

PORIRUA MENTAL HOSPITAL.

DR. HART reports :—

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ending 31st December, 1936.

The total number of cases under care during the year was 2,085, of whom 1,866 were committed patients, 209 voluntary boarders, and 10 sent to the hospital on remand.

Admissions numbered 419: 316 under certification, 94 as voluntary boarders, and 9 were admitted for observation. Of the cases admitted for observation, 6 were discharged at the expiration of the periods of remand.

During the year 70 voluntary boarders and 106 committed patients were discharged and an additional 89 patients were sufficiently improved mentally to be able to go on probation to the care of relatives or friends.

Deaths numbered 109, and 165 patients were transferred to other Mental Hospitals.

Apart from the care and treatment of cases resident and already enumerated, I have to refer to the Psychiatric Clinic and the Psychiatric Ward for Women at the Wellington Public Hospital: the inauguration of the latter being the first step made in this direction in New Zealand. By active co-operation between the Wellington Hospital Board and this Department a ward has been set apart for the observation and treatment of early cases of psychoses and psychoneuroses. The ward is staffed by trained mental nurses seconded for duty there from this mental hospital. It is not intended that the ward should become a subsidiary mental hospital, as all well-defined cases of psychoses will continue to be sent as early as possible to the mental hospital, which alone can fully provide the specialized experience and therapeutic resources necessary for the active and successful treatment of such cases. At the same time I believe, and statistics will support my opinion, that successful early treatment can be provided in such a ward for mild cases of psychoses and psychoneuroses. Rest in such a ward, psychotherapy, temporary alleviation, and later adjustments of environmental and domestic stress have enabled certain cases to become once again socially adapted members of the community. I feel confident that treatment in the Psychiatric Ward has, in certain cases, prevented in the individual an extension of mental and nervous symptoms, and it is reasonable to believe that in several cases admission to a mental hospital has been avoided. The Hospital Almoner and the Social Worker of the Mental Hospital Department have been associated with the work of the ward in assisting in the rehabilitation into the community of the cases we have been able to discharge. The Psychiatric Ward has only been in operation since June last (a period of six months) and some 47 women have been under treatment, of which number 31 were discharged and 16 admitted to the mental hospital (7 as voluntary boarders and 9 under certification). The fact that all cases exhibited some mental and nervous symptoms and that it was possible to discharge 31 of 47 cases I think in itself more than justifies the existence of such a ward. A similar ward for men is under consideration and should prove an equally useful unit. The bi-weekly Out-patient Clinic at the Wellington Public Hospital continues as formerly, visits totalling 567, of which number 136 were new cases. In May of this year a monthly Out-patient Clinic was inaugurated at the Palmerston North Hospital, and 49 cases were referred for advice and treatment. The numbers and sources of reference of new extra mural cases dealt with during the year are as follows :—

Psychiatric Clinic	..	..	..	..	..	..	136
In-patients Wellington Public Hospital	..	..	..	..	..	..	118
Palmerston North Hospital Clinic	..	..	..	..	..	..	49
Prisons Department	..	..	..	..	..	..	21
Total new cases	..	..	..	..	..	..	324

The transfer of 165 patients during the year to Kingseat and Nelson Mental Hospitals has reduced the overcrowding, which on scheduled accommodation still exists to the extent of 143 males and 56 females.

Owing to the reduced hours of work and the resultant increase in nursing staff the staff accommodation is now inadequate, and additional accommodation for nurses will have to be provided for.

As an addition to other avenues of occupational therapy an instructor in cane-work and coir-mat making has been appointed. Classes only commenced some weeks ago and it is too early to look for results, but it is anticipated that this work and work in the allied "simple crafts" will prove of value both therapeutically and in the production of useful articles.

The artisan staff in all its branches has been fully occupied on general maintenance-work and, in addition to contract work, three staff and a party of patients have been constantly employed at interior painting and renovations. Under this heading the complete interior painting of Wards M. 3, M. 5, M. 6, F, and D was carried out during the year, whilst portion of M. 7, E, Rautā, office block, certain staff residences, &c., were painted and renovated.

Alterations and additions to existing buildings carried out during the year have been as follows :—

The erection of a new dairy and alterations to the male bathroom in the main building, with the erection of a dressing-room. The provision and equipment of a kitchenette for Male 1, and the extension of the building with the provision of extra bathing accommodation at Valima. Additional wash-hand basins were installed in E ward, and bathroom and lavatory additions in Male 5, lavatory and urinal additions in Male 3, and improvements to the ventilation in the corridors of the main building. Extensions were made of the hot-water service to the wash-hand basins in the villas Kaumatua, Weymouth, Somerset, Montrose, and Nairn. The malthoid roofing of the poultry-house was replaced by corrugated iron, and fairly extensive repairs carried out to the slate roofs of the main building. Of new equipment a new Ideal boiler was installed at the lower buildings, and plate-warmers provided for the main dining-hall, M. 1 and M. 6.