

1898.

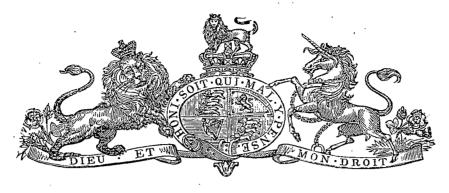
PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH:

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1897.

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

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CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1897.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF SECRETARY.

SIR.

WE have the honour to submit to you the following Report of the work of this Department during the year 1897 in carrying out the Public Health Acts, the Vaccination Act, the Quarantine Act, and such parts of the Chinese Immigration Act and Licensing Act as relate to the public health

CENTRAL BOARD.

1. There has been no change in the composition of the Board or of its staff during the year.

LEGISLATION.

2. There was no new legislation with respect to the general law relating to the public health-But the Board was interested in Bills introduced into Parliament for the purpose of securing a better supply of water to the inhabitants of Bothwell, Hamilton, and Tunbridge; but the prosecution of the measures had to be deferred to the next session of Parliament.

HEALTH DEPARTMENTS OF OTHER COLONIES.

3. We have had the usual interchange of Reports with the Health Departments of the other Colonies, and have again received much valuable information, especially with regard to the law and practice of vaccination. The New South Wales Board has sent us the promised supply of their new "Manual for the Information and Guidance of Local Authorities and of Dairymen and Milk Vendors," and we have distributed copies among all the Local Boards of Health in Tasmania.

From the Health Department of Victoria we have received details of the system established there for the bacteriological verification of typhoid fever and diphtheria. As a similar system would often be of great service here, we propose to call your attention to the necessary details.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD OF ENGLAND.

4. We have received from the Local Government Board copies of regulations issued by it for the direction of Port Health Officers in Great Britain as to the steps to be taken in dealing with vessels arriving with infected passengers; and though the regulations cannot all be carried out under the different law prevailing in Tasmania, they contain so much information of general value that we have sent copies of them to all the Port Health Officers in the Colony.

DEPARTMENTAL WORK.

Districts without Local Boards.

5. The following Districts being without resident Local Boards of Health, are still under our immediate jurisdiction 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's Peninsula. The Town of Dundas is in an anomalous position: a town was proclaimed in 1890, and Town Board elected, the Members being ex officio Local Board of Health. But for some years no Town Board elections have been held, no proclamation of revocation under the 13th Section of the Town Boards Act has been issued, and an attempt made to resuscitate the Board under the provisions of the 12th Section of the same Act has failed. The consequence is that there is no authority to enforce the provisions of the Health Act, or fulfil the duties of a Local Board of Health, as the Central Board cannot act under the terms of the before-cited Section of the Public Health Act, 1887.

Special Inspections.

6. Special inspections connected with sanitary matters were made by our Engineering Inspector during the year at Barnes Bay, Beaconsfield, Bothwell, Crescent Lake, Gormanston, Great Lake, Hamilton, Hobart, Ilfracombe, Lyell, New Town, Perth, Queenstown, Ringville, Sorell Lake, Strahan, Tunbridge, and Zeehan. Most of these inspections were made at the special request of the Local Boards of Health concerned, and of some of them reports have already been submitted to you and to Parliament.

New Local Boards.

7. During the year Towns were proclaimed, and Town Boards elected, at Beaconsfield and Queenstown. This necessitated making new arrangements for the parts of the former Health Districts of Beaconsfield and Queenstown that were not included in the new Towns. These outlying parts have been constituted new Health Districts with the names respectively of Dalrymple and Mount Lyell; Dalrymple being administered by the same Local Board of Health as Beaconsfield, and Mount Lyell by the same Board as Queenstown.

Public Buildings.

8. The plans and specifications of sixteen public buildings were submitted during the year under the provisions of the 114th Section of the Public Health Act, 1885. On compliance with our regulations, and after inspection, fifteen have been approved, and, in one case, approval of opening to the public refused.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

General Condition.

