where planted should it ever become necessary to construct one-way roads or footpaths in the future. By letter, dated 25th July, 1927, to the Country Roads Board, the views of the Commission were summarized as under:—

“ It is considered that the Geelong Road throughout its whole length will become so important and will carry so great an amount of traffic as to make it essential that any treatment of that arterial road should be such as will permit of the adoption of a three-way road cross section without later amendments to any permanent work now or subsequently undertaken.

That avenues of trees are very desirable, but the rows of permanent trees should be planted in such a position as will not necessitate their removal should it be found necessary to adopt a cross section which will separate the traffic into tracks of a similar design to St. Kilda, Flemington, or Sydney roads.

That the footpaths should be sufficiently wide to permit of a tree plantation on the kerb side.

That the side road tracks should be at least 30 feet wide.

That there is no objection to the protecting trees being planted on what might ultimately become the side roads and footpaths.

Whilst the Commission does not desire to encroach in any way upon the functions of the Country Roads Board, I am to say that the Commission is unable to see that there is any difficulty in fitting in the planting of trees along this road in such a way as will permit of the adoption at some future time when it is required of the 3-chain road cross section as set out in its First Report issued in 1925.”

The Board replied as follows on 5th August:—

“ The whole of the circumstances in connexion with this matter were carefully considered at a full meeting of the Board, as the result of which, I am directed to inform you, that the Board has decided to adhere to the proposals for a centre road of 66 feet width, with two plantations of 33 feet and two side-tracks for stock of 33 feet each.

I have also to advise you that the work of tree-planting on the lines indicated is now proceeding.”

Finally, the Commission wrote to the Country Roads Board on 26th August, 1927, in the following terms:—

“ I am to state that the Commission is exceedingly sorry at the decision of your Board. My Commission had hoped confidently that the more elastic layout for the future treatment of Geelong Road, as submitted by it, would have been preferred to one which precludes any future segregation of traffic without serious amendment to the cross section of the road and the probable destruction of trees which will have only matured as a result of constant care and after considerable expenditure has been incurred. It is also considered that the Commission's scheme would have provided adequately for all possible future requirements, at no additional cost, and would have been equally suitable for the planting of trees in permanent positions.

I am further directed to say that the Commission has noted with some pleasure that the original cross section proposed by your Board has been amended in such a manner that it will allow of the future construction of side roads—if ever they become necessary—by the removal of the line of inferior trees which are to be planted nearest the property boundaries.

I am to add that the Commission, when publishing its next Report, will include therein some references to the Geelong Road, and will give its reasons for advocating the cross section as set out in its First Report as the standard for 3-chain roads.”

This correspondence sets forth the points of view of both authorities. The cross sections of other 198-ft. roads have required alteration in the past as progressive expansion of the metropolis has changed their character from country to suburban. It is reasonable to expect a similar change, in parts at least, of Geelong Road. The Commission's comments and advice were directed toward the creation of a permanent plantation in accordance with future needs, which would serve equally well at no extra cost for present conditions. It is felt that the adopted scheme will prove less advantageous, and will probably require serious and costly amendment in the future, including the destruction of trees which only constant attention will have nurtured.

AIRPORT AND AERODROMES.

Aerial services, both Governmental and private, are under Commonwealth control. The Commonwealth Government's Air Force Headquarters, depots, and aerodromes are located at Point Cook and Laverton, outside the metropolitan area, on the western foreshore of Port Phillip Bay. The only Government-owned aerodrome in the metropolitan area is the one at Essendon, in the Broadmeadows Municipality, and the only privately-controlled aerodromes are on leased Crown lands at Coode Island and Fisherman's Bend.

The Commission has investigated the matter of aerodromes and has conferred with the Commonwealth controlling authorities. It is considered essential that Melbourne should possess an up-to-date airport and that the Essendon aerodrome, if sufficiently enlarged and improved, is suitably located for the purpose. It is about 8 miles from the central business area, and when the north-western arterial route via Mount Alexander-road is improved, the communication by road between the city and the airport should be excellent. The Commission has satisfied itself that all necessary action for the establishment of an effective airport for Melbourne is in hand, and, consequently, no detailed recommendations are made.

The Commission endorses the view expressed by the Controller of Civil Aviation, that there is no necessity for the planning of a special site in the metropolitan area for possible use by airships.

