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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH:

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1899.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

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CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1899.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF SECRETARY.

SIR,

WE have the honour to submit to you the following Report of the work of this department for the year 1899, in carrying out the Public Health Acts, the Vaccination Act, the Quarantine Act, and such parts of the Cemeteries Acts, the Chinese Immigration Act, and the Licensing Act, as relate to the public health.

CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

1. There has been no change with regard to the *personnel* of the Board, or of its staff, during the year, and we have been perfectly satisfied with the conduct of the officers in all respects.

LEGISLATION.

2. No alteration was made during the year in the statutes administered by the Board.

HEALTH DEPARTMENTS OF THE OTHER COLONIES.

3. There has been the usual interchange of Reports and information on health matters with the Boards of the other Colonies; and that, received with regard to the laws relating to death certificates, to the provision of isolation hospitals, and to measures taken for the prevention and cure of consumption, was of very great use to us.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD, ENGLAND.

4. The Local Government Board in England having appointed a Departmental Committee to inquire into the subject of the use of preservatives and colouring-matters in connection with food, the Right Honourable the Colonial Secretary asked the Government of Tasmania to furnish information on the laws relative to the subject in force in this Colony, and as to any experience gained by the Health Authorities in connection therewith. In reply we forwarded copies of the Tasmanian Statutes on the subject; and explained that in carrying out the enactments our practice has been to have proceedings taken in all cases where the matters used where in themselves deleterious, or were present in quantities injurious to health. Where the matters are innocuous and only reduce the commercial value of the article adulterated, the taking of action is left to the person prejudiced. We have found that preservatives are used chiefly in connection with condensed milk, and colouring matters with so called "vinegars" and "essences." With regard to milk we have made inquiries principally with respect to 'pasteurised' milk and cream, articles that are largely used in the mining districts where the dairying industry is not yet properly established. Samples that we had analysed had been prepared with some preservative (probably *preservitas*) containing boric acid, so that we are following up the inquiry. With regard to vinegar, the greater part of what

is sold as such in the Colony is, in reality, dilute acetic acid, or pyroligneous acid, treated with other acids, and coloured. From time to time some of this has been prevented from getting into the market in Tasmania.

DEPARTMENTAL WORK.

Districts without Local Boards of Health.

5. As it has hitherto been impracticable to obtain the services of gentlemen residing in the following districts, willing to act as members of Local Boards of Health, we are acting therein as such Board, under the provisions of the 6th Section of "The Public Health Act, 1887":—Hamilton-on-Forth and Don, Mersey, Russell, Rural Scottsdale, Selby, the Straits Islands, and Tasman Peninsula.

New Local Boards of Health.

6. During the year a new town was proclaimed by the Governor in Council at Moonah that previously had formed part of the Rural Municipality of Glenorchy, and the Town Board thereupon elected became Local Board of Health of the town. Two portions of the Health District of Macquarie were also proclaimed separate Health Districts, under the names of the Health Districts of Mount Lyell and of Sorrento, and Local Boards of Health were named by the Governor in Council, the Local Board nominated for Mount Lyell being the present members of the Town Board of Gormanston. Should occasion arise for comparing the returns given in this Report, and that may be hereafter given, for the Health District of Mount Lyell, it must be borne in mind that is altogether a different district from that which, in the year 1898, was incorporated with, and still forms part of, the town of Queenstown.

Official Inspections.

7. Special inspections in connection with sanitary matters were made by the Engineering Inspector of the Board at the following places:—Beaconsfield (3), Beltana, Burnie, Derby, Devonport, Don, Glenorchy, Gould's Country, Hobart (3), Interlaken (Clyde Water Supply, 3), Latrobe, Launceston, Lindisfarne, Longford, Longley, Moorina, New Norfolk (2), New Town (3), Rural Queenborough (3), Saint Helens, Sandfly, and Weldborough.

Public Buildings.

