

1932.  
NEW ZEALAND.

MENTAL HOSPITALS OF THE DOMINION

(REPORT ON) FOR 1931.

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 78 of the Mental Defectives Act, 1911.*

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL to the Hon. J. A. YOUNG, Minister in Charge of the Department of Mental Hospitals.

SIR,—  
Wellington, 1st July, 1932.  
I have the honour to present the annual report upon the Department of Mental Hospitals for the year ended 31st December, 1931.

At the close of the year there were 7,020 persons on the registers of the mental hospitals of the Dominion, including 47 at Ashburn Hall private licensed institution.

The number of persons actually in residence in Government mental hospitals at the end of the year was 6,451, of whom 6,149 were the subjects of reception orders, and 302 were voluntary boarders, while 522 were out on probation to the care of relatives and friends. The number of those on probation is considerably swelled in December by the temporary exodus of many boarders and patients who spend the Christmas holidays with their own people, but who are unfortunately unable to remain permanently outside an institution.

I regret that no diminution can be reported in the number who require admission to our hospitals, and during the year 1,406 persons were received, 1,063 under a Magistrate's reception order and 343 as voluntary boarders.

Our discharges of patients and boarders totalled 626, or 43·1 per cent. calculated upon the admissions, but this percentage does not unfortunately constitute what might fairly be termed the recovery rate.

Of the 1,063 patients whose mental disorder at the time of admission was so advanced as to necessitate committal by a Magistrate, only 23·23 per cent. were ultimately able to be pronounced recovered, while a further 11·1 per cent. showed sufficient abatement of symptoms to permit of discharge, generally after a period of probation.

In the case of the 343 voluntary boarders who sought admission at an early stage of the disorder when they were still able to co-operate in their treatment, no less than 261, or 70 per cent., were discharged as "recovered." Taking into account all admissions, voluntary and otherwise, our recovery rate was 36·13 per cent., which is about equivalent to that of other countries whose statistics are available for comparison.

PROGRESSIVE INCREASE IN MENTAL HOSPITAL POPULATION.

Whilst it is satisfactory to learn from the above figures that the results of treatment in our New Zealand institutions do not fall short of those in other comparable countries, it is impossible to view with equanimity the steadily mounting number of patients in our hospitals and their increasing ratio to the general population.

The annual reports of our Department go back in their present form to 1876, in which year there were 783 patients, or a ratio of approximately one registered insane person to 383 of population.

In the intervening years there has been a steadily progressive increase in the number under care at the end of each year, as shown in the subjoined quinquennial table:—

Quinquennium.	Average Annual Increase.	Quinquennium.	Average Annual Increase.
1876-1880 .. ..	79	1906-1910 .. ..	111
1881-1885 .. ..	79	1911-1915 .. ..	111
1886-1890 .. ..	57	1916-1920 .. ..	122
1891-1895 .. ..	83	1921-1925 .. ..	113
1896-1900 .. ..	91	1926-1930 .. ..	239
1901-1905 .. ..	90		