

1916.  
NEW ZEALAND.

---

## NATIVE LAND COURTS AND MAORI LAND BOARDS

(REPORT FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY, NATIVE DEPARTMENT, ON THE WORKING OF)  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1916.

*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*

### ANNUAL REPORT.

Native Department, Wellington, 29th May, 1916.

The Hon. the Native Minister.

I HAVE the honour to append hereto a report on the work of the various branches dealing with Native land:—

#### *Native Land Court.*

During the year there have been 131 sittings of the Native Land Court, the total number of cases notified for hearing being 19,709. In addition to the ordinary Courts sitting in each district two separate Courts are still sitting in the Aotea and Tairāwhiti Districts dealing with original investigations relating to customary lands, and some 40,023 acres have been clothed with title in the Aotea District, while 32,325 acres have been similarly dealt with in the Tairāwhiti District. Some of the orders made, however, are subject to appeals. The ordinary Courts have also investigated the title to some 3,106 acres of customary lands in the Tokerau District and 6,790 acres in the Waiariki District, making a total area of 82,244 acres of customary land clothed with title during the year.

With regard to Native freehold land, 2,172 partition orders, affecting 542,841 acres, have been made, while a large number of other orders affecting Native lands have also been dealt with. During the past six years 7,870 partitions have been made by the Native Land Court, and of this number no less than 4,255 have been effected during the last two years, clearly indicating the extent to which the individualization of title is being carried out. One result of this extensive individualization of title is seen in the big drop in the number of appeals notified during the last two years, only 241 cases being recorded during that time, as compared with a total of 1,229 appeals notified in the four-years period immediately preceding. During the year just ended there have been sixteen sittings of the Native Appellate Court, the total number of cases scheduled being 121.

The jurisdiction to approve and confirm alienations in the South Island having been taken away from the Court and vested in the South Island District Maori Land Board, particulars of South Island alienations are now included in the Maori Land Board returns.

The year's revenue received by way of Court fees, &c., and including outstandings of fees for the current year, totalled a sum of £6,212 7s. 6d., as against £6,049 3s. 6d. in the previous period. In addition, fees amounting to £781 19s. were collected on old Native Land Court orders, as against £590 13s. 5d. collected on such orders during 1914–15. This result indicates that the old orders are being rapidly brought up to date.

A great deal of work devolved during the year upon the Aotea District Native Land Court in respect of the West Coast Settlement reserves, some 718 orders being made, affecting an area of 113,383 acres. No fees were charged by the Court for this work, otherwise the year's revenue would have been much larger still.

Table A attached hereto sets out the operations of the Court for the year ending 31st March, 1916.

#### MAORI LAND BOARDS.

The area of land vested in and administered by the various Maori Land Boards totals 959,198 acres, excluding sixteen blocks, comprising 7,163 acres 1 rood 35 perches, which have been re-vested in the Native owners during the year. Alienations of vested lands during the year consisted of twelve leases, affecting an area of 1,855 acres 3 roods 23 perches, and of forty-eight transfers, affecting 995 acres 1 rood 32 perches.

With regard to Native freehold land, the Boards have also during the year approved of 597 leases, comprising 99,841 acres 2 roods 19 perches, and have confirmed 1,119 transfers (apart from sales to the Crown) affecting 117,832 acres and 18 perches of freehold land. The figures disclose an increase of 231 leases and 22,246 acres over last year's totals in respect of land leased, and a decrease of forty-two transfers and 43,188 acres with regard to land sold. Considering the very unsettled state of affairs due to the war, these figures may be regarded as satisfactory.