

1929.
NEW ZEALAND.

MENTAL HOSPITALS OF THE DOMINION

(REPORT ON) FOR 1928.

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

The Hon. the MINISTER IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HOSPITALS to His Excellency the GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Wellington, 10th July, 1929.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report for the year 1928 of the Director-General of Mental Hospitals.

I have, &c.,

A. J. STALLWORTHY,

Minister in Charge of Department of Mental Hospitals.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL to the Hon. A. J. STALLWORTHY, Minister in Charge of the Department of Mental Hospitals.

SIR,—

Wellington, 10th July, 1929.

I have the honour to present my annual report upon the mental hospitals of the Dominion for the year ended 31st December, 1928.

At the conclusion of the year, 6,160 persons were under care and treatment in the institutions, of whom 5,902 were detained under a Magistrate's reception order, and 258 had been admitted as voluntary boarders upon their own application.

The number of voluntary boarders admitted during the year was 290, as compared with 197 last year, which represents 21 per cent. of the total admissions.

The manifest advantages of securing early treatment in the pre-certifiable stage of mental disorder have been sufficiently stressed in previous annual reports, and it is not necessary to again enlarge upon the matter, but it is gratifying to find that public recognition of this is being reflected in the rapidly increasing number of these who come to us as voluntary boarders, and thus avoid drifting into a condition which necessitates formal certification and committal by a Magistrate.

In New Zealand the percentage of voluntary admissions upon the total has risen from 8 to 21 per cent. during the last decade, but we are still far behind the record established at the Royal Mental Hospital, Edinburgh, last year, where no less than half the admissions were on a voluntary basis. It is only fair to state, however, that in New Zealand we restrict such admissions very strictly to those who are able to fully appreciate the nature of a request for admission and consequences of signing it. Our test in this respect is higher than that in vogue at the institution I have quoted. Those whom we judge to be unfit to sign the request for admission can be admitted only under a Magistrate's reception order after certification by two medical men.

During the year 439 patients and boarders were discharged as recovered, which is 35.9 per cent. calculated on the admissions. I do not wish to attach undue importance to these so-called "recovery rates," which are liable to serious error, but it is significant that while only 26.04 per cent. of the committed patients became fit for discharge as "recovered," the corresponding figure for the voluntary boarders was 68.6 per cent. The statistics published in these reports showing the number of patients in mental hospitals have sometimes been quoted as indicating an unusually high incidence of mental disorder in this as compared with other countries; but, as there is no international uniformity in