

COPY OF CIRCULAR LETTER FORWARDED TO CHAIRMEN OF LOCAL BODIES.

Office of Minister of Internal Affairs, Wellington,
22nd April, 1912.

SIR,—

I have the honour to inform you that in the opinion of the Government the time has arrived and is opportune to deal with the question of the simplification of the local government of New Zealand. There has gradually grown up a considerable overlapping of the functions of local bodies, which is not conducive to successful local government. The number of local bodies is felt to be far in excess of the requirements, and their powers are in some respects insufficient to enable them to carry out their work to the best advantage. At the present time there are no less than 124 counties, 113 boroughs, 60 town districts, 149 road districts, 41 river districts, 43 Harbour Boards, 13 education districts, 42 land-drainage districts, and 37 hospital districts in existence, making a total of 622 local government districts.

In the scheme which is now before the country the Government propose to materially reduce the number of local governing bodies by increasing the areas and enlarging the functions of the local bodies proposed to be set up. It is therefore the intention of the Government to endeavour to pass into law, with such amendments as may be considered desirable, the Local Government Bill introduced by the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Ward during the recent session of Parliament, a copy of which has already been sent you. The principal features of the Bill are briefly outlined in an explanatory memorandum which accompanied it, and I now enclose further copies of the memorandum for the information of the members of your Board.

In view of the importance of the subject and the changes proposed in the Bill, it is deemed advisable to submit it to a conference of delegates of local bodies for discussion and consideration of amendments; and arrangements are being made for such conference to be held in Wellington, in the Dominion Museum building, commencing on Tuesday, 21st May proximo, at 10 a.m.

It is obvious that direct representation of each local body concerned would make the conference altogether too unwieldy. It has therefore been decided that local government districts should be grouped in certain areas, and that all the local governing bodies within such areas should meet and elect a delegate or delegates to the conference. As hospital districts, consisting as they do of groups of counties, have well-defined boundaries, it is proposed for the sake of convenience that they shall comprise the areas referred to, and that the Chairman of each Hospital and Charitable Aid Board (with the exception of the groups of districts mentioned below) shall convene a meeting at an early date, such meeting, of course, electing its own chairman. This course is also proposed because the Hospital Board will doubtless have the necessary accommodation and be in a sufficiently central position to make it convenient for the local bodies from all parts of the district to meet together and select their delegate or delegates to the conference in Wellington.

In a few cases, where the population or the number of local bodies within the boundaries of a hospital district is too small to warrant separate representation, it has been decided to group such a district with another, or others, and that a delegate or delegates be elected for the group so formed. The following are the hospital districts that have been so grouped:—

Coromandel	Hawera	Wairau	Buller	Vincent	Southland
Thames	Patea	Picton	Inangahua	Maniototo	Wallace and
Waikato					Fiord.

The Chairman of the Hospital and Charitable Aid Board at _____ will advise you in due course of the time and place of the meeting for your district.

For your information, there will be _____ delegate required to represent the _____ Hospital District at the Wellington conference.

Each delegate to the conference at Wellington will be allowed 10s. per day travelling-allowance in addition to locomotion expenses to and from Wellington. Other expenses incurred will require to be paid by the respective local bodies.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

G. W. RUSSELL,

Minister of Internal Affairs.