

REPORT OF THE POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT OF QUEENSLAND FOR THE YEAR 1897.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command.

To His Excellency The Right Honourable CHARLES WALLACE ALEXANDER NAPIER, Baron Lamington of Lamington, in the County of Lanark, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

I have the honour to present to Your Excellency the accompanying Annual Report of the Under Secretary and Superintendent of Telegraphs upon the operations of the Post and Telegraph Department for the year 1897.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BUILDINGS, BRISBANE.

During my term of office as Postmaster-General in 1888, I brought under review the utter unsuitability of the Post and Telegraph buildings in Brisbane for the purposes for which they are intended, in the following terms:—

“DEFECTIVE AND INSUFFICIENT OFFICE ACCOMMODATION.

“This is a great and serious obstacle to the efficient transaction of Post and Telegraph business. The head office is found to be most unsuitable in its internal arrangements, more particularly for the work of its executive branches, for many reasons, of which the following are prominent:—

- “1. Want of proper light, having buildings on each side, so that on cloudy days gas has to be used;
- “2. Want of proper ventilation. This is a most serious matter, particularly as regards the mail room, where, on summer nights, the heat is almost unbearable, and greatly retards the work, besides being very injurious to the health of the officers employed;
- “3. Want of space both for sorting and distributing correspondence, and accommodation for the public;
- “4. The design of the present building will not admit of extensions or additions being made for the increasing work of the Department effectively, and with a due regard for the requirements of the various branches;
- “5. Danger of fire from proximity of other buildings.”

Having viewed the extensive and elaborate provision made in the other Colonies for the proper conduct of postal and telegraphic business, I am led to the conclusion that the accommodation in our chief office is lamentably deficient in all those requirements which would be found in a well-ordered building of latest design. In view of the certain increase of business, which cannot fail to be continuous, I do not see that it is possible to utilise the present site so as to convert it into what is required unless the buildings are pulled down and rebuilt.

Although large sums of money have been since spent in Brisbane on Government buildings, I find that little has been done to improve this office, and nothing has been done to provide for its reconstruction on proper lines.

My predecessor, Mr. Dickson, when leaving office in March last, recorded a minute as follows:—

"A new commodious post and telegraph office is an absolute necessity, and should be considered at once. Any patching up or transforming the present building I hold to be a sheer waste of money."

I strongly recommend the erection of new buildings to enable the increasing business to be properly performed in some accordance with existing conditions and the requirements of the public.

PACIFIC CABLE.

I regret that I am unable to report that the negotiations for the laying of a Pacific cable are in a forward state. The influence of the present monopoly appears to be so great as to cause a postponement of the serious consideration of this matter, but I earnestly hope that the pressure of circumstances will be sufficiently strong to cause early and decisive action to be taken without further delay.

At the Hobart Conference, in March-April last, the following motion was proposed by the Hon. J. R. Dickson, and seconded by the Hon. J. G. Duffy:—

"That this Conference re-affirms the opinion that in the interests of Australasia the Pacific cable project should be consummated as soon as practicable, and that the Governments of the various Australasian Colonies be requested to represent to the Imperial and Dominion Governments the foregoing opinion, together with the proposal of the Premiers as agreed to at their recent Conference held in Melbourne, viz.:—that if Great Britain and Canada would each contribute one-third of the cost, the Colonies would be prepared to contribute the remaining third."

This was accordingly represented to the Imperial and Dominion Governments, &c., and I earnestly hope that this important matter will be no longer delayed.*

REDUCTION IN CABLE RATES.

The anticipated reduction in the cable rates from Queensland commenced on the 7th of July, 1897, and from the returns I observe that the transmission of cablegrams has been restored to Queensland.

TIME-TABLE IN CONNECTION WITH THE FEDERAL MAIL SERVICE.

I regret to state that the time-table for the Federal Mail Service has been very inconveniently arranged for the departure of the outward weekly English mail from Brisbane. Although repeated efforts have been made to secure Saturday, or, at earliest, Friday, we have been compelled to accept Thursday, which necessitates the despatch of the mails early on Monday morning instead of Sunday, which is practically no commercial improvement. We have endeavoured to provide for a departure of the train at mid-day on Monday, so as to give the public a few hours on that day for completion of correspondence, which now has, as a rule, to be closed on Saturday; but the Railway Commissioners of New South Wales have declined to alter their train to suit, on the ground that it would disarrange their local traffic. The Commissioners further stated that a special train would practically be of no use to their department, and if it were determined to have one run for postal purposes, the cost on the lowest scale would be £7,644 per annum for the journey between the Queensland border (Jennings) and Sydney.

* Since the above was written the following information has been received:—It is probable that the Agents-General of Victoria, New South Wales, New Zealand, and Queensland will shortly meet the representatives of the Imperial Government and Canada at an informal conference with a view to the adoption of some feasible scheme for the execution of this important project, but the opinion of the conference is to be submitted to the Australasian Governments concerned for consideration.

REDUCTION OF POSTAGE WITH UNITED KINGDOM AND CANADA POSTAL UNION CONGRESS AT WASHINGTON.

I am happy to state that the efforts of the British representatives to reduce the postage from 2½d. to 2d. has not been successful. Great Britain has, however, endeavoured to secure a reduction to and from the Colonies. Canada has also proposed to reduce her postage from 5 cents per ½ ounce to 3 cents per ounce; but at the Hobart Conference it was resolved that—

“The various Agents-General, delegates to the Postal Conference in London, be instructed to oppose the proposal to reduce the rate of postage to all parts of the British Empire from 2½d. per ½ oz. to 2d., and also the Canadian proposal to reduce her outgoing rate from 5 cents per ½ oz. to 3 cents per oz., for the following reasons:—

- “1. The present rate is not an unreasonably high one, having in view the large cost to the Colonies involved in the maintenance of the present means of postal communication with the various portions of the Empire.
- “2. Because of the anomaly which would be created by carrying letters 14,000 miles for the same rate as now charged for delivery within the limits of the town where posted.
- “3. Regarding the proposal of Canada to reduce her outgoing postage, this Conference is strongly of opinion that no reduction should take place which would be a departure from the present uniform rate, for the following reasons *inter alia*:—At present a charge of 2d. per ½ oz. is made in Australia for the carriage of letters to however small a distance, while the Canadian proposal would involve the carrying of her letters over the same routes at a greatly reduced cost. This would, in the opinion of the Conference, lead to confusion and dissatisfaction.”

and action was taken accordingly to communicate this resolution to the Agent-General of this Colony.

In connection with this matter, I observe from the returns that the volume of correspondence despatched from this Colony to Great Britain and Foreign places during 1897 has been less by 2·46 per cent. than that of the previous year, thus increasing the loss caused by the reduction of the universal postage rate to 2½d.*

MISUSE OF THE FREE O.H.M.S. SYSTEM BY GOVERNMENT OFFICERS.

My attention has been directed to the continued misuse of the Telegraph system by Government officers who are authorised to send O.H.M.S. messages, many of whom appear to think that the wire is more convenient than ordinary correspondence, and send verbose and unnecessary messages, some of which contain matter not strictly on public service; and I have been compelled to reissue a circular which I considered necessary in 1894. I hope this will have the desired effect of preventing the abuse, which tends to impede the transaction of commercial business. Unless there is a strong restraint put on the officers concerned by their own Departments, I shall be compelled to recommend the restoration of the short-lived system which was initiated in 1890, under which the various Departments had to pay for and consequently control this business, the latter being one of the principal objects for which the payment system was introduced.

NORTHERN COSTAL MAIL SERVICE.

The contract held by the A.U.S.N. Company for the conveyance of mails between Brisbane and the Northern ports of the Colony expired on the 30th June, 1898. In order to provide for a continuance of this service tenders were twice called for, but only one tender was received. This was not considered satisfactory as it was not only excessive in amount but stipulated for an eight-knot service, non-liability for penalties, and the option of withdrawing from the Gulf section by giving six months' notice.

* Since the above was written, cablegrams from London have appeared in the Press that the official announcement made regarding the conclusions arrived at by the Postal Convention, states that the result is to establish penny postage between Great Britain and Canada, Newfoundland, Cape Colony, Natal, and any of the Crown Colonies which may be willing to accept the reduction.

I see no objection to Great Britain establishing a penny postage to Queensland, as that country can well afford it, having over £3,000,000 surplus in post office funds after paying all expenses.

This Colony cannot, however, afford to adopt a penny rate on this side, as it would involve a reduction in the inland and intercolonial rates roughly estimated at from £50,000 to £60,000. This would increase the annual deficiency between revenue and expenditure ranging from £120,000 to £130,000.

In April and May last Departmental reports were furnished on the advisability of providing for the Northern mail service by fast steamers between either Gladstone or Keppel Bay and Cairns, connecting with the railway service between Brisbane and Gladstone, by which a considerable saving in time might be effected, and the mails reach Cairns on Tuesdays instead of Thursdays as at present. After consideration it was decided that tenders be invited as follows:—"Between Gladstone or Broadmount and Flat Top, Bowen, Townsville, and Cairns, and *vice versa*, once a week; with branch steamers to ply between Cairns, Port Douglas, and Cooktown, once a week." Tenders to be sent in by 30th July, 1898. If this can be satisfactorily provided for arrangements may be made for the Gulf section by forwarding the mails from Cairns by the overland route *viâ* Mareeba and Croydon, and if necessary this service might be increased to twice a week, special provision being made for mails for Normanton, &c., during the wet season, by a temporary steamer service.

INLAND PARCEL POST.

The increase of business in connection with this branch has been notable, the proportionate increase in the number of parcels posted having been more than maintained. The experience of the past year proves beyond the possibility of doubt that the parcel post has been serviceable alike to the merchant and the purchasing public. Both have taken full advantage of it, and the result of placing the extensive and varied assortments of goods available in the principal towns of the Colony at the disposal of the residents in the interior has been to stimulate trade and to increase the volume of correspondence passing through the post office, the parcels operations necessarily leading to a material increase in the number of letters, &c., sent in connection therewith. As parcels are now carried by nearly all coach or buggy mails, the benefits of the system have been extended generally throughout the Colony, and continual applications are made for the conversion of horse mails to coach services, with a view to sharing the benefits of a system so universally popular.

The number of inland parcels posted during 1895—the year in which parcels were first carried by coach—was 115,081, while for 1897 the number had increased to 161,546, and the postage collected amounted to £10,943, as compared with £7,264 2s. 5d. the amount collected in 1895.

