

(No. 46.)



1879.

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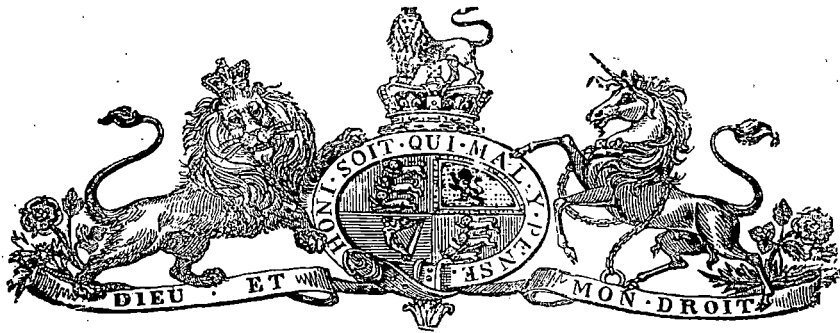
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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HOSPITAL FOR INSANE, NEW NORFOLK :  
CORRESPONDENCE.

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Laid upon the Table by Mr. Crowther, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
September 11, 1879.



*Colonial Secretary's Office, Hobart Town, 5th March, 1879.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that on the 1st instant, accompanied by the Honorable the Premier, I visited and inspected the Hospital for the Insane, New Norfolk, with the view of making myself acquainted with the condition of the buildings and of the patients maintained in the Institution.

In common with the Commissioners I regret the delay that has been so long permitted in effecting the repairs and other necessary works for the efficient management of the Hospital, and as you are aware the Government purpose submitting to Parliament a vote for the extension of the quarters provided for the self-supporting male patients.

Several matters of pressing importance engaged my attention and that of the Premier during our visit, which I desire to press upon the notice of the Commissioners, and I shall be glad if you will bring them under their early consideration.

1st. The necessity for providing additional sleeping accommodation in the refractory women's ward.

The present system of converting the dining-room into a dormitory, the patients having to sleep upon the floor, appears to be highly objectionable.

2nd. The bath-room in this portion of the building needs immediate repairs, for which, and for the other works that the Commissioners may recommend, I should be glad that estimates may be prepared with as little delay as possible.

3rd. The ventilation of the cells and sleeping compartments also struck me as requiring attention.

4th. The inhabitants of the town complain of their inability to obtain a sufficient supply of water for their daily use; I would therefore request the Commissioners to consider the best means to prevent the waste of water in the Hospital, and, indeed, in the summer months to restrict all unnecessary consumption.

5th. It is obviously of great importance that the Assistant Surgeon should reside in the Hospital; and I would suggest that the Matron's Cottage be used for this purpose, and that rooms be provided for her in another portion of the Establishment, an arrangement which, I am informed, can be easily effected.

6th. In conclusion, I would desire to call the attention of the Commissioners to the existing privilege of private practice allowed to the Surgeon Superintendent, and to express the hope that this may be discontinued, as it is highly desirable that both the medical officers should strictly devote their time and attention to the duties connected with the Institution.

The Government consider that there exist many and grave objections to medical officers in receipt of Government pay being allowed private practice, and they do not feel justified in sanctioning it in this or any other public Institution.

Trusting that the above suggestions and observations may meet with your concurrence and that of the Commissioners generally,

I have, &c.

THOS. REIBEY.

*The President of the Commissioners of the  
Hospital for the Insane, New Norfolk.*

New Norfolk, 7th March, 1879.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 5th instant, relating to matters connected with the Hospital for the Insane, and which I will take an early opportunity of referring to a special meeting of the Commissioners.

I have, &c.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

R. OFFICER, President.

New Norfolk, 24th March, 1879.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that, having laid your letter of the 5th instant before the Commissioners, I have received instructions to send you the following reply:—

1. *Additional Sleeping Accommodation in the Refractory Women's Ward.*

The strong objections to the present practice of converting the dining-room into a dormitory, and the urgent need of further sleeping accommodation in this part of the Hospital, have long been felt by the Commissioners, and have repeatedly been urged upon successive Governments. (*Vide Extracts from the Minutes of Commissioners' meetings appended.*) The Commissioners are pleased to learn that the Ministry recognise the justice of their representations in regard to this defect in the Institution, and that there is now a prospect of immediate steps being taken to supply the required dormitory.

2. *Repairs of Bath-room.*

The defective condition of this room has not escaped the attention of the Commissioners, and under their instructions the necessity for repairing it has been frequently brought under the notice of the Public Works officials by the Surgeon Superintendent. The Commissioners trust that the needful steps for effecting the required repairs may be taken by the Public Works Department without further delay.

3. *Ventilation of Cells and Sleeping Compartments.*

The Commissioners concur with Ministers that the ventilation of these compartments is not satisfactory, and they would recommend the introduction of ventilation pipes or columns on the Tobin system.

