

1895.
VICTORIA.

R E P O R T

FROM

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON RAILWAYS

ON THE QUESTION OF

FURTHER EXTENSION OF RAILWAYS

IN THE

MALLEE DISTRICTS;

TOGETHER WITH THE

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDICES.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 25th July, 1895.

By Authority:

ROBT. S. BRAIN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

RAILWAYS STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT No. 1.—[6s.]

EXTRACTED FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY.

THURSDAY, 17TH JANUARY, 1895.

6. RAILWAY EXTENSION IN THE MALLEE DISTRICTS.—Mr. H. R. Williams moved, pursuant to notice, That the question of further extension of railways in the mallee districts be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for consideration and report.

Mr. McColl moved, as an amendment, That the words "railways in the mallee districts" be omitted, with a view to insert in place thereof the words "the railways which have been considered by the several Railway Committees or Sectional Committees, and have not been rejected by any of these bodies."

Debate ensued.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Debate continued.

Question—That the question of further extension of railways in the mallee districts be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways for consideration and report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

EWEN HUGH CAMERON, Esq., M.L.A., Chairman ;

The Hon. James Buchanan, M.L.C.,
John Balfour Burton, Esq., M.L.A.,
Albert William Craven, Esq., M.L.A.,
Albert Harris, Esq., M.L.A.,

The Hon. Donald Melville, M.L.C. (Vice-
Chairman),
The Hon. Edward Morey, M.L.C.,
William Arthur Trenwith, Esq., M.L.A.,
John Samuel White, Esq., M.L.A.

APPROXIMATE COST OF REPORT.

	£	s	d
Compilation.*			
Printing (1,000 copies)	188	0	0

* The compilation was a portion of the work of the Clerk of Committees, who is paid by annual salary.

INDEX TO THE REPORT.

MALLEE RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Paragraphs	Page
1. Reference of question of further extension of railways in the Mallee districts to Committee	v
2. Meetings held ; witnesses examined	v
3. Country inspected	v
4. Existing Mallee railways ; length and cost ; details of cost	v, vi
5. Financial results of existing Mallee lines	vii
Wheat traffic from Mallee lines.	
Total revenue.	
Profit and loss.	
Effect of local rates.	
6. Occupation of Mallee country	viii
Conditions of tenure.	
Compensation for improvements and for interest in lease.	
Compensation for clearing land.	
7. Developments in Mallee country	viii, ix
Present area of allotments.	
Statistics of cultivation.	
8. Permanency of Mallee as a wheat country	ix
9. New railways asked for	x
Benefit of railways in Mallee.	
Room for development in country served by existing railways.	
10. Locking up of Mallee lands	xi
11. Claims of block lessees	xi, xii
12. Committee's opinion on the question of further extension of railways in Mallee	xii
13. Information collected respecting extensions asked for—	xii-xix
(1) Quambatook extensions	xii, xiii
(2) Sea Lake extensions	xiii, xiv
(3) Birchip extensions	xiv-xvi
(4) Hopetoun extensions	xvi
(5) Jeparit extensions	xvii
(6) Netherby and Lorquon extensions	xviii
14. Mildura and Yelta extensions	xix-xxiii
15. Classification of land in central Mallee	xxiii
16. Direct communication with Mildura	xxiii
17. Want of system in past railway extension	xxiv
18. Difficulty of obtaining statistics relative to Mallee holdings	xxiv
19. Divisions in the Committee	xxiv

FURTHER EXTENSION OF RAILWAYS IN THE MALLEE DISTRICTS.

R E P O R T .

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS, to which the Legislative Assembly referred the question of further extension of railways in the Mallee Districts, have the honour to report as follows :—

1. This question was referred to the Committee on the 17th January last, under the provisions of section 11 of the *Railways Standing Committee Act 1893*, No. 1350, by which either House of Parliament is empowered to refer railway questions—other than particular lines—to the Committee for consideration and report. Reference of question to Committee.

2. The Committee have held 45 meetings in connexion with the question remitted to them, and have examined 90 witnesses, including Honorable Members of the Legislative Assembly ; the Engineer-in-Chief, and the Acting Traffic Manager of the Victorian Railways ; officers of the Crown Lands Department connected with the administration of the Mallee ; farmers, graziers, and others who lease mallee lands ; settlers at Mildura ; representatives of the various central railway leagues formed to promote the construction of a line to Mildura ; shire engineers ; and other persons interested in Mallee railway extension. The Committee have also been assisted by reports of the evidence taken by the first Railways Standing Committee, who examined several witnesses, including representatives of various trading and carrying firms interested in the Murray and Darling trade. This evidence, which has not yet been reported to Parliament, is now appended, copies having been printed by the first Committee. Meetings held. Witnesses examined.

3. Advantage was taken of the recent recess to inspect the country which would be traversed by an extension of any of the existing railways which tap the mallee country. The Committee have travelled from Quambatook 60 miles north to Waitchie, and 30 miles east from Waitchie to Swan Hill. The country along the eastern side of Lake Tyrrell and that lying north-west of Sea Lake to Myall Tank and Tyrrell has also been visited, as well as that lying east of Hopetoun as far as Minapre, north of Birchip as far as Marlbed, and north-east of Marlbed to Sea Lake. The Committee also journeyed from Hopetoun north to Yellangip, thence north to Tiejia, thence north-east to Kulkyne on the River Murray, and thence north-west to Mildura, and to Yelta, at the junction of the rivers Darling and Murray, returning through the Mallee, *viâ* "The Oaks," to Yellangip, thence to Pine Plains, and from that place in a southerly direction, *viâ* Albacutya, to Jeparit : the total distance travelled through mallee country has amounted to 566 miles. Country inspected.

The fatigue of these long journeys was greatly relieved by the ready help received from the settlers in the Mallee, and the Committee desire particularly to acknowledge the valuable assistance rendered to them by Mr. Lascelles, of Hopetoun, and his manager at Tyrrell Downs Station—Mr. Carruthers ; Mr. Anderson, M.L.A., of Waitchie ; Mr. Robertson, of Kulkyne ; the Messrs. Wood, of Lalbert ; Mr. Kersel and Mr. Scott, of Marlbed ; Mr. Carter, of Pine Plains ; Mr. McInnes, of Albacutya ; and also by the residents of Mildura.

4. During the last three or four years railway construction has proceeded rapidly in the Mallee districts, three-fourths of the money expended in the colony Existing Mallee lines.

during that period having been spent in providing railway facilities to meet the requirements of the new agricultural settlement there.

In addition to the older lines from Dimboola to Serviceton and from Kerang to Swan Hill, which serve a considerable area of mallee land, six new railways which tap the Mallee have been opened since the 1st January, 1893. These lines have a total length of 163½ miles, and have cost the State £299,643, or an average of £1,833 per mile. This amount does not include the cost of rolling-stock, which is estimated by the Department at about £264 per mile, thus adding about £43,000 to the capital cost of the 163½ miles which have been built.

Length, cost,
&c.

The following statement shows the length, cost, and date of opening of each line:—

Name of Line.			Date of Opening.	Length.	Cost per Mile.	Total Cost to 31st Dec., 1894.
				Miles.	£	£
1.	Warracknabeal to Beulah	... ..	5.1.93	22	2,361	51,942
2.	Donald to Birchip	... ..	28.3.93	32½	2,177	70,703
3.	Beulah to Hopetoun	... ..	6.3.94	16	1,899	30,384
4.	Dimboola to Jeparit	... ..	19.6.94	23	1,554	35,742
5.	Boort to Quambatook	... ..	7.8.94	22	1,732	38,104
6.	Wycheproof to Sea Lake	... ..	8.3.95	48	1,516	72,768
Totals			...	163½	1,833	299,643

Details of cost.
Appendix A.

A return is appended showing the details of the cost of these railways, which were all constructed on the "butty-gang" system. On the Beulah and Birchip lines, which were the two railways first built, the earthworks—side cuttings, main cuttings, and side ditches—cost 8½d. per cubic yard, the standard wages being fixed at 6s. per day. On the other lines the earthworks cost 7d. per cubic yard, the standard wages being 5s. per day.

In their Third General Report, recently presented to Parliament, the Committee refer to the manner in which these railways have been constructed. It is therein stated that "these lines have been built and equipped in an economical manner. They are, nevertheless, admirably adapted to meet the traffic requirements of the districts they serve, and although built at a cost per mile much below that of any railways hitherto made in Victoria, the works are substantial, and the lines are all laid with 60-lb. steel rails and redgum, box, or ironbark sleepers. During the wheat season some of the biggest train loads in the colony are carried over the mallee lines. Sand, or sand and gravel, has been used for ballast on some of the lines, but when the development of traffic warrants it, gravel or metal ballast can be readily substituted at a small additional expenditure."

Owing to the easy character of the mallee country hitherto opened up, the earthworks on the mallee lines have cost a comparatively small sum, more than half the amount spent on the lines being for the permanent-way materials—sleepers, rails, and fastenings. The Engineer-in-Chief has furnished the Committee with a list of materials used in building a mallee railway, which it would pay to take up and re-use in the construction of another line within a distance by rail of 100 miles, and after five years' service on the first line. The items are as follows:—

Item.	Average Original Cost per Mile.	Average Value per Mile to take up and remove.
	£	£
Fencing (line fenced complete)	90	55
Cattle-pits	30	15
Bridges	40	15
Culverts	30	15
Sleepers	400	250
Rails and fastenings (60lbs. steel)	670	550
Temporary station buildings	30	15
Water supply, signals, and telegraph	30	15
	1,320	930

5. In considering the question of extensions in the mallee country, the Committee have made careful inquiries as to the financial results obtained from the lines already built. Owing to the rapid manner in which the Mallee can be converted from its natural state into a wheat-field with the aid of the roller and the stump-jump plough, the new lines have been able to yield substantial returns to the railway revenue much more quickly than is generally the case when railways are built into undeveloped agricultural districts. Owing also to the fact that a very large proportion of the wheat grown in the Mallee is sent to the sea-board, every ton carried by the Department from these new railways has added about 15s. to the railway revenue. As showing the importance to the Victorian railways of the wheat traffic generally, it may be mentioned that in 1893-4 the Department carried about 3,000,000 bags; the average haul was 154 miles, and the revenue obtained amounted to £223,000.

