

REPORT BY PERMANENT HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS.

Postal Conference, Hobart, 30th March, 1898.

IN pursuance of the instructions of the Honourable the Delegates assembled in Conference, we have carefully considered the questions remitted to us, and have to report as follows:—

Nos. 3 and 4.—“Adoption of uniform Letter Bills, and furnishing Statistics of Inter-colonial Correspondence.”—“Adoption of uniform Letter Bills for Mails exchanged between (a) the Principal Offices of the Australasian Colonies, and (b) Border Post Offices.”

Recommended, That the Letter Bills as prepared by New South Wales, at the request of previous Conferences, be adopted, and that, during the months of May and November in each year, the number of letters, packets, and newspapers contained in mails be stated on Letter Bills for statistical purposes.

No. 5.—“Australian Mails Way-Bill.”

No report. Can be dealt with departmentally.

No. 6.—“Reply Postage Stamp—(a) Merridew’s Scheme; (b) Maury’s Scheme.”

It would be impossible to introduce the universal use of the Reply Postage Stamp without interfering more or less with the postal revenue of the countries concerned, and we therefore cannot advise adoption of either scheme.

No. 7.—“The use of the ‘Paid-at’ Stamp on Correspondence on which postage has been paid in cash.”

Recommended, That cash payment be accepted for *all* classes of mail matter over the value of £1, posted at one and the same time, but that the “Paid Stamp” shall indicate the postage paid for each article. The Offices authorised to accept cash payment to be determined by each respective Administration.

No. 8.—“Inland Postage Rates, Local Delivery.”

No report. The Postmaster-General, South Australia, suggests that where 1*d.* postage is introduced it should be restricted to letters posted in a town for delivery in the same town. This system already obtains in Queensland and Tasmania.

Nos. 9 and 10.—“Rates of Postage levied by Fiji on Patterns and Samples and on Newspapers”—“*Re* Berne Bureau questioning the rates charged by the Australasian Colonies on International (a) Patterns, and Samples, and (b) Newspapers.”

As our rates of postage on patterns and samples and newspapers are in strict conformity with Article 5 of the Vienna Convention, and Fiji is charging similar rates, the objections raised by Berne to the rates of Fiji are not supported by the Convention. Should the Berne contention be upheld it would involve the rates in all the Colonies being raised, in the case of packets, from 1*d.* to 1½*d.* for two ounces.

No. 11.—“Samples of Glass, &c.—*vide* London Letter, dated 21st January, 1898.”

Hitherto it has been the practice of the Australasian Colonies to permit “Queen bees, and live but harmless entomological specimens,” as well as glassware—provided such articles be properly and securely packed—to be transmitted by sample post within the Colonies and to any other country or colony where allowed by the local regulations; but the Colonies have refused to transmit by sample post packets of liquids, oils, fatty substances, dry powders (whether