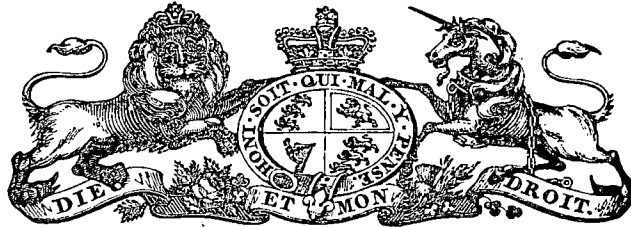


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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

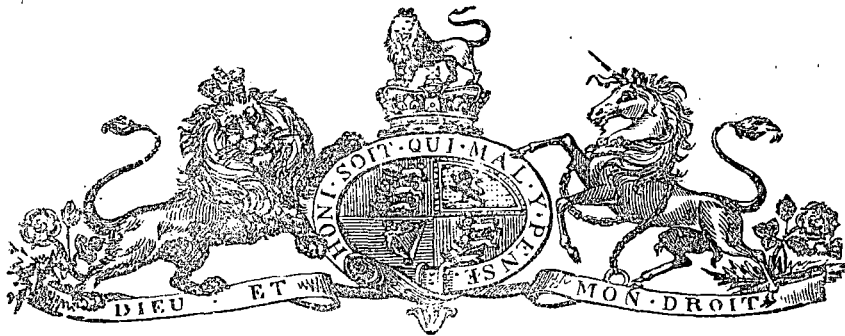
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CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

INTERIM REPORT

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



## CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

### INTERIM REPORT.

TO THE HON. THE CHIEF SECRETARY.

SIR,

THE Central Board of Health has the honour to present you with an interim Report upon the working of the Public Health Act, 1885.

The Act came into force on the 1st of January of this year. On the 29th of January the Governor in Council, in accordance with the 8th and 9th Sections of the Act, appointed the undersigned to be respectively the President and Members of the Central Board. On the 19th January Mr. W. H. Graham was appointed Secretary, and on the 1st of April Mr. A. Mault was appointed Inspector.

#### *Central Board of Health.*

From the time of its appointment until the end of August the Central Board has held 23 general meetings, one special meeting, and one Committee meeting, and the attendance of its Members thereat has been very regular. In order to more efficiently perform its duties its Members have, as far as practicable, been made acquainted some days beforehand with the business to be brought forward at each meeting. By this means not only has the time taken up by the meetings been economised, but the business transacted has been more carefully considered than could have been otherwise possible. This especially was the case with such important matters as the "Instructions, Regulations, and Model By-laws," hereinafter referred to, each Member having a draft copy to separately revise before their final adoption was resolved upon. On this account the number of meetings of the Board gives but an incomplete idea of the work its Members have done. More especially is this the case with the President, whose duties necessitate at least two consultations daily with the Secretary to arrange all matters arising out of the correspondence, and whose position makes him the intermediary between the Board and the Government.

Immediately upon its appointment the Board placed itself in communication with the Central Boards of Health in the neighbouring Colonies. And it has to acknowledge with thanks the hearty manner in which its requests for information have been responded to by the sanitary authorities of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria. From their experience it has received much useful guidance as to central and local administration by regulations and by-laws, and valuable hints as to sanitary appliances, as well as reports on hygienic matters as remarkable for wonderful detail and illustration as for scientific research. This Board cannot but feel that by the interchange of valuable information on matters regarding the Public Health, it may not only put Tasmania "in touch" with the other Colonies on matters that concern all, but that it may also be the medium of conveying to the public here the valuable experience that is being gained by similar bodies elsewhere. Communications have also been received from Glasgow and the Mauritius; and this Board is glad to record that the Tasmanian Act has received a very approving notice from the leading medical journal of England.

At its first meeting the Central Board decided that the representatives of the public press should be admitted to report its proceedings.

