

1908.
NEW ZEALAND.

MAORI LAND PURCHASE OPERATIONS:

REPORT UNDER "THE MAORI LAND SETTLEMENT ACT, 1905," FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31st MARCH, 1908.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,—

Department of Lands, Wellington, 1st June, 1908.

In accordance with the provisions of "The Maori Land Settlement Act, 1905," and amendments of 1906 and 1907, I append a statement of the land-purchase operations which have been conducted under my supervision, together with a statement of accounts.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM C. KENSINGTON,

Under-Secretary for Lands.

Hon. J. Carroll, Minister of Native Affairs, Wellington.

REPORT.

LAST year's report was more in the nature of an explanation of the negotiations in progress, and detailed the operations set on foot for acquiring lands for the Crown for settlement purposes from those Maoris who were anxious to sell in various portions of the North Island, especially excluding, however, the Tokerau district, north of Auckland, and the Tai-Rawhiti district of the east coast. This year's report conveys the information of the whole of the actually completed purchases, scheduled under their respective land districts, the total area completely purchased being 263,001 acres. Summarised, the areas purchased are as follows:—

						A.	R.	P.
Auckland	...	...	...	...	...	121,776	1	34 $\frac{2}{3}$
Taranaki	...	...	...	...	...	127,821	2	35
Hawke's Bay	...	...	...	...	...	13,294	2	23
Wellington	...	...	...	...	...	109	0	0
Total	...	...	...	...	...	263,001	3	12 $\frac{2}{3}$

The prices paid in the Auckland Land District ranged from 5s. 6d. to £2 an acre, or an average for the whole of about 19s. 10d. per acre. This, I consider, is a very fair average in view of the scattered nature of the purchased areas and the extraordinary variety of the soils and general capabilities from a settlement point of view.

In the Taranaki Land District the average price paid ranges from 7s. 6d. to £1 per acre, the average being 8s. 9d. per acre. A good deal of the area purchased being only medium land, the average price is a very fair one.

In Hawke's Bay the price paid ranges from £5 to £7 per acre, the average being £6 12s. per acre, the lands purchased being of first-class quality and all fit for immediate settlement.

In Wellington only one small area has been purchased owing to the difficulties surrounding acquisition, the price being £1 5s. per acre.

LAND-PURCHASE OFFICERS.

On the 31st December, 1907, Major Dean Pitt and Mr. James Mackay ceased their connection with the Department owing to the completion of operations in their districts. On the 31st March, Mr. Dunbar Johnson was transferred to the Native Land Court, and took up his Judge's work. Mr. W. H. Grace is now the only land-purchase officer on salary, and he is engaged in completing all outstanding areas, and also is rendering aid in connection with various matters which have resulted from the sittings of the Commission. His special report is printed as an appendix. Here I may state that the whole of the land-purchase operations, the fixing of the price to be paid for areas in the numerous blocks, have all been dealt with by myself personally, with the very able assistance of Mr. Paterson, the Chief Accountant, who has kept an exhaustive check upon the whole of the expenditure and of all the imprest advances made from time to time. The work was made easier by my personal knowledge of every block negotiated for.