A statement is attached to this Report showing the wheat traffic on the new mallee lines for the nine months ending 31st March, 1895, and the revenue derived therefrom, also the quantity stacked at stations and the revenue which it is estimated will be received from the carriage of the same. This return shows that the Department obtained £76,840 10s. for the carriage of 102,950 tons 10 cwt. of wheat.

Another return is appended, giving the revenue derived from each line from the date of opening until the end of June, 1895, which shows that the Railway Department has received £239,103 from the mallee railways mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Of this sum £57,911 has been credited to the extensions, and £181,192 to the old railways.

A further return, attached hereto, shows the profit and loss on the working of each line from the date of opening to the 30th June, 1895. Taking the lines as a whole they give the following results :—

	£	£
Capital cost, including rolling-stock ... ..	...	338,242
“Local” revenue earned	57,911	
“Local” working expenses	22,694	
	<hr/>	
Gross profit	£35,217	
Interest on capital cost at 4 per cent. per annum ...	19,153	
	<hr/>	
Net profit	£16,064	

The lines which show the best results are those first opened, viz., the Warracknabeal to Beulah and Hopetoun line, and the Donald to Birchip extension. The Hopetoun line is purely a mallee railway, and shows a net profit of £10,975. The Birchip extension is fed from the Mallee, although it does not actually pass through mallee land; this line shows a net profit of £4,485. The Sea Lake extension also shows a profit of £676, but the line has only been open during the past three months. The remaining lines have earned more than sufficient “local” revenue to pay “local” working expenses, but not quite enough to cover also the interest on capital cost, the shortage in each instance being as follows :—

	£
Dimboola to Jeparit	8
Boort to Quambatook	64
	<hr/>
Total shortage	£72

In considering these figures the fact must not be lost sight of that local rates have been charged on every line until the 11th December, 1894, when they were abolished on the extensions to Hopetoun and Birchip. The effect of these local rates on the railway revenue, and the Committee’s views regarding them, is fully set forth in paragraph 2 of their Third General Report. Under the through rates, the Department will only receive 9d. instead of 4s. 6d. for every ton of wheat sent from Hopetoun to Warracknabeal and thence to Melbourne; and it will only receive 2s. 4d. instead of 4s. on every ton sent from Birchip to Donald and thence to Melbourne, a proportionate reduction being made on wheat sent from the other stations on the lines.

Should the traffic not increase the revenue earned by each extension will be very much reduced, while the interest charge and the working expenses will remain the same as when the local rates were levied.

Occupation of
mallee country.

6. The conditions of tenure under which the mallee country is now occupied and the developments that have taken place in that portion of the colony during the past few years have a most important bearing on the question of further railway extension therein.

Conditions of
tenure.

About 12,000,000 acres are comprised within this territory, which, prior to the year 1883, was occupied in large squattages, held under annual licence from the Crown. Under such an uncertain tenure, and with bad seasons, the country rapidly deteriorated, until, in 1883, it had almost been abandoned to the rabbit and wild dog. In that year the Mallee Pastoral Leases Act was passed. The object of this measure is described in the Report of the "Mallee" Committee (1891) as being "to get rid of the rabbits and wild dogs, to improve the country, and preserve it for the Crown, for ultimate disposal in 1903."

Under the Act 9,407,760 acres were divided into blocks, varying in size, and 2,127,740 acres—forming the southern and eastern portion—into allotments, varying also in size, but not exceeding in any case 20,000 acres. Each block was subdivided into two parts, "A" and "B." Persons who had been in occupation of mallee country for two years previously were given the first right to take up land, the right to lease blocks not so taken up being sold at auction. The purchaser at auction was entitled to obtain a lease of one portion—either "A" or "B" as he elected—for a term to expire not later than twenty years from the 1st December, 1883, and it was a condition that he should hold the other half of the block as "occupier" for a period of five years, and then surrender it back to the Crown, having cleared it of vermin. The lease of the blocks was to be granted for pastoral purposes, and it was enacted that at the termination of the same the land and all improvements thereon should revert absolutely to the Crown. Certain improvements of a permanent character, made on either the leased land or the occupied block, have then to be paid for in accordance with regulations made by the Governor in Council.

Compensation
for improve-
ments and
interest in lease.

The leases contain certain covenants substantially the same for the blocks and the allotments. One of these covenants is that the lessee shall not cultivate, assign, sublet, or subdivide without the consent of the Board, signified in writing; another that the Crown may resume possession of any leased land after giving three years' notice, on paying the lessee for his interest in the lease and for improvements of a permanent character—houses, fences, wells, reservoirs, tanks, and dams. The sum paid for improvements is not to exceed the sum expended thereon by the lessee, and is determined in accordance with regulations made by the Governor in Council, while the compensation to be paid to the lessee for his interest in the lease has to be determined in the manner provided by the Lands Compensation Statute.

Compensation
for clearing
land.

There was no provision in the Act of 1883 for payment to the lessees for clearing the land, in fact the debates in Parliament indicate that the inclusion of "clearing" in the list of improvements to be paid for, was then expressly refused. In December, 1885, however, Parliament passed an amending Mallee Act by which lessees of blocks and allotments were allowed at the expiration of their leases to claim from the incoming tenant a sum not exceeding £30 per mile for wire-net fencing, and not exceeding 10s. per acre for the clearing of their land.

In 1889 the tenure of the five-year blocks occupied by the twenty-year lessees reverted to the Crown, and another amending Act was passed, under which these "occupied" blocks, comprising some 4,500,000 acres, were dealt with. An area of 426,350 acres was transferred from the blocks to the allotments to supply the growing demand for wheat land, the remaining area being returned to the blocks, to be dealt with under the conditions of the Principal Act.

Developments in
mallee country.

7. Owing to the introduction of the mallee roller, the stump-jump plough, and other appliances, by means of which the mallee can be quickly and cheaply cleared and cultivated, and owing also to favorable seasons and the prices ruling for wheat, a great demand for mallee land set in about the year 1889, and permission was given to several block lessees to subdivide and cultivate their land. By this means an area of 755,558 acres has been added to the allotments, and a further area of 230,338 acres

has since been resumed by the Government on payment of a sum of £18,000 as compensation to the lessees. The present area in the allotments is now 3,854,911 Present area of allotments. acres, made up as follows :—

Original area divided into allotments under 1883 Act ...	Acres.	2,127,740
“ Occupied ” blocks which reverted to the Crown in 1889, and were added to allotments ...		426,350
Land which block lessees have permission to subdivide and cultivate ...		755,558
Land resumed by the Crown on payment of compensation to lessees ...		230,338
All other land added ...		314,925
Total area in allotments ...		3,854,911

Lessees can obtain permission to cultivate any of this land on making a formal application to the Board to be allowed to do so. The Crown Lands Department estimates that two-thirds of the area, or 2,569,940 acres, are fit for cultivation, and the Government Statist has furnished a return showing that 583,652 acres were under crop in 1894-5 ; the number of cultivated farms being 1,813. The yield from the area under cultivation is given as follows, viz. :—Wheat, 514,529 acres, yielding 4,117,588 bushels, an average of 8 bushels to the acre ; oats, 10,575 acres, yielding 167,259 bushels ; barley, 2,023 acres, yielding 38,254 bushels ; hay, 37,559 acres, yielding 35,148 tons ; other tillage, 357 acres ; and land in fallow, 18,609 acres. Statistics of cultivation.

In order that it may be seen what effect the increased cultivation in the Mallee has had on the wheat yield of the whole colony the Committee have also obtained from the Government Statist the following statistics for the quinquennial periods ending 1894-5 and 1887-8 :—

Year.	Area under Crop.	Yield.	Year.	Area under Crop.	Yield.
	Acres.	Bushels.		Acres.	Bushels.
1894-5	1,373,668	11,445,878	1883-4	1,104,392	15,570,245
1893-4	1,469,359	15,255,200	1884-5	1,096,354	10,433,146
1892-3	1,342,504	14,814,645	1885-6	1,020,082	9,170,538
1891-2	1,332,683	13,679,268	1886-7	1,052,685	12,100,036
1890-1	1,145,163	12,751,295	1887-8	1,232,943	13,328,765
Totals ...	6,663,377	67,946,286	Totals ...	5,506,456	60,602,730

These statistics show the development that has taken place in the Mallee during the past few years, for it must be remembered that there was very little wheat grown there until after the year 1887. More than one-third of the total area under crop, and more than one-third of the quantity of wheat raised in Victoria in 1894-5, was in the Mallee.

8. While fully recognising the value to the colony of the progress made in developing the Mallee, the Committee have felt it their duty to closely investigate the prospects of the district as a permanent wheat-field before recommending the construction of other lines between those already built. The past expenditure on Mallee railways has been incurred on estimates of revenue based on a wheat traffic, and the existing lines are now too close together unless the country continues to grow wheat. Permanency of Mallee as wheat country.

Although some of the white sandy land will, according to the evidence, only grow two crops, experienced witnesses have stated that the best soil will retain its productiveness for many years if properly farmed. The land must be cropped consecutively for the first three or four years to prevent the mallee shooting up again, but it is then necessary to put it in fallow and rest it. There is, unfortunately, no provision in the leases under which the land is held to regulate the number of consecutive crops which may be taken off the land ; and it rests entirely at the discretion of the lessee as to how many crops he will put in.

In its natural state the Mallee is of very little value, even for grazing purposes, but when cleared it grows good grass, even after yielding four or five crops of wheat. There is every indication that in 1903, when the present leases fall in, unless steps

are taken to regulate the number of consecutive crops which may be taken off the land, the country will have been transformed, first, into a wheat-field, and, having been exhausted through constant cropping, will have passed through the wheat-growing stage and have reverted to a grazing area; greatly improved in carrying capacity, no doubt, but still of much less value as a gathering ground for railways than it was as a wheat-field.

New railways
asked for.

