

The committals for stealing, burglary, unlawful possession, &c., also show an unusually large increase compared with the preceding year, the figures being 38 for 1895-96 and 60 for the year under review.

The great increase in the number of inmates in the Reformatory due to the increased committals led the Council to draw particular attention to the matter, and at your request it made special inquiry into the causes of the evident increase in juvenile crime. The Council obtained reports from the Police Magistrate and the Inspectors of Police, and forwarded to you an exhaustive report, setting forth the causes of the increase of criminal practices amongst boys and youths, and embodying suggestions which, if carried out, it believes will tend to arrest—so far as legislation can do—the apparent progress of deterioration in the morality of the youth of the colony.

THE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.

The number of children in the Industrial School on the 1st July, 1896, was 41 (18 boys and 23 girls), and during the year 394 (192 boys and 202 girls) were received, comprising 187 (113 boys and 74 girls) newly committed, 205 (78 boys and 127 girls) readmitted, and 2 (1 boy and 1 girl) transferred from reformatories. The new committals show an increase of 68 (50 boys and 18 girls) over the number received in 1895-96.

The discharges during the year number 381 (195 boys and 186 girls), including 211 (125 boys and 86 girls) boarded out, and 4 girls placed out without subsidy, 110 (36 boys and 74 girls) sent to service, 13 (6 boys and 7 girls) released on expiration of term of detention, 6 (4 boys and 2 girls) released after remand, 5 (3 boys and 2 girls) released on petition to the Governor, 6 (2 boys and 4 girls) placed with relatives on probation, 7 (5 boys and 2 girls) transferred to reformatories, 13 (10 boys and 3 girls) sent to hospital, 2 girls died, and 4 boys absconded, leaving 54 (15 boys and 39 girls) in the school on the 30th June.

The majority of the inmates are girls of service age, many of whom are detained in the school owing to the difficulty of obtaining suitable situations for them, while a number are unfit for service until they receive some disciplinary training.

The general health of the inmates has been good. The two children who died were infants, aged two months and three weeks respectively, and were in a dying condition when admitted.

THE GIRLS' REFORMATORIES.

On the 1st July, 1896, the number of inmates of the Girls' Reformatory was 30, and during the year there have been 31 admissions, comprising 11 new committals, 18 readmissions, and 2 transfers from the Industrial School.

The discharges were 33, of which number 12 were placed at service, 3 were released on expiration of term of detention, 1 was released on petition to the Governor, 2 were placed with relatives on probation, 1 was transferred to the Industrial School, 1 was sent to the Lunatic Asylum, and 13 absconded. The number in the reformatories on the 30th June was 28—*i.e.*, 18 at Edwardstown, and 10 at St. John's, Kapunda.

On the 4th June the Roman Catholic inmates to the number of ten were transferred from Edwardstown to the reformatory at St. John's, Kapunda, which has been proclaimed specially for Roman Catholic girls, and is under the charge of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The Council has the same control over this institution as over the Edwardstown Reformatory, and the inmates of both establishments are subject to the same regulations. The department pays the sisterhood 10s. per week for each girl while she remains an inmate, and this sum is to cover all expenses for the maintenance and training of the girls. In consequence of the transfer of the Roman Catholic girls the staff at Edwardstown has been reduced by one.

The Council is greatly interested in the transfer of the Roman Catholic girls to the care of a sisterhood, and it has hopes that the result will fully justify the new legislation which provides the machinery for this departure from former methods.

THE BOYS' REFORMATORY.

The number of inmates on the 1st July, 1896, was 59, and since that date there have been 93 admissions, comprising 62 new committals, 24 readmissions, 4 transfers from the Industrial School, and 3 transfers from country homes. The offences for which the newly-committed boys were sentenced are: Uncontrollable, 6; sleeping in the open air, 1; stealing, 44; housebreaking, 3; unlawfully on premises, 2; unlawful possession, 3; wilful damage, 2; assault, 1.

During the year there were 49 discharges—*viz.*, 1 placed at service, 12 released on expiration of term of detention, 8 released on petition to the Governor, 1 released after remand, 1 transferred to the Industrial School, 2 sent to the Hospital, 1 committed to gaol for horse-stealing before admission to the Reformatory, and 23 absconded. The number of boys in the institution on the 30th June was 103, the highest on record.

For the first half of the year some trouble was experienced in consequence of the committal of boys over sixteen years, whose bad conduct not only caused the Superintendent much anxiety in managing the boys themselves, but in counteracting the unsettling influence which their conduct had upon the other inmates. It is satisfactory to be able to say that for some time the conduct of these older boys has greatly improved under the training of the Reformatory, and that the general conduct of the inmates is satisfactory.

The work done at the institution during the year has been considerable, the improvements consisting of increased facilities for poultry-rearing, the excavation of a large reservoir, and the planting of additional fruit trees.