8. Plans and specifications of twenty-four Public Buildings were examined and dealt with during the year, nine being for new churches, two for schools, three for hospitals, seven for public-halls, one for a theatre, and two for circus exhibitions. The buildings were to be opened at Beaconsfield (2), Beltana, Franklin, Gardner's Bay, Gordon, Hobart (6), Leslie Longley, Middleton, Queenstown (4), Rhyndaston, Sandfly, Woodbridge, and Zeehan.

Disinfectants.

9. Nine Local Boards were supplied with disinfectants during the year.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

General Condition.

10. Though the general death-rate fell from the rate of 13·51 to the 1000 living in 1898 to 12·25 in 1899, the general condition of the public health cannot be held to have been very satisfactory, and this chiefly on account of the prevalence, among zymotic diseases, of the non-notifiable ones of influenza and whooping-cough.

NOTIFICATION OF DISEASES.

11. During the year 1405 cases of notifiable diseases were reported to us. An Appendix to this Report shows the distribution of the typhoid fever, diphtheria, and scarlet fever cases included in the above number; and the attached plan has marked upon it the location of the cases reported from the City of Hobart.

Typhoid Fever.

12. There were 294 cases of typhoid fever reported, with 46 deaths, as compared with 802 cases, with 83 deaths, reported during the preceding year. It will be noticed that while the disease has been far less prevalent, the returns appear to show that the type has been more severe, the case mortality having been 15·6 per cent. in 1899, against 10·3 in 1898. We believe that this was not really the case, and that the notification of typhoid cases is still very incomplete. This is shown by the fact that the statistical returns give 289 cases of typhoid and continued fever as having been treated in hospitals, and our returns give 98 cases as not having been so treated. So that at least 387 cases occurred, instead of the 294 mentioned in our return—a number that would reduce the case mortality to 11·7 per cent. In the year 1898 the disease was absolutely the most prevalent at

Hobart, with 193 notified cases, and relatively so at Beaconsfield, with 142 cases. In 1899 the disease was both absolutely and relatively the most prevalent in Queenstown, with 70 notified cases. The utility of promptly treating typhoid cases in hospitals is strikingly shown by the experience at Queenstown during the year. At this town the hospital is chiefly supported by subscriptions giving the right to hospital treatment, consequently, typhoid cases are admitted in the early stages of the disease, and without being conveyed long distances; so that the case mortality is 6·3 per cent., as compared with 10·2 per cent. at Hobart Hospital and 13·5 at Launceston Hospital, where the patients are often brought long distances, and admitted in the later stages of the disease.

Diphtheria.

13. There were 104 cases of diphtheria notified, with 19 deaths. The case-rate was slightly higher than in 1898, but the death-rate nearly double; so that the disease was of a severer type. Of the total cases, 37 were treated in hospitals, with 4 deaths, showing a case mortality of 10·8 per cent., as compared with 18·2 per cent. for all the cases.

Scarlet Fever.

14. There were 620 cases of scarlet fever notified during the year, with 15 deaths from it registered. More than half the cases occurred in the registration district of Hobart, 312 being notified from the City, and 53 from the suburbs. The urgent necessity for providing proper means of isolation for infectious cases was fully recognised by us and brought under the notice of the Government and the Local Boards of Health of the City and suburbs. In the meantime, to prevent, as much as possible, the spread of infection by the school children, we were enabled, with the co-operation of the Education Department and Dr. Sprott, Officer of Health of the City, to keep all teachers informed of the names of all families in which the fever occurred, so that the children might be temporarily kept from school. And we sent a circular to the heads of all private schools asking for their co-operation in the matter.

Suspected Smallpox.

15. During July, a young woman was received from the country into the Launceston General Hospital with symptoms that were suspiciously like those of smallpox. She was immediately isolated in an observation ward, and her father and family also isolated and kept under observation in the country, and vaccinated. Fortunately, the case did not turn out to be one of smallpox.

Measles.

16. There were 387 cases of measles notified, and 13 deaths from it registered during the year. In the Hamilton district 171 cases were notified, and 130 in the Upper Piper; but the disease nearly disappeared from the districts in which it was so prevalent in 1898.