9. The general health of the Colony, though affected by epidemic visitations of typhoid fever, diphtheria, and scarlatina in certain districts, continued good. The death-rate from all causes was very slightly lowered, being 11.53 to the thousand living in 1897, as compared with 11.63 in 1896. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned visitations, which more than doubled the number of notifications received of cases of the three diseases mentioned, the death-rate from preventable diseases was only slightly higher than in the preceding year—the increase in the case-rate being over 100 per cent., while the increase of mortality was under 5 per cent. This is very satisfactory as shewing how great is the control that can be exercised over these diseases by vigilant preventive measures with regard to their causation and spread.

Notification of Infectious Diseases.

10. There were 851 cases of infectious diseases notified to us and dealt with during the year. Our President has arranged with the Telegraph Department for the prompt conveyance of notifications through their offices, and this facilitates effective action. The distribution of cases of typhoid fever, diphtheria, and scarlatina throughout the Colony is given in Appendix I. to this Report, with the comparative numbers in the five previous years. A plan of Hobart shows the location of each case in the city marked thereupon.

Typhoid Fever.

11. There were 492 cases of typhoid fever and continued fever notified, and 47 deaths from it registered during the year, as compared with 276 cases with 45 deaths in 1896. The number of cases is greater than in any year since 1889, but the number of deaths was greater in 1891. The disease was generally speaking of a mild type, for the case-rate of mortality was only 9.6 per cent., as compared with 15.8 per cent. in 1896 and 18.7 per cent. in 1891. This diminution is also greatly due to the more frequent treatment of patients in hospitals. With respect to the incidence of the disease as regards locality, about 35 per cent. of the cases occurred in Hobart and Launceston, and 65 per cent. in the rest of the island; and as regards population the case-rate in the cities was 3.56 per 1000, and in the country 3.06 per 1000. The disease was particularly rife among the mining population. In Beaconsfield, Queenstown, Lefroy, and Zeehan and neighbourhood, the case-rate was over 18 per 1000, as compared with 1.4 per 1000 for the rest of the country districts, and the above-mentioned 3.56 per 1000 for the cities. Of the 492 cases notified, 362 were treated in public hospitals. It will be noticed in the table given in the Appendix that 30 cases were notified from Hamilton—a case-rate of probably over 60 per 1000. This is certainly in part due to the inferior quality and insufficient quantity of the water supply derived from the River Clyde.

Diphtheria.

12. There were 150 cases of diphtheria notified, and 12 deaths registered attributed to it, as compared with 114 cases with 13 deaths in 1896. It will be noticed that notwithstanding the greatly increased number of cases, the number of deaths is smaller. During the past four years the death-rate from diphtheria has continuously and rapidly decreased from 19.8 per cent. of cases in 1894, through 16.8 per cent. in 1895, and 11.9 per cent. in 1896, to 8.0 per cent. in 1897. As this decrease in mortality is coincident with the increase in use of antitoxin serum, we cannot but regard this as the cause and that as the effect. Of the 149 cases, 44 were treated in the public hospitals.

Scarlatina.

13. There were 203 cases of scarlatina notified and 5 deaths registered as caused by it, as compared with 29 cases and no deaths in 1896. The disease was chiefly prevalent on the North-West Coast and the country behind it. We have reason to believe that many more cases occurred than were notified, as in the more sparsely peopled districts behind the larger settlements many cases are never seen by a doctor. The rate of case mortality was therefore probably below the 2.5 per cent. given in the Appendix.

Measles.

14. No deaths from measles were registered in the colony, and only three cases notified.

Whooping-cough.

15. The epidemic of whooping-cough on the North-West Coast during 1895-6 completely passed away, no deaths being registered and only one case notified.

Influenza.

16. There was again an increase in the number of deaths registered from influenza, being 28 in comparison with 24 in the preceding year. One-third of the deaths were registered in the Midland Registration District.

Phthisis.

17. There were 135 deaths registered from phthisis during the year, in comparison with 113 during the preceding year. The death-rate from it in each 100,000 living was, in—

Hobart			124
Launceston			114
North-East Registration	n Divisi	on	70
North-West			44
Midland	1,		39
South-East	, ,,		71
South-West	"		47

The Midland Division being again the lowest in the scale, notwithstanding its West Coast population living in the wettest climate in the island.

