

In reply I am to inform you that the Government have not at present any funds disposable for such an undertaking, but they are anxious, before the next Session of the General Assembly to collect all the information possible upon the whole subject, with a view to making a recommendation respecting it, to the Houses of Legislature.

The two points in this Colony which it would be most desirable to connect by the Electric Telegraph are the Towns of Auckland and Dunedin, which are separated from each other by a distance of from 600 to 700 nautical miles, overland throughout, with the exception of Cook's Straits.

The Government would feel much obliged if you would inform them what you estimate to be the cost of such a work *per mile* for the whole distance, and also furnish them, as you kindly offer to do, with any information, which you may consider desirable respecting the organization and working of Electric Telegraphs generally, and more particularly as regards Colonies inhabited as this is in the Northern Island by a numerous Native population in the interior—a circumstance which probably would make it advisable to adopt for the Line a more circuitous route by the Sea Shore.

A personal interview, as you suggest, between the Government and yourself would be the most satisfactory means of obtaining the desired information, but the Government hesitate to ask you to visit this Colony for the express purpose, because even if the information were of the most satisfactory nature, it might happen that, after all, the Legislature would decline to take any action in the matter, a result, however, which the Government do not anticipate.

I have, &c.,

(Signed)

W. GIBBORNE,

Under-Secretary.

W. H. Butcher, Esq.,  
Hobart Town, Tasmania.

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MR. BUTCHER TO COLONIAL SECRETARY, NEW ZEALAND.

Hobart Town, Tasmania,  
May 15th, 1859.

SIR,—

I do myself the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Communication, dated the 19th March, asking for certain information relative to the construction, organization and general management of Electric Telegraph Lines in Australia.

With regard to the cost *per mile* of the Line from Auckland to Dunedin, I do not feel myself competent to give an opinion, being at present totally ignorant of the Country through which the Line would traverse. It would be necessary before offering such opinion to be made acquainted with the facilities for transport, of materials for the construction of the same. The nature of the soil, (whether rock or sand),—the amount of timber required to be cleared, for the preservation of the line; the density of the forest land; the length of plain to be spanned; and a variety of other data, in order to form a correct estimate of the work, which could only be obtained by a personal inspection of the route. I will merely therefore confine myself to giving the actual cost of similar Lines at present complete and working in the Colonies of Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania, which may guide you in forming an approximate estimate of similar work to be performed in your Colony; at the same time I would beg to draw your attention to the fact, that in all cases where Lines have been constructed in the Colonies above referred to, the roads have been of such a nature, as to allow the passage of loaded drays and waggons, and hence the distribution of timber has been a lesser item of expense than would have been the case in the absence of proper roads.

From Melbourne (Victoria) to Sandhurst (Bendigo diggings) one hundred and twenty-three miles (123) forty feet of timber cleared from each side of Line, and about two thirds (2-3rds) of the distance plains, Sixty-five pounds (£65) *per mile*.

From Geelong, (Victoria) to Ballarat, sixty miles (60) forty feet of timber cleared on either side of line, partly plains, Sixty-five pound (£65) *per mile*.

From Melbourne (Victoria) to Beechworth, (Ovens diggings) two hundred miles (200) forty feet of timber cleared from each side of line, partly plains, Fifty-nine pounds (£59) *per mile*.

From Ballarat (Victoria) to Mount Gambia, (boundary of South Australia) via Belfast, Warnambool, Portland, &c., about three hundred miles (300) forty feet of clearing, partly plains, Sixty-four pounds ten shillings (£64 10s.) *per mile*.

From Adelaide (S. A.) to Mount Gambia, about three hundred miles (300), clearing forty feet of timber, Sixty-pounds (£60) *per mile*.

From Sydney (N.S.W.) to Albury, about three hundred and fifty miles (350) clearing forty feet of timber on each side, Sixty pounds (£60) *per mile*.

From Hobart Town (Tasmania) to Launceston, one hundred and twenty miles, (120) no clearing, and a good metalled road, the entire distance, Fifty-two pounds ten shillings (£52 10s.) *per mile*.

From Launceston (Tasmania) to George Town, forty miles, (40) twenty feet of timber cleared on each side, Sixty-five pounds ten shillings (£65 10s.) *per mile*.

There are a number of other Branch Lines recently constructed in Victoria and New South Wales, the cost of which do not materially differ in price from the Main Trunk Lines.

You will observe that the three Colonies Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, have adopted the same principle of clearing, viz., forty feet on each side of their Lines, while Tasmania only clears for a space of twenty feet. The difference arises from the greater prevalence of bush fires in the three Colonies last named than in Tasmania; the additional number of feet in the one case is to prevent as much as possible the posts coming in contact with the burning timber, as well as to reduce the liability of trees and limbs falling across the line and breaking the continuity of the wire. In America,