

1932.
NEW ZEALAND.

LAND TRANSFER AND DEEDS REGISTRATION.

ANNUAL REPORT OF DEPARTMENT, 1931-32.

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

Head Office, Stamp Duties Department, Wellington, 31st March, 1932.

The Hon. the Minister of Stamp Duties, Wellington.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report on the working of the Land Transfer and Deeds Registration Department for the year ended the 31st March, 1932.

The returns appended show—

- A.—The business transacted under the Land Transfer Act.
- B.—The fees received thereunder, including the fees received on account of Crown grants.
- C.—The mortgages and discharges of mortgages, and the amount remaining secured by mortgage under the said Act on the 31st March, 1932.
- D.—The arrears existing at the various Land Transfer Offices at the close of business on the same date.
- E.—The number of deeds received for registration and the number remaining unrecorded on the 31st March last, also the fees received in the Deeds Registration Offices.

Business transacted.—Registration business has suffered a sharp drop during the year owing to the prevailing depression.

Compulsory Registration.—The work of bringing under the provisions of the Land Transfer Act of titles not previously subject to those provisions was completed prior to the beginning of the year under review in all districts except the districts of Auckland, Nelson, and Otago. It is being proceeded with in those districts, and owing to the depression members of the permanent staff not required in the meantime for the ordinary work have been employed on this work, so that it has been carried on at a greater rate than previously. The District Land Registrars of those districts estimate that if present conditions were to continue—that is to say, without there being any material reductions in the permanent staffs and no great increase in ordinary registrations—the work would be practically completed in the following periods, namely: In Auckland, from three to five years; in Nelson, one year and a half; in Otago, eight years.

Reconstruction of Hawke's Bay Register.—Out of the total number of certificates of title and Crown leases of land in the Hawke's Bay district that were in existence at the date of the earthquake and fire, estimated at about twenty-seven thousand, twelve thousand have been copied, in addition to a large number of mortgages and other leases. The Land Transfer (Hawke's Bay) Act, 1931, appears to be reasonably sufficient for the purpose of providing a method of ascertaining the position of titles to land and reconstructing the register so far as possible. Hawke's Bay solicitors have suggested that the Act is unsatisfactory in one respect—that is to say, that it is extremely doubtful as to what is the effect, in view of the law as to novation, of a new instrument executed in substitution for an instrument destroyed in the earthquake and fire—but it has not been suggested, and I am unable to suggest, how the Act might be improved in this respect. The solicitors also contend that the work should be carried on with greater expediency than has been done, and that they should be allowed to assist by making copies of instruments held by them (they being paid for the work) as was done during the first few months after the reconstruction work was begun. The staff engaged upon the work consists of permanent officers of the Department (except typists and draughtswomen, who are nowadays mostly temporary officers), and comprises the pre-earthquake staff of the Napier Office, together with a large number of officers drawn from other District Land Registry Offices where, owing to the depression, their services are not in the meantime necessary.