9. Applications for several new railways have been submitted to, and carefully investigated by, the Committee. The extensions asked for being as follows:—

Quambatook to Lalbert.
Quambatook to Waitchie, or Swan Hill to Waitchie.
Sea Lake to "Tyrrell."
Birchip to Marlbed or to Curyo.
Birchip to Minapre, or Hopetoun to Minapre.
Jeparit towards or to Albacutya.
Jeparit or Salisbury to Netherby.
An extension through the Mallee to Mildura and Yelta.

Benefit of
railways in
Mallee.

In the Report of the "Mallee" Committee previously referred to the opinion is expressed "that the promiscuous settlement of agriculturists throughout the Mallee could only end in disaster, as it has been clearly shown that agricultural settlement there, to be successful, must be compressed together—should creep inwards gradually from the fringe, and be accompanied as far as possible by railway accommodation and the conservation of water for stock and domestic purposes." They add that "all the evidence shows that for the permanent success of wheat-growing in this district there must be railway accommodation within a fair day's journey."

These views are confirmed by the knowledge gained by the Railways Standing Committee, though the distance which a grower can afford to cart depends on the price of wheat and the yield he obtains. The opinions of the farmers in the Mallee vary greatly as to what is a fair day's journey, but from ten to fifteen miles to a station is generally named. The distance which can be travelled in a day depends on the number and extent of the sand ridges to be crossed. Some of the farmers do their own carting; but a large proportion have their wheat carted by contractors. The explanation given of this is that at the time the carting has to be done the farmer is busy stripping, burning off, and clearing new land, to add to the area under crop, or ploughing, and he needs his horses on the farm. The rate for carting by road varies, but is generally about $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per bag, or 7d. per ton per mile. Given a railway, with a local rate he pays $1\frac{1}{8}$ d. per ton per mile, with a uniform terminal charge of 1s. per ton, which brings the rate up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. or $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. per ton per mile. It will thus be seen that the railway charge, even with the local rate, means a saving of 5d. or $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile to the wheat-grower.

Room for
development in
country served
by existing
railways.

It has been shown that the State has already expended £338,242 in providing railways to serve the new wheat districts. An area of 1,703,100 acres is within ten miles of existing railways. This area is not nearly developed as a wheat-field and is more than sufficient to accommodate all the present settlers who have taken up land in the Mallee with the intention of cultivating it. When travelling over the existing lines, every one of which was inspected, the Committee were struck with the large areas, in close proximity to railways, which had either never been cleared, or which had been rolled down and apparently abandoned. Several explanations were given of this. One reason was that a large number of allotments had been taken up by speculators, without any intention of cultivating, but who simply held the land for a higher price, while the *bonâ fide* grower was obliged to go on to land more distant from a station. Another explanation was that a great deal of the land was taken up by men of very limited means, who could only put in a small area at first, but who would gradually increase it year by year. The explanation given to account for the scrub being permitted to spring up again was that inexperienced men had taken up the land, and rolled down a larger area than they found they could cultivate. There is no obligation on the lessee of an allotment in the agricultural area to cultivate or improve his holding, the only conditions being that he shall pay his rent and keep the land clear of vermin. In the opinion of the Committee these conditions should be strictly enforced in all cases where the land has

been taken up for speculative purposes. The crops sown on land which has been cleared and cultivated in proximity to uncleared allotments suffer serious injury from the rabbits, which obtain shelter and increase rapidly in the uncleared areas.

10. In addition to the great room for development in the agricultural allotments served by existing lines, the conditions under which the land is held have to be considered. In dealing with the question as to whether they could recommend any of the new railways asked for, the Committee were at once brought face to face with the facts that the Mallee has passed out of the hands of the State until 1903, that the blocks cannot be cultivated without the consent in writing of the Board of Land and Works, and that Parliament has stopped the subdivision and sale of land by the block lessees. It is obvious that a railway cannot be projected through mallee wheat land if that product cannot be grown to furnish traffic to the line. The Crown Lands Department has furnished the Committee with a map of the Mallee country showing (in pink) what land can be cultivated upon the lessees obtaining permission from the Board, and (in yellow) what land is not permitted to be cultivated. A copy of that map is attached to this Report, and it shows clearly how the "locked" areas affect the various extensions asked for, as well as mallee railways already built. Locking up of Mallee lands.

11. The Committee have examined several block lessees as to the terms on which they would allow the State to resume the land leased by them, or what concessions they would make to the State if permission were given to them to cultivate or subdivide the same. Their evidence is attached, as well as offers made in writing to the Committee. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 151 to 174, and Appendices F to H.) Claims of block lessees.

As explained in paragraph 6, the resumption (except for public purposes) of any land held by the block lessees necessitates the payment of compensation, not only for certain permanent improvements, but also for the lessee's interest in the unexpired term of the lease. In 1883 the original block lessees obtained their leases for pastoral purposes at a low rental based on the grazing capacity of the land, but since that year many of the blocks have changed hands, and the present lessees have, in some instances, paid large sums to the outgoing lessees for the transfer of leases. The value of the land for agricultural purposes has since been discovered, and the lessees now claim compensation for their interest, on an agricultural basis. As already pointed out, the amount to be paid is fixed as provided by the Lands Compensation Statute. With regard to the permanent improvements which the State has to pay for, the Lands Department claims that only improvements which have been authorized in writing by the Board have to be paid for; the lessees allege that this is a mistake, and that they can put what permanent improvements they think fit—of the class specified in the Act—on their land, and the State has to pay, either when the land is resumed, or at the expiration of the lease in 1903. If the latter contention is correct, the liability of the State is likely to be very much larger than the Department anticipates.

Most of the lessees prefer to have permission to subdivide their land, alleging that they will speedily settle the country in small areas, but Parliament has, after full inquiry by a Select Committee, stopped the subdivision of land by block lessees. If permission is given to the block lessees to cultivate, the importance of the provision contained in the amending Mallee Act of 1885—that lessees of blocks or allotments can claim, from incoming tenants, at the expiration of their leases, a sum not exceeding 10s. per acre for the clearing of their land—is made apparent by the following evidence given before the Committee by Mr. Lascelles :—

"4505. Supposing that such a thing as this arises, you clear on a certain block two or three thousand acres, take two or three crops of wheat and put it to grass—at the end of the lease you do not want to continue, who is to pay this if no new tenant comes—is the State to pay?—The State need not pay.

"4506. Suppose a man comes in?—He cannot come in without paying me. I could remain in possession of that land if there is no incoming tenant to pay me for that improvement.

"4507. On what terms are you to remain on?—On whatever terms I like—no rent at all.

"4508. That is a queer trap we are going into after all?—I did not make the law. I can tell you something more in relation to that. These Acts are very complicated, and from reading the evidence of the officers of the Department, I believe I know the Mallee Act better than they do; not only that, but supposing this man had cleared 2,000 acres of mallee as you put it, he has a claim against the incoming tenant for the clearing of that land. But he has also made a dam on that land, we will say of 3,000 yards; the State has to pay him for that dam, and necessarily an incoming tenant needs to be found to pay him for the clearing, but the State has to pay the water improvements. I notice that questions were put to an officer from the Mallee Department, in answer to which he says that it is necessary for the block lessee to get the consent of the Department to put down a tank or make any improvements. That is not so; there is no consent necessary. If I like I can put down £100,000 worth of tanks without the consent of any

Minister, and at the end of the term I have to be paid for them. Mr. Trenwith says—‘ My impression has always been that the highest possible claim against the Government was 10s.’ and the reply was—‘ That only refers to the clearing and cultivating. As to the other improvements, it says—“ All permanent improvements.” Ten shillings is only for one item, the other has to be valued and paid for. The block-holder gives notice when he is going to put down a tank or erect fencing, or clear the box flats.’ I say that is not so, and that it is not required under the Act to obtain any consent for these improvements on the leasehold. What he was driving his head against is that where a block-holder occupied half of his land for five years he had to get consent for the occupation block, but not on the leasehold area.

* * * * *

“ 4469. At Jeparit we passed through the country and took the evidence of a farmer who had a block of 640 acres. We asked him what was his rent, and he said—‘ I lease from the block-holder—I pay nothing. The terms are that I clear the mallee for the right of two crops.’ What would you estimate that man paid for clearing the mallee?—It is impossible for me to give what it may have cost him—I have never done that myself. I can tell you what it has cost me. It has cost me as high as 12s. an acre, and the lowest would be 4s. It is not only the original rolling down; that 4s. is afterwards increased by having to pick up if you have a bad burn, and cut shoots two or three years after—that is all included in the clearing of the land.

“ 4470. I know you approve of looking after the State’s interest; do you think this 10s. an acre is a serious business, and that they may come against us for the whole of the land coloured yellow?—The State has not to pay the money; it is the incoming tenant who pays the money.

“ 4471. But the State will get less rent?—But the country is in an improved state, and the incoming tenant has an improved property in various ways.”

One of the lessees, Mr. Wood, when under examination expressed his willingness to forego any claim to compensation for “ clearing ” if given the right to cultivate ; his evidence was as follows :—

“ 4287. You look on it that the clearing about squares it?—Yes. If they allowed us to cultivate, and did not increase the rent, we would abandon all claim as to our improvements. I think the last witness did not understand that ; he thought he would be charged 3d. an acre rent. I think most of the other block-holders would be inclined to give it on those terms.”

Committee's opinion re further railway extension.

12. The Committee are of opinion that the resumption of any more land in the Mallee, and the payment of compensation therefor, is unnecessary until the agricultural areas served by existing railways are properly settled and further developed; and they desire to call the attention of Parliament to the desirableness, when dealing with the question of Mallee settlement, of endeavouring to encourage the cultivation and occupation of the country which has already been supplied with railway facilities. The Committee think that extension of railways in the Mallee districts should not proceed further until Parliament has dealt with the land tenure and compensation questions.

Information collected respecting extensions.

13. Although the Committee are not able to recommend that any more railways should be built in the Mallee at present, they desire to place on record, for the information of Parliament, the following statistics and other information which they have collected with regard to the various lines asked for :—

Quambatook to Lalbert, Ultima, and Waitchie.