The Crown lands upon which the private aerodromes are located are utilized in the planning for the future for other purposes, and the Fisherman's Bend area will, no doubt, be all appropriated to residential and industrial uses in the near future. It will possibly be a good many years before the Coode Island aerodrome is required for harbour purposes, however, and the Commission sees no reason why it should not continue to be used as at present for the intervening period. It may become necessary to provide by some means an aerodrome for private use irrespective of the North Essendon airport, but the Commission considers that the time is not yet opportune for planning further provision beyond the one large airport.

At the request of the Air authorities in 1924, the Commission urged upon the municipalities of Broadmeadows and Keilor the necessity for protecting the vicinity of the North Essendon aerodrome by prohibiting the erection of high buildings, chimneys, &c. The municipalities undertook to watch developments in this respect. The Commission desires to urge again that by the adoption in these localities of the zoning regulations referred to herein the desired objective will be achieved.

STREET NAMING, NUMBERING, ETC.

As a result of the multiplicity of control, the metropolis has incurred an overlapping, duplication, and lack of uniformity in the naming and designation of streets and the numbering of buildings. Very little control is exercised by local governing or other authorities in these matters, with the result that much confusion exists. The Commission obtained from municipalities the names of all existing thoroughfares, and of any system adopted in the numbering of properties, erection of signboards, &c. When the Postal Department was communicated with, the Commission was advised that any action it could take to avoid duplication or similarity of street names and the varying methods of numbering would be much appreciated. It was stated that under the present conditions the delivery of correspondence is impeded. The Commission understands that many private firms have experienced considerable annoyance and loss as a result of the difficulties experienced in arranging for correct and prompt collections and deliveries because of the trouble occasioned in locating the house or shop, even when the traveller or carter finds the right street.

The absurd multiplication of similar names of streets in the metropolis may be gauged from the following illustrations. There are between 50 and 60 thoroughfares named either Railway-avenue, Railway-parade, Railway-crescent, Railway-place, Railway-street, &c., four of which

are in Fairfield, three in Williamstown and Highett, and many others are duplicated in the one suburb. There are even more streets named Park in some form or other, regardless of the numerous Parker, Parkin, Parkside, Parkview, &c., streets, and the duplication in some suburbs occurs frequently. With troublesome repetition there are the names of King, Queen, York, George, Edward, Victoria, Elizabeth, Mary, Albert, Henry, William, John, James, Charles, Alfred, Rose, Salisbury, Russell, Smith, Station, Gordon, Grandview, Church, &c., none of which appear less than twenty times.

The similarity of names in the same or adjoining suburbs is also confusing, as may be instanced by Allan and Allen streets, Baden, Bladen, and Leydon streets, Howard and Howarth streets, Mary and Merri streets, all of which are in the Municipality of Brunswick. Dorrington-avenue, Glen Iris, and Tollington-avenue, East Malvern, are close to each other. Orrong-road and Yar Orrong-road are both in Toorak. In Blackburn and Mitcham there are such confusions as Ashlar-street and Ashleigh-street; Orchard-grove and Orchid-street; Wilson-street, Wilton-street and Hylton-crescent; Springfield-road and Springvale-road; Hope-street and Pope-road. Similar examples abound in all areas.

Such names as A.I.F.-street (Balwyn), Utopia-place (Richmond), Wahgoo-road (Carnegie), Margtmary-street (Preston), Ballinamona-street (Fairfield), Botherambo-street (Richmond), Little Mary-street (Carlton), Cosy Gum-road (Carnegie), Wild Cherry Tree-road (Carnegie), Y-street (Burwood), Elaitchbee-grove (Preston), Through-street (Hawthorn), Friendship-square (Cheltenham), Gnotuk-avenue (Aspendale), &c., &c., should not be permitted. Many names given to lanes and alleys in the City proper are inappropriate and ill-chosen.

The numbering in many long streets is duplicated several times, one of the worst cases being Dandenong-road. This is due to the fact that the numbering is separately arranged in each of the five municipalities through which the road passes. Another illustration of bad numbering is on Victoria-parade, which divides the municipalities of Fitzroy and Collingwood from Melbourne, where both sides have the same set of numbers. Many other similar cases exist.

The lack of uniformity in street name-plates and the insufficiency of street name-signs on streets is a frequent cause of complaint.

