



Above: Tourist Map of Canberra c1933. I have printed 'Area of Westlake... & Causeway Settlement & Russell Hill Settlement'. Molonglo Settlement is out of the area shown to the east of the Canberra Railway Station

The Canberra Times 19 March 1930

HOUSING PLANS TO PROVIDE FOR CITY'S GROWTH - ELIMINATION THE TENEMENTS - PROPOSAL TO ASSIST MANUKA

Outlining the first portion of a programme of housing, the Chief Commissioner yesterday indicated that the Commission was facing the question of providing better living conditions for tradesmen and service men employed in connection with city undertakings.

In addition, a programme has been developed for 32 semi-detached and four detached houses at Manuka which should assist that centre as a place of business.

The Public Works Committee yesterday heard evidence on housing in Canberra with special reference to the proposal for the construction of 38 additional houses.

The Chief Commissioner (Mr AJ Christie) said that the proposal was for the erection of 14 additional grouped cottages in Manuka, which in the opinion of the Federal Capital Commission should be constructed to make provision for housing requirements for of (a) tradesmen and service men employed in connection with the work and essential services of the city, and (b) Public Servants of departments proposed to be transferred to Canberra in the near future.

The Commission considered that the number of low rental houses available was insufficient for actual requirements for this type of house, and disproportionate to the number of higher rental houses erected to date.

Many tradesmen and servicemen are now housed in timber structures of a temporary character, some of which have been in existence for 17 years and upwards and can no longer be regarded as providing reasonable living accommodation for families. It is desired to have these buildings vacated at an early date. Notwithstanding the reduction of constructional activities and consequently of employment. The Commission is of opinion that a certain number of new dwelling houses should be erected as soon as possible.

Five drawings were submitted to illustrate the proposal which provides for the construction of 32 of the houses in semi-detached forms and for four completely detached. In the latter, provision has been made for three families in each house by a grouped arrangement of the accommodation.

After a complete survey of the land available the Commission proposes that a vacant area in Griffith known as Section 6 bounded on the north by Bougainville Street, on the east by Flinders Way, on the south by Murray Crescent, on the west by Furneaux Street, as the most suitable for these cottages. The subdivision provides 12 allotments each taking a semi-detached house, and four corner allotments each taking a group house.

The lay-out of the site and the disposition of the houses has been studied with due regard to the area selected. Architecturally it is thought desirable to have a formal arrangement of houses as more successfully forming part of the scheme for the centre development, than would be the case were indiscriminate planning and design of buildings permitted. The formality of the grouped house scheme will in the opinion of the Commission, establish and emphasize the sense of a centre, a feature which is desired at Manuka.

The view that the site proposed was reserved for shopping purposes has been given consideration but the establishment of the Kingston Shopping Centre has, in the opinion of the commission, rendered it very unlikely that any extension of the existing shopping area at Manuka will be required for many years. Of the 12 shops erected in Manuka, 16 have been let, leaving 28 vacant with little prospect of occupation, unless there is an increase in the population of the district.

It is estimated that each pair of dwelling houses can be constructed for 1,800 pound, which together with the added costs of fencing, paths, plantation and overhead charges will total 1,985 pounds or 592 pounds per cottage. The rental on this will amount to about 27/3 per week and with ground rent and rate of (5/3 weekly) the total rent should be 32/6 per week.

It is estimated that each of the units in the grouped houses on the corner sites can be let for 21/6 per week and with ground rent and rates (3/6 weekly) the total rent should be 25/- per week.

The allotments for the semi-detached cottages are valued at 150 pounds for each house and the corner allotments at 300 pounds each.

At present 1,987 (?) dwellings are owned by the Commission excluding those on rural leases, and are rented to Public Servants and Commission employees.

The houses may be divided into 746 permanent dwellings and 321 temporary dwellings.

Of the former, 12 at present are vacant, but advice has been received of the impending transfer of eight public servants, thus leaving an balance of four unallotted houses.

In the permanent dwellings there are 118 employees on wages who are, therefore, not in receipt of Housing allowance. They are living in houses the rentals of which range from 30/- per week at Westridge to 50/- per week in the City, and which are too expensive for them. Fully 20 of these families are awaiting a cheaper house in the City area.

In regard to the temporary of tenement houses, they are situated as follows:-

• Causeway	134
• Westlake	62
• Acton	15
• Eastlake	13
• Molonglo	97
Total	321

The rents of these range from 7/- to 17/- per week. [The Eastlake Tenements were ex-Molonglo buildings moved to the site.]

In addition there are 30 families residing at Russell Hill where they were allowed to build their own dwellings. Twenty of these houses are in fair order, but the remaining 10 are not.

Efforts are in train to eliminate this settlement which has been reduced from 94 dwellings in the last 12 months.

This, therefore, gives a total of 351 dwellings which can be regarded only as temporary.

The 211 erected at the Causeway, Westlake and Acton are in fair condition and will serve their purpose for a few years yet; but in view of the shortage of houses the residents at Eastlake and Molonglo have been allowed until better accommodation can be provided.

There are thus 140 dwellings which are considered to be unsatisfactory and which warrant early replacement.

There are no tenants at present vacant, and in addition, 34 applications are held for tenements; seven for semi-detached houses; and nine for permanent residences.

In regard to the location of the proposed houses the larger demand is for houses on the south side of the river. This is brought about by the greater number of men being employed in the vicinity of the Railway Station, Workshops, Government Printing Office etc.

Information has been obtained on the economical position of the 333 of the 350 occupants of the tenements. This is as follows:-

In receipt of 5 pounds per week - 5: 5 pounds 6/- - 180; 4 pounds 5/- - 4; 5 pounds 12/- - 36; 5 pounds 14/- - 4; 6 pounds 28; 6 pounds 6/- - 2; 6 pounds 10/- - 12; 6 pounds 12/- 11; 7 pounds 1/2d 27; 7 pounds 2/- 10; 7 pounds 6/- 12; 7 pounds 14/- 1; 8 pounds- 1.

It is considered that the rental of the proposed houses will be within the means of employees receiving 6 pounds per week and over, and a dissection of the figures given above shows that 229 men receive less than 6 pounds per week and over.

The lower paid of the employees reside at Molonglo, Eastlake and Russell Hill, but the course of action to be adopted would be that the higher paid employees would be required to take the houses at the higher rental thus leaving the cheaper tenement houses available for the lower paid men.

Mr AJ Christie said that all country buildings were more expensive to erect than similar buildings in the cities. The further the building was from the city the higher would be the cost as a general rule.

The Acting-Chairman (Mr Lacey MHR): Then you would attribute the higher cost to freight chiefly?

Mr J Christie: Yes.

Mr J Curtin: What proportion of the added cost in Canberra would be due to the increased cost of labour here.

Mr Christie: I have not worked that out. I will prepare a schedule.

Mr Curtin: I would like a comparison between the type of cottage being built here and similar cottages in Goulburn.