(1) QUAMBATOOK EXTENSIONS.—Extensions of the existing railway which terminates at Quambatook, a station 191 miles from Melbourne, have been asked for as follows :—

Length, estimated cost, &c.

Name of Line.	Length.	Steepest Grade.	Sharpest Curve.	Engineer-in-Chief's Estimate of Cost to open the Line.	
				Per Mile.	Total.
	Miles.	1 in—	Chains Radius.	£	£
Quambatook to Lalbert	15	75	100	1,800	27,000
Lalbert, <i>vid</i> Ultima, to Waitchie ...	22½	75	100	1,800	40,500
Quambatook to Waitchie, <i>vid</i> Ultima	37½	75	100	1,800	67,500

Country inspected and evidence taken.

Proposal to start from Swan Hill.

The Committee have inspected the country from Quambatook to Lalbert, thence to Ultima and Waitchie, returning from Waitchie to Swan Hill ; they also took evidence at Quambatook, Lalbert, Waitchie, and Swan Hill, at which places several farmers and others interested in the extensions were examined. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 11 to 33.) At Swan Hill it was urged that a line should be built thence to Waitchie instead of from Quambatook, but the Committee think that if it is

decided to make a railway at any time to Waitchie the proper course for it will be from Quambatook. That route will be shorter, and therefore cheaper for the farmers, and the railway will not be subject to loss of traffic through river competition. A good deal of wheat is at present going by river to Echuca from Swan Hill.

The Railway Department has permanently surveyed a line from Quambatook to Lalbert, and the permanent survey is proceeding and will shortly be completed from Lalbert, *viâ* Ultima, to Waitchie. The existing line, which ends at Quambatook, has only been open since August, 1894, and is fed from the Mallee, although it does not pass through mallee land. For three or four miles after leaving Quambatook the survey of the proposed extension traverses open box plains, now used for grazing and stated to be fit for cultivation; thence onwards to Waitchie the country is for the most part good agricultural land with occasional sand ridges and belts of pine. To the west of Lalbert it is stated that there are considerable areas of open plain country suitable for grazing and at present used for that purpose. The maps of the Crown Lands Department class the whole of the country traversed by the proposed extension and for twenty miles beyond Waitchie as being within the best parts of the Mallee, and a large proportion of it is, no doubt, well adapted for wheat-growing.

The Committee obtained statistics of the number of holdings and the area cultivated in the district that would be served by an extension of twenty miles from Quambatook. The area they marked off started ten miles from Quambatook, and was twenty miles long and twenty miles wide—ten miles being on either side of the projected line. The Lands Department states that within this area there are now 38 mallee allotments of 320 acres each; 110 of 640 acres each; 17 of 1,280 acres; and 34 varying in size from 2,560 acres to 10,880 acres each—a total of 199 allotments; and also parts of four blocks held by W. Macfarlane, 19,000 acres; R. G. Wood, 36,000 acres; and W. Wood, 10,000 acres. The Government Statist gives (from the Agricultural Statistics of 1894–5) the number of cultivated holdings in the same area as 79, and the area under cultivation as 22,718 acres, yielding 220,413 bushels of wheat, 4,861 bushels of oats, and 3,625 bushels of barley, a total of 228,899 bushels, or 6,350 tons of cereals; and also 1,566 tons of hay; the average yield of wheat being 10·7 bushels to the acre. Statistics were also collected by the Lalbert Railway League for an area starting eight miles from Quambatook, twenty miles long by eighteen miles wide. These were sent to the Committee and are also for last season; they have been carefully compiled, and are, in the opinion of Committee, reliable; it is stated, however, that all those cultivating are not included, some farmers not having returned the schedules sent to them. These statistics show that the area in occupation within the boundaries mentioned was 81,724 acres; the area under crop 27,721 acres, an increase of 7,327 acres as compared with the previous year in the same area; the yield being 53,942 bags of wheat, or 5,993 tons. The yield obtained in one instance is stated at 22 bushels to the acre. The live stock returns are as follows:—Horses 615, cattle 732, sheep 4,639, pigs 235.

While these figures show that a good deal of land has been already placed under crop the yield from which would be available for an extension if made, it must be borne in mind that the surveyed route runs from 16 to 20 miles from the Sea Lake extension, and from 17½ to 21 miles from the Swan Hill line, and that all those who are now growing wheat beyond Quambatook take it to that station, to the Sea Lake line, or to the Swan Hill line. The distance from a station given by the farmers themselves in their statistics varies from 8 to 27 miles. In only one case is it 27 miles; there are 26 who have to cart from 20 to 25 miles. These distances, in many cases, could be shortened if proper roads were made; but the roads wander all round the blocks as a rule, greatly lengthening the distance to a station.

The area which can be placed under cultivation, moreover, is confined to the east of the line; nearly the whole of the land on the west, from Lalbert to Waitchie and on beyond Waitchie, being locked and in the hands of block lessees until 1903. Two of these lessees, Mr. A. Anderson, M.L.A., and Mr. Wood, were examined by the Committee, and the terms they are prepared to offer are set forth in the Minutes of Evidence, pages 161 to 164, and 172 to 174. Mr. Wood has also submitted an offer in writing, which is appended. (See Appendix F.)

(2) SEA LAKE EXTENSION.—The construction of a line twenty miles in length, from Sea Lake to "Tyrrell," has been urged on the Committee by the settlers who have recently taken up land for wheat-growing on blocks 27B, 27A, and 26B. The following

particulars as to cost of the line, which has been permanently surveyed, have been furnished by the Engineer-in-Chief :—

Length, estimated cost, &c.	Name of Line.	Length.	Steepest Grade.	Sharpest Curve.	Engineer-in-Chief's Estimate of Cost to open the Line.	
					Per Mile.	Total.
		Miles.	1 in—	Chains Radius.	£	£
	Sea Lake, north-west direct for twenty miles	20	75	40	2,100	42,000
	Sea Lake, north-west by Myall Tank for twenty miles	20	...	...	2,100	42,000

Country inspected and evidence taken.

The Committee have inspected the country from Sea Lake to Myall Tank, and thence northwards for twenty miles ; they also took evidence at Sea Lake regarding the line. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 101 to 108.)

Description of country and quality of soil.

The proposed extension starts from Sea Lake, the terminus of the Mallee railway from Wycheproof, 47 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles in length, which was only opened for traffic on the 8th March last. The blocks which the proposed line traverses have been divided into allotments by the Government, and offered for lease at a rent of 3d. per acre. The first block, 27B, was surrendered to the Crown by Mr. Lascelles in consideration for the completion by the Government of the Beulah to Hopetoun railway. The other two blocks, 27A and 26B, were "five-year" blocks, which have reverted to the Crown. The country is nearly all dense mallee, with sandy rises, and the soil along the route of the line is of good quality, and mostly well adapted for agricultural purposes ; but from the evidence obtained by the Committee it would appear that a large portion of the land to the west of the line is unsuitable for cultivation. This evidence is borne out by the maps furnished by the Lands and the Railway Departments. Most of the good land to the west is already served by the line to Sea Lake. Starting ten miles from that point there is a very small area taken up, and nearly all the land to the west of the line in 27A and 26B is still available for leasing in allotments ; some of it has been taken up and then thrown back on the Department. Some witnesses allege that the Government have cut up the land into too small areas, and that, though there is a lot of poor land, there is also good agricultural land. They also allege that if the blocks had been properly cut up, and in larger areas, with good and inferior land together, the greater part of it could have been profitably occupied. To the east of the proposed railway the land appears to be mostly of good quality, and it is nearly all occupied ; but the area is limited, as the surveyed route runs from two to seven miles from Lake Tyrrell, which is fourteen miles in length, and covers an area of about 50,800 acres. All the land beyond the northern boundary of 26B is in the hands of block lessees, and cannot at present be cultivated, even if suitable for wheat-growing.

Statistics.

Starting ten miles from Sea Lake, for twenty miles north and ten miles east and west of the proposed direct line, the Lands Department states that there are 100 mallee allotments of 500 acres each ; and parts of three blocks leased by E. H. Lascelles, 66,000 acres ; A. McEdward, 6,500 acres ; and H. Creswick, 6,500 acres. The area under crop or being prepared for cultivation is very small, the district being newly occupied. No statistics are available as to the area cultivated or the yield. The farmers who had a crop last season state that they obtained about three bags to the acre.

Birchip extensions.

(3) BIRCHIP EXTENSIONS.—Several extensions northwards from Birchip, a station 214 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Melbourne, have been asked for. The Engineer-in-Chief has furnished the following particulars as to cost, &c., based on knowledge of the country, there being no survey :—

Length and estimated cost.	Name of Line.	Length.	Engineer-in-Chief's Estimate of Cost to open the Line.	
			Per Mile.	Total.
		Miles.	£	£
	Birchip to Marlbed	10	1,800	18,000
	Birchip to five miles beyond Marlbed	15	1,800	27,000
	Birchip to Curyo	13	1,800	23,400
	Birchip to Minapre	31	1,800	55,800

The Committee have inspected the country from Birchip to Marlbed, thence northwards for five miles, and thence north-easterly to Sea Lake. They also took evidence at Birchip and in Melbourne respecting the proposed extensions. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 97 to 101, p. 108, and p. 164.)

Country inspected and evidence taken.

Leaving Birchip, which is now a town of considerable size, the proposed line passes for ten miles through open plain country; but there is mallee land immediately to the west and a few miles to the east. After leaving Marlbed, where there is a station homestead and a State school, the country is all mallee, and the soil is almost all well adapted for wheat-growing. On the route travelled by the Committee the land was uniformly of excellent quality, and the evidence obtained tends to show that the land between Marlbed and Minapre is all good, with the exception of sandy patches of limited extent.

Description of country and quality of soil.

The Committee have not been able to obtain reliable statistics for the area which would be served by a line running north or north-west from Birchip; but the evidence shows that the land which may be cultivated is all taken up south of block 48B, and a large area is under crop. The Government Statist has supplied the following statistics for the parishes of Towma, Marlbed, Kinabulla, Curyo, Willangie, Tunjie, Watchupga, and Cutchu, viz.:—Area under cultivation, 54,700 acres; yield therefrom, 441,862 bushels of cereals and 3,308 tons of hay. The cereals grown were wheat, oats, and barley. The average yield per acre of wheat was 8·9 bushels. Two of these parishes abut on existing lines, so the figures given can only indicate that the land is being cleared and cultivated to a considerable extent.

