

GENERAL.

The following schedule shows the amount voted for special works in New South Wales outside of subsidies and endowments for the year ending 30th June, 1912:—

<i>Consolidated Fund.</i>		£
Roads (maintenance)	20,500	
Bridges (maintenance)	20,000	
Punts and ferries (maintenance)	22,900	
<i>Public Works Fund.</i>		
Tourist roads	2,000	
Wood-blocking streets in and around Sydney, part of which is to be repaid by the municipalities	46,956	
Bridges	28,150	
Roads, water-conservation, &c., and also lands for settlement	20,000	
		<u>£160,500</u>

These figures include works in the Western District as well as in shires and municipalities. They include also some things other than roads.

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Assistant Under-Secretary, Public Works.

REPORT No. 2.—STATE ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL BODIES IN AUSTRALIA GENERALLY.

QUEENSLAND.

Very little monetary assistance is given by the Government to local bodies in this State, and, leaving out a very few special Boards, such as the Metropolitan (Brisbane) Water and Sewage Board, and a few Fire Boards and Cemetery Boards, and a few special Boards dealing with some large bridges, the only forms of local bodies are municipalities and shires, which correspond with our boroughs and counties respectively.

No assistance is given to these local bodies by the Government for roads and bridges other than some slight assistance by the Lands Department for new roads where Crown lands are opened up. There used to be a system of yearly votes for roads and bridges somewhat similar to our votes under the Public Works Fund, but this system was stopped in 1903. The only thing now approaching this assistance is some slight aid for roads and bridges to mineral fields; but £5,000 only was voted for this purpose last year.

No other subsidy whatever (except some small grant for parks and domains) is given, and the whole cost of administration, including the construction and upkeep of streets, roads, and bridges, is borne by the local authorities out of their own resources.

Hospitals are maintained by public subscription, supplemented by a Government grant of £1 for £1. The hospitals also receive the Police Court fines. These hospitals are managed by committees elected by subscribers, who must contribute at least £1 per annum to the funds of the hospital to entitle them to vote for members of the committee.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

I have dealt at length with the working of the subsidy system in New South Wales in Report I. It will be found from that report that assistance is given to the local bodies by the Government as follows: (a) Endowments (subsidies) to shires; (b) endowments (subsidies) to municipalities; (c) national works.

Full particulars as to the assistance thus granted will be found in Report No. 1.

VICTORIA.

An endowment (subsidy) of £100,000 is distributed yearly to the shires and municipalities in Victoria. This is divided in the manner shown in the Shires and Municipalities Endowment Act, 1907, which states definitely the amount to be paid to each local body. It used to be the custom in Victoria to classify the shires and boroughs somewhat in the manner now in force in New South Wales. When this last classification was made several shires were placed in the lowest class, under which no subsidy would be paid to them. They made serious objection, and the then Premier, the late Sir T. Bent, to appease them, made a classification of his own, which was inserted in the Act above mentioned, and, although that classification was only for a temporary period, it has been adopted yearly since that time. Under this classification the maximum amount paid yearly to boroughs is £100; minimum amount, £20; and the maximum amount paid yearly to shires is £2,000; minimum, £126.

Under this arrangement, if any shire subdivides, then the amount originally paid is also subdivided, and no monetary advantage is gained; for the total endowment £100,000 is a fixed sum, which cannot be exceeded.

Shires were originally classified into six classes, and boroughs into two classes; but cities and towns were not classified.

In addition to the endowment of £100,000, the Parliament votes annually certain sums for roadworks, without distinctly stating which works. This year £58,000 was voted, last year £48,000, and the year previously £80,000. The allocation of this money is at the discretion of the Minister.