

			Males.	Females.	Total.
Present number of patients	656	329	985
Deficiency of proper accommodation	389	190	579

The works already undertaken towards supplying this deficiency are—the new wing of the Auckland Asylum (which will provide for 107 male patients, and, according to contract, should be completed in May, 1880), and a portion of the male wing of the new Christchurch Asylum, sufficient for 50, and which, according to contract should be completed in September, 1880. In determining what buildings should be undertaken in addition to those now in course of erection in Christchurch and Auckland, the number for whom provision is required should at least be reckoned at what it is likely to be within the shortest period at which any new building of a suitable kind could be got ready, and this may be stated as fully two years hence. The increase in the number of lunatics last year was 87, and the previous year 81, and the average increase for the last six years was 69; and we may safely conclude that the annual increase will continue to be at least 70. At this rate, there will be in July, 1881, 1,125 patients, or 562 in excess of proper accommodation, including that now being provided at Christchurch and Auckland.

By far the most important works to push on with, in order to make the necessary provision, are the building of the new Asylum at Blueskin, and the completion of the male wing of the Christchurch Asylum. A magnificent reserve of 900 acres has been made at Blueskin, about twenty-seven miles from Dunedin, on the line of railway; and it is proposed to set aside 500 of this as a farm for the exclusive use of the Asylum. A site for the building has already been cleared, and appears to be all that could be desired; and the plans of a commodious and well-arranged Asylum for 300 patients are now ready. I understand that tenders are to be called for in such a manner that a contract can be made either for the erection of the whole building, so far as at present designed, or of one or more portions of it at a time. I would strongly recommend that the whole building should be gone on with at once, and be got ready for occupation as soon as possible. This would apparently take two years, and it must be remembered that the buildings now designed are far from being complete. Nothing is to be gained by building the Asylum bit by bit, and its occupation in that manner by the patients, which would add greatly to the difficulties and expense of management. On the other hand, its speedy completion would both enable the erection of another and equally expensive Asylum, which will ultimately be required for Wellington, to be deferred for some time, till the colony is in a better position to undertake another work of such magnitude, and at the same time save the waste of some thousands of pounds which would require to be flung away in temporary buildings were the present Dunedin Asylum not vacated in time to serve as such. It is not only on account of increased accommodation being required that it is of importance to hasten on the building of the Seacliff Asylum. There can be no doubt that the possession of 500 acres of good land will greatly reduce the cost of the patients' maintenance, and, by affording them the means of abundant, cheerful, and healthy employment, tend to promote the cure of those who are curable, and greatly to increase the comfort and happiness of them all. It will also, in future, be possible, with so large an extent of land, to provide increased accommodation of a comparatively, cheap and simple kind, by means of cottages placed here and there for the use of harmless and industrious patients, who, as a rule, much prefer the more natural and homely life they are thus permitted to lead to dwelling in a vast Asylum.

As regards the Christchurch Asylum, the necessity of finishing the male wing, the building of a portion of which has already been begun, must be sufficiently obvious to every one. The building at present occupied by the male patients is altogether too bad to be described in official language; and, while it can hardly be expected to last until the new one is ready, it causes the continual frittering away of considerable sums of money in repairs and temporary makeshifts. Supposing these two buildings to be completed by July, 1881, at which time I have assumed that the number of patients in excess of present satisfactory accommodation will be 562, there would still be a deficiency for 162. No doubt, if the colony is prepared to embark in further expenditure than is implied in undertaking the works already mentioned as most urgently required, the proper thing to do, in order fully to meet the deficiency in accommodation, would be to proceed at once to build a permanent asylum in the neighbourhood of Wellington, as recommended in previous reports. It is quite certain that this will ultimately require to be done. But the evil of overcrowding, so much complained of in the Wellington Asylum, is in the meantime being overcome by the erection of a block of buildings for 50 patients, and, if there is no delay in proceeding with the works already entered upon, it will be quite possible, and probably wiser, to avoid the great expense of this additional one at Wellington until some time after these have been finished; the present Asylum at Dunedin, which, with all its defects, is in a state of good repair, being continued in the interval in use by the excess of patients over satisfactory and permanent accommodation, as previously suggested.

In the Appendix will be found two tabular statements supplied by the Public Works Department, showing the amounts expended on asylum buildings during the year ended 30th June, the liabilities at that date, and the contract prices for additions in course of being made. From these it will be seen that the expenditure on buildings has been £13,359 15s. 9d.; and that the liabilities, which include the cost of the new wing to the Auckland Asylum, and the portion of the male wing of the Christchurch, already contracted for, amount to £17,485 17s. 1d. The Seacliff Asylum, the plans of which, so far as at present designed, do not include a Superintendent's house, workshops, and washing-house, which will afterwards have to be provided, will probably cost, by the time it is completed, fully £65,000. To complete the male wing of the Christchurch Asylum will likely cost £18,000 at least. These estimates, together with the liabilities, make a total of over £100,000, which will probably be required to complete the works already on hand or recommended to be undertaken.