

local bodies as to the apportionment of the cost of constructing or maintaining bridges or roads. Under this division 242 Proclamations, Orders in Council, and other documents were issued during the year in connection with roads, bridges, and some other minor public works which also fall within the province of the Department. This class of work is largely on the increase.

Most of the new roads and bridle-roads have been made to give access to lands recently taken up, although a considerable amount has been spent in the older districts on bridges and other improvements to roads. As long as it is the policy of the Government to settle people on land to which no roads have been made it should be a cardinal point of such policy to construct at least unmetalled dray-roads to the lands so disposed of, and the expenditure required for that purpose should take precedence of road expenditure in localities which already are roaded up to that degree. In connection with this I may mention that during the year under review 1,959 holdings, mostly in unroaded districts, have been disposed of, exclusive of those on estates acquired for closer settlement under the Land for Settlements Act.

I find that some local bodies have probably misunderstood the policy in handing over constructed roads to them for maintenance; and I wish to take this opportunity of emphasizing the advisability of such a policy, both in the interests of the settlers and the local bodies themselves.

Under the system in vogue until recently there were many miles of road which had been formed by the Government and were still maintained by them. The result was that a considerable portion of the moneys appropriated by Parliament was expended in repairs to existing roads, and consequently the Government have been hampered in their efforts to develop new country. I think it will appeal to honourable members as a more business-like policy that when a road is formed it should be handed over for maintenance to the local body in whose district it is situated, thus leaving the Government free to utilise to the fullest advantage the sums available for opening up new roads, converting bridle-tracks into dray-roads, and otherwise improving the means of communication. I feel convinced that by so doing we shall obtain the best results possible with the means at our disposal, thus minimising the difficulties with which our back-block settlers have to contend, and giving the fullest scope to the development of the natural advantages and the productiveness which our colony undoubtedly possesses.

The appropriations proposed for the current year are as under:—

	£
Roads, Departmental	18,605
Roads generally	246,439
Maintenance of main roads	28,458
Tourist roads	16,498
Government Loans to Local Bodies Account	35,000
Land for Settlements Account	6,910
Total	<u>£351,910</u>

ROADS ON GOLDFIELDS (MINES DEPARTMENT).

The vote last year under this head amounted to £31,200. The expenditure, however, considerably exceeded this sum, having amounted to £45,594, with contingent liabilities at the end of the year of £23,375.

The sum proposed to be authorised for the current year is £68,621, on account of which a vote of £35,000 is asked for.

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDFIELDS AND MINING.

As already announced in the Financial Statement, the returns from gold-mining continue to increase, and the anticipated amount of over £2,000,000 as the value of gold which would be exported during the late year was realised, the amount having been £2,037,831, being an increase on the previous year of £86,398.