

COPY

Minister for the Interior,
Parliament House,
Canberra, A.C.T.
2 February, 1959.

My dear Prime Minister,

Knowing your keen personal interest in having the policy making core of the Defence and Service Departments located in Canberra at the earliest possible moment, I thought you would like to know what progress has been made to date. This letter, therefore, describes in detail what has been achieved.

In November 1956, Cabinet directed -

- (a) that the policy making core of the Department of Defence and such other staff as would need to be associated with it in Canberra for policy making purposes should transfer to Canberra at the earliest possible date; and
- (b) that planning be based on 450 - 500 being transferred initially, i.e. as soon as office accommodation was available in 'B' Block of the Administrative Building, and a further 600 about six months later.

Subsequently a scheme to provide for the transfer of approximately 1,100 personnel over a period of one year from 1st January, 1959, was submitted to and approved by Cabinet in February, 1957. At the same time approval was given for a programme of works, including additional houses, schools, and associated engineering works, totalling an estimated £37.2m. to be spread over a period of five years from 1st July, 1957. This programme was designed not only to meet the needs of the transferees but also to meet the normal requirements of the rapidly expanding city. The prime task, however, was to effect the transfer of personnel of the Defence and Service Departments and I am pleased to be able to report that the first phase of the movement has been satisfactorily completed.

According to figures furnished by the Department of Defence, 433 positions were transferred in the first group. Some of these, however, were vacant and the occupants of some other positions declined to transfer. The actual number for whom accommodation had to be found totalled 372, including 47 United Kingdom and United States Liaison staffs. Approximately another 20 were accommodated at Fairbairn and Harman or obtained private accommodation.

The following shows the type of accommodation provided for the transferees :-

Houses	208
Flats	62
Hostel beds	<u>102</u>
			<u>372</u>

Despite this requirement it was possible during 1958 to allocate to the ordinary waiting list a total of 864 tenancies made up of 637 new houses and flats and 227 re-allocated vacancies. This compares with the previous best total of 759 during 1956, and the previous three-year average of 625. Accordingly, far from suffering any loss because of the transfers, the need to accelerate the building programme to meet the transfers benefited those who were on the waiting list for housing.

The need to provide such a large number of houses, flats and hostel beds, and at the same time make some provision for

people already in Canberra who were waiting for housing, presented quite a formidable task. A special unit was set up in the Department of the Interior to do the initial planning and programming and to co-ordinate the activities of the various agencies concerned in the overall development involved. Much credit is due to these officers, to the Department of Works, and over the latter half of last year, to the newly created National Capital Development Commission, for seeing the programme through and ensuring that requirements were met on time. It was a striking example of good planning and excellent team work between the various departmental agencies, backed up by close co-operation on the part of the contractors and men on the job.

The actual movement of officers with their families, and of departmental papers and records, was also carried out very smoothly and the officers of the Department of Supply and the removalists are to be commended on the manner in which this large-scale movement was organised and completed.

The allocation of accommodation was carried out in Melbourne some three months prior to the move commencing by officers of the Department of the Interior. Every officer being transferred was interviewed and given a choice of house types, consistent with his family needs. As a result quite a number of officers have expressed their appreciation for the way in which they were treated. The Victorian Branch of the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association in their official journal, "Viewpoint" had this to say :-

"Victorian 'Viewpoint' wishes to add its congratulations to the officers from the Department of the Interior who carried out the allocation task in Melbourne with such patience, fairness and courtesy that every future tenant went away with complete satisfaction."

The Secretary, Department of Defence, also expressed his thanks for the way the job was handled.

As you know, additional schools, pre-school centres and mothercraft centres also formed an important part of the five-year construction programme. Some of these were required urgently to relieve the over-crowding that had occurred due to the rapid growth of Canberra over recent years, as well as to meet the increased requirements arising from the transfers. Since 1st July, 1957, additional school accommodation has been provided as follows :-

	<u>Class-</u> <u>rooms</u>	<u>Other</u> <u>rooms</u>	<u>Maximum</u> <u>capacity</u>
North Ainslie Primary	8	4	380
Forrest Infants and Primary ...	15	5	700
Tharwa school - extensions ...	1	-	48
* Lyneham High School	19	21	900
* Lyneham Infants and Primary ...	15	5	700

(* Portions only of these two schools have actually been taken over but the remainder will be available later in the year.)

In addition, the first stage of alterations and additions to Telopea Park School to convert it to a full High School has been completed, giving 24 classrooms and 18 other rooms with a total capacity of 950.

Further schools in course of design or projected are :-

3.

	<u>Class-</u> <u>rooms</u>	<u>Other</u> <u>rooms</u>	<u>Maximum</u> <u>capacity</u>
Red Hill Infants and Primary ... (required by 1960)	23	5	1,000
Narrabundah High School ... (required by 1961)	19	21	900
Canberra High School - extensions		Additional Home Science and Technical accommodation.	
Telopea Park High School - second stage ...		Mainly alterations	

The denominational schools have also increased their accommodation. The Roman Catholic Church has made extensions to St. Edmund's College providing additional classrooms and science laboratories, and a new secondary school for girls has been opened this year at Braddon providing accommodation for 400.

The Canberra Church of England Boys' Grammar School has built a block of new classrooms, assembly hall and ancillary accommodation, giving additional capacity of 120. The Girls' Grammar School has at present under construction a block of five classrooms, science laboratory and ancillary accommodation.

As a result of the school expansion programme the increased school population at the beginning of the school year has been absorbed without difficulty and the further increase expected from the second moves to commence in July can also be absorbed.

Three new pre-school centres and two mothercraft centres were also opened during 1958.

Second move. The Defence Department has stated that it is anticipated 624 positions will be transferred in the second move scheduled to commence in July next. Construction to meet the housing requirements of this group is proceeding. Individual needs are not yet known but based on the pattern of types of accommodation sought by those in the first group, there appears to be little doubt at this stage that requirements can be met in time to permit of the second movement commencing on schedule.

(Sgd.) GORDON FREETH.