

1856-7.

VICTORIA.



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# YARRA BEND LUNATIC ASYLUM.

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## REPORT

OF THE

BOARD APPOINTED TO INSPECT THE YARRA BEND LUNATIC ASYLUM,

AND TO

REPORT UPON THE ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED.



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*Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed 22nd July, 1857.*

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**By Authority:**

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.



# REPORT.

Office of the Chief Medical Officer,  
Melbourne, 20th July, 1857.

SIR,

In obedience to the instructions contained in the accompanying letter from Mr. Balmain, the Board appointed by His Excellency the Governor, composed of the persons named in the margin, have assembled, and having inspected the Asylum at Yarra Bend, and duly considered the requirements for the accommodation of lunatics in this Colony, report as follows :—

The Chief Medical Officer.  
The Inspector General of Penal Establishments.  
John Gill, Esq.,  
Architect.

1st. With reference to "What accommodation is required for lunatics in this Colony?" It appears there are at present three hundred and ninety lunatics known to be under public surveillance in Victoria, distributed as follows :

390.

In the Asylum at Yarra Bend, one hundred and ninety-five males, and one hundred and twenty-three females ; in the eastern and main gaols, Melbourne, forty-three males ; in the Western Gaol, nine females ; in the Geelong Gaol, seven males and ten females ; in the Sandhurst, Castlemaine, and Ballarat Gaols, three males. The urgency expressed in the instructions for a speedy report has prevented the Board obtaining any information regarding the number of lunatics in Warrnambool, Belfast, Portland, Gippsland, or in any of the gold fields, except those above-named, but assuming these not to exceed ten, the total number of lunatics in the Colony for which accommodation is required is about four hundred.

195 males and 123 females.  
43 males.  
9 males.  
7 males and 10 females.  
3 males.

From the increase which has taken place in the number of lunatics in this Colony during the last four years, and from European statistics, the Board calculate that the future increase of lunatics is likely to be about one to every thousand inhabitants.

10.  
400.

With reference to the second query in the instructions—"Whether the present buildings at Yarra Bend can be converted into an efficient asylum to meet such requirements?"—The Board have ascertained that the original stone buildings were built to accommodate thirty-three males and thirty females. The additional stone buildings, erected in 1856, were calculated to hold thirty males and twenty females, in both buildings one hundred and thirteen lunatics. The remaining two hundred and sixteen are accommodated in wooden buildings, in a tent, and in the day-rooms of the stone buildings, the institution being literally crammed.

1—1000.

33 males and 30 females.

30 males and 20 females.  
113.  
216.

The Board are of opinion that in their *present state*, none of these places are efficient for the accommodation of lunatics, the old stone buildings are built like gaols, the day-rooms dark and gloomy, lighted only at one end by a barred window, situated too high for the inmates to look out of. The associated dormitories similarly circumstanced, and the single cells like those of a strong prison. The new stone buildings were avowedly built for a female gaol, for which they are well-adapted, but not for the accommodation of lunatics. The wooden buildings have only one day-room for one hundred and thirty lunatics, with a row of cells on one side of it, and wooden partitions on the other side, and at each end. There are no windows in the walls of this room, which is lighted by a sky-light from the roof. The remaining

130.



wooden buildings consist of cells, lighted only through the doors, or by perforated boards above the doors, no windows in them except in the females' infirmary, a narrow corridor filled with beds, without a fireplace, and wholly unsuitable for such a purpose. The Board can only look upon the wooden buildings as a temporary expedient in lieu of proper accommodation in their present state; they are simply insecure prisons, with the chance of the inmates being burned. The yards are mostly confined in extent, and ill-adapted to the out-door recreation of the lunatics.

The Board look upon the whole establishment as a gloomy, cheerless, and insecure structure; wholly unfit for the reception and treatment of lunatics.

The Board are of opinion that, by opening one side of each of the present stone buildings, and inserting additional windows, by increasing the extent of the yards, having them thoroughly levelled, drained, and covered with gravel, and by the erection of broad verandahs in each of them, these portions of the present Asylum could be made available for the accommodation of about one hundred refractory and penal lunatics. The inclination of the ground, and want of space on the tongue of land where the present buildings are situated, would render it impossible to erect a structure *in connexion* with them, which would answer the required purposes; but a short distance up the reserve there is plenty of room for new buildings, and there a complete asylum, capable of containing three hundred lunatics, might be erected.

Mr. Gill estimates the cost of these alterations and buildings at about One hundred thousand pounds.

We have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servants,

(Signed)

W. McCREA,

*Chief Medical Officer.*

W. CHAMP,

*Inspector-General of Penal Establishments.*

JOHN GILL,

*Architect.*

The Hon. Chief Secretary,  
&c., &c.

100.

300.

£100,000.

[COPY.]

Public Works Office, Melbourne, 10th July, 1857.

SIR,

I have the honor to inform you that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to appoint you Chairman of the Board, composed of the gentlemen named in the margin, for the purpose of considering what accommodation is required for lunatics in this Colony, and whether the present buildings at the Yarra Bend can be converted into an efficient asylum to meet such requirements.

Inspector-General of  
Penal Establish-  
ments.  
John Gill, Esq., Ar-  
chitect.

I am to request you will be good enough to place yourself in communication with the members of the Board, and name the days on which it will be convenient for you to meet.

It being of importance that this subject should be brought to an issue before the consideration of the Estimates by the House of Assembly is closed; I am further to request that you will lose no time in furnishing Mr. Moore with the report of the Board on the matter.

I have, &amp;c.

(Signed) THOS. C. BALMAIN.

The Chief Medical Officer,  
&c., &c.