

1900.

QUEENSLAND.

REPORT OF THE POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT  
OF QUEENSLAND FOR THE YEAR 1899.

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 1899.

NEW POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES, BRISBANE.

The Government having determined to provide a more suitable and  
commodious building for the Post and Telegraph Offices in Brisbane, competitive  
plans were invited, with premiums of £400, £300, and £200 respectively for the  
first, second, and third designs in the order of merit. Twenty-eight designs were  
received by the Department of Public Works, and were submitted to a Committee  
appointed by the Governor-in-Council, consisting of the principal Government  
Architects of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, together with the Under  
Secretary and Superintendent of Telegraphs of this Department, who awarded the  
premiums to the three most meritorious designs approaching most nearly to the  
requirements of the Department and the conditions laid down for the competition.  
None of the designs provide for all the necessities of this Department, but it is  
considered that with some modifications they may be adapted to our requirements  
and to the amount available for the building.

The new building will occupy the site of the existing offices, and will have  
frontages to Queen and Elizabeth streets, and also to a lane or right-of-way leading  
from Queen street to Elizabeth street on the northern side of the block, which while  
remaining the property of the Government will provide a thoroughfare for foot  
traffic. The building will be thoroughly up to date, and will be in accordance with  
the most modern and improved ideas of what is required for Postal and Telegraph  
purposes.

I fully endorse the opinions expressed by my predecessors as to the  
unsuitability of the existing offices, which are most inconvenient, both for the public  
and the economical and efficient working of the Department, and notwithstanding  
many alterations and additions, have for some considerable time failed to provide  
sufficient accommodation for the officers necessarily employed to keep pace with the  
very great increase of business. In this connection it may be mentioned that want

of space in the present building has rendered it necessary to rent premises in Adelaide street, known as the old Gaiety Theatre, for the Parcel Post Office; the Meteorological Branch has perforce to occupy the detached building fronting Elizabeth street, erected for the mailman's and caretaker's quarters, while a part of the engineering staff and the stores of the Department are provided for in rented premises. Such a condition of things cannot fail to increase the cost of working, and also to interfere with efficient supervision. The present building compares very unfavourably, not only with the post offices of the other Australian capitals, but with the post offices in the principal towns of this colony.

#### THE PACIFIC CABLE.

It affords me much pleasure to be able to say that this most important project appears to be on the eve of accomplishment. Notwithstanding the strenuous opposition that has been encountered from those who considered it inimical to their pecuniary interests, the strong and persistent representations of the Premier, supported by the other Australasian Colonies interested, the Dominion of Canada, and by the Chambers of Commerce, not only of these Colonies but also those of Great Britain, have prevailed to the extent of overcoming the initial difficulties. The cause of the Pacific cable has been warmly espoused by the Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who has consented to Great Britain becoming a full partner in this truly Imperial undertaking, and also to the utilisation of the credit of the United Kingdom in the proposal to raise, by way of loan, the funds necessary for providing and laying the cable.

The matter is now in the hands of the Pacific Cable Board, consisting of eight members, three of whom, including the Chairman, represent the Imperial Government, three represent the Australasian Colonies interested—namely, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and New Zealand, and two represent the Dominion of Canada. Although Queensland has not so far been directly represented on this Board, it has been arranged that the Agent-General for this Colony in London shall consult with the Australasian representatives on all matters affecting this cable.

The latest intimation received is to the effect that the tenders for providing and laying the cable invited by the commercial agents of the Pacific Cable Board were received and opened on the 14th of August last, and are now under consideration. The lowest tender, that of the Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company, Limited, of London, was £1,886,900, with the condition that the line would be completed in eighteen months.

A very full synopsis of the correspondence relating to the Pacific cable which has taken place since the date of the last Annual Report, including a departmental statement and my circular letter, will be found in Appendix X. to this Report.

#### FINANCIAL.

The financial position of the Department is very satisfactory, as shown by the increase of the revenue, which has exceeded that of any previous year.

The Postal Revenue was £200,726 7s. 8d., an increase of £18,519 15s. 4d. over that of 1898.

