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REPORT ON TOUR OF POSSIBLE SITES FOR TRACKING
STATION IN NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA

1. Inspecting Party

Mr. E.C. Buckley - NASA Director of Tracking and Data Acquisition.
Mr. M.I. Homewood - Department of Supply, Director of American Projects.
Mr. J. A. Mills - Department of Supply, State Controller, W.A. (Mueha only).
Mr. L. Wainwright - Principal Officer, Mueha.

2. Itinerary

Monday, 16th July, 1962 - Mueha Tracking Station.
Carnarvon.
Tuesday, 17th July, 1962 - Onslow.
Port Hedland.
Wednesday, 18th July, 1962 - Talgarno.
Wittenoom.

3. Observations

3.1 Mueha Tracking Station (39 miles by road from Perth).

This visit was made to give Mr. Buckley an appreciation of the geography and conditions at Mueha. Mr. Buckley complimented the State Controller and the Principal Officer on the orderly appearance of the Station and asked that the staff should be told of his favourable impression.

3.2 Carnarvon (600 miles by air from Perth, 609 miles by all bitumen road, using shortest practicable overland route, from Perth).

The party arrived about one hour before dark and were taken on a conducted tour of the town. During the evening they were taken over the Whaling Station and the Prawn Freezing Factory.

(a) Population - 1809 (by 1961 census) and small number of full-blooded aborigines.

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(b) Industries - Whaling: Station employs about 150 during season. Whale catches limited to Commonwealth Government quotas.

Prawns: Started this year. About 35 employees. Work expected to be seasonal.

Plantations: Bananas and Beans. Mostly run by Central European Migrants and natives. Market gardens on Gascoyne River.

Department of Civil Aviation, Main Roads Department and P.M.G. each have 20-50 employees in the town.

(c) Transport -

Road:

Bitumen sealed road to Perth (609 miles shortest route). Weekly passenger service takes 18 hours each way (Return fare £20). Regular daily freight service.

Air:

Six days a week service. Takes 3½ hours each way (to Perth). Airfield out of service after heavy rain for periods of several days. (Return fare (£31)).

Sea:

State vessels limited to 4,000 gross tons in size to work Northern ports. Can carry all types of cargo. State Shipping Service takes 3 days each way. Aims to maintain weekly service to North-West ports. (Concession return fares for residents - Men £22, Women £10, Children £5). Carnarvon Jetty has rail road into town.

(d) Port -

For pastoral industry in the hinterland.

(e) Communications -

Hooked up with Tress Trunk Network (Australia-wide). Continuous service on Magneto Telephone Switchboard. 15/- for 3 minutes to Perth - 3 channel system which is fully committed and would be difficult and expensive as the next step is a 12 channel system with additional repeater stations. There are normal telegraph services.

(f) Accommodation - Hotels - four

(Tariffs vary between 12-15 guineas).
Party stayed at Gascoyne Hotel which
is nicely equipped. Proprietor -
Gordon Micklejohn.

Port Hotel - 49 beds (single, double and
twin rooms, and several twin rooms with
private bathroom).

Gascoyne Hotel - 61 beds (single, double
and twin rooms, and several twin rooms
with private bathroom).

Carnarvon Hotel - 26 beds (single and
double rooms).

Sandhurst Hotel - 10 beds.

Houses - cost about £5,000. None
normally available for rental. Mostly
timber framed, asbestos and iron covered.

(g) Schools -

State School (Junior High School) -
modern brick and tile buildings.
Convent (Catholic) School - "Present-
ation Convent".

Both teach to Junior Certificate level
only - third year High School.

Children board at Geraldton or Perth
for education to Leaving Certificate
which is equivalent of Matriculation.

Approximately 25% pupils are native
children.

Some evening classes are operating.

(h) Hospital -

Modern building of adequate capacity
for area. 41 beds, with one doctor in
attendance. No private hospital or
doctor.

(i) Water -

No restrictions.