INTERCOLONIAL AND FOREIGN PARCEL POST.

The increase has not been so remarkable in connection with the parcel post exchange with places beyond the Colony. The number of parcels received has, however, largely exceeded those despatched, thus showing a balance of trade against Queensland, a circumstance which renders it imperative that the postage shall be equitably apportioned between the offices of despatch and receipt, and that so far as this Colony is concerned it shall be fairly proportioned to the amount of work to be performed. Action has been taken to place this view properly before the Colonies and Countries with which we transact parcel business.

PICTORIAL POST CARDS.

The desirability of bringing the Colony, together with its products and scenery, under the observation of people residing beyond its limits has been recognised by me, and the advantages to be derived from utilising the machinery of an institution like the Post Office, with exchanges penetrating every part of the world, for the purpose of assisting in the work of what may be termed advertising the Colony appeared to be beyond question. It has, therefore, afforded me much pleasure to introduce the first of a series of pictorial post cards, with views illustrating the various phases of settlement and of life appertaining to Queensland, together with some of its most attractive scenery. These cards, which have been produced wholly within the Colony, and at very little expense, are sold for the face value of the postage stamps thereon. They have already attained a large circulation which bids fair to increase to much greater dimensions. The advantages to the Colony arising from the circulation of these cards cannot be over estimated, and it is my intention to considerably enlarge and improve the series.

FINANCIAL.

I have very much pleasure in directing attention to the continuance of the expansion of the Revenue of the Department, which has improved beyond that of former years, and was the highest on record for the year under notice.

The Revenue of the Postal Service was £167,998 for 1897, or an increase of £6,272 on the previous year, whilst that of the Telegraph Service was £78,516, or an increase of £1,530.

The total Revenue was £246,514, an increase of £7,802 on the previous year.

An increase in the Expenditure of £11,743 has had the effect of increasing the net deficiency between Revenue and Expenditure to £67,429, or £3,941 more than the deficiency in 1896.

Until the Telegraph lines are placed in proper condition, I cannot hope to decrease the deficiency between Revenue and Expenditure, but with the assistance of the increase in the Revenue, which still continues, I may be able to effect some improvement after a time.

METEOROLOGY.

During the year many new climatological stations have been established, and a large number of rain gauges fixed throughout the Colony; and the number of inquiries by wire for special forecasts of coming weather and the likelihood of storms on the Australian seaboard has steadily increased.

As stated in last report, many demands continue to be made for the transmission of daily forecasts, but I have been compelled to decline them owing to the heavy additional strain on the Telegraph Branch which would be caused by their daily transmission, and the serious interference with the regularity of commercial and other important business.

NEW CALEDONIA CABLE.

The cable from Bundaberg to Gomen was interrupted from the 1st November, 1897, to the 19th January, 1898, and the necessary deduction was made from the subsidy.

The returns are not sufficient at present to reduce the Annual Subsidy of £2,000.

TELEPHONES.

The reduction in the charge for Telephones has greatly increased the demand for instruments and lines, and new Exchanges are being opened and provided for. The rate for private Telephones in country districts having also been decreased, a number of private lines are in course of construction.

The placing of wires underground in Brisbane is being rapidly proceeded with, and I hope that before long the Brisbane Telephone system will be on a thoroughly satisfactory basis.

Communication has been made by telephone between outlying districts and the nearest available telegraph office, thus affording telegraph communication to places where the establishment of a telegraph office is not warranted. This has been rendered practicable by the adoption of the phonopore system, which allows communication by means of existing telegraph lines without interfering with the transmission of telegrams on the same wire.

The establishment of a trunk line between Charters Towers and Townsville by means of the telegraph wire which already existed between those places has been most successful, and instead of a reduction in the receipts from the local telegraph service, an increase is apparent in both services to the extent of £174 for the year, which is extremely satisfactory.

A trunk line between Ipswich and Brisbane is now under construction, and is proposed to be extended to Toowoomba, and it is hoped it will be equally successful with that in the north.

"ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER ACT OF 1896."

Many municipalities and companies are seeking information and advice regarding the steps necessary to be taken in applying for Orders in Council for electric lighting powers.

In dealing with these applications for Orders in Council great care has to be exercised to guard against a monopoly being granted to any municipality, company, or other applicant.

Four Orders in Council have been granted up to the present time, as follows:—Brisbane Electric Supply Co., Limited; Toowoomba Electric Lighting Co., Limited; Charters Towers Electric Supply Co., Limited; Ipswich Municipal Council; and applications have been received and are under consideration from the following:—Gympie Municipal Council; Rockhampton Gas and Coke Co., Limited; Bulloo Divisional Board (Thargomindah).

In addition to the applications mentioned, however, there have been inquiries from various other municipalities, companies, etc., in connection with the working of this Act.

REDUCTION ON CHARGES OF INTERCOLONIAL TELEGRAMS.

The question of the reduction of the intercolonial charges on telegrams was brought forward at the Hobart Conference in the early part of this year; but it was resolved that, owing to the financial loss involved, the question of a general reduction in the prices of intercolonial telegrams must stand over for the present. It was, however, suggested that the Governments of New South Wales and Queensland arrange between themselves as to the rates and limitation of words and addresses.

It was desired that the addresses and signatures in excess of twelve words should be paid for; but on trial in the New South Wales Department it was found that the average address and signature did not exceed this number, and it was proposed by the Postmaster-General of the Southern Colony that there should be no charge for address and signature, and that the rate for each additional word after the first ten should be 2d. I pointed out that the proper charge for extra words at the 1s. rate should be 1d., and the adoption of the 2d. rate would lead to a multiplication of telegrams with free addresses and signatures; but the Postmaster-General of New South Wales objected to have a different charge from that obtaining between his Colony and Victoria, and in order to prevent further delay I arranged that the charge shall, after the 1st July, be 1s. for ten words and 2d. each additional word, address and signature to be free. The negotiations which were commenced in 1885 have at length produced a result which, although not as satisfactory as I could wish, will of necessity lead to an increased expenditure on account of extra wires and staff required, but I hope that this very great concession will be utilised by the public in such a manner as to restore the revenue to its present condition, and in due time to augment the receipts.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF LINES.

The result of several years of enforced economy has led to the serious deterioration of the telegraph lines and the consequent necessity for providing for extensive and permanent repairs. I must say here that it must be manifest that it is false economy to insist on a restricted and insufficient allowance for this important service, which tends to keep the lines in an insecure and unreliable state, and in course of time a larger expenditure is necessitated than would probably have been the case if repairs had been done from time to time when needed, instead of being put off to a future day. I am induced to make these remarks as I find that a very large expenditure will be required in the near future if the lines are to be kept in a satisfactory manner, and while I am desirous of giving the public effective service consistent with strict economy, I cannot do so without placing the communication in proper order.

W. HORATIO WILSON,

Postmaster-General.

Post and Telegraph Department,
Brisbane, 1st July, 1898.

REPORT.

POSTAL CONGRESS, WASHINGTON.

The Universal Postal Congress was held at Washington in May-June, 1897.

Fifty-six countries were represented with their colonies by 102 delegates and attachés actually present.

The work of the Congress consisted of conventions and arrangements to supersede the conventions and arrangement signed in Vienna on the 4th July, 1891, and the adoption of regulations of detail and order for their execution. The conventions and arrangements of Vienna formed the basis of the work of the Congress, so that those conducted by the Congress of Washington are practically revisions of those settled by the Congress of Vienna.

The conventions and arrangements referred to are as follows:—

1. The Universal Postal Convention governs the exchange of mails generally.
2. Arrangement for the exchange of articles bearing a declaration of value.
3. Arrangement for the exchange of money-orders.
4. Convention for the exchange of parcels.
5. Arrangement for a collection (or cash on delivery) service.
6. Arrangement for use of books of identity.
7. Arrangement for subscription at post offices to periodical publications.

The preliminary consideration of these matters was assigned to three committees, as follows:—

To the first committee—the first convention (No 1).

To the second committee—declared values (No. 2), parcels posts (No. 4), books of identity (No. 6).

To the third committee—money orders (No. 3), collections (No. 5), and subscriptions (No. 7).

In connection with the Committee on the Universal Postal Convention, No. 1, on which the Australian delegate was assigned a seat, the first important matter brought forward was the investigation of the existing intermediary transit rates. These are the charges to be paid by the country which makes up a mail for another country to every other country which furnishes territorial or maritime conveyance for said mail in transit from the country of origin to the country of destination.

This question gave rise to prolonged discussion on account of the opposite views held by the delegates of the various countries.

Some representatives favoured the entire abolition of intermediary transit rates so that each country should carry through its service the mails of every other country free of charge, and others advocated the maintenance of the present arrangements, while a large majority demonstrated a substantial reduction of the current rates.

The countries that furnish most of the transit to their pecuniary benefit were interested in maintaining the present rates, while the countries which furnished little or no transit, but whose mails were transported by other countries, contended for a total abolition or a radical reduction.

After considerable discussion both by the Committee and the Congress, the following result was arrived at:—

- (a) That the cost of maritime transit be reduced to the territorial transit rates if the voyage does not exceed 300 nautical miles; nevertheless the sea transit upon a voyage not exceeding 300 miles is gratuitous if the Administration interested receives already, on account of mails or correspondence conveyed, the remuneration applicable to the territorial transit.
- (b) To 5 francs per kilogramme of letters and postcards, and to 50 centimes per kilogramme of other articles for the exchanges effected upon a transit exceeding 300 nautical miles between European countries, between Europe and the ports of Africa and Asia situated upon the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, or from one to other of these ports, and between Europe and North America. The same rates are applicable to the transits assured throughout the Union between two ports of one State as well as between the ports of two States connected by the same line of vessels when the sea voyage does not exceed 1,500 nautical miles.
- (c) To 15 francs per kilogramme of letters and postcards, and to 1 franc per kilogramme of other articles for all transits not included in paragraphs *a* and *b*. In the case of sea transits effected by two or more Administrations the total cost of transit may not exceed 15 francs per kilogramme of letters and postcards and 1 franc per kilogramme of other articles. These costs are in such cases divided between the Administrations participating in the transport in proportion to the distance traversed, without prejudice to other arrangements which may exist between the parties interested.