The Commission does not consider it necessary to institute a new system of numbering and naming of streets and of houses as was done in the Borough of Queens, New York, which caused a 75 per cent. change over from the names and numbers previously existing. It is necessary, however, for many of the present confusions to be removed, and for the adoption of a scheme that will prevent further difficulties and duplications in all new development. A number of municipalities have already taken some action to prevent the duplications existing within their own boundaries, and in one or two instances some steps have been taken by adjoining municipalities to avoid confusion on their boundaries.

Some method of dealing with street nomenclature and numbering is needed, and any effective improvement will involve some centralized administration. The Postmaster-General's Department is a central authority, and is much concerned in this matter. It is, therefore, recommended that municipalities should be required to submit all proposed new street names to this Department before being adopted. The municipalities should also confer with the Postal Department in regard to prevent duplications and similarity of names. The comments of the Department should be accepted as the basis for alterations. It is believed that co-operation between the municipalities and the Postmaster-General's Department would quickly overcome the present unsatisfactory conditions. **An effort to secure some uniformity in the methods of numbering and marking of streets should also be attempted, and a conference of municipalities with the Postal Department, and possibly other bodies, should supply a workable and acceptable basis for future action in this respect.**

SCHEMES SUBMITTED BY PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS.

Many schemes have been submitted to the Commission for the treatment of various problems, and the Commission and its Officers have conferred with many of their proponents. Due consideration was given to all proposals, and the recommendations made herein incorporate, to some extent, the outlines of many of those submitted. It is hoped that this Report will give satisfaction to the majority of those who have been sufficiently interested to put forward their ideas, and as they are too numerous to mention individually, the Commission desires to express its thanks to them collectively.

ROOFING JOLIMONT YARDS (Mr. Jas. Alex. Smith's Proposals).

Some papers dealing with proposals made by Mr. Jas. Alex. Smith for the roofing of the railway yards east of Prince's Bridge were referred by the Government to the Commission at the commencement of its deliberations. The proposals have been so strongly advocated by Mr. Smith, and so much publicity has been given to them, that the Commission feels that some references to this particular scheme are necessary. Only a nebulous proposal has been put forward by Mr. Smith, which has for its principal object the roofing of the Jolimont Railway Yards, with a view to the utilization of the 80 acres which exist within the boundaries of Prince's Bridge Batman-avenue, Flinders-street, Wellington-parade, and Jolimont-road. All efforts by the Commission, by the Railway Department, and by the special expert committee which investigated the scheme for a square opposite St. Paul's Cathedral, to obtain from Mr. Smith, details of his proposals, have been unsuccessful.

At various times Mr. Smith has urged the building over of these railway yards and its use for the following purposes :—

- (a) The expansion of the city building area by extending Russell-street, Exhibition-street, and Spring-street across it, and by the provision of other roads, with a view to forming saleable street frontage.
- (b) Beautification, or a "purely aesthetic standard."
- (c) "Traffic readjustment."
- (d) A public concourse.
- (e) A greater City Hall.
- (f) A civic centre on the river front.

Mr. Smith has also advocated as part of the general scheme the widening of Flinders-street, the widening of Prince's Bridge, and a "square" opposite St. Paul's Cathedral.

In May, 1924, the Commission requested the Railway Department to supply a report and suggestions by its experts with a view to guiding the Commission in its consideration of these proposals. After many attempts to obtain this report, the Railway Department replied on 16th May, 1928, as follows :—

"It is regretted that no detailed information is yet available which would be of much value to the Commission in arriving at a conclusion as to the merits or otherwise of Mr. Smith's proposal.

A Committee was appointed with instructions, amongst other things, to inquire into the effect of extending streets or roofing over certain portions of the Jolimont Yard, but this particular question was put near the bottom of the list, as other matters relating to subways, platforms, entrances, exits, train running, &c., were considered to be more urgently in need of investigation.

The work of the Committee has been further hampered by absence abroad or on urgent duties for extended periods of certain of its members, and although reports on other matters included in the inquiry have been furnished, the scheme under review has not been discussed except in a general way. It may be stated that beyond the broad proposition to extend Russell, Exhibition, and Spring streets across the tracks of the Jolimont Yard to Batman-avenue, and to utilize portions or all of the intervening spaces for building purposes, no concrete scheme has ever been submitted by Mr. J. A. Smith to the Railways Commissioners, and it was intended when the time arrived to obtain from Mr. Smith a definite idea of his proposals so that the probable effect on railway arrangements and working could be more readily gauged.