Statistics.

The products from the parishes mentioned in the foregoing statistics are now taken to the Birchip station, the Hopetoun line, or the Sea Lake line. Presuming a line were run north-westerly from Birchip, midway between the Sea Lake and Hopetoun railways, it would have a gathering ground which is limited on the west by the the Hopetoun line and on the east by the railway to Sea Lake. The following are the distances between the two lines—at Birchip, 47 miles; at Marlbed, 41 miles; at five miles beyond Marlbed, 40 miles; at Minapre, 31½ miles.

Distance from other lines.

The following evidence regarding this extension was given by Mr. Lascelles:—

“4526. Did you say you had some particulars which would be valuable to the Committee?—I said I would like to put this map in. I have taken a straight line from Birchip to Minapre—the distance is 30 miles. I have made cross-sections every five miles, as shown on the plan. I have shown the distance in to those cross-sections from the two lines on either side of it. In the first five miles from Birchip it is twenty miles to the Sea Lake railway line at its nearest point; that is not necessarily a railway station, it may be more than that to a station. From the Hopetoun line it is 25 miles; the next five miles is 22 miles from the Hopetoun line and twenty miles from the Sea Lake. It goes on in that manner, and to illustrate it more clearly I have shown the exact gathering ground for the Birchip and Minapre line. I have taken a radius at the terminus of only nine miles from Minapre because it cuts in at one portion five miles off into sand, and I am allowing for that bit of bad country. The total of the figures is that the line commands 334,000 acres without, in my opinion, interfering with the gathering ground for other lines. Taking the basis that a farmer should not have to cart his wheat more than ten miles, I show that there are 334,000 acres of cultivatable land within the area commanded by that railway. That based at 10 bushels to the acre comes to 90,270 tons of wheat as the possibilities of that line in any single year. The Committee of course may make what deductions they like from these possibilities; that is a matter for their own calculation, but I am confident of this, that if the Minapre country is settled under my system, which provides that every man who purchases from me clears one-third the first year, one-third the second year, and one-third the third year, those possibilities will be nearly reached. I have had the figures checked by an expert and can vouch for them as being absolutely correct.”

Apart from the question of interference with existing railways, the gathering ground of this extension is at present still further limited by the fact that a few miles north of Marlbed to the immediate east of the extension, there are two large blocks, containing 82,560 acres, which the lessees, Messrs. Adams and Kersel, have no permission to cultivate. Mr. Kersel was examined as to the terms on which he was prepared to deal with the Government, and his evidence on the point is appended. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 155 to 161, and p. 174.)

Lands locked up: Terms offered by lessees.

The Committee are informed that the farmers and others who want the line fifteen miles from Birchip, *viâ* Marlbed, would be prepared to guarantee the interest on the cost of its construction and any loss arising from its working and that they will make the earthworks on the line at the rate of 3d. per cubic yard; the price to be paid by the Government is estimated at 8½d. per cubic yard. Mr. Lascelles also has offered to hand over to the Government allotments 659 and 660, comprising 38,000

Offer to guarantee the line.

Offer to relinquish lease of land.

acres (rights of subdivision and cultivation being transferred to a similar area in one of his other mallee blocks) if a line is made from Birchip to Minapre. He further states that he is willing to enter into a substantial guarantee that 10,000 acres of mallee land, in addition to that already rolled, will be cleared within ten miles of Minapre this coming season; and, he adds, that the "very cream of the mallee country is to be found within that area." He also states that he is willing that only half the line shall be constructed until such time as there are 30,000 acres cleared for cultivation within eight miles of each side of the last fifteen miles. Mr. Lascelles' letters are appended. (See Appendix G.)

Hopetoun extensions.

(4) HOPETOUN EXTENSIONS.—No extension has been asked for from Hopetoun northwards, except the through line to the Murray, the present settlement to the north being served by the existing railway. The farmers to the north-east of Hopetoun and Mr. Lascelles, who has obtained permission to subdivide blocks 48 A and B, have urged an extension from Hopetoun to Minapre. The Engineer-in-Chief estimates the cost of this line, which would be sixteen and a half miles in length, at £29,700, or £1,800 a mile.

Inspection and evidence.

The Committee have inspected the country between Hopetoun and Minapre, and have taken evidence at Hopetoun respecting the proposed line. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 35 to 42.)

Description of country and quality of soil.

The country through which this railway would pass is all within the area held under lease by Mr. E. H. Lascelles. The land along the route is of excellent quality, but only a small portion of it has yet been cultivated beyond a radius of ten miles from the Hopetoun station.

Mr. Lascelles, who was examined at Hopetoun, gave the following evidence respecting the country traversed:—

"1030. What would the country through which you propose the line to pass be fit for?—There is no better mallee country in Victoria. This Lake Corrong run is one of the few runs that have been in constant occupation, and there has always been some one in charge of it who has stopped bush fires; so that this mallee is what is known as green mallee, and that is the great secret of mallee farming. If you have green mallee you can get a splendid burn, and that burn has a great deal to do with good crops; if you get a heavy stubble after a good burn, you will get a good burn in the second and third years; a good burn in the first instance is the great secret of mallee farming."

Statistics.

The Lands Department states that within the area that would be served by this line there are ten allotments of 600 acres each; seven of 17,000 acres each; one of 9,500 acres; and one of 5,000 acres; and parts of two blocks, 15,000 acres. Mr. Lascelles gave the following evidence in Melbourne with regard to the future possibilities of the line and the present settlement:—

"4526. * * * I have also shown the Hopetoun to Minapre extension, which is in blue, and that shows that 171,000 acres are commanded by that line. The possibilities being 46,216 tons of wheat at 10 bushels to the acre. I was asked by letter for Hopetoun to Minapre statistics. In my evidence before I stated to the Committee that practically beyond ten miles from Hopetoun there was no settlement at present; that people at the low price of wheat had got to the limit of cultivatable land because of the want of a railway; but I would point out that exactly the same thing occurred when the Beulah to Hopetoun line was commenced in 1892. At that time there were only 100 acres under cultivation on the whole of my country up there, whereas now there are about 40,000 or 50,000 acres under cultivation. The two years' existence of that railway led to that settlement, and at the same time the railway has been the best paying one in the colony of the new railways."

Offer to guarantee the line.

Mr. Lascelles has offered to guarantee that this line will pay working expenses and 5 per cent. interest on the cost of construction for four years; or, he has stated, that he is willing to give up 38,000 acres of land leased by him in consideration for the building of the line. (See Appendix G.)

Offer to build the line.

Mr. Lascelles has also intimated to the Committee that he is prepared to build the line himself if he can obtain authority to do so.

Although the country served by the proposed line is good, it has been shown that it is not settled at present; all the present settlement being well served by the Hopetoun railway. The line also runs almost at right angles with the present railway to Hopetoun.

(5) JEPARIT EXTENSIONS.—Several extensions northwards of the existing Mallee line which now ends at Jeparit, a station distant $247\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Melbourne, have been asked for, and the Engineer-in-Chief has furnished the following information regarding them :—

Name of Line.	Length.	Steepest Grade.	Sharpest Curve.	Engineer-in-Chief's Estimate of Cost to open the Line.		Length, estimated cost, &c.
				Per Mile.	Total.	
	Miles.	1 in—	Chains Radius.	£	£	
Jeparit to Werrap	$9\frac{1}{2}$	75	30	1,900	18,050	
Jeparit northwards for twenty miles ...	20	75	30	1,900	38,000	
Jeparit to Albacutya	23	75	30	1,900	43,700	

The Committee have inspected the country from Jeparit to Werrap and Albacutya, and on to Pine Plains homestead, distant some 58 miles from Jeparit. Evidence was taken at Pine Plains homestead, Albacutya homestead, and Jeparit. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 75 to 85.)

For two or three miles after leaving Jeparit the land is poor, and there were no signs that any of it would be put under cultivation this year; a good deal of low-lying box country, subject to floods, is also passed through. A large proportion of the country up to the 36th parallel of south latitude is, in fact, white sand, which will only grow a couple of crops of wheat at most; on the flats between the sand rises the land is good.

After crossing the 36th parallel, which forms the southern boundary of block 64, the land improves greatly and through this block to the northern boundary of block 65, a distance of eighteen miles, the country may be classed as first-class wheat land. From the northern boundary of 65A for a distance of twenty miles there is very little land fit for cultivation, nearly the whole of it being sand ridges covered with dwarf scrubs and porcupine grass. In his report on the survey of this portion of the line the surveyor states that "desert fitly describes the greater part of the country." After traversing the twenty miles referred to, the quality of the land greatly improves, and, according to the evidence tendered to the Committee and the Railway surveyor's reports, there is a large area of good agricultural land in blocks 45 A and B, 35 A and B, 28 A and B, and 29 A and B.

The Committee have obtained statistics respecting the country north of Jeparit, taking an area starting ten miles from Jeparit, for twenty miles northwards, and having a width of twenty miles—ten miles on either side of the projected line. The Lands Department states that within this area there are 158 mallee allotments of 600 acres each, and parts of eight blocks held by the New Zealand Loan and Agency Company, 90,000 acres; and by E. H. Lascelles, 15,000 acres. The Government Statist gives (from 1894-5 returns) the number of cultivated holdings in the same area as 100, and the area under cultivation as 26,686 acres, yielding 181,636 bushels of wheat and 160 bushels of oats, a total of 181,796 bushels, or 5,049 tons of cereals, as well as 1,050 tons of hay; the average yield of wheat being 7.14 bushels to the acre.

There is no railway running parallel with the Jeparit line on the west, but the gathering ground on that side for any extension is limited, first by Lake Hindmarsh, which is about twelve miles long and four and a quarter miles wide, and covers an area of about 38,400 acres; and eleven miles further on by Lake Albacutya, which is about seven miles long and three miles wide, and covers an area of about 13,440 acres.