(j) Flooding -

Some parts of town are low lying and
flood to several feet. Other parts are
not affected.

(k) Cyclones -

Cyclones can strike at any time, but
generally between November and March.
Good buildings with minor precautionary
features such as wired on tiles are not
damaged. Cyclones generally further
north than Carnarvon. Mr. Buckley says
severe hurricanes major problem at all
north west sites.

- (1) Future - The USA VLF Station at Learmonth will probably bring increased road and air traffic through Carnarvon and will result in an improved road to the North.
- (m) Climate - Sub-tropical, probably rarely very unpleasant.
- (n) Weather -
- | | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Average Maximum | 80.2° |
| " Minimum | 62.7° |
| " Humidity | 64% |
| " Rainfall | 9" |
- Wettest months - May, June, July.
Cyclones either travel inland or sweep out to sea.
- (o) General Impression - The town is clean, bright and growing, although not at a high rate.

3.3 Onslow (800 miles by air from Perth).

- (a) Population - White, 150. (Ashburton Shire 569 : 1961 census). Native, about 500.
- (b) Industries - None.
The town serves as a port and supply centre for surrounding stations, but since loss of Jetty in 1961, ships are unloaded by lighter.
- (c) Transport -
- Roads: Unsealed, sometimes flooded between Onslow and Carnarvon. 889 miles by shortest practicable route from Perth. No bitumen after Carnarvon.
- Air: Three flights weekly to Perth. Return fare £40. Good unsealed airfield rarely affected by weather.
- Sea: Four days to Perth. State Shipping Service about once a week to North-West ports. (Concession fares for residents - Men £27, Women £12, Children £6). Cargo unloaded by lighter. Ships up to 10,000 tons only.
- (d) Communications - Telegraph only to Perth. No telephone outside township. (Extremely difficult to provide new lines as there is only a single telegraph channel.)

- (e) Accommodation - Hotel - Beadon Hotel - 26 beds in Rooms. Tariff about 12 guineas per week.
No houses for rental.
- (f) School - Primary School. Modern building. Special hostel for native children.
- (g) Hospital - 21 beds - old building. Serviced by a doctor from Port Hedland through the Royal Flying Doctor Service. No private hospital or doctor.
- (h) Water - No restrictions.
- (i) Flooding - Part of town flooded during cyclones.
- (j) Cyclones - Last cyclone through Onslow with winds 110-120 knots - cyclonic winds possibly high as 150 knots. Good buildings, with hurricane shelters are essential to withstand cyclones. Cyclones generally during November to March.
- (k) Climate - Sub-tropical. Cyclones more severe than at Carnarvon.
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|-----------------|-------|
| Average maximum | 88.5° |
| " minimum | 63.7° |
| " humidity | 56% |
| " rainfall | 9½" |
- (Wettest months February-June).
- (l) Future - Jetty which was in poor condition was partially destroyed in 1964 cyclone. It may not be reconstructed. There is no obvious reason for the continued existence of the town.
- (m) Impression - A dull town of dingy, paint hungry, timber-iron buildings.

3.4 Port Hedland (900 miles by air from Perth).

- (a) Population - 965. (Shire 1120 : 1961 census).
- (b) Industries - Port for 4,000 ton ships regularly handles manganese ore, and freight for surrounding stations.

(c) Transport -Roads:

Unsealed, sometimes flooded.
1,077 miles from Perth by shortest
practicable route. No bitumen
after Carnarvon.

Air:

Good airport, partially sealed.
Daily service to Perth (£49 return).

Sea:

State Shipping Service weekly to all
North-West ports. (Concession return
fares for residents - Men £35,
Women £17, Children £8/10/-). 3,000
tons maximum shipping. Intricate
approach and turning area in harbour.

(d) Communi-
cations -

Hooked up with Tress Trunk Network
(Australia-wide). Continuous Magneto
Telephone service. Normal telegraph
services. 15/- for 3 minutes to Perth.
Port Hedland and Talgarno could be
provided with a reasonable amount of
voice and telegraph channels, but they
may need additional terminal equipment.

