

1937.
NEW ZEALAND.

MENTAL HOSPITALS OF THE DOMINION.
(REPORT ON) FOR 1936.

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, 1937.
I have the honour to present my annual report upon the work of the Department of Mental Hospitals for the year ending 31st December, 1936.

There were at the close of the year 8,216 persons upon our registers, including 46 patients and boarders at Ashburn Hall Private Licensed Institution, and 631 patients and boarders who were out on probation to the care of relatives and friends.

In actual residence in State institutions there were 7,539 persons, an increase of 249 over the corresponding figure for the previous year, and of this number 7,210 were the subject of a reception order, whilst 329 were voluntary boarders.

The total number of first admissions, including voluntary boarders, was 1,145, as against 1,128 for last year, an increase of 17, and 267 former inmates were readmitted.

We were able to discharge 719 patients and boarders during the year, or 50·92 per cent., calculated upon the admissions, but of that number only 386, or 27·34 per cent., could statutorily be entered as having recovered.

The system of allowing patients and boarders to leave the institutions on probation has been considerably extended in the last few years, and this is of great advantage both to the patients and the institutions; but this procedure has created a fallacy in regard to our recovery rate. Under the provisions of our Act a patient on probation may be discharged as recovered during his period of probation only if the Medical Superintendent receives a medical certificate testifying to the patient's recovery, but if no such certificate is forthcoming he must be discharged as "unrecovered." We frequently have up to seven hundred patients on probation, and the majority of these convalesce at home to ultimate recovery, but relatively few send the requisite certificate, to the detriment of our statistics.

It is, however, satisfactory to know that over half our admissions are able to return home.

ACCOMMODATION.

I am glad to report that during the year a very considerable improvement has been effected in regard to the shortage of accommodation, to which I have had to call attention in previous reports. The net increase in the number of patients and boarders on the registers was 170, but in spite of this, by the carrying-out of a very extensive building programme, the deficiency in accommodation was reduced from 935 to 514 beds. As stated in previous reports, overcrowding cannot be adequately stated in terms of bed space alone; we must provide the ancillary services in proportion to the number to be served, and in this connection I direct attention to the numerous additions and alterations detailed in another part of this report. Many of these additions, such as the new store at Porirua, are but the first steps in an extensive programme which should make our institutions compare favourably with any in other parts of the world. The position with regard to the distribution of patients and the accommodation available is shown in the following table compiled in March, 1937 :—

Hospital.	Accommo- dation.	Number of Patients and Boarders on Registers.	Number on Probation.	Number actually resident.	Deficiency.	Surplus.
Auckland ..	1,187	1,410	130	1,280	93	..
Kingseat ..	620	587	5	582	..	38
Tokanui ..	637	630	51	579	..	58
Porirua ..	1,284	1,631	126	1,505	221	..
Christchurch ..	1,137	1,420	151	1,269	132	..
Nelson ..	819	853	38	815	..	4
Hokitika ..	478	454	7	447	..	31
Seacliff ..	1,004	1,237	34	1,203	199	..
Totals ..	7,166	8,222	542	7,680	645	131

Net deficiency 514, as compared with 935 for last year.