Whooping Cough.

17. Whooping cough, which is not now a notifiable disease, must have been very prevalent in the Colony, as 54 deaths were registered as caused by it—a larger number than in any year since 1880. As far as the hospital returns show, it seems to have been most prevalent at Hobart, where 2 in and 38 out-patients were treated; and Launceston, where the numbers were respectively 6 and 29.

Influenza.

18. Influenza was also very prevalent, and more fatal than in any year since 1891. There were 58 deaths registered as caused by it, of which 3 occurred in hospitals. There were 148 in-patients and 102 out-patients treated in hospitals. If the case death-rate of the hospital in-patients—a little over 2 per cent.—be taken as a guide, it would seem that over 2800 of the population may have suffered from influenza in 1899.

Phthisis.

19. There was again a considerable diminution in the mortality from phthisis, there being 101 deaths registered in 1899 against 125 in 1898. In fact, the death-rate for this disease was by far the lowest for at least thirty years, and, probably, ever since the foundation of the Colony, the rate being only 56 to the 100,000 living. During the year we prepared a poster and a small pamphlet, based in some measure on a poster prepared by the New South Wales Health Department, giving information and suggestions relative to consumption and its prevention.

Cancer.

20. During 1899 there were 91 deaths registered from cancer, 41 males and 50 females. In the previous year 99 deaths were registered. On the whole, there appears to be a tendency towards

a gradual increase in the mortality from this disease, the mean yearly death-rate to 100,000 living in the decade ending 1879, being 46·8; in the decade ending 1889, 49·7; and in the decade ending 1899, 50·9.

Infant Mortality.

21. The deaths of 543 infants under One year of age were registered during the year, as compared with 531 in the previous year. This death-rate was equal to 24·65 per cent. of all the deaths, and 11·6 of all the births. The number of deaths of infants and their death-rate was greater than in any year since 1893. The rates were in—

Hobart	130 deaths of infants	= 22·6 per cent. of all the deaths, and 15·6 per cent. of all the births there :
Launceston ...	76 "	= 22·5 " " " "
Country	336 "	= 26·1 " " " "

Launceston is the only district showing improvement as compared with the preceding year.

Hospitals for Infectious Diseases.

22. Parliament, at the request of Government, has voted £5000 to provide means for hospital treatment of infectious cases in the metropolitan district. We understand that this will be expended so as to enable the Board of Management at the General Hospital to restore the buildings now partly used as women's wards, but which were designed and built for use as an Infectious Diseases Hospital, to their original purpose, and to provide for women's wards in new buildings.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH ACTS.

Local Boards of Health.

23. In consequence of the very general displacement of the inspectors of the Local Boards which followed the centralization of the police, great delay was experienced in getting in the yearly returns, and in some respects they are still not quite complete. These delays have greatly retarded the preparation of this Report. The Ringarooma Board is again the only one that has altogether made default. The Local Board of Health of Queenstown, finding its preventive work hindered by irregularity of notification on the part of a medical practitioner, took legal proceedings against him to enforce the provisions of the 10th Section of the Public Health Act, 1887. Though the proceedings resulted in the dismissal of the case by the magistrates on the ground that it had not been proved to their satisfaction that the medical practitioner knew that the patient was suffering from an infectious disease, they fulfilled the real purpose for which they were instituted, as cases of infectious diseases occurring at Queenstown are now promptly notified.

Officers of Health.

24. We have, during the year, approved of the appointments of Officers of Health made by the Local Boards of Health of Beaconsfield, Beltana, Dalrymple, Green Ponds, Mount Lyell, and St Helens. We are glad to notice that more Local Boards are appointing these Officers.

By-laws.

25. During the year we confirmed by-laws duly made and published by the Local Boards of Health of Derby, Gormanston, Hobart, and Queenstown.

Food Supply.