It is nevertheless, understood—

- (1.) That the territorial transit rates will be reduced as follows:—

By 5 per cent.	during the first two years of application of the present Convention.
„ 10 „	during the two years following.
„ 15 „	thereafter.

- (2.) That the countries whose receipts and expenditure in connection with the territorial transits do not together exceed the sum of 5,000 francs per annum, and whose expenditure exceeds their receipts for this transit, are exonerated from all payments on this account.
- (3.) That the sea transit rate of 15 francs per kilogramme of letters and post-cards provided in Sub-section (c), Clause 3 preceding, will be reduced as follows:—
- To 14 francs during the first two years of the application of the present Convention.
To 12 francs during the two years following.
To 10 francs thereafter.

The amendments in the Postal Union Convention and in the detailed Regulations are given in full in an Appendix to the report of the proceedings at the Postal Conference at Hobart in March-April last, laid before Parliament.

INTERCOLONIAL POSTAL CONFERENCE.

An Intercolonial Postal Conference was held at Hobart, Tasmania, during March and April last. All the colonies, except New Zealand and Western Australia, were represented:—

New South Wales	...	{	The Hon. Joseph Cook, M.P., Postmaster-General.
			S. H. Lambton, Esq., Deputy Postmaster-General.
			P. B. Walker, Esq., M. Inst. C.E., M.I.E.E., Chief Electrician and Engineer-in-Chief, Telegraph Department.
Victoria ...	...	{	The Hon. John Gavan Duffy, M.L.A., Postmaster-General.
			F. L. Outtrim, Esq., Deputy Postmaster-General, Secretary to Postal Department, and Superintendent of Telegraphs.
South Australia ..	...		Sir Charles Todd, K.C.M.G., Postmaster-General.
Queensland ...	...	{	The Hon. J. R. Dickson, C.M.G., M.L.A., Home Secretary, acting for the Postmaster-General.
			John McDonnell, Esq., Under Secretary to the Post and Telegraph Department and Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs.
			John Hesketh, Esq., Electrical Engineer.
Tasmania ...	...	{	The Hon. Sir Philip Fysh, M.H.A., Treasurer and Postmaster-General.
			H. V. Bayly, Esq., Secretary to the Post Office.

One hundred and four subjects were dealt with, and amongst other matters were the proposed reduction of the rate of postage to all parts of the British Empire from $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. to 2d., and the Canadian proposal to reduce her outgoing rate from 5 cents per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. to 3 cents per oz., and it was resolved—

“That the various Agents-General, Delegates to the Postal Conference in London, be instructed to oppose the proposal to reduce the rate of postage to all parts of the British Empire from $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. to 2d., and also the Canadian proposal to reduce her outgoing rate from 5 cents per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. to 3 cents per oz., for the following reasons:—

“1. The present rate is not an unreasonably high one, having in view the large cost to the colonies involved in the maintenance to the present means of postal communication with the various portions of the Empire.

“2. Because of the anomaly which would be created by carrying letters 14,000 miles for the same rate as now charged for delivery within the limits of the town where posted.

“Regarding the proposal of Canada to reduce her outgoing postage, this Conference is strongly of opinion that no reduction should take place which would be a departure from the present uniform rate, for the following reason *inter alia*—at present a charge of 2d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. is made in Australia for the carriage of letters to however small a distance, while the Canadian proposal would involve the carrying of letters over the same routes at a greatly reduced cost. This would, in the opinion of the Conference, lead to confusion and dissatisfaction.”

REDUCTION IN CABLE RATES.

The reduction in the cable rates which came into force on the 7th July, 1897, appears to have led to the restoration of the business to Queensland, as by a return published by the Postmaster-General of South Australia, it is observed that when the reduction of rates took place in the Southern Colonies 1891-2, the number of Queensland messages, words and value, fell off considerably; but for the year 1897, during one-half of which the reduced rates were in force, the messages increased from 1,897 in 1896 to 4,182 in 1897. Words from 14,182 to 52,012 and the value from £6,559 to £14,557. The sum received by Queensland in 1896 was £180 4s. 6d., and for 1897 £456 7s. 4d.

FEDERAL MAIL SERVICE.

The following extract from a letter from the London Post Office shows the immediate effect of one of the arrangements connected with the New Federal Mail Service:—

Allowing for the progressive reduction of the sea postage on letters adopted at the Washington Congress, the sea postage collected by this Department, from foreign countries using the service in question, will average £7,070 per annum during the term of the contracts. This sum being deducted from £170,000, the gross cost of the service, the net annual cost will be £162,930. The colonial share of this—viz., 15-34ths—will be £71,881. No account has here been taken of the sea postage on homeward mails from New Caledonia, &c., which is at present

received by the Colonial Post Offices. The Postmaster-General proposes that, for the sake of convenience, this postage should still be collected and retained by those offices, and that in consideration of the sum thus received the Australian contribution to the subsidy should be fixed at £72,000 per annum. If any fines are incurred by the contractors, notice of the fact shall be given to the Colonial Post Offices, and the amount shall be apportioned in the manner agreed upon.

Payment to be made on behalf of the Colonies for the present quarter is as follows:—

Under the old contracts; for January, £6,250 (i.e., $\frac{1}{12}$ of £75,000).

Under the new contracts; for February and

March, 12,000 (i.e., $\frac{1}{6}$ of £72,000, or £6,000 per month).

UNSUITABILITY OF THE POST AND TELEGRAPH BUILDING IN BRISBANE.

I have again to direct attention to the want of proper accommodation at the Chief Office, Brisbane, for the ever increasing volume of business.

The importance of keeping pace with postal requirements warrants some attention being paid to the frequent representations made as to the unsuitability of the present building, which impedes in a very marked degree every attempt to improve the mail services, and may result in serious consequences if not attended to without further delay.

This matter has been referred to in the Annual Reports for a number of years, but no action has been taken to comply with postal requirements.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.

The following is a statement of the British and Foreign letter correspondence despatched from Queensland in 1897 and the ten years preceding:—

Year.	Number of Letters.	Increase in Number.	Decrease in Number.	Weight in Ounces.	Approximate Revenue.
					£
1887	372,342				
1888	380,310	2.14			
1889	379,672	...	0.16		
1890	367,972	...	3.08	156,302	10,050*
1891	410,699	11.61	...	171,514	5,680†
1892	429,484	3.66	...	172,870	5,080‡
1893	400,320	...	6.79	164,109	4,735
1894	384,327	...	3.99	146,871	4,545
1895	386,207	0.48	...	157,630	4,568
1896	391,447	1.35	...	154,006	4,630
1897	381,807	...	2.46	150,784	4,516

* At higher rates.

† At partly reduced rates.

‡ At rate of 2½d.

POSTAGE STAMPS.

A new article in the detailed Regulations of the Postal Union provides that the postage stamps representing the postage rates of the Union or their equivalent in the currency of each country are to be printed as far as possible in the following colours:—

Stamps of 25 centimes (2½d.) in dark blue.

" 10 " (1d.) in red.

" 5 " (½d.) in green.

The Queensland 1d. stamp has always been printed in red and the ½d. in green. The alteration of colour of the 2½d. stamp has been anticipated, and as soon as blue water-marked paper has been received from London the stamp will be printed thereon, red on blue, like the English 2½d. This has been found necessary in consequence of the similarity of colour to the 1d. stamp.

LETTERS, NEWSPAPERS, AND PACKETS.

There was an increase, as compared with the previous year, in letters posted in Queensland for delivery within the Colony, amounting to 613,799, or 4.64 per cent.; and in the newspapers of 916,295, or 13.63 per cent.; and packets of 9,858, or 0.32 per cent.

In correspondence for despatch beyond the Colony there was an increase of 103,602 in letters, equal to 4.72 per cent.; in newspapers a decrease of 51,842, equal to 4.77 per cent.; and in packets an increase of 93,125, equal to 16.78 per cent.

The letters received into Queensland exhibit an increase of 62,826, equal to 2.86 per cent.; and in papers a decrease of 1,013,133, or 28.75 per cent.; the packets also show a decrease of 331,570, or 23.94 per cent.

Of the total correspondence dealt with, letters show an increase of 780,227, or 4.43 per cent.; newspapers a decrease of 148,680, or 1.27 per cent.; and packets a decrease of 228,587, or 4.57 per cent.

The following statement shows the increase or decrease per cent. in the total correspondence in each year as compared with that preceding during the last seventeen years :—

YEAR.	LETTERS.		NEWSPAPERS.		PACKETS.	
	Increase per cent.	Decrease per cent.	Increase per cent.	Decrease per cent.	Increase per cent.	Decrease per cent.
1881	13.14	...	4.71	...	25.53	...
1882	14.94	...	9.49	...	32.92	...
1883	21.96	...	18.30	...	19.51	...
1884	22.05	...	28.92	...	25.19	...
1885	10.33	...	18.06	...	41.80	...
1886	7.43	...	6.78	...	14.25	...
1887	10.32	...	3.84	...	16.13	...
1888	8.02	...	4.45	...	19.12	...
1889	9.05	...	8.83	...	6.80	...
1890	8.14	...	3.39	...	9.22	...
1891	4.44	...	7.19	...	21.19	...
1892	2.24	...	...	7.99	14.49	...
1893	3.40	...	...	5.24	38.88	...
1894	9.18	...	3.42	...	23.04	...
1895	4.97	...	3.11	...	10.01	...
1896 ... ..	...	5.82	3.55	...	3.34	...
1897	4.43	...	...	1.27	...	4.57

LETTERS, NEWSPAPERS, AND PACKETS, 1897.

—	POSTED IN QUEENSLAND.						RECEIVED INTO QUEENSLAND.			TOTAL.		
	For Delivery within the Colony.			For Despatch beyond the Colony.								
	Letters.	Papers.	Packets.	Letters.	Papers.	Packets.	Letters.	Papers.	Packets.	Letters.	Papers.	Packets.
1896	13,204,784	6,720,038	3,066,588	2,194,814	1,138,439	564,856	2,191,112	3,786,899	1,384,928	17,590,710	11,645,338	4,996,370
1897	13,813,583	7,636,333	3,066,444	2,298,416	1,086,597	647,981	2,253,938	3,773,726	1,053,358	18,370,937	11,496,656	4,787,783
Increase in 1897	{ Number ... 613,799	{ 916,295	{ 9,858	{ 103,602	{ ...	{ 93,125	{ 62,826	{ ...	{ ...	{ 780,227	{ ...	{ ...
Decrease in 1897	{ Per cent. ... 4.64	{ 13.63	{ 0.32	{ 4.72	{ ...	{ 16.78	{ 2.66	{ ...	{ ...	{ 4.43	{ ...	{ ...
Decrease in 1897	{ Number ...	{ ...	{ ...	{ 51,842	{ ...	{ ...	{ 1,013,183	{ 331,670	{ ...	{ 148,080	{ 228,687	{ 4.67
Decrease in 1897	{ Per cent. ...	{ ...	{ ...	{ 4.77	{ ...	{ ...	{ 26.75	{ 23.94	{ ...	{ 1.27	{ ...	{ ...