As many matters connected with the carrying out of the Public Health Act by the various Local Boards of Health would commonly and generally affect the districts under their administration, the Central Board thought it desirable by preparing memoranda on such matters to facilitate the work of the local sanitary authorities. It has, accordingly, after much consideration, framed a series of "Instructions, Regulations, and Model By-laws for the guidance of Local Boards of Health," copies of which are sent herewith, and will be immediately issued. It will be seen that

this pamphlet contains a short digest of the Act, regulations relating to the periodical reports of Local Boards, and to the duty imposed by the Act upon Local Boards to make By-laws on certain subjects, regulations for the Officers of Health in rural districts, suggestions as to the transaction of business by Local Boards, a memorandum on the duties of Local Inspectors, instructions as to registers and licences, a series of model By-laws, memoranda as to nuisances, disinfectants, and infectious diseases, with a copy of Dr. E. S. Hall's simple directions for their treatment, and a complete index to the Act.

Pending the preparation of these suggestions the Central Board thought it desirable, by advertising and by posting up at all post and police offices, some of the Sections of the Act referring to infectious diseases, to make their provisions as widely known as possible; and it is indebted to the Post Office and Police Authorities for their help in the matter. Copies of Dr. Hall's directions have also been widely distributed.

In order to further assist Local Boards in the discharge of their duties, the Central Board has instructed its Inspector to make preliminary reports upon the condition of the various towns and districts of the island. He has presented a very full report upon the drainage of the City of Hobart, copies of which have been sent to the Local Board, and issued to all Members of Parliament. He is now engaged upon the consideration of the condition of Launceston, and by the end of the year hopes to have completed a circuit of the Colony.

The controlling power of the Central Board in regard to public buildings, under the provisions of the 114th Section of the Public Health Act, has been exercised in regard to the opening of the Launceston Academy of Music and to the building of a chapel in Hobart. In the former case, acting on the report of the Town Surveyor and Sanitary Officer of Launceston, the opening of the theatre was approved of, subject to improvements being made in the means of egress and in the provisions for extinguishing fire. In the latter case, plans of the proposed chapel were approved of after due examination.

The official work of the past seven months has involved the receipt of 271 letters and telegrams, and the despatch of 353 letters and telegrams, and 159 circulars.

#### *Local Boards of Health.*

Under the 5th Section of the Act, the Municipal Councils of the City of Hobart, of the Town of Launceston, and nineteen of the Rural Municipalities of Tasmania, and the Town Board of Glebe Town, were constituted Local Boards of Health. Under the provisions of the 7th Section, the Governor in Council has appointed Local Boards in the Districts of New Town and Queenborough.

One of the first matters to be attended to in order to put Local Boards into the position of properly carrying out the Act was the appointment of Officers of Health. Much correspondence has taken place on this subject, and some difficulty has been experienced in some districts owing to absence of properly qualified resident gentlemen. This now only affects Green Ponds. But in the case of Westbury, the Central Board regrets that a question of £10 a year—equal to one-fifteenth of a penny in the rateable yearly value of the district—is allowed to stand in the way of the administration of the law, and may compel it very unwillingly to nominate an officer itself. The following are the Officers of Health of the various Local Boards:—

<i>Hobart</i> .....	E. O. Giblin, Esq., M.D.
<i>Launceston</i> .....	R. W. Murphy, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Bothwell</i> .....	R. W. Lethbridge, Esq., M.B.
<i>Brighton</i> .....	G. H. Butler, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Campbell Town</i> .....	H. G. H. Naylor, Esq., L.R.C.S.
<i>Clarence</i> .....	E. O. Giblin, Esq., M.D.
<i>Deloraine</i> .....	J. Best, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Evandale</i> .....	C. H. Elliott, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Fingal</i> .....	T. Hoskins, Esq., L.R.C.S.
<i>Glamorgan</i> .....	A. G. E. Naylor, Esq., L.R.C.P.
<i>Glenorchy</i> .....	G. H. Butler, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Hamilton</i> .....	R. W. Lethbridge, Esq., M.B.
<i>Longford</i> .....	H. G. Haines, Esq., F.R.C.S.
<i>New Norfolk</i> .....	R. W. Lethbridge, Esq., M.B.
<i>Oatlands</i> .....	G. E. Butler, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Queenborough</i> .....	E. O. Giblin, Esq., M.D.
<i>Richmond</i> .....	C. Turner, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Ross</i> .....	H. J. Byrne, Esq., L.R.C.S.
<i>Sorell</i> .....	R. Blyth, Esq., M.R.C.S.
<i>Spring Bay</i> .....	A. G. E. Naylor, Esq., L.R.C.P.
<i>Glebe Town</i> .....	—
<i>Green Ponds</i> .....	—
<i>New Town</i> .....	—
<i>Westbury</i> .....	—

