

requires the same; and when such application is made it is considered on its merits, and, if necessary, a poll of the ratepayers is taken. It is contended that all these things make for uniformity, and, as the Ordinances are settled by the Crown Law Office before being issued, this saves the local bodies much money and trouble, and, with the exception of one important town, I did not find one local body who objected to the system.

The Local Government Act in New South Wales, moreover, gives the Government much more power over local bodies than does any similar Act in Australasia. Thus, local bodies must keep their accounts strictly in the form and in the manner prescribed by regulations made under the Act, and the Local Government Office takes steps to see that this is done properly, and that the revenue is applied to things provided for by law. The shire and municipal clerks and engineers must pass an examination prescribed by regulations under the Act, and be certified as competent by the Department before they can be appointed by any Shire or Municipal Councils, and the certificate can be cancelled for misconduct. The only exception to the rule is in the case of some officers who were so employed when the Act came into force, and who can get an interim certificate; but they cannot get employment in any other shire or municipality unless they pass the examination. Some of the clerks think this latter provision is too hard, and a few think that the Local Government Department wants too many returns; but most of them agree with the principle of examination and certificate as tending to raise their status; and all the other gentlemen I saw who represented the shires and municipalities expressed their cordial appreciation both of the system of accounts and also of examination.

The franchise is based on a property qualification, but is of simple nature. Broadly put, it is that every owner of land and every occupier, lessee, or tenant of land or household property of a yearly value of £5 is entitled to one vote.

Every shire and municipality is required to levy yearly a general rate of not less than 1d. in the pound on the unimproved rateable value of its lands, unless authorized by the Governor to levy a reduced rate.

The statute provides for the classification of shires, but I have gone exhaustively into this matter in Report No. 1, on State assistance to local bodies in New South Wales.

There is power for any Council by a referendum to ascertain the opinion of its electors on any subject.

There are 134 shires in New South Wales, varying in size from 36 to 5,745 square miles. There are 190 municipalities, including Sydney. Forty of these municipalities are in the suburbs of Sydney and twelve in the vicinity of Newcastle. An effort is being made to amalgamate or reduce the number of some of these by "Greater Sydney" and "Newcastle" schemes, and Bills to this effect have already been considered by Parliament.

VICTORIA.

In Victoria the whole of the main local bodies, with the exception of Melbourne and Geelong, are governed under the Local Government Act, 1903, and, with this exception, the same law applies to cities, towns, boroughs, and shires. There are fifteen cities, nine towns, thirty-seven boroughs, and 147 shires. The qualification requisite to enable these to be set up is as follows: A city must have a revenue of £20,000 on a shilling rate; a town must have a revenue of £10,000 on a shilling rate; a borough must have a revenue of £250 on a shilling rate; a shire must have a revenue of £1,500 on a shilling rate. It does not follow that because an area may have this revenue it can of necessity be constituted, for, as a matter of fact, it is not now the practice to set up a borough if it can only command a revenue of £250.

The Act is of a most comprehensive character, containing 726 clauses, and it includes similar powers to those provided for in our Counties and Municipal Corporations Acts.

The whole of Victoria is now practically under the municipal control provided for in this Act, save and except only Melbourne and Geelong and a small island known as French Island.

The Government does not exercise the same direct control over local bodies as is the case in New South Wales, but the clerks and engineers of local bodies are certified as competent by the Government after examination in a similar manner to that adopted in New South Wales. Those clerks who had been town or shire clerks or who had been in a municipal office for five years at the date of passing the Local Government Act got their certificates without examination. The accounts of local bodies are examined by two travelling Inspectors under the Local Government Branch of the Public Works Department. The local bodies must also keep their books and accounts in the manner prescribed by that department.

In Victoria the local bodies rate on the capital or annual value. There is no power to rate on the unimproved value.

In Victoria, as in New South Wales, each local body makes its own valuations for rating purposes, and this, I am informed, is the weakest part of the Victorian system.

In section 249 of the Local Government Act reference is made to the Board of Land and Works. This was originally a Board intended to carry out waterworks and build railways, but it does not do so now. It is a Board nominated by the Government, and it had some functions over areas not included in the district of any local body. Its functions in this and in most other respects have now almost ceased, but Government contracts are still let in its name.

Irrigation on lands near the River Murray is an important matter which I have dealt with in a separate report on irrigation in Victoria and South Australia.

I have also given full particulars of the Main Roads Board, recently constituted, in Report No. 2, on State assistance to local bodies in Australasia generally.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

There are only two main forms of local government in this State—viz., District Councils (corresponding with our counties) and Municipal Corporations (corresponding with our boroughs). These bodies are constituted and managed under the District Councils Act, 1887, and the Municipal Corporations Act, 1890, and their amendments respectively, but part of the Municipal Corporations Act relates only to Adelaide.