Cancer.

18. There was a satisfactory diminution in the death-rate from cancer, the number of deaths registered being 81, as compared with 95 in 1896, and the rate of mortality in 100,000 living being 48, as compared with 58. During the last ten years there has certainly been no marked tendency towards an increase in the prevalence of this disease in Tasmania.

Lead-poisoning.

19. There were no cases of lead-poisoning reported in 1897.

Infant Mortality.

20. There were registered during the year the deaths of 411 infants under one year of age, being equal to 21.1 per cent. of all the deaths, and 8.8 per cent. of all the births. There were in

In England and Wales the proportion is usually about 25 per cent. of the deaths and 14 per cent. of the births.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH ACTS.

Local Boards of Health.

21. We are glad to again record our sense of the continual improvement that is being made in the local administration of the Public Health Acts by the Local Boards of Health throughout the country. With regard to the following record of some of its details we regret that it is more incomplete than it ought to be, owing to the failure of the Local Boards of Health of Beaconsfield, Launceston, Longford, New Town, Queenstown, and Richmond to send in their yearly returns. The failure of the Launceston Board has been in part made up by the yearly report of the Officer of Health; and that of Beaconsfield and Queenstown is accounted for by the change in their sanitary administration that occurred during the year.

Officers of Health.

22. The appointments of Medical Officers of Health for their respective districts by the Local Boards of Health of Bothwell, Hamilton, New Norfolk, Queenstown, Selby, and Strahau were

approved by us during the year. We regretted to notice that in some of the more important suburbs of Hobart and Launceston the failure to appoint properly qualified Officers of Health deprived the Local Boards of the advice necessary to efficiently deal with the preventable diseases. We therefore urged upon these Local Boards the duty of making such appointments. In the case of Queenborough we were successful; but in that of New Town we were not, neither on the occasion of our first application, nor on that of a second, made after our attention had been called by the Committee of the General Hospital of Hobart to the urgent necessity of such appointment by the Local Board in question, as shown by repeated cases of typhoid occurring in certain houses.

By-Laws.

23. During the year we have confirmed By-laws duly made by the Local Boards of Health of the city of Launceston, and the towns of Beaconsfield, New Town, Queenstown, and Strahan.

Food Supply.

24. We regret that the failure of the Local Boards we have mentioned to send in complete returns prevents us from testing the progress made in controlling the milk, bread, and meat supply of the people. Evidently, the registration of dairies, bakeries, and butcheries is not so complete as it should be, as there are 160 of such establishments returned as unregistered. The regular periodical inspection of those registered seems fairly complete and effective, our incomplete returns giving 1998 such inspections. The necessity for such inspection may be judged from the experience of the Launceston abattoirs, where during the year it was found necessary to condemn the carcases of 10 cattle, 14 sheep and lambs, and 10 pigs. The Officer of Health adds:—"Eight of the cattle and three of the sheep condemned suffered from tuberculosis. The total amount of tuberculosis discovered at the abattoirs during the year is not by any means represented by these figures. We have had a great many cases of commencing and partial tuberculosis, which necessitated destruction merely of the organ or part affected. Hydatid cysts are very prevalent. We burn about twenty per cent. of the internal organs of cattle, and four per cent. of those of sheep on account of this disease alone." With respect to the adulteration of food, 45 samples of milk were taken and analysed, and in two cases proceedings were taken. At Launceston a considerable quantity of salted provisions and poultry were condemned.

Prevention of Spread of Infectious Diseases.

25. During the year we received 596 reports of special inspections made of houses in which infectious diseases occurred. If our returns were complete, it is probable that they would show that nearly every such house was visited and examined. There were 556 notices given for special sanitary work to be done, and none of these had to be enforced by legal proceedings. There were 34 isolation orders made; 94 houses were thoroughly disinfected; and 6 public conveyances, other than railway carriages, which are always disinfected by the Railway department after the transport of infected persons; and a considerable quantity of infected bedding and clothing was burnt; ten public schools were closed for a time, and disinfected. In one case proceedings were taken under the clauses of the Act for preventing the exposure of infected persons in public places. We sent supplies of disinfectants to all Local Boards making application.