It will be appreciated that a thorough investigation is likely to occupy the undivided attention of a large professional staff for an extended period, and in the absence of more definite particulars the Commissioners have so far not felt justified in incurring the heavy expenditure which would be involved in proceeding with the details of such an extensive scheme.

The proposal appears to be one which justifies the appointment of an expert body which could devote the whole of its time for a long period to the investigation of a definite scheme. This Department will willingly co-operate to the fullest extent practicable in furthering the inquiries and work of such a body, but the Commissioners feel that they cannot reasonably be expected to incur the whole of the large expenditure that would be involved in anything of the nature of a comprehensive investigation."

In view of the varied character of the proposals made by Mr. J. A. Smith, and the absence of details which he was invited to supply in support of the proposal, the Commission has only been able to analyse it as a scheme to roof over the Jolimont Railway Yards for any suitable purpose.

The Commission is unable to subscribe to the view that a continuation of Russell, Exhibition, and Spring streets across the railway yards will facilitate to any appreciable extent the movement of traffic. It is considered that for any benefits to accrue from it any such scheme would necessitate those streets being continued across the River Yarra and through the reserve areas to give direct access to St. Kilda and Punt roads. This would be an extremely costly proposal, which cannot be recommended by the Commission, especially as the proposals contained in this Report would give at least equal benefits to south and east-bound traffic from the city, and could be carried out for a fraction of the cost involved in carrying Mr. Smith's proposal to its logical conclusion.

It has often been contended that, by judicious management, the utilization of the area by the sale of frontages to streets surrounding or continued through this area would pay for the cost of the scheme and return handsome profits. The Commission has given sufficiently careful thought to this aspect to warrant an expression of serious doubt as to its financial success. Even if it were possible to prove the scheme to be profitable, it would only be at the expense of the existing city business and commercial area. Private syndicates have had every facility to submit propositions for the commercial use of the whole or parts of the area, but so far none have been forwarded.

If the proposal cannot be justified from a commercial point of view, no good purpose can be served by considering the use of the area as a city square, civic centre, concourse, or other aesthetic proposal. On page 272 the Commission rejected the scheme for a partial use of the area for the larger square opposite St. Paul's Cathedral, and recommended the development of more suitable and much less costly schemes of this nature in other parts of the city.

In considering this matter, it must also be remembered that the erection of supporting pillars to carry the permanent buildings over the railway tracks would necessitate a determination, for all time, of the layout of the railway facilities, a problem which would require long and earnest consideration by experts.

The Railway Department should not have been allowed to obtain control for any more of this area than was necessary for their through running tracks. Accommodation for such storage yards should have been found in a more suitable locality.

The effect of any scheme of building over this area upon vehicular and pedestrian traffic congestion at the Prince's Bridge-Flinders-street Station needs to be very carefully studied. Anything that will increase the congestion there is to be deprecated. Over 300,000 passengers use this station daily, and only a small percentage of the city area served by it is built to the allowable height limit. Further higher buildings that must inevitably follow will add greatly to the existing traffic. Road users are constantly increasing in the vicinity under present conditions. This intersection is not only one of the busiest pedestrian-used points in the metropolis at peak hours, but is one of the heaviest pedestrian-used intersections in the world. All these circumstances point to the absolute necessity of not only pausing, but of applying the highest degree of skill to a further examination of the proposals lest their execution renders greater the problems now encountered.

Furthermore, Melbourne at present has a surplus of space available for almost every kind of use. The Commission is, therefore, of opinion that as nothing is likely to happen in the future to render any permanent building scheme in this area more expensive or less practicable than at present, no public moneys should be expended upon it. The area will still be of value as a large open space.

On the 28th April, 1928, the Commission wrote to the Public Works Department, for the information of Cabinet, advising the steps it had taken up to that date to secure sufficient details of any of the proposals to enable it to make a recommendation. The Government was urged to guard against any hasty decision, and the Commission adheres to this point of view.

CROWN LANDS, LEASES, ETC.