On the east side the Hopetoun line is distant from 24 to 20 miles from the proposed extension; the farmers which would be served now take their wheat south to Jeparit or east to various stations on the Hopetoun line; Hopetoun being 30 miles further north than Jeparit. The fact that the local rate has been abolished on the Hopetoun line, and is still in force on the Jeparit extension, no doubt influences the farmers as to which line they go to. A ton of wheat can be sent from Hopetoun to Melbourne, $254\frac{3}{4}$ miles, for 18s. 7d., while it costs 21s. from Jeparit to Melbourne, $247\frac{1}{2}$ miles, a saving of 2s. 5d. per ton. Presuming that the Jeparit line was extended to a point as far north as Hopetoun, with the local rate the freight from the new terminus to Melbourne would be 5s. 3d. per ton more than from Hopetoun. None of

the farmers who gave evidence at Hopetoun were more than fifteen miles from a railway, although there may be others eighteen or nineteen miles distant from a station.

Lands locked up:
Terms offered by
lessees.

Any extension of this line—apart from its merits as a through line to the Murray—is limited, as it has been shown that, when you get to the northern boundary of block 65, you are on the verge of twenty miles of country unfit for cultivation. An extension of fourteen or fifteen miles would serve all the land fit for wheat-growing south of the bad tract of country referred to, presuming the land was available for cultivation; but it is not. Block 64A has been resumed by the Government at a cost of £4,000, and is nearly all taken up; but block 65A, which has an area of 53,100 acres, is leased to the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited, who have no permission to cultivate or subdivide. The Committee examined the manager of the company, Mr. David Elder, whose evidence is attached. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 151 to 155.) Mr. Elder also forwarded a statement in writing to the Committee, intimating the terms which he was prepared to offer to the Government. This offer is attached. (See Appendix H.)

Netherby and
Lorquon
extensions.

(6) NETHERBY AND LORQUON EXTENSIONS.—A proposal for the construction of a branch railway from a point between Dimboola and Nhill, on the main line to Adelaide, or from Jeparit to Netherby and Lorquon, has been brought under the notice of the Committee. The Engineer-in-Chief has furnished estimates of the cost for two routes as follows:—

Length, estimated cost, &c.	Name of Line.	Length.	Steepest Grade.	Sharpest Curve.	Engineer-in-Chief's Estimate of Cost to open Line.	
					Per Mile.	Total.
					£	£
		Miles.	1 in—	Chains Radius.		
	Jeparit to Netherby	20 $\frac{1}{2}$	50	40	2,000	41,000
	Salisbury to Netherby	21 $\frac{1}{2}$	50	30	1,850	39,775

Evidence taken.

Evidence was taken at Jeparit regarding the proposal, several witnesses being examined. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 85 to 90.)

The Committee have not inspected either of the alternative routes, but a Sectional Committee of the first Railways Standing Committee did so.

Description of
country and
quality of soil.

The land along the route from Jeparit to Netherby is of excellent quality, as is also that between Netherby and Salisbury; but a few miles to the west and north of Netherby the country deteriorates, and is stated to be unfit for cultivation.

Mr. Arthur Scott, chairman of the North-Western Vermin Board, who knows the Mallee country well, when giving evidence in Melbourne referred to this line as follows:—

“3181. In your opinion, would a line pay better from Jeparit towards Netherby than the fourteen miles you suggest towards Albacutya?—No, three or four miles just beyond Netherby you get to the big desert, and four miles to the west you get to Yanac Heath—Netherby is just in the bight; there would be nothing to feed it. It is grand country from Jeparit to Netherby, but it is so surrounded by sand that it would never pay to build a railway to Lorquon. It is a little place, and they will have to always stick there. If it were a broad expanse of country I would say make it, but it runs to the point of the big heath which Mr. Turner describes to the north and the Yanac Heath to the west, so that you would never get anything to come down. In fact it is a bad corner in there.

“3182. Is not the land occupied there better land than in this fourteen-mile extension?—There are some patches of extraordinarily good land about Netherby, but it is such a small patch.”

Statistics.

The only statistics obtained with regard to the proposed line were supplied by the local railway league, and the latest year for which the same were given was 1892–3. These statistics are as follows:—“Bags of wheat, 139,956; cost of carting same to nearest railway station, £10,738; number of farmers, 182; average amount paid by each farmer for cartage, £59; population, 1,300.” It is stated that since 1892–3 there has been a steady increase in the area put under crop.

Distance from
other lines.

The farmers in the Lorquon and Netherby districts now take their produce south to stations on the main Adelaide line, or east across the Wimmera River to Jeparit. If the evidence is correct with regard to the country to the north and west of Netherby, and that evidence is corroborated by several witnesses, any railway to

Netherby would be a twenty-mile "cockspur" for all time. While the district is a good one, the Committee feel that unless it can be shown that there are better prospects beyond Netherby, a railway to that place would not be justified.

14. MILDURA AND YELTA EXTENSIONS.—The Engineer-in-Chief has furnished estimates of the cost of the following alternative lines through the Mallee to Mildura and Yelta :—

Name of Line.	Length to Construct.	Ruling Grade.	Sharpest Curve.	Estimated Cost of Construction at Present Prices, exclusive of Land and Rolling-stock.		Length, estimated cost, &c.
				To equip the Line for Moderate Traffic, inclusive of Fencing.	To open for Public Traffic, exclusive of Fencing and Station Equipment, &c.	
	Miles.	1 in—	Chains Radius.	£	£	
Sea Lake to Yelta (Wycheproof route)	114	75	20	£301,673 = £2,650 per mile	£269,600 = £2,368 per mile	
Hopetoun to Yelta (Hopetoun route)	122	75	20	£326,620 = £2,672 per mile	£291,899 = £2,388 per mile	
Jeparit to Yelta (Dimboola route)	152	75	20	£404,907 = £2,655 per mile	£361,739 = £2,372 per mile	
Quambatook to Yelta ...	161	75	20	£426,650 = £2,650 per mile	£381,248 = £2,368 per mile	
Birchip to Yelta ...	151	75	20	£393,053 = £2,603 per mile	£350,320 = £2,320 per mile	

The Committee have inspected the Mallee country between Hopetoun and Mildura, travelling by way of Waithe, Yallum, Patchewollock, Yellaugip, Tiejia, Nallwyne, Kulkyne (on the Murray River), and thence along the river frontages, *via* Caradoc, to Mildura. Most of these places are simply the designations of old out-stations now deserted, or watering-places in the Mallee. From Mildura the Committee drove to Yelta—a surveyed Government township opposite the junction of the Murray and Darling rivers. On the return journey the route taken from Mildura was in a southerly direction by way of places designated Kooralong, Double Tanks, Bald Hill Tank, The Oaks, Tiejia, and Yellaugip. From the latter place the Committee turned south-west and drove to Pine Plains Station, at the head of Outlet Creek, and distant some 80 miles north of Dimboola. From Pine Plains the route followed was almost due south along the Outlet Creek and the country adjacent thereto, *via* Nypo and Albacutya Station to the railway terminus at Jeparit. Evidence was taken at Murtoa, Hopetoun, Mildura, Wentworth, Yellaugip, Pine Plains, Albacutya, Horsham, and at Melbourne respecting a railway to Mildura and Yelta. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 1 to 11, 34 to 40, 42 to 79, 90 to 96, 109 to 119, 123 to 124, and 128 to 133.)

The Committee are pleased to be able to say, from their own observations and the evidence given before them, that there is a much larger area of good agricultural land, and much more good grazing land, in the central and northern Mallee districts than is generally held to be the case. The destruction of vermin under the stringent provisions of the Act of 1883 has greatly improved the country for grazing purposes; the rabbits and wild dogs are, however, still numerous in places, and any cessation of the precautions for keeping them down would undoubtedly soon lead to the country being again overrun with vermin. The Committee are unable to say how far the country on each side of the route they followed continues of the same character as on the track itself, but numerous tracts of good agricultural land, several miles across, were traversed. The good land, as a rule, consisted of red loamy soil covered with either dense mallee, open mallee, belar, hopbush and other scrubs, or pines. Numerous pine forests, covering large areas of country, were traversed, the trees being very large and healthy looking. Several well-grassed plains were also crossed, as well as large tracts of saltbush and bluebush country. While much good land was passed through, the Committee also traversed considerable areas of poor sandy country of little, if any, value. It would, perhaps, be a fair estimate to say that one-third of the country traversed between Hopetoun and Mildura was good agricultural land, one-third fair grazing land, and one-third inferior country.

Starting at the South Australian border, and taking the country north of the 36th parallel of south latitude, there is a very much larger area of good land to the

east of the 142nd meridian than to the west. A very large proportion of the land to the west of that meridian is stated to be desert country, unfit for occupation. This evidence is borne out by the fact that west of the 142nd meridian fifteen blocks, comprising about 1,350,000 acres, are unoccupied, having been taken up and abandoned as worthless, while the whole of the country to the east is in occupation, with the exception of one block of some 30,000 acres on the Murray. A belt of country covered with sand hills runs across the central Mallee in a north-easterly direction from the northern end of Lake Albacutya. The soil on these hills is fine white sand, and the only vegetation growing upon them is dwarf mallee, ti-tree, and other stunted scrubs, and porcupine grass. Some of the hills are of considerable height, though they are lower as you go east; the belt of country covered with them also becomes narrower as you go east. These sand hills separate the settled portions of the mallee, which are now occupied mostly for agricultural purposes, from the large blocks held by a few lessees for pastoral purposes. A railway to Mildura from Jeparit, Hopetoun, or Sea Lake must cross this belt of country. After it is crossed, however, the land improves, and much of it is, as already stated, fit for cultivation, provided the rainfall is sufficient. This, in the opinion of the Committee, is not at all certain, although it is now recognised that the mallee land will grow wheat with a smaller rainfall than any other part of Victoria. A return, furnished by the Government Astronomer, is appended, showing the rainfall at various points throughout the Mallee.

See Appendix E.

Mildura.