26. The number of establishments connected with the bread, meat, and milk supply of the Colony registered by the various Local Boards of Health, was 942,—an increase of 54 over the preceding year; and the reported number of those unregistered was 166,—a decrease of 48 from the number of the preceding year. It is certain that there are still numbers of dairies unreported and unregistered. There were 3446 inspections made of the registered premises, but in only one case was it necessary to take legal proceedings to enforce the by-laws and regulations made with regard to them. At our request the Government Analyst made four analyses of foods and seven of water from various parts of the Colony.

Prevention of spread of Infectious Diseases.

27. We received, during the year, reports of the inspection of 913 houses in which infectious diseases had occurred, 212 of which were disinfected by the local authorities; and in eight cases infected articles were destroyed. In 53 cases isolation orders were made, and in 184 cases special sanitary works were ordered. There were 21 public schools temporarily closed on account of the prevalence of infectious diseases; and four public conveyances, other than railway carriages and ambulances, disinfected after use by patients.

Offensive and Noxious Trades.

28. There were registered during the year 40 of the offensive trade establishments scheduled in Section 96 of the Act of 1885. No legal proceedings were taken relating to them, nor are we aware of the existence of any unregistered establishments. Acting as Local Board of Health of Selby, under the provisions of the 6th Section of the Act of 1887, and in accordance with a petition from the inhabitants of the district, we refused permission to establish a bone store on the George Town Road, adjoining Invermay.

Abatement of Nuisances.

29. During the year 1296 written notices were served for the abatement of nuisances, in addition to numerous verbal notices given during the periodical inspections of premises. In 45 cases legal proceedings had to be taken to enforce the notices.

House Sanitation.

30. There were 20 houses condemned during the year as unfit for human habitation, of which 12 were demolished or permanently closed, and eight were allowed to be re-occupied after sufficient repairs had been carried out. The drainage of 231 houses was effected, and privies constructed or repaired in connection with 585 houses; and 39 yards were paved or repaved.

Town Sanitation.

31. The drainage of some of the towns in the Colony has been improved by the construction of 3316 yards of new sewers by the Local Boards of Health. In regard to special matters of municipal sanitation we were appealed to and intervened in three cases successfully, but with respect to a fourth case, the drainage of an offensive marsh near Tunbridge, we regret that, although some improvement has been effected, the marsh has not yet been properly drained.

Water Supply.

32. Our Engineering Inspector has prepared plans during the year for the water supply of Beaconsfield, and for the improvement and regulation of that of the River Clyde. After due analysis and report, ten wells were closed.

Cemeteries.

33. The sites for two new cemeteries were approved; and the Regulations made by the Trustees of two other cemeteries were considered and amended. In twelve cases we recommend to you to permit the exhumation of bodies buried in public cemeteries for reburial elsewhere, and in two cases that came within the provisions of the 29th Section of "The Public Health Act, 1889," we recommended you to grant authority for burial in closed cemeteries.

The Work and its results.

34. There were in all 13,350 administrative acts performed by the Local Boards of Health in connection with sanitation, and not comprising the notification of diseases. The general death-rate was slightly lower than the average of the last ten years, but very considerably below that of any preceding decade.

LICENSING ACT, 1889.

35. After the necessary inspections of inns and public-houses, the certificates required under the 42nd Section of the Licensing Act were issued by the Local Boards of Health of the various cities, towns, and districts. Acting under the 6th Section of "The Public Health Act, 1887," we issued the certificates to 23 licensed houses situated in places outside the jurisdiction of any Local Board.

VACCINATION ACT, 1898.*Regulations.*

36. During the greater part of the year we vainly endeavoured to induce the Government to get the approval, by the Governor in Council, of the regulations made under the Act, and which were necessary before any work could be done for carrying it out. But, on a change of Government, the necessary approval was obtained, and the regulations were gazetted, and came into force on the 23rd December, too late to begin work during the year under review.

Vaccinations performed.

37. Only 44 children were vaccinated during the year—a number less than one per cent. of the births that occurred. There were also 80 adult Chinese vaccinated.

