

THE OBSERVATORY.

COMMONWEALTH BUILDINGS TO BE ERECTED.

STATE GOVERNMENT APPROVES.

A matter which has been the subject of considerable correspondence between the State and Federal Governments was finalised at last week's Cabinet meeting, when it was approved that the Commonwealth Government should be permitted to erect a building for meteorological work within the Observatory grounds. The new offices will be built by the Commonwealth on a design approved by the State Government, and erected on a spot in the north-west corner.

Discussing the matter yesterday the Colonial Secretary (Mr. Colbatch) said:—"This has not settled another question which has been the subject of much controversy, both in and out of Parliament for some years—whether the control and maintenance of our Observatory is properly a State or a Federal obligation. In this connection the history of the Observatory is not uninteresting. In 1866, at the request of Lord (then Sir John) Forrest, Sir Charles Todd, South Australia's veteran astronomer and meteorologist, came over from Adelaide to choose a site on which an observatory, devoted to astronomy and meteorology, might be built. After careful investigation he decided on the reserve overlooking the city and adjacent to King's Park, as the most suitable in every way, and recommended that it should be set apart for astronomical and meteorological purposes. The Government gave immediate effect to this recommendation and 1867 saw the Observatory buildings erected, and astronomical and meteorological work in full swing.

The year 1907 witnessed a change, the meteorological work passing into the control of the Commonwealth. The need for co-ordination in this science had made this step necessary, and the efforts of Mr. Hunt (Commonwealth Meteorologist) were directed towards securing continuity of the records, especially in the case of the standard stations situated in the capital cities. With this end in view, and with the object of increasing the efficiency and enlarging the usefulness of the weather service, he has been insistent in endeavouring to obtain sites for permanent meteorological buildings close to these standard stations. His efforts in the case of Western Australia had, for various reasons, not been successful, and it was with the object of urging the matter personally that he visited Perth recently. He interviewed the Premier and myself, with the result, as I have said that Cabinet has at last approved that a site on the Observatory reserve should be set apart for meteorological buildings, thus giving effect to the original idea for which the reserve was set apart."