4. *Assistant Surgeon's Residence within the Hospital.*

The Commissioners are fully alive to the importance of the Assistant Surgeon residing within the Hospital, and they would be glad to concur in any feasible plan for effecting so desirable an arrangement. They are, however, unanimously of opinion that the proposed conversion of the Matron's cottage to this purpose is open to the most serious objections, and they would recommend that premises providing the necessary accommodation should be erected on the male side of the Establishment.

5. *Waste of Water in the Hospital, &c.*

After enquiry the Commissioners are unable to discover that there has been hitherto any waste of water in the Hospital, or that the inhabitants of the town have any just cause of complaint. They have, however, directed the Surgeon Superintendent to exercise a careful supervision over the use of water within the Hospital for the future, and to guard strictly against all unnecessary consumption.

6. *Private Practice of Surgeon Superintendent.*

The Commissioners have long been sensible of the grave objections which exist to the privilege which the Surgeon Superintendent has enjoyed of private practice, and they entirely agree with the Ministry as to the desirability of both Medical Officers devoting their whole time and attention to the discharge of their official duties; but it will be seen from the annexed extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Commissioners held in February, 1856, that the privilege of private practice, within certain limits, was conceded to Dr. Huston at the time of his appointment, and the Commissioners are therefore clearly of opinion that, as the right was at that time recognised and formed indeed part of the terms of contract entered into with him, he cannot now be justly deprived of it without adequate compensation for the loss of income he would thereby sustain.

The Commissioners recommend that negotiations should be entered into with him by the Government with a view to a fair adjustment of his claims and his consequent withdrawal from all private practice.

In conclusion, I am requested to assure you that the Commissioners will be at all times glad to receive any suggestions which Ministers may think it their duty to make, and will be always prepared to give to them the full and respectful consideration which they deserve.

I have, &c.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

R. OFFICER, President of Commissioners,  
Hospital for Insane Persons, New Norfolk.

*EXTRACT from the Proceedings of a Meeting of the Board of Commissioners, held at the Lunatic Asylum, New Norfolk, on the 13th day of February, 1856.*

**PROPOSED**—That the Salary of the Surgeon be fixed at £500 per annum, with house allowance until quarters can be provided, upon the understanding that his private practice is to be confined to a radius of one mile from the Asylum. Carried.

Governor's approval dated 16th February, 1856.

A true Copy.—G. F. HUSTON, *Secretary*.

*Colonial Secretary's Office, Hobart Town, 31st March, 1879.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th instant, and desire to express my satisfaction and thanks for the manner in which the Commissioners have dealt with my communication of the 5th instant, and for the statement that the Commissioners will be at all times glad to receive any suggestions which Ministers may think it their duty to make, and will be always prepared to give them the full and respectful consideration which they deserve.

From the 6th paragraph of your letter it appears that the privilege of private practice was conceded to the Surgeon Superintendent at the time of his appointment within certain limits; and in the extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Commissioners held on the 13th February, 1856, it is stated that "the Surgeon's private practice is to be confined to a radius of one mile from the Asylum."

I have the honor to request that you will be good enough to ascertain if this agreement has been strictly carried out by the Surgeon Superintendent, and if his private practice has been confined to the radius of one mile from the Asylum.

I have, &c.

*The President of the Commissioners of the Hospital  
for Insane, New Norfolk.*

THOS. REIBEY.

*New Norfolk, 4th April, 1879.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 31st ultimo expressing your satisfaction with, and thanks for, the manner in which the Commissioners dealt with your communication of the 5th March; and, adverting to the sixth paragraph of the Commissioners' letter, your request to be informed whether the "agreement to confine his private practice to within the radius of one mile has been strictly carried out by the Surgeon Superintendent."

In reply, I have the honor to state that up to the time of Dr. Moore's death, and for a period of nearly 23 years, the Commissioners believe that agreement was faithfully adhered to by Dr. Huston, but since June or July of last year some urgent and dangerous cases of illness have occurred in places beyond the stipulated distance, which rendered it imperative, in the interests of humanity, and in the absence of any private practitioner, that his professional services should be made available, and which could not have been refused without exposing both himself and the Commissioners to merited obloquy.

The Surgeon Superintendent, however, reported from time to time, both to myself and the Commissioners, the necessity that had arisen for his infringement of the rule, which they felt under the circumstances could not be avoided.

I have, &c.

*The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.*

R. OFFICER, *President*.

*Colonial Secretary's Office, Hobart Town, 19th April, 1879.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th instant, having reference to the professional practice of the Surgeon Superintendent outside the Hospital.