The Telegraph and Telephone Revenue amounted to £98,074 9s. 10d., an increase over that of the preceding year of £9,347 6s. Of this sum £12,574 8s. 11d. was contributed by the Telephone Service, which is rapidly becoming an important factor in connection with the revenue, as well as a great public convenience.

The total revenue for 1899 was £298,800 17s. 6d., an increase of £27,867 1s. 4d. over that of the previous year.

The net deficiency between the revenue and expenditure was £48,912 0s. 7d., as compared with £42,837 3s. 8d. in 1898. The slight excess is accounted for by the amount paid to the Commissioner for Railways for the carriage of mails having been increased from £40,000 to £50,000, and by the increased amounts required for the Coastal Mail Service for the full year, as well as for the mail service with Vancouver, amounting in the aggregate to £64,926 13s. 6d., as compared with £49,396 19s. 11d., or a total increase of £15,529 13s. 7d.

If the free business in connection with Meteorology and the other Departments of the Public Service, estimated as at least £60,000 per annum, is taken into consideration, the Post and Telegraph service is self-supporting to a greater extent than is generally supposed. It must, however, be remembered that the Department has never been charged with the interest on the capital expended in the construction and maintenance of buildings, or for the erection of telegraph and telephone lines.

The condition of many of the older telegraph lines is such that a very large expenditure for repairs, amounting in many instances to reconstruction, will have to be provided for at an early date.

In a Department where the revenue is collected in small sums, generally in pence, any increase of revenue indicates an increase of work, and a consequent increase of expense in working; increased earnings must therefore necessarily involve a proportionate increase of expenditure.

In this, which is probably the last Annual Report of a separate Post and Telegraph service in Queensland, before it is merged in the Federal Service of Australia, it may not be out of place to direct attention to the fact, that in 1860, the first year of the existence of Queensland as a separate Colony, the total revenue of the Department was only £4,866 10s. 7d., while the expenditure amounted to £12,007 1s. 1d.

#### REDUCTION IN CHARGES FOR INTERCOLONIAL TELEGRAMS.

The reduction in the charge for telegrams not exceeding ten words between Queensland and New South Wales commenced on the 1st of July, 1898. The number of messages exchanged with New South Wales for the half-year ended on the 30th of June, 1898, that is under the higher tariff, was 50,225, and the charges thereon were £12,520 7s., while for the year ended the 31st of December, 1899, at the lower rate, the number of messages was 165,055, while the charges amounted to £24,848 13s. 3d.; an increase in the number of messages of 64,605, but a decrease of revenue amounting to £192, which was apportioned equally between the two Colonies. To this loss must, however, be added the cost of transmitting the increased business. This is compensated for, as far as the public is concerned, by the additional facilities in both Colonies.

The reduced rate between Queensland and Victoria for messages of ten words came into operation on the 1st of January, 1899, the cost of which was reduced from 3s. to 2s. for the minimum message, while that for additional words remained as before. The number of messages exchanged with Victoria during the half year ended the 30th of June, 1898, was 12,528, and for the year ended the 31st of December, 1899, the number was 38,317, an increase for the year of 13,261. The amount collected on the messages during the half year in 1898 was £4,874 4s. 1d., and for 1899 £10,831 10s. 3d.—a total increase for the year of £1,083, giving the increased amount of £361 to Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, the three Colonies concerned. Although South Australia was not affected by any reduction of the rate, there was a considerable increase of business with that Colony. The increases per cent. during 1899 were—New South Wales, 64 per cent.; Victoria, 52 per cent.; and South Australia, 36 per cent. in the number of messages exchanged.

#### CABLE TRAFFIC.

Under the agreement with the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, the total number of messages received and sent by cable during the year ended 30th April, 1899, was 7,258, the total value being £19,794 6s. 5d., of which the proportion due to Queensland amounted to £609 11s. 8d.; and for the year ended 30th April, 1900, 8,487 messages were transmitted, the total value being £21,724 14s. 10d., of which £715 3s. 5d. was due to this Colony.