After crossing the country described, Mildura is reached. The population of the shire is now 3,000, practically the whole of the settlement being within the Irrigation Colony. The progress which has been made at Mildura is astonishing, and whatever difficulties have been met with or have still to be surmounted, with regard to the irrigation channels, the seepage, and the cost of water supply, there can be no doubt that it has been demonstrated that apricots, peaches, wine and raisin grapes, citrus, and many other fruits will grow with profusion at Mildura and on the other Mallee lands along the Murray frontages. The trees have attained a wonderful development in the short time they have been planted, and many orchards are now bearing well, and, it is stated, are giving handsome returns to the owners. A return is appended showing the area now under cultivation at Mildura, and the progress made during the last few years. From the statement it appears that 10,431 acres are now under cultivation, of which 7,964 acres have been planted with vines and fruit trees of various descriptions.

See Appendix K.

Distances to Mildura.

The distances to Mildura by the various railway routes brought under the notice of the Committee are as follows :—

Route.			Mileage constructed.	Mileage to construct.	Total.
<i>Via.</i>			Miles.	Miles.	Miles.
Jeparit ...	...	...	247 $\frac{1}{2}$	143 $\frac{1}{2}$	391
Hopetoun ...	...	...	254 $\frac{3}{4}$	113 $\frac{1}{4}$	368
Sea Lake ...	...	...	237 $\frac{3}{4}$	105	342 $\frac{3}{4}$
Quambatook ...	...	...	191	150	341
Birchip ...	...	...	214 $\frac{1}{2}$	140	354 $\frac{1}{2}$

Yelta and Wentworth.

It is sixteen miles to Yelta from the point where the through survey branches off to Mildura. The mileage to be constructed for a through line from any one of the above-mentioned railway termini to Yelta would be as follows :—From Jeparit 152 miles ; from Hopetoun 122 miles ; from Sea Lake 114 miles ; from Quambatook 161 miles ; and from Birchip 151 miles. Yelta is a Government surveyed township immediately opposite the junction of the rivers Darling and Murray, and is at present uninhabited. The site is a favorable one for a town, but all the settlement is at present on the New South Wales side of the river at Wentworth, the population of which is stated to be 700.

The Darling trade. See Appendix I.

As great stress has been laid on the extent and value of the Darling River trade, the appended return prepared by the sub-collector of Customs at Wentworth, and handed in by a witness at Mildura, will be of interest. It will be seen that the larger portion of the trade at present goes down the River Murray to South Australia.

Amongst other witnesses, representatives from various centres—Bendigo, Geelong, Ararat, Horsham, Warracknabeal, and other places—tendered evidence to the Committee. The opinion undoubtedly exists that a large trade will ensue if a railway to Yelta and Mildura is made, but the Committee were unable to obtain any reliable evidence as to the extent of such trade, or what revenue was likely to be derived from it by a through railway. Evidence of central leagues

In June, 1894, the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Rennick, furnished a Report to the Minister for Railways with reference to the proposal to build a through railway to Yelta. He therein estimates the prospects of such a line, under certain contingencies, to be as follows :— Engineer-in-Chief's Report on Mildura Railway. See Appendix L.

Route.	Estimated Cost to open.	Estimated Annual Revenue from moderate development in a few years.		Estimated Annual Maintenance and Working Expenses for moderate development.		Balance against Interest on Capital.
	£		£		£	£
Wycheproof Route (Sea Lake to Yelta)	269,600	From intermediate population	17,100	Maintenance, £60 per mile	6,840	
		From Mildura population	9,000	Other working expenses	14,560	
		From New South Wales traffic	6,000			
			£32,100		£21,400	10,700
Hopetoun Route (Hopetoun to Yelta)	291,899	From intermediate population	18,300	Maintenance, £60 per mile	7,320	
		From Mildura population	9,000	Other working expenses	14,880	
		From New South Wales traffic	6,000			
			£33,300		£22,200	11,100
Dimboola Route (Jeparit to Yelta)	361,739	From intermediate population	22,800	Maintenance, £60 per mile	9,120	
		From Mildura population	9,000	Other working expenses	16,080	
		From New South Wales traffic	6,000			
			£37,800		£25,200	12,600
* Quambatook to Yelta	381,248	From intermediate population	30,150	Maintenance, £60 per mile	9,660	
		From Mildura population	9,000	Other working expenses	20,440	
		From New South Wales traffic	6,000			
			£45,150		£30,100	15,050
* Birchip to Yelta	350,320	From intermediate population	27,180	Maintenance, £60 per mile	9,060	
		From Mildura population	9,000	Other working expenses	19,060	
		From New South Wales traffic	6,000			
			£42,180		£28,120	14,060

* NOTE.—The Quambatook and Birchip routes were not included in the Report to the Minister, they have since been added at the request of the Committee.

From the foregoing figures it will be seen that considerably more than half the estimated revenue is to come from the intermediate country ; that is, the mallee land between one of the existing termini and Yelta. Mr. Rennick explains that he has based his estimate of revenue from this mallee country on a population of 5 to the square mile of good country—which he has assumed to be not less than half the land—for a width of twenty miles, and he adds—“I am of opinion that none of these lines would pay

for many years without the development of the intervening country." The Engineer-in-Chief emphasised this opinion in his evidence before the Committee :—

"45. If the intermediate traffic is not continued, that is the wheat traffic, what would be the result?—If you could not settle a population between the end of the present lines and Mildura, none of those lines could pay for many years; they would be dependent on the traffic from Mildura and the river and the New South Wales traffic.

* * * * *

"57. Your evidence goes to show if wheat can be grown there that the railway will pay, but if wheat cannot be grown, other things possibly may be?—If you cannot settle a population permanently in that country, the line to Mildura or Wentworth would not pay for years."

Evidence at Mildura. (See Minutes of Evidence, pp. 52-55.)

The case for a through railway, as put by Mildura, is summed up in the evidence of the shire secretary and engineer, Mr. P. G. D. Lavater, who has endeavoured to show that the line will pay without reference to traffic from the intervening country, and that the Darling and the Mildura trade alone is sufficient to justify the construction of the line. The imports and exports at Mildura are stated as amounting to 8,610 tons, made up as follows :—Miscellaneous imports, 3,500 tons; timber for packing-boxes, 900 tons. Exports: dried fruits, wines, fresh fruits, vegetables, &c., 4,210 tons. The tonnage of the Darling trade—both imports and exports—is taken from the return furnished by the sub-collector of Customs at Wentworth, and is stated at 21,000 tons, of which 15,000 tons now goes to South Australia, and 6,000 tons to Victoria. The traffic for the railway is then made up by Mr. Lavater as follows :—

Appendix I.

	Tons.
The whole of the Mildura trade, both exports and imports	... 8,610
The present Darling River trade with Victoria	... 6,000
Darling River trade to be taken away from South Australia	... 5,000
	<hr/>
Total	... 19,610

In order to meet the river competition it is proposed to carry this tonnage from Yelta to Melbourne at a uniform rate of 30s. per ton—about 1d. per ton per mile. Further revenue is to be derived from the carriage of thirty passengers a week at £3 per head—£4,680 per year—and from the carriage of mails, £600 per annum.

With regard to the first item, it is problematical how much of the Mildura traffic would go by the railway, although the tonnage given is likely to increase considerably as the orchards come into full bearing. With regard to the 6,000 tons from the Darling, which at present goes to Victoria, the fact must be borne in mind that the bulk of that tonnage now goes to Echuca, and the revenue earned by the Mildura line therefrom would be at the expense of the existing railway from Echuca to Melbourne.

The following evidence was given by Mr. Lavater on this point :—

"1410. You do not contend that there is any benefit in taking it from Echuca or Swan Hill and putting it on to this line?—No, certainly not.

"1411. Then the kernel of the whole affair is that we are to rob our neighbour in South Australia and give it to this railway?—Yes."

The Railway Department states that the rate proposed—30s. per ton—would not be a payable one; and that even a maximum of 40s. per ton would not be a payable rate.

Water competition.

Careful inquiries have been made as to the chances of a railway to Mildura and Yelta competing with the water carriage, and the Committee desire to call attention to the following evidence given on the point by the Hon. Wm. McCulloch, M.L.C., before the first Committee :—

"799. Then generally what good would the railway do the colony; would Victoria benefit in any way by the construction of this line?—I do not know what effect it might have locally, I have never been through that country, but I do not think it would be the means of bringing any extra traffic worth speaking of to Victoria. It could only be used in the event of the Darling running and the Murray not running, which is a very rare thing.

"800. From what you know of the Darling would it give us any more upwards traffic?—I do not think it would be worth speaking about; they might get small lots when they were in a hurry.

"801. Would it cut off any of the South Australian trade?—I do not think so, excepting in small things.

"802. Is it your opinion that any increase in traffic at Yelta would simply diminish the traffic on the other line?—Yes, you would rob the Echuca line to a great extent.

* * * * *

"811. Do you know the district between Broken Hill and Wilcannia?—For about 60 miles.

"812. Do you not think in the event of the railway being constructed to Yelta at the mouth of the Darling, there would be a disposition to bring trade to Melbourne from there that we are not getting at present?—It would not have the slightest effect in my opinion; you must show some inducement, and you cannot show that unless you are prepared to carry it at a very low rate by the railway. They are connected now by the Darling and the Murray with Echuca, and then by railway with Melbourne, and they have that connexion at a cheaper rate than they would get by Yelta.

"813. Then what can possibly induce those people to urge the construction of this line?—We know how anxious people are to get a railway as near as they can to them. Wentworth people think the line would benefit them to some extent. You would get more passenger traffic than you do now.

"814. From your long experience and your position in the country as a merchant you tell this Committee that so far as any trade beyond Yelta itself is concerned we have no right to calculate upon it much?—That is so.

"815. And that the city of Melbourne would not be benefited much?—It could not possibly be, except for small things that they were in a great hurry for. If a storekeeper was out of drapery or something of that sort, he might get it by rail.

"816. Then if we do recommend such a line it must be on the local trade and not on the trade beyond?—That is so.

* * * * *

"834. * * * * * The only point worth considering, it seems to me, is that if it is a rich country you are going through you will open that up and go on to Mildura; but the traffic from the Darling is not worth speaking about."