POSTED IN 1897.

	Letters.	Newspapers.	Packets.
For delivery within the Colony	13,813,583	7,636,333	3,066,444
For despatch Intercolonially	1,916,609	858,413	581,310
For despatch to British and Foreign Places	381,807	228,184	66,671
Totals	16,116,999	8,722,930	3,714,425

INLAND SERVICE.

The following table shows the extent and cost of the Inland Mail Services during the years 1896 and 1897 :—

Year.	Extent in Miles.	Total Miles Travelled.	Cost of Conveyance, including Landing and Shipping.	Cost per Mile travelled.	Number of Post Offices.	Number of Receiving Offices.
			£ s. d.	d.		
1896	30,723	5,720,689	87,919 15 5	{ b 2½ c 4½ d 5 }	408	692
1897	31,176	5,804,613	88,798 3 2	{ b 2½ c 4½ d 5 }	405	721
Increase	453	83,924	878 7 9	...	...	29
Decrease ... ..	...	...	...	...	3	...

a Includes £22 12s. 4d. unpaid, on account of Inland Mail Service.

b By horse.

c By coach, &c.

d By railway.

The extent of mail lines on 31st December, 1896 and 1897, was as follows :—

	1896.	1897.
By railway	2,516	2,660
By coach, &c.	10,230	10,060
By horse	17,977	18,456
Total miles	30,723	31,176

The cost of Inland Mails in 1897 as compared with 1896 shows an increase of £878 7s. 9d. The cost per mile travelled was a little less by horse and somewhat more by coach in 1897 than in the previous year, and there was an increase of 83,924 in the number of miles travelled.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

The Postal revenue for 1897 was £167,998, being an increase of £6,272 as compared with 1896, and is the highest amount ever received for a calendar year.

The Telegraph revenue for 1897 was £78,516, an increase of £1,530 as compared with 1896.

The total revenue was £246,514, showing an increase of £7,802 over that of the previous year.

The total expenditure for 1897 was £313,943, or £11,743 more than for 1896, and the net deficiency between revenue and expenditure in 1897 was £67,429, or £3,941 more than the deficiency in 1896.

REVENUE.

POST OFFICE.				TELEGRAPH OFFICE.			
Year.	Amount.	Increase.	Decrease.	Year.	Amount.	Increase.	Decrease.
	£	£	£		£	£	£
1883	77,476	4,958		1883	70,583	10,420	
1884	88,769	11,293		1884	77,118	6,535	
1885	97,650	8,881		1885	82,037	4,919	
1886	105,805	8,154		1886	82,958	921	
1887	116,531	10,726		1887	83,061	103	
1888	131,305	14,773		1888	103,790	20,728	
1889	134,843	3,538		1889	93,296		10,493
1890	130,999		3,843	1890	91,779		1,516
1891	127,443		3,556	1891	95,146	3,367	
1892	135,722	8,279		1892	82,952		12,194
1893	135,518		204	1893	81,203		1,749
1894	143,455	7,937		1894	72,159		9,044
1895	158,407	14,952		1895	71,921		238
1896	161,726	3,319		1896	76,986	5,065	
1897	167,998	6,272		1897	78,516	1,530	

The following statement shows the detail of the Net Revenue of the Post and Telegraph Department during the years 1896 and 1897:—

Year.	Sale of Stamps.		Postage on Unpaid Letters, &c.		Fees for Private Boxes and Bags.		Money Order Commission.		Postal Note Revenue.		Miscellaneous Receipts.		TOTALS.			
													Post Office.		Telegraph.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
1896	145,879	13 8	2,167	15 9	3,138	2 9	5,161	18 9	1,582	5 2	3,796	1 7	161,726	2 8	76,986	1 10
1897	152,808	14 10	2,366	14 0	3,320	17 1	5,149	13 6	1,635	6 8	2,716	19 9	167,998	5 8	78,516	4 11
Increase	6,928	16 2	199	18 3	182	14 4			53	1 4			6,272	3 0	1,530	3 1
Decrease							12	5 3			1,079	1 10				

The following statement shows the Expenditure of the Post and Telegraph Department during the year 1897, exclusive of Loan Expenditure:—

	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Salaries, including Country Post Offices throughout the Colony	143,266	0 2		
Conveyance of Mails—				
Inland Mails and Landing and Shipping	51,095	17 7		
Coastwise Mails	10,703	10 0		
<i>Via</i> Adelaide and San Francisco	11,447	4 6		
Gratuities to Masters, &c.	4,039	18 9		
By Railways	40,000	0 0		
Miscellaneous Services—			117,286	10 10
Mail Bags, Uniforms, &c.	12,455	12 11		
Maintenance and Repair of Lines	14,001	0 8		
Fuel, Light, and Water	2,135	14 11		
Travelling Expenses, &c.	2,988	3 7		
Forage Allowances generally	6,554	6 1		
Rent of Temporary Offices, &c.	1,210	2 0		
Labourers for Protection of Stations	1,954	10 6		
Allowance to cover Extra Cost of Provisions	5,721	9 6		
Stores and Stationery generally	2,872	4 10		
Guarantee Cable to New Caledonia	1,830	2 9		
Meteorology—			51,723	7 9
Salaries	1,030	0 0		
Contingencies	637	19 5		
			1,667	19 5
Total, 1897	£		313,943	18 2
Expended in 1896	£		302,200	12 1
Increase	£		11,743	6 1

The above includes £551 3s. 5d. on account of previous years.

EXPENDITURE, 1896 AND 1897.

	1896.	1897.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Expenditure during the year	302,200 12 1	313,943 18 2
Included on account of previous years	2,051 15 0	551 3 5
	300,148 17 1	313,392 14 9
Amount unpaid on account 1895 and 1896	362 0 0	430 0 0
Net expenditure for the year	£300,510 17 1	£313,822 14 9

Net increase on account of 1897, £13,311 17s. 8d.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE, 1896 AND 1897.

YEAR.	NET REVENUE.			EXPENDITURE.	DEFICIENCY.
	Post Office.	Telegraph.	Total.		
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1896	161,726 2 8	76,986 1 10	238,712 4 6	302,200 12 1	63,488 7 7
1897	167,998 5 8	78,516 4 11	246,514 10 7	313,943 18 2	67,429 7 7
Increase	6,272 3 0	1,530 3 1	7,802 6 1	11,743 6 1	...
Decrease ... ..	...	...	...	...	3,941 0 0

The expenditure includes the amount paid on account of previous years.

STATEMENT showing the APPROXIMATE COST of OCEAN MAILS for the Year 1897.

<i>Federal Mail Service—</i>	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Subsidy—		
1st January to 31st December, 1897	9,807 10 0	
Exchange on Remittances	£64 8 1	
Cablegrams notifying arrival of Mails in London	4 16 6	
	69 4 7	
	9,876 14 7	
Less from Non-contracting Countries, Approximate on account of 1897	125 0 0	
	9,751 14 7	
<i>San Francisco Service</i>	291 16 5	
<i>Vancouver Service</i>	186 18 4	10,230 9 4
Transshipping at Sydney	£18 0 0	
Gratuities for Sea Transit	196 6 7	
Transit Charges, Canada	88 18 4	
Transit Charges, Cape Colony	13 15 8	
Transit Charges, Germany	13 8 6	
Transit Charges, United States	14 15 7	
Transit Charges, New Zealand (Parcel Post)	2 18 11	
	348 3 7	
Land Transit to New South Wales	£266 19 10	
Land Transit to Victoria	249 3 3	
Land Transit to South Australia	250 9 1	
	766 12 2	
Land Transit, Brisbane to Wallangarra	326 0 0	
	1,440 15 9	
Less Sea Conveyance for other Colonies	£59 8 0	
Less Land Transit for other Colonies	2 4 3	
	61 12 3	
		1,379 3 6
Estimated amount due to the United Kingdom for Transit £1,100 0 0		11,609 12 10
Less estimated amount due by the United Kingdom on Parcel Post Account... ..	285 0 0	
	815 0 0	
Estimated amount due to other Countries	150 0 0	
	965 0 0	
Less estimated amount due from Non-contracting Countries	275 0 0	
		690 0 0
Total estimated Cost of Service in 1897 ... ..	...	12,299 12 10
Cost of 1896 ... ..	...	11,609 12 10

POST AND RECEIVING OFFICES.

Five Post Offices were opened and eight closed during 1897, leaving 405 on 31st December.

There was an increase of 29 Receiving Offices, making 721 on 31st December.

The number of Letter Receivers on 31st December was 195, being an increase of 15 as compared with 1896.

POST OFFICES, 1897.

Opened.		Closed.	
Engelsburg Kedron Pinbarren Pinkenba Wyandra		Black Ridge Broughton Fassifern Huxley	Limestone Miriam Vale Stafford Yadthor.
NUMBER OF OFFICES.		NUMBER OF RECEIVERS.	
Post Offices.	Receiving Offices.	Brisbane.	Country.
1896	408	89	91
1897	405	97	98
Decrease ...	3	...	...
Increase ...	...	8	7

MONEY ORDERS.

Eight Money Order Offices were opened in 1897, and two closed, making 119 on 31st December, 1897.

The number of transactions was 205,481, an increase of 0.61 as compared with 1896.

The amount was £787,598, which was an increase of 3.94 per cent. as compared with 1896.

POSTAL NOTES.

The business for 1897 shows an increase of 13.44 per cent. in the number of transactions, and an increase in the amount of 13.93 per cent. as compared with 1896.

ACCOUNTS BRANCH, CHIEF OFFICE.

The number of vouchers paid in 1897 was 15,440; the number of cheques drawn, 10,916; and the number of letter-bills examined, about 385,000.

TRANSACTIONS.