In February last the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company gave formal notice of the termination on the 30th April, 1900, of the tariff agreements for both the European and New Zealand traffic, and a new agreement was submitted providing, on certain conditions, for a uniform rate of 4s. per word for all the Colonies, with reductions from time to time until the rate reached 2s. 6d. per word,

the principal condition being that the Company were to be allowed to open local offices in the Colonies, and to collect and deliver directly from and to the public telegrams forming part of the Australasian traffic. The Colonies of South Australia, West Australia, and Tasmania accepted the terms and signed the agreement accordingly, and from the 1st of May last messages from and to these Colonies have been transmitted at the reduced rate. The other Colonies refused to accept the conditions demanded by the Company, and so far as they are concerned the old rates are still maintained.

For the year ended 30th April last the amount paid by Queensland towards the subsidy for the Tasmanian Cable, apportioned on the basis of population, was £519 9s. 6d., and for the guarantee to the New Zealand Cable, which is dependent on the receipts, the apportionment paid by this Colony during the same period amounted to £82 12s. 2d.

The value of paid messages from and to New Caledonia during the year 1899 was £6,493 12s. 8d., and free business estimated at £700, the proportion due to Queensland on paid messages being £346 10s. 6d., consequently the returns were not sufficient to reduce the annual subsidy of £2,000 paid by this Colony.

#### NORTHERN COASTAL MAIL SERVICES.

The contract services arranged in October, 1898, between Gladstone and Townsville by the "Barcoo" with a branch service between Townsville and Cairns, and a service between Brisbane and Cooktown *via* Port Douglas, have been satisfactorily performed, and have afforded a very complete service with the Northern ports of the Colony at a moderate cost. Though not coming within the year under review, it may be mentioned that the service between Gladstone and Townsville has been recently improved by the alteration of the time of departure from the latter port from 5 to 10.30 p.m., thus affording time for reply at Charters Towers, &c., and ensuring the immediate despatch South of the mails from Hughenden, Winton, and the surrounding districts, which arrive in Townsville by train in sufficient time for despatch by the "Barcoo" under the altered conditions.

As the contract under which these services are performed will expire in October next, tenders were invited for a continued service on the existing lines, and the tender of the A.U.S.N. Company has been accepted. The conditions are more stringent, and include a provision for differential passenger rates in favour of the railway to all the ports served. The cost will be £16,750 per annum, as against £13,000 per annum now paid.

From the 7th of October—that is almost simultaneously with the commencement of the new service—arrangements will be made for a continuous through service from the Southern colonies to the Northern ports of Queensland. Hitherto the mail trains from Sydney have arrived in Brisbane too late to enable mails and passengers to go forward at once to Gladstone and the North, but it has now been arranged that these trains shall reach Brisbane at 9.20 p.m., and that the North Coast mail trains shall leave at 10 p.m.; the vexatious detention of at least twenty-four hours in Brisbane on the Northern journey will thus be avoided.

A contract service between Brisbane and the Gulf ports—Normanton and Burketown, *via* Thursday Island, was entered into with the A.U.S.N. Company in January last. Under this contract steamers leave Brisbane for the Gulf at regular intervals of three weeks, and the service, which costs £6,000 per annum, provides for a regular exchange of mails and parcels with the places mentioned, and supplements the overland service from Cairns twice a week. Its principal value is the provision made for the regular carriage of cargo between the Queensland ports at a lower rate than that which may be fixed from time to time for freights from Sydney and Melbourne, thus stimulating the trade of this colony.

#### THE DROUGHT.

It was of course inevitable that mail communication in the Western Districts of the Colony, which have for so long a period been afflicted by a severe drought, should suffer partial derangement. In many instances it has been necessary to allow the contractors to substitute pack-horses for coach mails, to reduce the

frequency of the services, alter the timetables in other respects, and generally to afford as much relief to the contractors as was compatible with the public convenience and the condition of the country. It is a source of satisfaction that, although all other traffic dependent upon horse-traction or carriage has ceased, the mails have kept the road. In some instances the contractors have been compelled to resort to the use of bicycles, as horse feed was not obtainable at any price, and one result has been to call the attention of both the Department and the contractors to the desirability of introducing some method of mechanical traction for the carriage of the mails where the difficulties in the way of horsing the lines have become almost if not quite insuperable. Inquiries are still proceeding as to the best means available, and the motors most suitable for the peculiar conditions obtaining, both as regards roads and climate in the interior of the Colony.

