

chains long. This brings the line to the crossing of the main road at Glenham Homestead. It is estimated that the tunnel-works will be finished by about January next. Beyond carrying on the works contracted for, it is not proposed to incur any further expenditure on this railway during the present year.

The amount now required to be voted for this railway, in order to meet existing liabilities, which will all probably fall due before the end of March next, is £9,000, leaving £11,084 for appropriation in succeeding years.

SEAWARD BUSH.

The Seaward Bush Railway is completed and opened for traffic from Appleby to Oteramika, a distance of 11 miles. A contract-survey is made to Waimakaka, 12 miles further, but it is not intended to undertake any more works at present.

The amount now required to be voted for this railway, in order to meet existing liabilities, which will all probably fall due before the end of March next, is £1,000, leaving £3,609 for future appropriation.

SUMMARY.

On account of railways in course of construction, as a whole, the votes proposed to be asked for this year will amount to £338,900, leaving £829,518 for future appropriation. Of these amounts £75,240 and £334,084 respectively appertain to the North Island Trunk Railway, and the balance, namely, £263,660 and £495,434 to other railways.

REMARKS ON OUR RAILWAYS GENERALLY, RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE.

In connection with the subject of railways in course of construction, I would wish to take this opportunity of making a few remarks on the question of our railways generally, retrospective and prospective.

My object is to look back at what we have done during the last seventeen years, in order to realise what we have obtained for our expenditure, in comparison with similar expenditure in other countries.

In doing this, I propose, for reasons which I shall explain presently, to confine my remarks, in the meantime, to a comparison between the railways of New Zealand, and those of Victoria, New South Wales, and Cape Colony, taking in each case the latest data that we have got to hand:—

In New Zealand, taking, as in the other colonies, the working railways mileage, we had, in March 1888, 1,758 miles of railway, which cost £13,352,978, or an average of	£7,595 per mile.
In Victoria, they had, in June 1887, 1,880 miles of railway, which cost £26,171,609, or an average of	£13,921 per mile.
In New South Wales, they had, in December 1886, 1,889 miles of railway, which cost £24,071,454, or an average of	£12,743 per mile.
And, in Cape Colony, they had, also in December 1886, 1,599 miles of railway, which cost £14,130,616, or an average of	£8,837 per mile.

These are the actual figures as given in Table A attached to this Statement, but, in order to do full justice to the cases of the other colonies, as they have greater lengths of double line than we have, I have calculated the cost per mile anew on the basis that each mile of double line is equal to two miles of railway. The several lengths of double line are as follows: In New Zealand, 6 miles; in Victoria, 236 miles; in New South Wales, 66 miles; in Cape Colony, 15 miles. This, however, is doing more than justice to the cases of the other colonies, as the cost of constructing a double line is not in reality anything like double the