

1936.
NEW ZEALAND.

MENTAL HOSPITALS OF THE DOMINION

(REPORT ON) FOR 1935.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 78 of the Mental Defectives Act, 1911.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL to the Hon. P. FRASER, Minister in Charge of the Department of Mental Hospitals.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st June, 1936.

I have the honour to present my annual report upon the work of the Department of Mental Hospitals for the year ending 31st December, 1935.

At the end of the year there were 8,046 persons upon the registers of the mental hospitals of the Dominion, including 40 patients and boarders at Ashburn Hall Private Licensed Institution and 716 patients and boarders who were out on probation in the care of relatives and friends.

In actual residence in Government institutions, there were 7,290 persons at the end of the year, an increase of 66 over the figure for the previous year, and of this number 6,975 were detained under a Magistrate's reception order, whilst 315 were under treatment as voluntary boarders at their own request.

The total number of first admissions, including voluntary boarders, was 1,128 as against 1,049 for last year, an increase of 79, and 253 former patients and boarders sought readmission.

We were able to discharge 647 patients and boarders during the year, or 46·85 per cent., calculated upon the admissions, but of these only 520 or 37·65 per cent. could be regarded as recovered, the remainder only being sufficiently well to live outside under some degree of supervision.

The deaths during the year totalled 435 or 6·11 per cent. of the average number resident.

In the result our mental hospital population increased to the extent of 232 inmates during the year.

STATE OF ACCOMMODATION.

For many years most of our hospitals have been overcrowded, in some instances seriously so, and attention has been frequently called to the shortage of accommodation, but no effective long-range building programme has ever been evolved to meet the inevitable increase in our population. We have had to do our best with the annual appropriations from the Public Works Fund, but even when these appropriations have appeared to be sufficient for immediate needs, it has been found most difficult to get the money spent within the financial year, owing to the time occupied in drawing plans, calling for and accepting tenders, &c.

The results of not building to meet our annual increase in numbers, are, of course, cumulative, and the position at the time of writing is that we have 935 patients in excess of proper accommodation.

The extent and distribution of the overcrowding is set out in the following tables (compiled in May, 1936):—

(A) Accommodation.

(B) Number of patients and boarders resident.

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