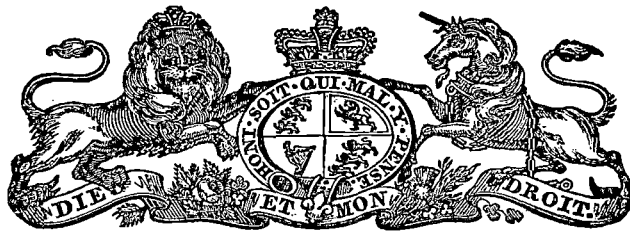


(No. 11.)



1881.

TASMANIA.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

BOARDED-OUT CHILDREN IN HOBART:

REPORT FOR 1880.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
July 19, 1881.



Hobart, 27th June, 1881.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to report that on the 1st day of March, 1880, the Executive Committee of the Hobart Benevolent Society took over the care of the boarded-out children; and, as I have stated in my report on pauper maintenance, I would now inform you that the arrangements made in removing from the Argyle-street Depôt caused no inconvenience to the foster-parents of the boarded-out children, as their weekly money was forthcoming on the regular day of issue—Tuesday, 2nd March. On the Tuesday in each week those who receive cash are paid that which is due for the past week, one week's pay being always retained in hand.

On Saturday afternoon, the 6th March, all the boarded-out children were brought down to the Depôt for inspection by Dr. Hall, and were regaled upon the occasion by the Society. All were comfortably clad, and the children showed that they were well cared for and appeared very happy. On various occasions the children have been visited in their homes by Dr. Hall, Mr. Catley, the Enquiring Officer, and Mr. Judge. Dr. Hall was accustomed frequently to call in upon his rounds in the city. The reports have invariably been favourable.

Care has been exercised in the choice of foster-parents or guardians for the children; and that the religion of the children should be respected by placing them suitably with Protestant or Catholic guardians as was necessary.

On the 6th May, 1880, all the boarded-out children that had attained the age of 12 years were brought before the Committee by their guardians, and examined by Dr. Hall as to their physical condition for service. Only two girls were considered by him as fit to be sent out, and for these good situations were obtained. In response to an advertisement in the *Mercury* for situations, from 20 to 30 applications were received for the two girls; and on two other occasions, when advertising boys and girls, about three times the number of applications were received as there were children, showing the demand for strong healthy children. During the 10 months 22 children were sent out to service.

The boarding-out system has now been on its trial for about four years, and I esteem it to be a great success as compared with the former system of placing a number of children together to be cared for *en masse*. The children in the families have all the finer feelings of their nature brought out; and when they are visited there is an open, healthy, happy-looking face held up to you, instead of the timid fearful look that was dreading the consequences of any familiarity. The children are found to be well behaved and, in most instances, obedient to their foster-parents.

The appointment of the Central Committee on the 1st January last, in accordance with the Public Charities Act, was, in my opinion, a very necessary step—one in the right direction, and was urgently needed, to provide proper machinery for apprenticing, &c.; as although the Committee of the Benevolent Society have no longer the care, that being transferred to the Central Committee yet now one uniform system prevails, and the children of Hobart and suburbs and those of the country have all one head.

The lengthened experience in the Department of the Administrator of Charitable Grants, and his knowledge of the requirements of the system, are of great service to the Committee, and contribute largely to the success which is now attending its labours.

The reports of the school attendance have been most satisfactory as to regular attendance and cleanliness. The school teachers, in some instances, spoke most eulogistically of the care of some of the guardians as being model foster-parents.

There have been cases where it has been necessary to remove children from the care of one guardian to place them with another, when an almost immediate change has taken place for the better, in the happy expression and in the physical appearance of the child or children, showing evidently that there had been some secret neglect or unnecessary hardship or severity.

In visiting the children they are taken aside to speak to them privately, so that they may state, without any fear, whether they have sufficient food. In some cases there is evident constitutional weakness, which only the care taken of them enables them to overcome. No serious cases of illness have occurred, nor have any of the common epidemics of childhood been prevalent amongst them.

It is expected of foster-parents that after they have received the first supply of clothing, which is two suits for each child, and which is sufficient for necessity, that for the future they shall keep up the supply to the first standard. The purchase of these, and of boots especially, of which the children "knock" out many pairs in the year, presses very heavily on persons who have to board, clothe, and shoe them on 5s. per week,—a sum which I consider too low for the guardians to do the children and themselves justice. It is only the affection which is begotten in the care of the children that induces the foster-parents to care for them as if they were their own. The affection of the children for the guardian is very marked when the child has to be removed for service.

The number of children when taken over by the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Society was 70 boys and 61 girls; and although 10 boys and 10 girls were added to the number during the 10 months, when they were surrendered to the Central Committee in the month of January there were 60 boys and 55 girls.

The expense, when taken on, was £136 0s. 6d. on the 1st March, and on surrender the amount was £114 13s. 2d. on the 31st December, 1880, or an average cost for the year of £13 4s. 5d. per head, and a reduction of £21 7s. 4d.

The Committee express their satisfaction that they have so successfully carried on the work of boarding-out; and I have personally the honor of thanking you for your courtesy on all occasions when I had necessity to wait upon you.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Yours respectfully and obediently,

R. ANDREW MATHER, *Chairman*
Executive Committee, Benevolent Society.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.