In connexion with the appointment of Local Boards of Health by the Governor in Council, the Central Board has already called your attention to the desirability of making such an amendment of the Public Health Act as may be necessary to give rating powers to Local Boards so appointed.

The subject of the framing of the By-laws necessary for properly carrying out the Act has occupied the attention of some of the Local Boards, and some proposed by the Launceston Local Board have been duly certified by the Honorable the Attorney-General and approved by this Board, and a copy thereof laid before Parliament. Other Local Boards have requested the assistance of this Board in the matter, and the Model By-laws referred to previously have accordingly been drawn up for their use.

Under the provisions of the 74th Section of the Act, the Central Board has requested Local Boards to make half-yearly reports upon the sanitary condition of their districts. As the Act has not been long in force, and arrangements for carrying it out are not yet properly completed, this Board did not expect any very complete returns from many districts. In its Annual Report it will submit to you properly tabulated statements founded on these half-yearly reports of the Local Boards, but for the present will content itself with the following abstract:—

*Hobart*—No report yet received.

*Launceston*—The Local Board has lost no time in taking advantage of the Public Health Act to ameliorate the condition of the town. Under local Acts important sanitary works had been already carried out, and thus the town was in a position to do much with the new powers conferred. During the past six months 5160 feet of branch sewers and 7536 feet of drains have been constructed, and flushing arrangements made; 130 houses have been connected with the sewers; 70 water-closets substituted for cesspits; 56 houses have been provided with proper sinks; 113 dairies have been inspected more or less frequently, and four special reports made upon them; 21 butchers' establishments have been inspected, and marked improvements already effected; the public abattoirs are kept in an admirable condition of cleanliness; all the noxious trades establishments are duly registered, and proceedings have been taken in two cases to cause abatement of nuisances; 14 houses have been ordered to be demolished as unfit for habitation, and 5 others to be repaired; the condition of the houses and yards has been attended to by continual inspection; 107 cesspits have been emptied; 250 premises have been cleansed, and 92 disinfected; 70 notices have been served for the periodical removal of manure, and 15 for the removal of pigs; a proper sanitary record is kept, and the following is a summary of the action taken by the Local Board:—86 notices have been served for defective privy construction, and 5 for deficient accommodation, 186 for defective drainage, 250 for filthy houses, 25 for filthy stables, cowsheds, and piggeries, 25 for dairies in filthy condition, 22 for houses in unfit condition for habitation, 4 for overcrowding, 1 for selling unwholesome food, 3 for selling unwholesome milk, and 164 for other offences against the Act,—making a total of 773, of which 733 had been complied with at the date of the return. The Central Board heartily congratulates the Launceston Local Board and its officers upon the spirit and intelligence they have displayed in the administration of the important powers conferred upon them by the Public Health Act.

*Bothwell*—A house-to-house inspection has been made, and sanitary improvements effected in seven cases in accordance with the Health Officer's requirements. The present health of the district is good, but during the half year there was an epidemic of diphtheria (40 cases), and 6 cases of whooping-cough, none of which were fatal. Notices have been sent to owners to abate some cases of nuisance from stagnant water.

*Brighton*.—Report not yet received.