Offensive Trades.

26. Probably the registration of noxious trade establishments was as complete as during the preceding year, but our incomplete returns give the number as 38, in comparison with 45 last year. As these registrations are entirely in the control of Local Boards, we can only give the numbers returned. Three applications for the proclamation of Noxious Trade Areas in connection with smelting on the West Coast were received, and were under consideration at the end of the year.

Abatement of Nuisances.

27. During the year there were 1850 notices served upon owners and occupiers of premises to abate nuisances, and in only three cases was it necessary to take legal proceedings to enforce compliance. It is very pleasant to thus record how with regular inspection it is seldom needful to do more than point out evils to have them remedied.

House Sanitation.

29. There were 30 houses declared unfit for habitation during the year, of which 11 were permanently closed or demolished, and 19, after being properly repaired, were allowed to be again inhabited. There were 454 houses drained, 429 privies or closets repaired or rebuilt, 21 yards paved or repaired, and three polluted wells were closed.

School Sanitation.

30. On various occasions during the year we have had communications with the Education Department in relation to the sanitary condition of some of the schools under its control, and are

glad to record the courtesy with which our suggestions have been received and acted upon. With reference to the sanitary inspection of schools, we learn that it is carried out in connexion with the periodical visits of the School Inspectors for educational purposes, and we have suggested that it would be useful if the Boards of Advice were instructed to send in quarterly reports to the Director dealing with such definite sanitary considerations as the water supply, the condition of the buildings, playgrounds, and privies, and the health of the children attending. Information on this last point, if communicated to us, would often forewarn us with regard to coming visitations of various zymotic diseases.

Water Supply.

31. We have taken much interest in connexion with the water snpply of Beaconsfield, Bothwell, Hamilton, Lefroy, and Tunbridge, and done what we could to further schemes for improvement. And we have to thank the Government Analyst for the valuable help he has always readily given us.

Cemeteries.

32. Various matters, including requests for advice as to the closing of particular cemeteries, have been submitted to us. On six occasions you have referred to us requests for exhumation orders to permit the removal of bodies from one cemetery to another. Though, generally speaking, this is a practice that ought to be discouraged, on these occasions we advised you to grant the order, under conditions that would safeguard the health of all concerned. With respect to another matter that has been forced on our attention, we strongly advise the discontinuance of the use of vaults for the burial of the dead. If allowed to be used, it should be only on the condition that each burial should be hermetically sealed by sufficient covering of concrete or masonry in cement.

Railways and the Public Health.

33. The Honourable the Minister of Railways brought under the notice of the Board the want of sufficient protection to the public and to railway servants against infection under the present system. Notwithstanding the provisions of the 16th Section of the Public Health Act, 1887, for preventing the exposure of infected persons, and often in ignorance of them, such persons travel in railway carriages without informing the guard, or arrive at a station without giving the station master time to provide the proper carriage; and on arriving at their destination get the railway porters to carry their luggage to an ordinary cab, and thus subject a number of persons to risk of infection. At Hobart, as the station is outside the City, the City Authorities could not interfere. We suggested that some of the dangers might be obviated by Railway Regulations requiring due notice of all infectious cases requiring transport, so that one of the proper ambulance carriages could be provided. And as regards Hobart station, thanks to the public spirit of Dr. Sprott, the Officer of Health of the City, and the Hospital Authorities, we were able to arrange that in all cases proper precautions should be taken.

Hospital Tents.

34. The hospital accommodation at both Beaconsfield and Queenstown was overtaxed by the extraordinary prevalence of typhoid fever. With respect to the former town, the Defence Department was good enough to lend us marquees and tents, which, fortunately, had not to be actually used. We purchased and lent to the Queenstown Board a proper military hospital tent, which is still in use there, pending the building of a new hospital.

Hop-pickers.

35. In view of the usual recurrence of typhoid fever among the persons who migrate to the country for hop-picking, we again called the attention of the Local Boards of hop-growing districts to the necessity of taking special precautions with regard to the proper housing of these people, and to the prevention of their fouling the streams that run by or through the hop-grounds. A few cases of the fever again occurred among them.