#### TELEPHONES.

The activity in connection with the expansion of the telephone system still continues. There has been an increase of over 30 per cent. in the number of subscribers throughout the Colony during the year, and new Exchanges have been opened at Cairns, Ipswich, and Mount Morgan.

In Brisbane the underground system has been extended until it now stands as shown on the map accompanying this Report. The multiple switchboard continues to work well, and has been extended to provide for 600 additional subscribers. Even this capacity will shortly be exhausted.

The hope expressed in the last Report that as the female switchboard attendants became familiar with their duties an improvement would be noticed in the working of this Exchange has been fully realised. It is satisfactory to be able to record a most decided improvement in the service since their introduction.

At the other Exchanges, notably at Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville, and Charters Towers, extensions continue to be necessary.

The extent of the service can be better understood from the fact that the total calls throughout the Colony for the year are estimated (from periodical "counts") to equal over 3,500,000, of which over 2,250,000 were recorded in Brisbane; and that over 3,000 miles of wire are used in the 11 Exchanges, of which 654 miles are underground.

The trunk line from Brisbane to Ipswich has been extended to Toowoomba, and the business done on it is very satisfactory. At the present time the revenue from the use of the line, Brisbane to Ipswich and Toowoomba, is at the rate of over £1,000 per annum. Rockhampton has been connected with Mount Morgan by telephone trunk line, and the revenue from the use of this for the past year has been over £200.

The capital expenditure on account of the Telephone Exchange System throughout the Colony now stands at £60,000. The revenue for the past year was £12,574, or an increase of over 40 per cent. on that of the previous year.

#### TELEPHONES IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

Steady development is reported in this branch also, and the facilities offered are found to be of great value to stationowners and others.

The use of the telephone as a substitute for the telegraph in country districts is being steadily advanced. There are now seventy-five such offices open as against forty-five at the same date last year.

#### "THE ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER ACT, 1896."

There has been no special development under this heading. Of the eight Orders granted to date only four are being operated under. Steps are being taken to cancel the Orders granted to the Gympie and Toowoomba Companies unless action is taken to give effect to them.

By far the most important matters in connection with the Electric Light and Power Act have been the accidents detailed in the report—due to breaking of trolley and other wires. The Department is fully alive to the importance of adequately protecting life and property from such accidents, and additional and more stringent Regulations have been prepared, and are now under consideration.

## MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS OF LINES.

It cannot yet be reported that the maintenance and repairs of our lines is in a satisfactory state. The past year has been one in which it has been impossible, by reason of the drought, to undertake extensive repairs on those lines requiring most attention. The year 1900-1901 therefore commences with still heavier arrears to overtake, and no probability of such improved conditions as would enable the work to be accomplished.

Considering the disabilities in this direction under which the Department is at present labouring, the schedule of faults and interruptions cannot be considered as excessive.

## PROPOSED NEW LINES.

The demands for new works, and extensions of Telegraphic and Telephonic communication, shows no abatement. Among the more important propositions for Telegraphic extension are the following :—

- Completion of the copper quad wire, Brisbane to Bowen ;
- Second wire, Palmerville to Tate, for service of the Cape York Peninsula ;
- Second wire, Hughenden to Charters Towers ;
- New line, Port Douglas to Cooktown ;
- New line, Aloomba to Hervey's Creek ;

while extensions which cannot in all probability be undertaken for some little time have been advocated from—

Boulia to Birdsville,  
Longreach to Stonehenge,  
Richmond to Coobiaby,

Gladstone to Calliope,  
Cooktown or Coen to Ebagoolah.

There has been a request for a Telephone Trunk Line from Brisbane to Gympie, Maryborough, and Bundaberg. This work, which is estimated to cost £7,500, is now under consideration.

## FEDERATION.

As this is probably the last Annual Report in connection with the Post and Telegraph as a State Department, it cannot be considered out of place to allude to the conditions that will probably obtain, when in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Act the Post and Telegraph Departments of the Australian Colonies and Tasmania are transferred to the Federal Government. At the instance of the Government of New South Wales, a Conference of the permanent heads of the State Departments will be held in Sydney on the 14th of November for the purpose of preparing a draft Bill and Regulations to secure uniformity in Post and Telegraph matters throughout the Federal territory. The results of this Conference are to be submitted to a Conference of Ministers to be held at Melbourne at a later date, probably in February next.