In reply I have to inform you that, as by the terms of Dr. Huston's original appointment he is allowed to practise within a radius of one mile from the Institution, the Government will not interfere so long as Dr. Huston holds the office, but they request that the limit assigned may be literally and strictly adhered to, as it is evident that prolonged absences from the scene of his duties is highly objectionable.

I have, &c.

*The President of the Commissioners of the  
Hospital for the Insane, New Norfolk.*

THOS. REIBEY.

*Askrigg, Macquarie Plains, 20th May, 1879.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that I have this day forwarded to Mr. Riddoch, M.H.A. for New Norfolk, a letter bearing about 90 signatures, requesting you to devise some means for restricting the Surgeon Superintendent of the Hospital for Insane from practising privately, as such practice will prevent the outlying parts of the district from being able to rely upon medical attendance if such should be required.

On behalf of a large number of the signatories to the letter, I am requested to state that since Dr. Moore's death it has been absolutely necessary for the Surgeon Superintendent to practise outside the mile occasionally; and I am, moreover, requested to state that we think any pecuniary claim for compensation which the Surgeon Superintendent may have (provided he is restricted from private practice) should be adjusted in a spirit of equity.

We wish to guard ourselves from even the suspicion of desiring to injure the Surgeon Superintendent pecuniarily, while, at the same time, we wish to secure for our families the certainty of medical attendance if required.

I have, &c.

FREDK. MILNE,

On behalf of Signatories at Macquarie Plains.

*To the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.*

*New Norfolk, 7th May, 1879.*

*To the Honorable the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.*

SIR,

WE, the undersigned inhabitants of the District of New Norfolk and Macquarie Plains, desire to call your attention to the inconvenience and hardship we suffer for the want of a Private Medical Practitioner.

This state of matters arises from the Medical Officer or Officers of the Hospital for the Insane being allowed to practise at one time within a mile of the Institution, which includes the whole of the Township; and at another time without restriction as to distance.

We know that in either case, while this privilege is allowed, no other medical man will consent to settle in the neighbourhood. And, while we have no desire to do any one an injustice, we consider it a very great hardship that the whole District should suffer in this way.

We trust, therefore, that you will devise and put in operation some means to afford us relief in this particular.

And have, &c.

[Here follow 91 Signatures.]

FORWARDED for the consideration of the Commissioners of the Hospital for Insane, New Norfolk. The Petitioners have been so informed, and also of the substance of the Colonial Secretary's letter of the 19th April.

THOS. REIBEY.

22 May, 1879.

*The President of the Commissioners of the  
Hospital for Insane, New Norfolk.*

THE Commissioners beg to refer the Government to that portion of the President's letter of 24th March (paragraph 6), which conveys their sentiments and recommendation on this subject, and which they now earnestly press on their attention.

HENRY BUTLER, *Chairman, pro President.*

9th June, 1879.

*The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.*

*Colonial Secretary's Office, Hobart Town, 22nd May, 1879.*

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Petition of the 7th instant, on the subject of the Medical Officer of the Hospital for the Insane, New Norfolk, being allowed private practice.

In reply, I have the honor to inform you that on the 19th ultimo the President of the Commissioners of the Hospital for the Insane was informed that as by the terms of Dr. Huston's original appointment he is allowed to practise within a radius of one mile from the Institution, the Government will not interfere so long as Dr. Huston holds the office of Surgeon Superintendent, but they request that the limit assigned may be literally and strictly adhered to, as it is evident that prolonged absence from the scene of his duties is highly objectionable.

I have, however, forwarded your Petition for the consideration of the Commissioners of the Hospital for the Insane.

I have, &c.

THOS. REIBEY.

*Messieurs A. RIDDOCH, M.H.A., MOLESWORTH JEFFERY,  
FREDK. MILNE, JAMES J. TURNBULL, and the other  
Gentlemen signing the Petition.*

*Hospital for the Insane, New Norfolk, 19th July, 1879.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to forward copy of a resolution passed by the Commissioners at their meeting yesterday, the 18th instant, having reference to the private practice of the Surgeon Superintendent of this Institution.

I have, &c.

HENRY BUTLER, *Chairman.*

*The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.*

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*EXTRACT from the Proceedings of a Special Meeting of the Commissioners, held at the Hospital for the Insane, New Norfolk, on the 18th July, 1879.*

RESOLVED—That a communication be again addressed to the Government in reference to the Private Practice of the Surgeon Superintendent, calling attention to paragraph 6 of their letter of 24th March last, and also to their Memo. on the Petition of the inhabitants of the District, forwarded for their consideration and returned to the Government on the 9th of June last. Also, to state that a death has occurred in a case of midwifery beyond the bounds of Dr. Huston's private practice, which in all probability might have been avoided if assistance had been rendered, but which he felt compelled to decline attending to when sent for.

A true Copy.—G. F. HUSTON, *Secretary.*