Revenue—					
Post Office ... ..	...	...	...	...	£167,998 5 8
Telegraphs ... ..	...	...	...	...	78,516 4 11
Total ... ..	...	...	...	...	£246,514 10 7
Expenditure—					
Post and Telegraph	...	...	...	...	£313,943 18 2
Loan ... ..	...	...	...	...	33,729 9 5
Total ... ..	...	...	...	...	£347,673 7 7
Money Orders ... ..	...	...	...	...	£787,598 8 2
Postal Notes ... ..	...	...	...	...	156,285 4 4½
Grand Total ... ..	...	...	...	...	£1,538,071 10 8½

PRIVATE LOCK-BOXES.

There are now 1,271 lock-boxes in various offices throughout the Colony, viz. :—

Office.	No.	Office.	No.	Office.	No.
Barcaldine	6	Fortitude Valley	5	Rockhampton	119
Blackall	12	Geraldton	13	Roma	21
Bowen	13	Gladstone	17	St. George	11
Brisbane	262	Gympie	17	South Brisbane	1
Bundaberg	67	Herberton	6	Stanthorpe	3
Barkettown	7	Hughenden	4	Tambo	4
Cairns	35	Ipswich	21	Thargomindah	6
Charleville	37	Laidley	7	Thursday Island	19
Charters Towers	99	Longreach	27	Toowong	1
Childers	4	Mackay	29	Toowoomba	51
Cloncurry	7	Maryborough	53	Townsville	108
Clermont	15	Muttaburra	4	Warwick	24
Cooktown	27	Normanton	16	Winton	17
Croydon	41	Port Douglas	4	Woolloongabba	8
Cunnamulla	21	Queenton	2		

LETTER-CARRIERS.

The following list shows the number of letter-carriers employed throughout the Colony :—

Office.	Number, 31st December, 1896.	Number, 31st December, 1897.	Increase in Number.	Decrease in Number.
Brisbane	32	32	...	...
Albion	2	2	...	...
Bundaberg	4	4	...	...
Cairns	1	1	...	...
Charters Towers	5	5	...	...
Cooktown	1	1	...	...
Croydon	1	1	...	...
Dalby	1	1	...	...
Fortitude Valley	4	4	...	...
Gympie	3	3	...	...
Ipswich	4	4	...	...
Mackay	1	1	...	...
Maryborough	4	4	...	...
Mount Morgan	1	2	1	...
Normanton	1	1	...	...
One-Mile	1	2	1	...
Rockhampton	6	6	...	...
Roma	1	1	...	...
Toowoong	3	3	...	...
Toowoomba	3	3	...	...
Townsville	6	6	...	...
Warwick	2	2	...	...
Woolloongabba	8	8	...	...
	95	97	2	...

CORRESPONDENCE BRANCH.

The number of documents received and entered in the registers during 1897 was 52,561; the number of letters written, 41,384; and the number of mail waybills, &c., examined, about 102,000.

MAIL WORK OF THE CHIEF OFFICE.

The returns of the numbers of letters, both received and despatched, show a satisfactory increase but there was a falling off in the numbers of both packets and newspapers received, the former having decreased by 216,394 and the latter by 635,247. Packets are always an uncertain item, and as they are largely made up of printed advertising matter, which finds its way into the Colony in single packets, individually addressed, without the possibility of any enforcement of the Customs tariff, which can only be applied when such matter is consigned in bulk to one address, it is not a matter for regret that there has been some diminution. The smaller number of newspapers received by post is of course due to the altered conditions arising from the increase in the rate of intercolonial postage, 690,616 fewer newspapers having been received by post from the other Colonies than during the previous year. It must be remembered, that with the exception of a small share of the postage collected on parcels, no revenue can be derived from correspondence received by post, while the handling, transmission, and delivery of it, is a matter of considerable expense to the receiving Colony. When the volume of matter in both directions, that is outwards and inwards, is equal or nearly equal, no adjustment is necessary, but when, as was formerly the case with intercolonial newspapers, the numbers despatched are so small as to be out of all proportion to those received the inequitableness of such an arrangement needs no explanation. The fact that the number received in the mails was less than in previous years has only relieved the Department of an unremunerative incubus. There has been little or no decrease in the number of newspapers sent from the Southern Colonies into Queensland as the result of the higher rate; they are still sent, but less expensively than by post at the increased rate, and the railways and shipping companies derive the benefit, which is to some extent shared by this Department, which, having assisted to build up a local trade in newspapers, benefits by the postage on the newspapers, which are now posted in Queensland instead of being posted in the South. The statutory enactment which compelled the local newsgagents to pay twice as much postage on a Southern newspaper posted in Queensland as was necessary when that newspaper was posted in the Colony of publication, together with the abuse of the newspaper rate in the Southern Colonies to enable it to cover magazines and periodicals and to distribute them throughout Queensland at the nominal rate levied on newspapers, was calculated to destroy local trade. The Suppression of Gambling and the Indecent Advertisements Acts have to some extent interfered with the circulation of Southern newspapers in this Colony, because while their operation has been guarded against by the publication of special editions of the principal newspapers for circulation in Queensland, the newspapers which constitute the social as apart from the business exchange consist to a very great extent of the Southern editions containing the illegal advertisements, and consequently are refused circulation here. So far as mail matter received is affected, it is only necessary to add that the number of mails for 1897 shows an increase as compared with the previous year of 3,865, and the net increase in the number of letters was 278,744.

The returns of correspondence despatched, all revenue producing, show an increase in almost every item, the net increases being—mails, 2,102; letters, 201,175; and packets, 39,828. Intercolonial newspapers only show a decrease of 80,136, which is insignificant when compared with the falling off of 690,616 in the numbers received.

The total number of letters posted and received at the Chief Office during 1897 was 9,640,489; packets, 2,468,364; newspapers, 5,965,593. While for the preceding year the numbers were—letters, 9,118,845; packets, 2,592,624; newspapers, 5,949,881. A comparison will show a satisfactory increase of over 500,000 in letters, a falling off, as previously remarked, in packets, and a small increase in newspapers.

EXPRESS DELIVERY SERVICE.

With a view to afford facilities for the expeditious delivery of important and urgent letters, &c., outside the ordinary course of delivery, an express service has been instituted. An opportunity is thus presented for ensuring delivery by special messengers on payment of a moderate fee. Full particulars can be obtained by reference to the Post and Telegraph Guide, or on application at any Post Office.

LOOSE SHIP LETTERS.

Whether it is because of more ample opportunities for sending letters in closed mails, or from an increasing sense of the comparative insecurity inseparable from loose methods of transmission as contrasted with the safety of the mails, it is satisfactory to note that there has been a marked decrease in the number of letters sent loose by sea during the year. During 1896, 1,761 were received from the South, and 9,808 from the Northern ports, while the figures for 1897 are, from the South 1,320, and Northern ports 7,823.

TRAVELLING POST OFFICE.

The Travelling Post Offices on the Southern and Western Railway continue to perform most satisfactorily the important work resulting from their establishment. In addition, they have had to deal with a large increase in the number of newspapers posted at the border, and altogether the work has reached the maximum that can be readily accomplished by one officer. Such little relief that it has been found possible to afford has reduced the number of letters received and despatched, but letters posted have increased by 13,193, and the newspapers, &c., by 136,675; the number of articles registered for the public also increased by 786. The total number of letters posted and received was 1,254,027, and of newspapers, &c., posted, 186,927.

On the Central Line the Travelling Post Offices have had a very satisfactory increase of business. The total number of letters posted and received numbered 218,197, an increase of about 32,000 over the number for the preceding year.

The work of the officers attached to these travelling and auxiliary offices is from its character arduous and trying, especially in the warmer portions of the Colony, and these difficulties have been accentuated by the increased size and weight of the mails entrusted to them and the inadequacy of the accommodation which the Railway authorities have been able to provide, especially on the Central Line. It is contemplated to afford the conveniences arising from a Travelling Post Office on the North Coast and Northern lines, and the large amount of mail matter to be handled will render ample carriage room imperative, particularly when the climatic conditions are considered.

COLLECTION OF CUSTOMS DUTIES.

The adoption of the practice and Regulations of the Universal Postal Union, with respect to the exclusion of articles having any saleable value from the intercolonial packet post, and restricting their transmission to the parcel post, has been found very advantageous; its tendency has been to safeguard, not only the revenue, but also the trade of the Colony, and at the same time afford greater expedition in dealing with dutiable goods received by post. The number of articles containing such goods received otherwise than as parcels fell from 8,109 in 1896 to 2,752, and the duty collected from £603 to £173.

DEAD LETTERS.

Considering the nomadic character of a section of the community, and the many accidents, whether arising from careless and insufficient addresses, or other causes, which help letters in their course to the Dead Letter Office, it is satisfactory to find that, although the number of letters posted and received during the year amounted to 18,370,937, as compared with 17,590,710 in 1896, only 82,189 were received into the Dead Letter Office, and of this number 935 were irregularly posted. The fact affords a fair illustration, not only of the careful manner in which correspondence is handled by the Post Office, but also of the improved conditions affecting the circulation of letters as compared with those obtaining only a few years since. In 1889 the number of letters received and posted numbered only 13,070,083, and of these 123,815 found their way to the Dead Letter Office.

The letters received as unclaimed, and opened for the purpose of return to the senders resident in Queensland, included 687, with enclosures of the value of £4,392 10s. 1d., and of these only 159 were registered. Nearly the whole of them were returned to the senders in due course, but the contents of 32, for which no owners could be found, having an aggregate value of £43 11s. 7d., were sent to the Treasury.

MISSING LETTERS.

The number of applications for missing letters during 1897 numbered 1,232. Of these, 865 were satisfactorily traced, but of 365 unregistered letters no trace could be found. The difficulty, amounting to almost an impossibility, of tracing an unregistered letter through the post has been previously remarked. From the moment such a letter is dropped into the letter-box it becomes one of upwards of 18,000,000 similarly posted, and of which no record is possible or attempted. This well-known and understood fact no doubt leads unprincipled persons to shift the responsibility for their *laches* in connection with their correspondence from their own shoulders on to the Post Office, as they rely with perfect confidence upon the understanding that neither posting nor delivery can be proved where registration has not been effected. The provision which is universally in operation elsewhere—viz., that all letters, &c., containing articles of value that may be detected in transit through the Post Office unregistered, shall be compulsorily registered and registration charged for—does not obtain here, the legislature having determined that, except when coin is sent, the sender of money may exercise his option as to using this safeguard of the Post. Considering, however, the expense and trouble of endeavouring to trace remittances sent in unregistered letters, and the unsatisfactory results so frequently obtained, it has become a question whether the Post Office should undertake any inquiries for such letters. Registration might well be associated with insurance against loss to a limited extent, but where there is no registration or insurance it is not clear why the Department should be put to the expense and trouble of an inquiry, the necessity for which has been caused by the neglect of the means of safeguarding provided at such moderate cost.