The Postal and Telegraph rates in connection with the Federal system must be reserved for the consideration of the Federal Parliament, as they will necessarily form an important factor in the financial policy of the Federal Government. Whether the existing rates are maintained or reduced will depend upon the determination of that Government as to the policy of making the Department self supporting and revenue producing, or of largely supplementing the earnings of the Department out of the General Revenue.

## METEOROLOGY.

The increase of public telegraph business and the obvious necessity of avoiding as far as possible delays in transmission, together with the comparatively few wires and limited staff of operators at the disposal of the Department, rendered it imperatively necessary to curtail the free business sent over the wires in connection with meteorological reports and weather forecasts. A departmental committee,

including the Government Meteorologist, Mr. Clement Wragge, was appointed to deal with the matter. The following report was brought up and adopted, and the Regulation relating to weather forecasts was amended accordingly :—

The committee appointed to consider the question of free transmission of meteorological business beg to report as follows :—

- (1.) This free business has grown to such an extent that, in the interest of ordinary paid business which is now seriously delayed, it is desirable that so far as possible the free business should be reduced. By the proposals submitted herewith, it is estimated that this work will be reduced fully 50 per cent.
- (2.) All authorities for free transmission of meteorological business previously issued should be cancelled.
- (3.) That reports be forwarded to the Government Meteorologist by wire daily at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. from stations of the first and second order as published in Quarterly Postal Guide, provided that such stations shall not exceed 60 in all.
- (4.) That climatological reports be forwarded to the Government Meteorologist by wire daily at 9 a.m. from stations of the third order, as published in the Quarterly Postal Guide, provided that such stations shall not exceed 40 in all, and from not more than 10 special coast stations as by list appended hereto.

That in the case of any rainfall recorded or any unusual occurrence such as a gale of force 7 or over, thunderstorms, severe duststorms, solar or lunar halos, earth tremors, &c., special report by wire should be made at 9 a.m. from any telegraphic station.

- (5.) That special forecasts of weather conditions likely to benefit or prejudicially affect important townships or districts may be wired free on occasions by the Government Meteorologist.

Any person or persons requiring any information or forecasts may obtain the same by communicating with the Government Meteorologist, Brisbane, who will notify forecasts by code telegram, not exceeding five words, exclusive of address, which may be forwarded collect for 6d., or daily, except Sundays and holidays, for an annual payment in advance of £5. All additional information, including statements of rainfall, &c., may be obtained by telegraph at Press rates, viz. :—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Up to 24 words ... ..	1	0
Each additional 4 words or portion thereof ...	0	1
Address and signature counted and charged for.		

A very comprehensive code has been prepared by Mr. Wragge, copies of which can be obtained either from the Government Printer or the Department at the small cost of 6d.

#### THE SUBSTITUTION OF FREMANTLE FOR ALBANY AS A PORT OF CALL FOR THE FEDERAL MAIL STEAMERS.

By Clause 3 of the current contracts it was provided that the Peninsular and Oriental and Orient Companies should (if requested by the Imperial Postmaster-General so to do) substitute the Port of Fremantle in Western Australia for the Port of Albany as a port of call under the agreements, as soon as the mailships could use

the Port of Fremantle with safety, and cargo-work and coaling could be carried on at such port in all states of the weather: Provided that whenever the mail ships called at Fremantle such an additional number of hours should be added as should be agreed upon between the Postmaster-General and the Companies, or failing agreement as settled by arbitration. It was assumed that such request would depend upon the expressed wishes of the majority of the Colonies as parties to the agreements. The contracts also provide for penalties in event of delays in delivering the mails at Adelaide.

In a letter from the General Post Office to the Colonial Office of the 1st of November, 1899, it was stated that the Companies would be prepared to substitute Fremantle for Albany on condition that twelve hours extra should be allowed them for the voyage, the extra steaming time being estimated at about seven hours, and a margin of five hours more being taken for contingent delays arising from the greater exposure at Fremantle as compared with Albany. This the Lords of the Admiralty considered reasonable in the circumstances; the Post Office, however, stated that though the steamers might as a rule be expected still to arrive within the contract time, the senders and receivers of letters were accustomed to a quicker average service than the contract provided for, and would actually have to put up with an arrival of their letters from seven to twelve hours later than if the ships continued to call at Albany.