The Work done, and its results.

36. Notwithstanding the incompleteness of our Returns, they show that about 6600 various kinds of administrative acts were done under the Public Health Acts. The results are shown by the great improvement in the death-rate in relation to preventible disease. This is all the more satisfactory, as it has been done, thanks to the co-operation of the Territorial Police, with a grant of less than £450 from the Treasury. It is probable that the local charges incurred did not greatly exceed that sum.

LICENSING ACT, 1889.

37. Under the provisions of the 42nd Section of the Licensing Act, inspections were made of 374 inns and public-houses, and after the performance of necessary work in some cases, certificates of satisfactory sanitary condition and accommodation were given. In one of these cases the licence was, nevertheless, refused.

VACCINATION ACT.

Vaccinations performed.

38. Only 29 children were brought for vaccination during the year, of whom two were not seen on the eighth day, and of the rest, 26 were successfully vaccinated, and one unsuccessfully. There were also 52 adult Chinese vaccinated on arrival in the Colony.

Amendment of the Vaccination Act.

39. In accordance with the suggestion made in our Report for last year, we have had a Bill drafted for amending "The Vaccination Act, 1882," which our President will introduce into Parliament, and for which we ask your hearty support. Though we believe that the only efficient preventive measure against small-pox is universal vaccination, we have modified the compulsory clauses, in accordance with the suggestions made in the Report of the recent Royal Commission on Vaccination in England to protect those who honestly believe that vaccination is altogether injurious. To meet the scruples of those who believe that diseases have sometimes been communicated by vaccination from unhealthy to healthy children, we have provided that all parents may demand the use of calf lymph only; and we have already made arrangements for supplying glycerinated calf lymph prepared on Worlomont's system, as recommended by the best practitioners in Britain, to all who require it.

QUARANTINE ACT.

The "Nineveh" Cases at Melbourne.

40. In connection with the arrival of the s.s. Nineveh at Melbourne, from the Cape of Good Hope, with small-pox on board, and the landing of some of the passengers before the existence of the disease was discovered, we had for a few days to put the provisions of the Quarantine Act in force as regards the medical inspection of all ships from Victoria. Happily no ill effects followed, as the passengers were soon traced, and all quarantined at Melbourne.

Barnes Bay Quarantine Station.

- 41. As Hobart is the first port of call for two lines of passenger steamers calling at the Cape, where small-pox is virtually endemic, we felt it necessary, after careful inspection made, to call your attention to the state of unpreparedness that we found at the Barnes Bay Quarantine Station, should it be required for use in connection with a similar incident to that of the s.s. Nineveh at Melbourne. We again urgently ask that the Barnes Bay Station should be immediately put into and always kept in a condition to meet any emergency. We regard this, not only as a question of self-preservation for Tasmania, but also of intercolonial comity.
- 42. At the request of the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies we have, since the first of July last, furnished to the Central Office of the International Quarantine Council, at Alexandria, a Weekly Health Return for the port of Hobart, and have to thank the Registrar-General for having made the special arrangements that enable us to do this. As it is a matter of general interest, we have furnished a copy of this weekly report to the local daily papers.

CHINESE IMMIGRATION ACT.

43. During the year 107 Chinese landed in Tasmania, and were examined by the Port Officers of Health; 52 of them were found unvaccinated, and underwent the operation before being permitted to land.

Conclusion.

44. In conclusion, we again heartily thank the Officers of other Departments, especially of the Law, Lands and Works, and Railway Departments, the Commissioner of Police and his Officers, the Analyst and Registrar-General, for much and repeatedly given assistance.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

- P. O. FYSH, K.C.M.G., 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.

A. Mault, Secretary, Hobart, 12th July, 1898.

Appendix I.

	Typhoid Fever.						Diphtheria,						Scarlet Fever.						Тотаь.					
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	256	190	266	361	276	492	2 19	320	233	137	114	—— 150	83	28	33	6	29	203	558	 538	532	464	419	845
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DEATHS	44	25	33	47	43	47	67	50	46 ⁻	23	13	12	4	1	1		•••	5	115	76	80	70	56	63
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