In the municipalities of South Melbourne and Port Melbourne there are extensive areas of Crown lands. The occupied portions are held for the most part under the provisions of Sections 125 and 129 of the *Land Act* 1915. The areas held under the former section are leased for various terms up to 21 years, whilst those under the latter are held by virtue of annual licences. In

March, 1924, the Commission obtained from the Lands Department certain particulars of these leases and licences. It was ascertained that many of the leases were due to expire during the next few years.

The Commission's proposals in these municipalities affected a few of the Crown properties, and it was urged that all applications for new leases or licences or for renewals of them should first be forwarded to the Commission for an expression of opinion. After renewed representations this was agreed to, and carried out for a period. This policy was apparently changed, because the practice has been discontinued for some time, although it is known that many licences and leases have expired since the last renewal was notified to the Commission. In view of the difficulties experienced in its negotiations with the Lands Department in earlier years, the Commission has taken no action to revive the negotiations since its requests, made in July, 1926, for an interview with the Honorable the Minister of Lands were ignored.

In the Fisherman's Bend area the Commission's proposals are almost wholly planned upon Crown lands administered by the Lands Department. The recommendations are made elsewhere in this Report, and it is only necessary again to urge the imperative need for the prevention of haphazard leasing out of harmony with the scheme. It is a regrettable fact that when the State Savings Bank purchased the lands upon which its original housing scheme in this area was carried out, the Lands Department insisted upon the development conforming with a design entirely contrary to the general scheme submitted by the Commission. The State Savings Bank Commissioners, after they had acquired the area, rejected the Lands Department's unsatisfactory layout and adopted the plan of this Commission.

In the Commission's view all these Crown lands should be administered to the best advantage of the State. In only a few instances where leases or licences have been issued are the allotments affected by the Commission's schemes. It is regrettable, however, that some leases in South and Port Melbourne should be granted or renewed in respect of allotments which do not accord with the Commission's general roads improvement scheme and with the zoning proposals. The opportunity is at hand in these cases at least to insert adequate safeguards in the leases which will permit of the improvements being carried out without any payments of compensation. The leases and licences at present return a comparatively small revenue, and the adoption of this policy could have only a very slight and temporary effect upon the Lands Department's finances. The 1,120 acres of Crown lands which are so close to the central business area return between £50,000 and £60,000 annually, but the existing leases or licences affected by the Commission's scheme are less than 2 per cent. of the total area. With the adoption of the Commission's general scheme, the values would rise rapidly, thus permitting the Department to augment its revenue.

Although the Department may grant leases for 21 years, it frequently agrees to much shorter periods. The result is that insufficient inducement is given to lessees to erect substantial buildings, and not only is the appearance of these areas spoilt, but the revenue obtained by the municipalities is not commensurate with the services rendered. The Commission urges the desirability of legislation permitting leases for a longer term than 21 years.

UNIFORM VALUATIONS.

The method of assessing the value of property for taxation purposes is far from satisfactory. Each municipality has its own valuer, who assesses the values of properties on which the municipal rate and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works rate are levied, whilst municipal valuation is the basis of calculation of the value of property occupied by income taxpayers. Moreover, there are many works and institutions the money for which is raised by proportionate levies upon the municipalities on a basis of the annual value of the whole of the property in the various municipalities. Therefore, it is all important that the method of arriving at valuations in all the municipalities should be upon a uniform basis.

The multiplicity of local government bodies concerned in the government of this metropolis leads to a great variation in the valuation of properties in different parts which have a similar market value. The present method of assessment is largely governed by the individual methods and opinions of the valuers. Some municipalities operate under comparatively high valuations and a low rate, while others have low valuations and high rates. Some levy rates on the unimproved value of land, while others rate on the value of land and improvements. In some cases the valuations are kept up to date, and in others several years pass between the revisions.

In New South Wales the valuations are carried out under the supervision of a Valuer-General's Department, and in this manner a greater uniformity in the valuations is maintained. The Commission is of the opinion that a similar method should be instituted here to overcome the difficulties and remove the anomalies that now exist.

In England, *The Rating and Valuation Act* 1925 completely altered the existing systems of local authorities. It has considerably reduced the number of rating authorities, and provided for co-ordinating assessment committees for each county area as well as a central valuations committee. The Act was framed with the object of securing one valuation in each area for rates levied therein, a general standard or level of valuations, uniform scales of deductions from gross to rateable valuations, and a common means of arriving at the net annual value of similar property.