INFRINGEMENT OF THE POSTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

It is a matter for regret that no improvement has taken place in this respect, and the impression is becoming stronger every year that, under the plea of ignorance, the laws framed for the protection of the postal revenue are systematically broken. The articles that are allowed to be sent in open covers at the lower rates of postage are definitely stated in the Regulations, but advantage is taken of the obvious fact that a very small proportion of the matter so sent can be examined to construe, or rather misconstrue, the Regulations, so as to admit of even letters being sent in open covers at the lower rate. There is evidently a feeling abroad that if the sender elects to place his communication in an unsealed envelope he should be entitled to all the advantages of the packet rate of postage. The Department, having some regard for its revenue, is not prepared to go to this length at present, but the disinclination to prosecute for what may have been an inadvertence has so far shielded the offenders. As previously remarked, the obvious and indeed the only way to avoid the loss to revenue must be to adopt the Postal Union practice, and make minimum rate for letters and commercial papers identical. In the meantime it may be well to point out that as a general rule anything printed on an account, invoice, &c., and which is common and applicable to all the accounts and invoices sent, is admissible, but nothing of a special or personal character is permitted at the packet rate.

In many instances where the frauds on the revenue have been, although unmistakable, due more or less to ignorance, or when some acceptable explanation could be offered, the Postmaster-General has accepted the minimum penalty indicated by the statute rather than take the matter into the courts. It may perhaps be well to intimate that the limits of forbearance have been reached, and future offenders will probably find it necessary to satisfy the magistrates as to the validity of their excuses, or to pay the penalty in public, for the due encouragement of others similarly disposed.

REGISTRATION.

The returns of this class of correspondence show an increase in the number registered and received for the year of 14,380, the numbers being for 1897, 204,533, as compared with 190,153 for the previous year. This increase, which was fairly and proportionately distributed under the heads of Inland, Intercolonial, and British and Foreign, is the result of legitimate business.

POST AND TELEGRAPH STORES.

The increased work of the Department, especially in connection with telegraph and telephone construction and maintenance, has caused corresponding activity in this branch, and it has been necessary to rent temporarily additional storage accommodation. The system of indenting has not been found altogether suitable for some important descriptions of goods, and local tendering is now being tried, as it is considered that results more favourable to the trade of the Colony and to the interests of the service may be obtained. The conduct of the Stores Branch has been very satisfactory, and efficiency has been studied with a proper regard for economy.

THE PARCEL POST.

The popularity of this branch of Postal business has been well maintained during the year, and it has been no inconsiderable factor in the increased revenue earned by the Department. The returns show only a normal increase, but one eminently satisfactory as proving how steadily it has advanced in popular favour.

In the Chief Office the total number of parcels posted and received during the year was 147,087, as compared with 119,206 for the previous year. The postage on parcels posted for 1897 was £6,716 10s. 5d., while for 1896 it was £5,519 5s. 6d. The Customs duty collected for the year was £4,761 14s. 9d., and for the previous year £4,046 18s. 4d.

The returns of parcel business throughout the Colony show that 173,369 parcels were posted, as compared with 148,379 in 1896, while there were received from beyond the Colony 28,879, as against 19,644 in the previous year. The intercolonial parcel business shows that the balance of trade is decidedly against Queensland, the number received from the other Colonies for the year having been 23,360, weighing 53,889 lb., while those despatched hence amounted to only 8,809, weighing 23,451 lb. Under such circumstances the apportionment of the postage between the despatching and delivering Colonies is a matter of moment. Hitherto the larger share has been retained by the Colony of origin—viz., 4d. out of the 6d. collected on each pound after the first, 2d. per lb. only being allowed for transmission throughout Queensland, while out of 8d. collected for the first pound 3d. has been allowed. It has long been evident that the share of intercolonial parcel postage allotted to this Colony has been quite out of proportion to the work to be performed, involving in many instances carriage by steamer, rail, and coach, and the Colonies have been appealed to at successive conferences to assent to an equal division of the postage collected, so that there might be a fair division apart from any inequality in the numbers despatched or received. As this proposition has failed to gain assent, notice has now been given that the Department can no longer afford to carry parcels for other Colonies for less than an equal moiety of the postage, and that if this is not allowed surcharges will be made on the delivery of the parcels. There is certainly no apparent reason why the Department should continue to carry parcels for other Colonies for a lower rate than that levied on our own parcels—viz., 3d. per lb.

The total Postal revenue derived from parcels in 1897 was £12,541 2s., as compared with £9,926 6s. 10d. in 1896. The Customs revenue collected entirely by this Department was £6,335 3s. 3d., and for 1896 £5,344 12s. 9d.

TELEGRAPHS, TELEPHONES, ELECTRIC-LIGHTING, AND TRACTION.

"*The Electric Light and Power Act, 1896.*"—Considerable activity has been shown throughout the Colony in connection with electric lighting matters, although the number of Orders in Council granted up to the present time has not been great.

Many municipalities and companies are inquiring into the matter and taking the preliminary steps necessary to obtain powers.

Orders in Council have been issued as follows:—Brisbane Electric Supply Company, Toowoomba Electric Lighting Company, Charters Towers Electric Supply Company, Ipswich Municipal Council.

Applications have been received for Orders in Council for the following:—Brisbane Municipal Council, Gympie Municipal Council, Rockhampton Gas and Coke Company, Bulloo Divisional Board; and steps are being taken to obtain orders for other townships throughout the Colony.

Electric Traction.—Some considerable trouble has been experienced, since the introduction of electric traction into the city of Brisbane, by the overhead telephone lines coming into contact with the trolley wires. Several telephone instruments and pieces of apparatus have been damaged, and a few fires have occurred. These fires were fortunately restricted to the inside of our apparatus, and did no damage to any other property. These accidents, however, are important, as indicating the danger which is always present if electric tramway or lighting lines and telephone lines are erected overhead in the same streets. Therefore, the work of putting the wires underground is of even greater moment than it was before, for it becomes not only a question of efficient telephoning, but of the safety of public property.

An instance of the extent of the damage possible was given recently at Zurich, where the whole of the Telephone Exchange was demolished in a very short space of time on the 3rd of April, 1898, and damage to the extent of about £40,000 occurred.

The underground system has been commenced and will be got into operation in Brisbane as soon as possible, and includes all the most recent devices for efficiently protecting the service.

TELEPHONES.

The last year has been one of considerable activity in the extension of the telephone systems of the Colony. The following are the Exchanges now open:—

	Connected at 30th June, 1897.	Since Connected.	Since Disconnected.	Connected at 30th June, 1898.
†Brisbane *(and district)	... *671	*205	*23	*853
Maryborough ...	46	10	2	54
†Bundaberg ...	31	17	1	47
†Rockhampton ...	53	24	2	75
†Charters Towers ...	80	67	2	145
†Townsville ...	55	23	1	77
††Toowoomba ...	...	...	...	78

* This includes South Brisbane, Toowoong, and Albion Exchanges, but omits private lines.

† Open day and night.

†† Only opened 13th December, 1897.

This table also shows the number of subscribers now connected as compared with last year.

It has been found that the introduction of the new instruments, owned and maintained by the Department, has conduced to a much more efficient and satisfactory service.

The system of regular supervision and inspection also assists, to a very great measure, in preventing faults.

The still increasing number of new telephone wires in connection with the Exchange at Charters Towers makes a thorough rearrangement and reconstruction of the lines in and around that town imperative. Action has been taken with a view to having this work done as soon as the finances of the Department will permit.

The same applies, in a minor degree, to Townsville and Maryborough.

TELEPHONES IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

A question which is, if possible, of more importance than that of telephones in populated centres, has been that of providing communication, by telephone, between outlying districts and the nearest available Telegraph Office.

New Regulations have been framed to assist station-holders to obtain telephone communication, and have resulted in fairly numerous applications. It is, however, found that, as a rule, there are peculiar circumstances affecting each application, and, while it is desired to give every facility, it is impossible to avoid some amount of seemingly unnecessary cost to the applicants for these lines, if the Department is to maintain the monopoly of its own proper functions.

Every effort is being made by the Department to extend, by all reasonable means, this branch of the service, and the public are being informed, as widely as possible, that the technical information in possession of the Department is at their disposal.

Another important departure has been the opening of Telephone Stations on the Phonopore system. This system allows communication to be established between two points on the route of an existing telegraph wire without the erection of any new line, the telephone message passing over the telegraph line at the same time as, but independent of, the telegraph message.

The following stations have been opened on this system:—

Southbrook to Pittsworth	Pratten to Warwick
Marburg to Ipswich	Lake Nash to Camooweal
Colinton to Esk	Wangarratta to Bowen
Peel Island to Dunwich	Lytton to Brisbane

while others in various parts of the Colony are under consideration.

MILEAGE OF LINE AND WIRE.

The total mileage of line (poles) open for public business on the 1st January, 1898, was 10,090½ miles, and of wire 18,472 miles 60 chains.

NUMBER OF STATIONS.

There were in daily operation the following number of Stations :—

	In Operation, 30th June, 1897.	Opened since.	Closed since.	Total at 30th June, 1898.
Telegraph Stations	184	2	7	179
Railway Telegraph Stations	190	12	2	200
Telephone Stations	11	19	1	29

NEW STATIONS.