*Campbell Town*—The town portion of this district is reported as having open gutter drains, and no provision of scavenging is made. During the half year there has been one case of typhoid fever and three of whooping cough, one of which was fatal.

*Clarence* is reported as being now healthy, though in the earlier part of the year about three cases of typhoid fever occurred at Bellerive.

*Deloraine*—Report not yet received.

*Evandale* is reported as being now free from infectious disease, though earlier in the year there were three cases of typhoid fever, none of which were fatal.

*Fingal* is reported as being now free from infectious disease. There were two cases of diphtheria in March, one of which was fatal. The dairies and butchers' premises are regularly inspected and kept in clean condition, and some notices have been served for the cleansing of private premises.

*Glamorgan*—Report not yet received.

*Glenorchy*—Report not yet received.

*Green Ponds*—Report not yet received.

*Hamilton*—Report not yet received.

*Longford* is reported as being now quite free from infectious disease, but five cases of diphtheria (one fatal), and six cases of typhoid (one fatal), have occurred during the half year. Some of these being traced to the use of polluted well water, of which analyses were made, the Officer of Health has ordered the discontinuance of its use.

*New Norfolk* is principally drained by surface gutters that are cleansed about twice a year. It has been visited by typhoid fever, of which four or five cases have occurred. The Officer of Health and the Inspector have made a preliminary inspection, and the works they recommended for the sanitary improvement of many houses are being carried out.

*Oatlands*—The Local Inspector had not yet made his inspection at the date of the Report. Four cases of typhoid fever had occurred and one death. In connection with this, disinfection of houses and cleaning of drains had been effected at Tunbridge.

*Richmond* is reported as very healthy. Some work has been done in clearing out the town drains.

*Ross* is reported as free from infectious disease, and the private premises and butchers' establishments returned as fairly drained and clean.

*Sorell* is reported free from infectious disease, but the Officer of Health has been so recently appointed that the provisions of the Act are only beginning to be put in action.

*Spring Bay*—Report not yet received.

*Westbury*—Report not yet received.

#### *Infectious Diseases.—Typhoid Fever.*

In addition to the cases of infectious diseases noticed in the above half-yearly Reports, others of typhoid fever have occurred at Hobart, Launceston, Rosevears, the Cascades, and Westbury, and a sporadic case at Glazier's Bay.

The typhoid in Hobart existed in the neighbourhood of Elizabeth and Collins streets, and as in this district cases have at one time or other occurred in nearly every house, should any further outbreak occur it will be desirable that the Local Board should endeavour to ascertain precisely the conditions giving rise to this frequent occurrence, and, if possible, remove or remedy them.

In Launceston about 15 cases occurred in a small area, and were apparently traceable to a polluted milk supply. The Local Board reported the measures taken to suppress this outbreak of fever, and they appear to have been successful.

Rosevears is in the Police District of Selby where no Local Board exists. On the outbreak of the fever at a dairy farm, Dr. Thompson, of the Launceston Hospital, kindly placed his services at the disposal of the Central Board, and by his dispositions, especially in connection with the sale of the dairy produce, the disease was prevented from spreading.

Four cases of the fever which occurred at Westbury have been reported to the Central Board; but as it appears from the correspondence that they have occurred in a district where the disease is almost endemic, fuller reports have been called for, but have not yet been received. It is much to be regretted that in presence of this fact the Local Board is still without an Officer of Health.

The case occurring at the Cascades, though fatal, was an isolated one.

Glazier's Bay is outside the district of any Local Board. The case there was that of a man who had contracted the disease in Launceston, and travelled home while it was running its course. This Board at once communicated with the police authorities, who, by carrying out Dr. Hall's directions for treatment and disinfection, prevented the spread of the disease.

Owing to the fact that the body of a person dying of fever was carried in a steamer from Launceston and exposed a long time in a church, the Central Board has recommended the adoption of the By-laws and regulations contained in the before-mentioned instructions, on the subject of the burial of the dead in such cases.