(e) Accommo-
dation -

Hotels - Tariffs vary between 12-15
guineas per week.

Pier Hotel - 50 beds (single and
double rooms) and 38 verandah beds.
Esplanade Hotel - 24 beds in rooms,
8 on verandah.

Houses £5,500. Not available for
rental.

(f) Schools -

Primary School. Good modern building.
Convent School - Presentation Convent.
(Probably to Junior Certificate level).

(g) Hospital -

New hospital nearly completed at cost
of £250,000. 20 bed - general, maternity,
and a resident doctor.

(h) Water -

No restrictions.

(i) Cyclones -

As for Onslow.

(j) Climate -

Sub-tropical. Temperatures rise to
uncomfortably high level and house
cooling systems are generally used.

Average Maximum	89.1°
" Minimum	68.7°
" Humidity	55%
" Rainfall	11"

Wettest months January to March.

- (k) Future - Considerable mining activity is being initiated in the area and may be expected to benefit Port Hedland. Main ore shipments will probably be made through a new port owing to restriction of 3,000 tons at Port Hedland. New houses are being built - approx. 8 per year.
- (l) Impression - A town with increasing activity, good new face, but no apparent change in hotel standards - not high in recent years.

3.5 Talgarno (1,000 miles by air from Perth)

The party arrived about one hour before dark and were given a brief tour of the buildings and installations by Mr. Bill Paterson, the Officer-in-Charge.

The establishment was set up for instrumentation of the impact area for Blue Streak, the development of which has been discontinued.

- (a) Population - 5.
- (b) Industries - Widely spaced cattle stations near the coast.
- (c) Transport - Road: Unsealed.
No regular services.
Air: Unsealed airstrip.
Weekly service to Perth.
(Return fare to Perth £63).
- (d) Accommodation - 10 modern homes.
Mess accommodation, near completed, for 250. Single men's hut accommodation for 200.
- (e) School - None.
- (f) Hospital - None.
- (g) Water - No restrictions.
- (h) Future - None in sight.
- (i) Climate - Very warm and humid. Packaged air-conditioning units in houses and single quarters and mess designed for air-conditioning.
- (j) Impression - Not an ideal location for tracking station because of lack of support facilities.

3.6 Wittenoom (700 miles by air to Perth)

An inland town 120 miles from North West coast about 1,000 feet above sea level.

- (a) Population - 1,000.
- (b) Industries - Asbestos Mining, employs 350.
Pastoral stations in surrounding areas.
- (c) Labour - A large number of mining employees are tradesmen such as fitters, carpenters and electricians.
- (d) Transport - Roads: Unsealed but generally serviceable. 40 hours driving to Perth.
Weekly freight service.
Air: Four flights weekly to Perth. (£47 return).
Good unsealed airport..
- (e) Accommodation - Hotel.
No houses for rental.
- (f) Schools - Two, State and Convent.
Not to Junior Certificate level.
- (g) Hospital - 4 beds and resident doctor.
To be increased to 12 beds in next year.
- (h) Water - No restrictions.
- (i) Climate - Very hot, but dry.
Cooling commonly used in houses.
- (j) Swimming - Natural pools, 4 miles from town are available all the year.
- (k) Future - Houses are being built at rate of 12 per year for increased mining activity.
- (l) Impression - A neat, clean township, steadily expanding.

4. Houses:

It was suggested at Wittenoom by a local official that the State Housing Commission, who own most of the houses there, would build additional houses for rental to the employees of any organisation which sets up business there.

State Housing Commission policy on provision of housing in North West towns is known to be aimed at providing houses where a demand exists.

5. Income Tax Concessions:

All the places mentioned, except Muchea, are above the 26th parallel and substantial concessions are allowed. In addition to all normal tax free allowances, a wage earner is entitled to an allowance of £270 and all his dependents' allowances are increased by a half.