QUARANTINE ACT.

Bubonic Plague.

38. On the 7th March the Governor in Council proclaimed the Mauritius to be a place infected with bubonic plague; and under an Order-in-Council of the same date, regulations were made as to the preventive measures to be taken with regard to all persons and vessels arriving thence. Fortunately no quarantine action had to be taken under this proclamation during the year.

Quarantine Stations.

39. The Southern Quarantine Station at Barnes Bay is in condition for occupation when required. But no provision is yet made for a northern station, other than the proclamation of the quarantine anchorage in the Tamar; nor is there any provision for quarantine in Macquarie Harbour; we hope that during the current year these deficiencies may be supplied.

Hobart Weekly Health Returns.

40. We continue to send to the International Quarantine Bureau, at Alexandria, a weekly health return of the Port of Hobart, and also a copy of it to the Hobart papers for public information.

CHINESE IMMIGRATION ACT.

41. All the Chinese landed in the Colony during the year were duly examined, 93 paid poll tax, and, as before-mentioned, 80 of them were vaccinated.

CONCLUSION.

42. We have again to heartily thank the officers of other departments, especially of the Law Lands and Works, Railway, and Police Departments, and the Analyst and Registrar-General, for constant courtesy shown and great assistance given.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

WM. MOORE, M.L.C., *President.*

C. E. BARNARD, M.D.

T. BENNISON.

R. S. BRIGHT, M.R.C.S., Eng.

E. J. CROUCH, M.R.C.S., Eng., *Government
Medical Officer.*

E. M. FISHER.

C. HARBOTTLE.

W. W. PERKINS, M.L.C.

A. MAULT, *Secretary.*

5th November, 1900.

APPENDIX I.