This yearly visitation of typhoid fever, which is certainly a preventible disease, and the causes of which can very frequently be distinctly pointed out, and often in connection with water supply or the provision of milk, calls for the earnest consideration and continuous action of Local Boards of Health. It is emphatically the scourge of middle and active life, and that the ranks containing the bone and sinew of the country should be thinned by a disease that proper precautions are almost certain to stamp out, is not creditable to any administration.

*Diphtheria.*

In regard to diphtheria, in addition to the cases mentioned in the half-yearly Reports of Local Boards, there were also cases at Hobart, Launceston, Franklin, Queenborough, and Weldborough. The last-named place is outside the district of any Local Board, and, by the use of the treatment and disinfectants recommended by Dr. Hall, the disease was confined to the part of the Chinese camp where it broke out.

Franklin is also without a Local Board of Health, and the outbreak there was the most serious of any in the Colony. The Central Board at once sent down its Inspector, and on his recommendation and that of Dr. Madden, the local medical practitioner, the public-school was closed for some time. As for the cause of the outbreak, the actual point of origin could not be definitely fixed, but having once originated it found in the exceptional dampness of the climate of Franklin at the time, and other predisposing causes, every facility for its propagation. The outbreak at Bothwell was said to be traceable to a single and isolated case.

A damp locality, polluted wells, and uncleansed water-tanks may be enumerated amongst the causes of this disease. In some portions of the Colony diphtheria is present every year as an endemic disease, and much may be done to effect its removal by attention to water supply and by drainage. The foundations of all houses, built or being built, should be rendered as dry as possible by a system of public or private underground drains.

*Nuisances and Offensive Trades.*

Special references have been made to the Central Board of Health by the Government and by Local Boards in relation to certain nuisances—chiefly those arising from the exercise of noxious trades in towns. All these references have been attended to, and the Local Boards in whose districts the nuisances existed have been communicated with and assisted in dealing with the affairs. A memorial from individuals and firms carrying on “noxious trades establishments” at Launceston, addressed to Government, was submitted to the Central Board for its consideration, and it accordingly has forwarded to you the results of such consideration.

*Duties of Central and Local Boards of Health.*

Much ignorance prevails as to the respective spheres of duty of the Central and Local Boards of Health, and this Board is consequently continually receiving complaints that ought to be addressed to the Local Board of the locality, of the existence of nuisances. All these complaints are referred to the Local Board concerned; but much time and trouble would be saved if it were always remembered that the Central Board does not take upon itself any of the actual work of local government except when obliged to do so by the default of Local Boards.

It is as yet too early to speak much of the results of the working of the Public Health Act, but the experience we have had all justifies the wisdom of the provision that has been made of entrusting the general administration of it to a central authority. This provision not only insures greater uniformity in carrying out the enactments, but establishes a very necessary means of stimulating local authorities. At the same time it places within the reach of Local Boards special and professional assistance that small communities would otherwise find it impracticable to procure; and in cases where, in such communities private and public interests clash, while sharing the responsibilities of the local authority on the one hand, on the other it affords the protection of an impartial tribunal to private persons from injustice arising from local jealousy or incompetency. Furthermore, important parts of the Act have hardly been brought into action yet—for instance, the clauses for protecting food from adulteration—and these parts the Central Board can greatly aid Local Boards in carrying out.

In conclusion, the Central Board trusts, by patient continuance of its efforts to assist Local Boards—upon whom the successful working of the Act really rests,—to show that the proper administration of a Public Health Act will effect as much good to the common weal here as it has done in the other colonies.

All which is respectfully submitted.

H. A. PERKINS, M.D., *President.*  
 J. A. HARDY, M.R.C.S.E., &c.  
 GEO. CRISP.  
 JAMES H. B. WALCH.  
 HENRY HUNTER.

W. H. GRAHAM, *Secretary.*  
*Central Board of Health, Hobart,*  
 7th September, 1886.