Since the 30th June, 1897, the undermentioned new Stations have been opened :—

Gladstone (R.T.S.)	2nd July, 1897
Wyandra (R.T.S.)	3rd July, 1897
Engelsburg	10th July, 1897
Stewart's Creek (R.T.S.)	15th July, 1897
Fisherman Island (Telephone)	30th July, 1897
Strathpine (R.T.S.)	9th August, 1897
Sandgate (Telephone)	13th August, 1897
Howard (Telephone)	28th August, 1897
Pinkenba (R.T.S.)	3rd September, 1897
Lochnagar (R.T.S.)	3rd September, 1897
Kedron (Telephone)	7th September, 1897
Bulimba (Telephone)	7th September, 1897
Mingoola (Telephone)	8th September, 1897
Irvinebank	29th September, 1897
Taringa (Telephone)	4th October, 1897
Montalbion (Telephone)	4th October, 1897
Jimboomba (Telephone)	6th October, 1897
*Lagoon Creek (R.T.S.)	12th October, 1897
Iveragh (R.T.S.)	12th October, 1897
Marburg (Telephone)	1st February, 1898
Drayton (Telephone)	2nd February, 1898
Southbrook (Telephone)	2nd February, 1898
Westbrook Siding (Telephone)	3rd February, 1898
Tewantin (Telephone)	4th February, 1898
Paddington (Telephone)	23rd February, 1898
Red Hill (Telephone)	25th February, 1898
Miriam Vale (Telephone)	11th March, 1898
Grantham (Telephone)	23rd March, 1898
Stamford (R.T.S.)	13th April, 1898
Ballast Siding (R.T.S.)	19th May, 1898
Watten (R.T.S.)	19th May, 1898
*Colinton (Telephone)	13th June, 1898
Moonmera (R.T.S.)	21st June, 1898

*Now called Bororen.

• STATIONS CLOSED.

Fassifern	10th July, 1897
Sandgate	13th August, 1897
Howard (R.T.S.)	28th August, 1897
Montalbion	29th September, 1897
Lochnagar (R.T.S.)	5th October, 1897
Pialba	18th October, 1897
Miriam Vale	21st October, 1897
Mingoola (Telephone)	20th December, 1897
Marburg	1st February, 1898
Tewantin	4th February, 1898

From the above it will be seen that the following stations were transferred from telegraph to telephone stations :—Sandgate, Montalbion, Miriam Vale, Marburg, Tewantin.

And the following new telephone offices are now open :—Howard, Fisherman Island, Kedron, Bulimba, Taringa, Jimboomba, Drayton, Southbrook, Westbrook Siding, Paddington, Red Hill, Grantham, Colinton.

The following lines were completed during the year ending 30th June, 1898 :—

From	To	Miles of Line.	Miles of Wire.
Fassifern	Engelsburg	3½	7
Charters Towers	Hillgrove (deviation)	21½	64½
Rosedale	Gladstone	77½	272½
Hendon	Allora	3½	7
Croydon Junction	Rosedale	...	172
Bowen (deviation)	...	1¾	18
Rockhampton	Broadmount	15	25½
Hughenden	Stamford	37½	38½
Leyburn	Ellangowan	5½	7
Toowoomba	Helidon	...	37½

The following lines were dismantled :—

From	To	Miles of Line.	Miles of Wire.
Maryborough	Pialba	27	27
Charters Towers	Hillgrove	29	87
Bowen (near)	...	2¾	24½
Toowoomba	Helidon	...	81

From Gladstone to Gin Gin, 104 miles of line, 243 miles of wire, is still in progress.

TELEPHONE TRUNK LINES.

On the 12th June, 1897, a telephone trunk line was opened between Charters Towers and Townsville, experimentally. This trunk line is working on the existing telegraph lines, and is giving great satisfaction considering the difficulty under which it is working. The revenue from its use has been as follows:—

REVENUE ON TRUNK LINE.

TOWNSVILLE-CHARTERS TOWERS.

Month.	Revenue at Townsville.	Revenue at Charters Towers.	Total per Month.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1897—			
July	4 13 0	10 1 0	14 14 0
August	4 15 0	11 6 0	16 1 0
September	11 9 0	13 19 0	25 8 0
October	10 9 0	13 8 0	23 17 0
November	9 11 0	13 1 0	22 12 0
December	10 10 0	14 15 0	25 5 0
1898—			
January	11 11 0	17 17 0	29 8 0
February	13 9 0	19 12 0	33 1 0
March	18 10 0	28 6 0	46 16 0
April	19 15 0	25 6 0	45 1 0
May	24 1 0	29 11 0	53 12 0
June	28 15 0	35 8 0	64 3 0
Total for the Year 1897-98 ...	167 8 0	232 10 0	399 18 0

TELEGRAPH REVENUE.

The Telegraph Revenue for the same period between Charters Towers and Townsville was as follows:—

Month.	Revenue at Townsville.	Revenue at Charters Towers.	Total per Month.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1897—			
July	34 2 2	42 6 4	76 8 6
August	31 16 1	30 10 3	62 6 4
September	29 6 1	33 1 8	62 7 9
October	30 7 7	36 0 4	66 7 11
November	24 3 8	32 4 7	56 8 3
December	33 5 3	39 7 5	72 12 8
1898—			
January	25 10 4	27 9 1	52 19 5
February	20 2 2	21 19 0	42 1 2
March	26 8 1	29 5 11	55 14 0
April	24 17 7	29 14 11	54 12 6
May	32 9 5	32 10 2	64 19 7
June	25 11 1	26 14 6	52 5 7
Total for the year 1897-98	337 19 6	381 4 2	719 3 8

The combined Telegraph and Telephone Revenue for the year 1897-8 was £1,119 1s. 8d. The telegraph business for the same period during the previous year was £944 11s. 3d. Therefore, the net result of the opening of the trunk line between the two towns has been an increase in revenue at the rate of £174 10s. 5d. per annum. There is, in addition, the great increase in the number of subscribers to the Charters Towers and Townsville Exchanges, an increase largely, if not altogether, due to the trunk communication between the two places.

Application has been made for the opening of a trunk telephone line between Brisbane and Ipswich and Toowoomba. The first section of this work is being put in hand early, as a deposit has been made to cover the cost.

INTERNATIONAL CODE.

On the 1st August, 1897, the International Code, as fixed by the Telegraph Bureau, was brought into use in all the Australian Colonies.

For some few weeks business was slightly delayed, but this trouble soon passed away, and at the present time no inconvenience is being felt through the change.

NEW CALEDONIAN CABLE.

The cable from Bundaberg to Gomen became interrupted on the 1st November, 1897. Owing to the lack of a suitable boat or proper equipment for the repairs, some delay was experienced in removing the fault, as the Eastern Extension Company's boat, "Sherard Osborne," had to be obtained for the purpose. The Electrical Engineer accompanied the boat on part of its work, and the information obtained was valuable.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.

The Electrical Engineer has delivered 27 lectures on technical matters to the operators and others in the Department, and an examination will shortly be held. The average attendance at the whole of these lectures was 27.

SUBMARINE CABLES.

The faults on the Submarine Cables of the Colony for the past twelve months have been as follow :—
 1897.—Lytton—Pile Light, June 20th to 26th. Dunwich—South Passage, November 28th to 30th.
 1898.—Pile Light—Fisherman Island, March 8th to April 29th. Flat Top Cable, 3rd February.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS OF LINES.

The question of the maintenance and repairs of Telegraph lines of the Colony has been receiving special consideration during the past year. It has been found that the system of close and rigid economy followed for very many years in the past has resulted in an accumulation of decayed and faulty lines. This of necessity compels increased expenditure for coming years, but the utmost economy is being exercised, and only those lines are being attended to which cannot safely be allowed to go unrepaired. Notwithstanding this, the cost of maintenance and repairs of lines will be considerably increased.

It is the intention of the Department to introduce more extensively the system of contract for repairs, as it is thought that this will lead to economy and greater efficiency.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF LINES.

SOUTHERN DISTRICT.

The maintenance parties have been fully occupied during the past year.

The work in hand is very considerable, and the condition of many sections of line call for immediate attention.

The party under Overseer Emmerson has been engaged on the line from Toowoomba towards Ipswich, which necessitated some extensive alterations between Toowoomba and Helidon.

The party under Acting-Overseer Egan has been employed in Toowoomba erecting the lines for the new Telephone Exchange.

Overseer McKeever has been employed stretching additional wires and repairing the line from Bundaberg to Rosedale, to connect with the lines run under the Rosedale-Gladstone contract. He is now engaged dismantling the old line from Gladstone to Gin Gin.

Acting-Overseer McHugh was engaged on the reconstruction of the telephone lines, &c., in and about Bundaberg, which work was made necessary by the extra services applied for. He is now appointed to take late Overseer Duncan's place in the Northern District.

Overseer Byrne has been employed on general repairs on the Mount Perry and Gayndah lines.

Overseer Crew on the maintenance and repairs of the lines along the Central Railway, and is now employed on the reconstruction of the lines in and around Rockhampton.

Overseer Wise has been employed on extensive repairs on the South Coast Railway and Cleveland lines; also raising the wires along the Corinda Branch Railway above the level of flood waters. This party has also run an extra wire to Bald Hills, as a section of the additional wire to be run for the Railway Department to Yandina.

It is intended to carry out repairs and alterations on the Beenleigh line, and this work will be attended to by this party.

A party, under Acting-Overseer James Wise, was employed on the Sandgate, Pinkenba, and Ascot Railway lines. Their work included the erection of a completely new line of heavy poles from Brunswick street Railway Station to Northgate Junction; the running of new twin copper wires to Zillmere, Nundah and Nudgee for telephones; the thorough overhauling of the line from Northgate Junction to Sandgate; and dismantling of No. 16 from Sandgate to Bald Hills; and the running of a new wire for No. 16 from Northgate Junction to Bald Hills.

IN THE NORTHERN DIVISION maintenance parties have been employed as follows :—

Overseer Brennan's party on the Charters Towers-Hillgrove deviation, and subsequently on repairs on the Nebo-Collaroy section.

Overseer G. Simpson's party between Walsh River and Fairview.

Overseer Duncan's party between Ravenswood and Mount McConnell.

Acting-Overseer Edwards's two parties between Charters Towers and Hughenden, along the railway. One of these parties was dispensed with in October.

Acting-Overseer G. E. Simpson's party, first on the Ayer-Cape Bowling Green section, and afterwards on the 2 miles 2 chains deviation along the railway at Bowen.

This party was disbanded in December.

Acting-Overseer Waite and one labourer have been employed during the last six months making temporary repairs along the railway between Townsville and Woodstock.

Extensive repairs have also been made between Townsville and Hubert Wells by temporary line repairer and labourers.

The old line along the streets of Bowen was dismantled by the local line repairers and labourers after the deviation was connected up.

Work in connection with opening a Telephone Exchange at Mackay has been commenced, and it is anticipated the system will be in operation at an early date.