In the District of the Local Board of	Typhoid Fever.					Diphtheria.					Scarlet Fever.					TOTAL.								
	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899
Beaconsfield.....	1	3	...	81	142	13	5	2	4	2	3	4	...	...	...	...	23	6	6	5	4	63	168	23
Bellerive .....	...	...	2	1	2	...	...	...	1	...	3	1	...	...	...	1	...	2	...	...	3	2	5	3
Beltana.....	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	...	...	...	...	2	4
Boobyalla.....	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	4	...	...	1
Bothwell .....	...	...	1	5	8	1	13	9	...	...	...	4	...	...	...	...	...	5	13	9	1	5	8	10
Brighton	1	2	1	2	2	1	...	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	2	1	2	1	3	2	4
Burnie .....	...	...	2	1	1	...	...	3	3	3	11	7	...	...	...	29	26	3	...	3	5	33	38	10
Campbell Town	3	6	13	8	4	...	2	...	1	3	...	5	3	...	...	...	...	...	8	6	14	11	4	5
Carnarvon .....	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Clarence	4	...	2	5	...	...	...	5	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	8	4	5	3	5	1	8
Dalrymple .....	...	...	...	...	8	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Deloraine	6	9	...	3	6	7	48	3	...	...	2	3	8	...	1	6	30	5	62	12	1	9	38	15
Derby .....	...	3	...	4	6	10	...	...	...	6	1	...	1	...	...	...	5	10	...	3	...	4	11	21
Devonport .....	...	...	...	1	2	1	3	...	...	...	3	4	...	...	...	22	3	4	...	3	...	6	8	9
Dundas .....	...	3	...	...	3	...	...	1	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	1	2	3	...
Evandale	1	1	2	1	5	...	1	...	...	4	...	3	3	...	...	9	7	...	5	1	2	14	12	3
Fingal	1	1	...	1	1	4	8	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	5	...	...	9	1	...	7	1	4
Franklin	1	...	1	2	3	1	8	3	2	9	3	5	3	...	1	...	...	2	12	3	4	11	6	8
George Town .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Glamorgan	3	1	12	...	...	1	4	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	7	2	12	...	...	...	2
Glebe Town .....	...	...	...	2	2	1	1	...	2	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	1	10	1	...	2	2	3	12
Glenorchy .....	...	...	5	...	8	...	7	2	1	7	1	1	...	...	...	...	4	7	2	6	7	9	5	...
Gordon .....	...	...	1	...	2	1	1	2	1	...	...	8	1	...	...	...	...	5	2	2	2	...	2	14
Gormanston .....	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...
Gould's Country .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	42	...	...	...	...	...	42
Green Ponds	1	...	...	...	...	9	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7	1	...	3	...	...	16
Hamilton	4	2	12	30	3	7	12	1	...	...	5	4	...	...	...	...	17	5	16	3	12	30	25	16
Hamilton-on-Forth & Don .....	...	...	...	1	1	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	3	...	1	...	...	2	4	1
Hobart	95	116	80	116	293	64	36	20	45	30	8	12	2	1	4	20	49	312	133	137	129	166	350	388
Invermay	11	19	1	3	1	...	8	3	4	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	3	...	19	22	1	3	4	2
Kentishbury .....	...	...	...	...	...	10	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10	...	...	...	...	...
Kingston	2	6	...	...	1	4	1	...	5	...	3	...	...	...	...	2	4	...	3	6	5	...	3	11
Latrobe.....	...	...	...	1	14	...	7	3	...	2	12	3	...	...	...	7	12	...	7	3	...	10	38	3
Launceston	47	101	46	55	65	14	10	9	3	4	13	1	7	...	1	32	56	23	64	110	50	91	134	38
Lefroy .....	...	7	19	17	1	1	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5	56	...	...	9	19	22	57	1
Leven .....	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	16	2	...	...	...	...	17	2
Longford	15	3	17	8	32	7	1	3	3	...	2	4	1	...	...	16	44	...	17	6	20	24	78	11
Macquarie .....	...	2	...	15	11	7	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	2	2	15	11	12
Mersey .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Moonah.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Mount Lyell.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Mount Stuart	3	...	2	2	1	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	3	...	3	3	1	1
New Norfolk	7	4	9	12	23	6	1	6	1	14	9	9	...	...	...	...	...	8	8	10	10	26	32	23
New Town	4	8	5	5	27	3	5	3	...	5	1	1	1	...	...	1	...	...	9	11	5	11	28	25
New Town, Rural .....	...	1	...	...	...	2	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	2
Oatlands	1	6	1	9	6	4	...	...	11	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	6	12	9	6	6
Penguin	2	...	...	...	...	1	12	...	...	10	...	...	...	...	...	1	10	...	14	...	...	11	10	1
Port Cygnet.....	...	...	...	1	2	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	2	...
Queenborough.....	4	14	7	3	6	2	3	1	4	9	...	...	...	...	1	3	...	5	7	15	12	15	6	7
Queenborough, Rural ...	5	2	3	1	9	1	1	6	2	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	6	6	8	5	2	9	7	7
Queentown .....	...	...	...	57	52	70	...	...	...	1	...	2	...	...	...	2	7	18	...	...	...	60	59	90
Richmond	3	1	...	8	...	9	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	3	1	...	9	...	9
Ringarooma.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Ross	3	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	...	...	1	...	...
Russell	1	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	14	88	...	2	...	1	15	88	...
St. Helens	8	2	3	1	9	2	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	8	2	3	1	10	3
St. Leonards	9	5	6	1	2	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	2	1	...	9	5	6	3	4	1
Scottsdale.....	...	2	...	1	1	1	5	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	10	...	5	2	...	...	1	...
Scottsdale, Rural.....	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	6	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	2	1	...	6	...
Selby .....	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	...
Sheffield .....	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	9	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	9	...	3	...	1
Sorell	3	...	...	...	3	4	3	4	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	37	6	4	4	...	4	41
Sorrento .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
South Franklin .....	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	13	...	...	...	...	...	2	14
Spring Bay .....	...	...	...	...	...	1	25	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	4	1	...	...	...	1	4
Strahan.....	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