In the telegram from the Secretary of State to His Excellency the Governor of South Australia of the 22nd of May last, communicated to His Excellency the Governor of Queensland, it is stated that the Companies undertake to endeavour to observe present time-tables, so that the only difficulty is penalties in case of additional delay. Her Majesty's Government consider it reasonable not to exact penalties unless schedule time is exceeded by more than twelve hours. This must be considered corroborative of the view of the Imperial Post Office, that receivers of letters must anticipate delays under the proposed alteration of conditions, but unless special trains are employed from Adelaide right through to Brisbane the delay here would be at least twenty-four hours instead of twelve hours, as stated.

The Imperial Postmaster-General, at the instance of the Premier of Western Australia, communicated with the Companies on the subject of the substitution of Fremantle for Albany as a port of call for the Mail Steamers, and the Companies replied that they were prepared when the dredging in Fremantle Harbour had been completed to the requisite depth and other necessary work had been carried out to make Fremantle the port of call, on condition that 12 hours extra should be allowed them for the voyage.

The alteration was opposed by this Colony and also by the Colonies of New South Wales and Victoria, as the 12 hours additional would practically involve a delay of 24 hours in the delivery of the mails, as they would probably reach Adelaide too late to catch the daily express train to Melbourne.

The subject was considered at a Conference of the Premiers of the Australian Colonies held in Sydney in January, 1900, and it was resolved "That this Conference of Premiers is unable to agree to any extension of the period of transit as asked by the Mail Companies."

The Imperial Postmaster-General, however, decided to substitute Fremantle for Albany as the port of call on the understanding that if it was found necessary, and the alteration caused inconvenience, he would reconsider the matter.

The alteration commenced with the steamers leaving Adelaide on the 9th and Brindisi on the 19th of August.



The following statement shows the time allowed for replies at the various Australian capitals under the conditions of the agreements previous to the alteration:—

	Mail Delivered as per Time-table.	Mail Leaves as per Time-table.	Interval for Reply as per Time-table.
<i>P. &amp; O.</i> —Perth ... ..	Saturday, noon ... ..	Saturday, 3-25 p.m. ... ..	14 days 3½ hours
„ Adelaide ... ..	Monday afternoon ... ..	Thursday, 11-15 a.m. ... ..	9 days 21 hours
„ Melbourne ... ..	Tuesday afternoon... ..	Wednesday, 2-15 p.m. ... ..	8 days
„ Sydney ... ..	Wednesday noon ... ..	Tuesday, 4-30 p.m. ... ..	6 days 4½ hours
„ Brisbane ... ..	Friday morning ... ..	Monday, 6-15 a.m. ... ..	3 days
<i>Orient</i> —Perth ... ..	Saturday, noon ... ..	Saturday, 3-25 p.m. ... ..	14 days 3½ hours
„ Adelaide ... ..	Tuesday morning ... ..	Thursday, 11-15 a.m. ... ..	9 days 2 hours
„ Melbourne ... ..	Wednesday afternoon ... ..	Wednesday, 2-15 p.m. ... ..	7 days
„ Sydney ... ..	Thursday, noon ... ..	Tuesday, 4-30 p.m. .... ..	5 days 4½ hours
„ Brisbane ... ..	Saturday morning ... ..	Monday, 6-15 a.m. .... ..	2 days

Perth has the additional advantage of reply by two previous steamers, an interval of three hours and seven days respectively being allowed therefor; while Adelaide and Melbourne can reply by one previous steamer, the former having sixty-nine and the latter twenty-four hours.

It is difficult to see why the people of the Eastern Colonies, who are now, on account of their geographical position, placed in a very disadvantageous position with respect to the mail service as compared with the people of Western Australia, should be seriously inconvenienced to an even greater extent, for the purpose of enabling an alteration to be made in the Western Australian port of call.

JAMES G. DRAKE,

Post and Telegraph Department,

Postmaster-General.

Brisbane, 1st September, 1900.