Surveys, plans, and specifications, &c., are well advanced towards establishing a Telephone Exchange at Cairns, and efforts are being made to open it before the commencement of the coming cane cutting, so that those interested in the sugar industry at Hambleton, Mulgrave, Aloomba, &c., may have the benefit of it during that period.

It is intended to make extensive repairs, almost equal to reconstruction, of the line along the railway between Townsville and Charters Towers.

Wherever required, Siemen's iron poles are to be substituted for the existing wooden ones.

Repairs are much needed on the section, Townsville and Ross Island, and the work will be done as soon as arrangements can be made.

Reconstruction of the line with iron poles has been started between Fairview and Laura Railway Station.

The officer appointed to act as Engineering Inspector for the Northern district arrived at Bowen on the 6th December. Since that date he has been fully employed in engineering matters generally.

The large amount of work connected with reconstructions and new work contemplated has so far prevented him, with one exception, from visiting the maintenance camps and reporting on the work lately done by the parties under the new engineering instructions, and it is likely to be some time yet before he will be at liberty to attend to this very important part of his duties.

It is with regret that the accidental death, by drowning, of overseer William Duncan and labourer William Moore, on the 3rd May, is recorded. It is reported that they were measuring the span of the wires across the Burdekin River on the Ravenswood-Mount McConnell section, where the water is deep. It is surmised that one of the two having got out of his depth the other went to his rescue, and both were drowned. The bodies were recovered subsequently and buried, and the graves fenced.

FAULTS AND INTERRUPTIONS, 1897-8.

SOUTHERN DISTRICT.

During the year there have been 896 interruptions to communications, the average duration being 10½ hours; 193 interruptions were for less than 1 hour.

221 over 1 hour and less than 3 hours.

119 " 3 " " " " 6 "

76 " 6 " " " " 12 "

182 " 12 " " " " 24 "

70 " 1 day " " " 2 days.

35 " 2 days.

The principal causes of these interruptions were—Timber on line (blown, burned, &c.), 96; office faults, 55; line repairers and parties, 87; insulators, pins (broken, &c.), 70; faults in R.T.S., 42; crosses telephone lines, 48; crosses (cause unknown), 27.

The interruptions over two days were—

1897.—

26th April, Nos. 1 and 10, Brisbane and Ipswich, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. 28th. Unknown.

12th May, No. 11, Surat and St. George, 10:10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. 17th. Insulator removed.

30th May, Nos. 36 and 38, Westwood and Emerald, 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. 1st June. Unknown.

18th June, Nos. 9 and 19, Gladstone and Raglan, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 21st. Burnt tree.

20th June, No. 41, Lytton and Pile Light, 11:30 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. 26th. In fuse at Pile Light.

1st July, No. 35, Cape Capricorn and Keppel Bay, 5 p.m. to 10:20 a.m. 27th. Bad joints in copper and iron wires.

24th July, No. 8, Gympie and Maryborough, 10:30 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. 26th. Two bracket screws drawn.

11th September, Nos. 9 and 12, Maryborough and Gingin, 9 a.m. to 12 noon 13th. Unknown.

29th September, Nos. 7 and 32, Rawkwood and Camboon, 3 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. 2nd October. Fallen tree.

6th October, No. 48, One-Mile and Tewantin, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. 8th. Burnt tree.

6th October, Nos. 9, 12, and 32, Maryborough and Junction, 5:15 p.m. to 10:10 a.m. Trees on line.

11th October, No. 35, Port Alma and Raglan, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. 5th November. Wire off high pole, Inkerman Creek.

9th November, No. 44, Brisbane and Racecourse, noon to 11 a.m. 13th. Crossed telephone.

22nd November, No. 3, Nerang to Border, 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. 24th. Tree on line.

25th November, Nos. 6 and 23, Brisbane and Ipswich, 3:10 p.m. to 9:15 a.m. 27th. Cross, North Quay.

28th November, No. 4, Dunwich and South Passage, 6:30 a.m. to 8:20 a.m. 30th. Broken fuses.

11th December, Nos. 8 and 9, Maryborough and Gympie, 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. 13th. Crossed, cause unknown.

11th December, No. 23, Gympie and Kilkivan Junction, 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. 13th. Unknown.

25th December, No. 19, Rockhampton and Mount Morgan, 9 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. 27th. Overlapped.

1898.—

1st January, No. 44, Brisbane and Racecourse, 2 p.m. to 1 p.m. 4th. Line broken.

4th January, Nos. 9 and 19, Gladstone and Raglan, 8:30 a.m. to 4:40 p.m. 6th. Tree on line.

6th January, No. 24, Mungindi and St. George, 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. 8th. Broken two places.

11th January, No. 48, One-Mile and Tewantin, 9 a.m. to 5:14 p.m. 14th. Tree on line.

13th January, Nos. 9 and 19, Gladstone and Gingin, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. 18th. Tree uprooted, carried wires in Boyne River.

19th January, No. 25, Isisford and Jundah, 8:30 a.m. to 5:25 p.m. 22nd. Broken insulator.

22nd January, Nos. 8 and 9, Caboolture and Gympie, 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. 24th. Tree on line.

2nd February, No. 35, Port Alma, loop, 3:35 p.m. to 6 a.m. 7th. Iron pole corroded through.

14th February, No. 30, Tiaro and Inskip Point, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. 16th. Wire broken by wind storm.

20th February, Nos. 45 and 54, Saltern and Longreach, 9 a.m. to 11:40 a.m. 22nd. Crossed at Crossing.

28th February, No. 19, Gladstone and Gingin, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. March 4th. Crossed with old Bustard Head wire.

6th March, No. 32, Maryborough and Gayndah, 9 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. 9th. Tree on line.

7th March, No. 43, One-Mile and Tewantin, 9 a.m. to 10:35 a.m. 10th. Floods.

8th March, No. 41, Pile Light and Explosives, 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. 29th April. Cable.

21st March, Nos. 9 and 19, Gladstone and Bundaberg, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. 26th. Piece of tie-wire on line.

30th March, No. 35, Keppel Bay and Cape Capricorn, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. 3rd April. Buried in sandhill near Cape Capricorn.

NORTHERN DISTRICT.

The number of interruptions was 550, viz.:—February, 70; January, 68; November, 65; October, 52; September, 47; March, 45; August and December, 41 each; July, 40; June and April, 28 each; and May, 25.

The interruptions are classified as follows:—Line parties, 80; large birds, 49; contact with telephone wires, 46; decayed and ant-eaten insulator pins, 41; unknown causes, 39; railway office faults, 36; bush fires, 32; corroded wire, 26; insulators broken by lightning, 24; strong winds, 22; office faults, 21; trees blown on line, 20; fallen poles, 17; insulators off, 15; submarine cable fuses blown, 12; floods, 12; brackets off, 9; defective ties, 9; bad joints, 8; lightning conductors, 8; trees felled on line, 8; teamsters, 7; broken stays, 3; loose wire on line, 2; stockwhips, 2; jubilee decorations, 2.

On the 3rd February, during a severe cyclone, the submarine cable between Flat Top Island and East Point, Mackay, became totally interrupted and continues so. Repairs are postponed pending decision as to the route the new cable will have to follow owing to the washaways and alterations in the coast at East Point, caused by floods and high seas. In the meantime telephonic communication has been established between the pilot's house at that place and Mackay for shipping purposes.

The tropical disturbance which passed along the coast between Rockhampton and Bowen on the 3rd February was very destructive to the line between Nebo and Bowen, but most disastrous around Mackay, which was in the centre of it. All our wires were seriously injured. In many places they were blown off the poles for several miles, and carried into the tops of high trees. In some instances the poles were lifted completely out of the ground, and left lying yards away from where they had stood. Hundreds of large trees and innumerable branches were blown on the line. The cyclone was accompanied by torrents of rain, which caused exceedingly high floods, and these were kept up by heavy rain continuing to fall for many days. Repairs to lines were much retarded thereby, although every effort was made by special parties sent out on the several sections. The line repairers and labourers worked well, often in water up to their waists the whole day, and encountering much personal risk while swimming rivers and creeks.

It was on these sections that the longest interruptions occurred during the twelve months. Mackay was cut off from telegraphic communication from the 3rd to the 12th of February, but the business of that place was transacted by steamer from the nearest ports as opportunity offered. Excepting the interruptions caused by the above disaster, the longest were—one of 179 hours between Geraldton and Flying Fish Point, caused originally by a defect in the telephone instrument and inexperience of the officer at the Point, and one of 176 hours, between Normanton and Donors Hill, which should have been removed in a few hours but was missed by the line repairer, who was severely punished for his irregularities.

In cases where trees were felled on the line, the offenders were, when possible, either prosecuted or punished by being charged with all expenses of repairs, and warned of probable prosecution if the offences were repeated.

There have been several instances of damage to iron poles on the plains in the Western country caused by highly laden wool teams dragging down the line through being drawn under the wires at places other than the usual road crossings. In the majority of such cases it was not possible, in the absence of witnesses, to successfully prosecute the supposed offenders.

The working of the railway circuit (No. 13) between Townsville and Stamford is very unsatisfactory. The work is quite congested with messages relating to railway traffic, so that public business with railway telegraph offices is lamentably delayed.

Additional wires are absolutely necessary to remedy the inconvenience which must otherwise be increasingly felt as the circuit becomes extended beyond Stamford with consequent increase of business both railway and public.

It is hoped that the new copper wire for quadruplex working between Brisbane and Sydney and Brisbane and Bowen will soon be an accomplished fact.

NEW CALEDONIA CABLE.

The following is the return of business during the year 1897:—

	£	s.	d.
Free business, estimated at	700	0	0
Value of private messages from and to New Caledonia ...	3,464	2	0
Proportion due Queensland on paid messages from and to New Caledonia	198	3	0
Proportion due New Caledonia and Cable Company (to and from)	1,161	10	0

SUMMARY TELEGRAPH SERVICE, 1897.

Number of telegraph and telephone stations	388
Miles of line	10,090
Miles of wire	18,472
Number of messages transmitted and received (including international)	1,165,134
Value of ordinary messages transmitted (excluding O.H.M.S., value £11,077 8s. 10d.) ...	£77,276 9 0
Revenue paid to Treasury (including £6,107 1s. 8d. on account of telephones) ...	£78,516 4 11
Cost of construction to date (including buildings)	£897,105 15 0

JOHN McDONNELL,
Under Secretary Superintendent of Telegraphs.

Post and Telegraph Department,
Brisbane, 1st July, 1898.