The following evidence, also, was given by Mr. Fitzpatrick, the Acting Traffic Manager of the Victorian Railways :—

"252. What is your evidence; is it all against the line?—From a commercial point of view it is.

"253. There is no justification for it, you think?—I can only advocate it on national grounds.

"254. To pay expenses or to make money, you have not a single point in favour of it?—No. I would be delighted to say something in favour of it, if I could. I must admit I am totally ignorant of the country between Wycheproof and Mildura. * * * * *

The foregoing evidence points to the fact that a railway to Mildura and Yelta must depend, to a very large extent, on the traffic to be derived from the country between the existing railway system and those two places. At present the whole of the land from within a few miles of Jeparit, Hopetoun, and Sea Lake to Mildura is locked up and in the hands of the pastoral lessees, who have no permission to cultivate it or subdivide it for agricultural settlement. In view of the importance of the settlement at Mildura, and the number of people located there, it would have afforded the Committee great pleasure to have been able to recommend the construction of a through railway at once; but they feel bound to report to Parliament that, in their opinion, the revenue to be derived from such a line would, at present, fall far short of the amount required to pay working expenses and interest on the cost of construction.

15. Great difficulty has been experienced in obtaining precise and reliable information as to the location and extent of the areas fit for cultivation in the central Mallee. The Crown Lands Department has had an examination made of portions of the country beyond lakes Hindmarsh and Albacutya, but the Committee would suggest that a thorough inspection, by competent men, should be made of the country within fifteen miles of the various surveyed railway routes to Mildura, with a view to the land being classified, and the areas fit for agricultural settlement marked on the departmental plans. The Committee are informed that this can be done at a comparatively small cost, and the information would be most valuable in determining the course of future railway extension, and in dealing with the Mallee when the present leases expire.

16. It occurred to the Committee, when crossing the Mallee, that it would do much to open up the country if direct communication could be established with Mildura by means of a track cut from one of the present railway termini straight through the Mallee. The present route by road to that settlement is from Swan Hill *via* Euston, the road from Euston to within a short distance of Mildura being through New South Wales. The Postal Department now pays £695 for the conveyance of mails from Swan Hill to Euston and from Mildura Junction to Mildura.

The contractor for the conveyance of the mails, Mr. MacMahon, of Wentworth, drove the Committee through the Mallee, and he gave the following evidence on the question when under examination at Wentworth :—

"1725. Suppose about 50 miles of the proposed line were built, could you connect with the mails?—I would be very glad to connect if there were a subsidy and I was the successful contractor.

"1726. What would be the fare for passengers?—They could be brought through then at about the same price as from Swan Hill now.

"1727. Would you be able to tender for the service at the same amount?—It would be about £800 to £1,000 for a tri-weekly mail; that service would bring a number of passengers.

"1728. Do you think it would be a practicable route as far as water is concerned?—There would have to be artificial water provided.

"1729. Would it be a costly business to clear a track?—No; it would be a road that could not be used for carting heavy goods; it would do for mails and passengers.

"1730. In what time could you do the journey from Tiejia to Yelta?—In eighteen to twenty hours I think, with complete arrangements and changes every 50 miles or so.

"1731. What would be about the fare from Tiejia to Yelta for passengers?—About £2 I should think.

"1732. Could you not do it cheaper than that?—It depends upon how many passengers you get; we generally charge about 6d. a mile for coaching in the colony, and that would be less than 6d. a mile.

"1733. You think the idea is practicable?—Yes, as far as coaching is concerned."

The matter has since been taken up at Dimboola, Hopetoun and Mildura, and the Committee suggest that the Government assist in cutting the track. The only practicable route through the Mallee at present is from Hopetoun.

Want of system
in past railway
extension.

17. It is greatly to be regretted that in building the Mallee railways a well-considered scheme, suited to the prospective as well as the present settlement, and adequate to the capabilities of the land, was not adopted. The construction of the recently opened line from Wycheproof to Sea Lake, which was commenced without the sanction of Parliament, and without reference to the Railways Standing Committee for inquiry, was a mistake. This line, which runs for the most part through "five-year" blocks which reverted to the State in 1889, destroys the parallelism of the older mallee lines; it cuts across the country, dividing it most awkwardly, leaving too large a space between the Swan Hill line on the east, and the Hopetoun line on the west, and yet the space left is too narrow to admit of another line being run on each side of the Sea Lake line with safety, unless the land is always to grow wheat. A large proportion, moreover, of the country the Sea Lake extension serves is locked up; an area of 191,000 acres, which is not permitted to be cultivated, being within ten miles of the railway. The line, also, runs too close to Lake Tyrrell, 25,700 acres occupied by this salt morass being within ten miles of the terminus.

Difficulty in
obtaining
statistics re
mallee holdings.

18. The Committee have been unable to obtain any reliable statistics as to the area under cultivation in the various mallee allotments; no such statistics are obtainable from the Crown Lands Department, and those furnished by the Government Statist can only be given for shires or divisions of shires. As all the holders of mallee allotments are tenants of the Crown, the Committee would suggest that the Lands Department should take steps to obtain statistics of the area under cultivation each year in each allotment, the yield, and other similar information. This might easily be done through the Crown lands bailiffs in charge of the various districts, and would be useful information in dealing with questions affecting the Mallee country.

Divisions *vide*
sec. 5, sub-sec.
(5), Act No. 1177.

19. The following extracts from the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee show the divisions that took place during the consideration of the Report:—

18TH JULY, 1895.

The Committee proceeded to further consider the Draft Report on the question of further extension of railways in the Mallee districts.

Paragraphs 1 to 11 read, amended, and agreed to.

Paragraph 12 read, as follows:—

12. The Committee are of opinion that the resumption of any more land in the Mallee, and the payment of compensation therefor, is unnecessary until the agricultural areas served by existing railways are properly settled and further developed; and they desire to call the attention of Parliament to the desirability, when dealing with the question of Mallee settlement, of endeavouring to encourage the cultivation and occupation of the country which has already been supplied with railway facilities. The Committee think that extension of railways in the Mallee districts should not proceed further until Parliament has dealt with the land tenure and compensation questions.

Mr. Buchanan moved, That the following words be inserted after the word "facilities," in line 6, viz.:—"The Committee cannot recommend the construction of a through line to Mildura or Yelta, for the reasons stated hereafter, but they are of opinion that short extensions of some of the existing lines, to serve the settlement that has taken place on areas too distant from a station, would be justified. Such extensions could be worked at a small cost with the existing staff and rolling-stock, and their construction would lead to increased traffic on through railways.

Mr. White seconded the amendment.

After discussion, the Committee divided on the question "That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted."

Ayes, 3.
The Chairman,
Mr. Buchanan,
Mr. White.

Noes, 6.
Mr. Craven,
Mr. Burton,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. Melville,
Mr. Morey,
Mr. Trenwith.

And so it passed in the negative.

Mr. White moved, That the words "The Committee think that extension of railways in the Mallee districts should not proceed further until Parliament has dealt with the land tenure and compensation questions" be omitted, with a view to insert in place thereof the following words:—"At the same time, however, the Committee would feel justified in recommending short extensions of two or three lines, conditionally on the lessees within an area of ten miles of the same foregoing any claim for compensation for clearing."

After discussion, the Committee divided on the question "That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the paragraph."

Ayes, 5.
Mr. Craven,
Mr. Burton,
Mr. Harris,
Mr. Melville,
Mr. Trenwith.

Noes, 4.
The Chairman,
Mr. Buchanan,
Mr. Morey,
Mr. White.

And so it was resolved in the affirmative.

E. H. CAMERON,
Chairman.

Parliament House,
Melbourne, 24th July, 1895.

INDEX TO THE APPENDICES.

- A.—Analysis of cost per mile of Mallee lines.
- B.—Return of wheat traffic on Mallee lines, 1st July, 1894, to 31st March, 1895—nine months.
- C.—Return of revenue derived from Mallee lines.
- D.—Return showing the approximate profit and loss on working the lines constructed since 1890 in the Mallee from date of opening.
- E.—Rainfall in the Mallee country.
- F.—Copy of offer stating terms on which W. H. Wood and Co. will treat with the Government respecting land on Quambatook extension.
- G.—Copy of offers made by E. H. Lascelles in connexion with the proposed extensions from Hope-toun to Minapre or Birchip to Minapre.
- H.—Copy of offers made by David Elder, General Manager New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited, with reference to land on Jeparit extensions.
- I.—Comparative return of the Darling River trade, years 1893 and 1894.
- J.—Statement of estimated revenue and working expenses of a railway from Sea Lake to Yelta, handed in by Mr. Lavater when giving evidence at Mildura.
- K.—Statement showing cultivated land at Mildura.
- L.—Proposed alternative railways to Yelta—Report of the Engineer-in-Chief.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

ANALYSIS OF COST PER MILE OF MALLEE LINES.

Description of Works.	Warracknabeal to Beulah.	Donald to Birchip.	Beulah to Hopetoun.	Dimboola to Jeparit.	Boort to Quambatook.	Wycheproof to Sea Lake.*	Average of 163½ miles.
	22 miles. 5.1.93.	32½ miles. 28.3.93.	16 miles. 6.3.94.	23 miles. 19.6.94.	22 miles. 7.8.94.	48 miles. (Not yet opened.)	
Length .. Date of opening	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<i>Easy and Moderate Country.</i>							
Clearing and grubbing	20	5	10	10	6	10	10
Fencing	80	87	48 (2 wires only)	8 (unfenced)	14 (unfenced)	3 (unfenced)	37
Cattle-pits at crossings	28	39	30	6	5	2	17
Earthworks (including stations and approaches)	165	214	192	146	150	135	164
Bridges	62	49	32	11	23	...	26
Culverts	34	42	40	25	17	9	25
Gravelling roads and approaches	25	36	12	5	19	7	17
Ballast (main line and sidings)	305 (gravel)	238 (gravel)	128 (sand)	109 (sand & gravel)	250 (gravel)	95 (sand)	178
Sleepers (redgum, ironbark, or box, main line and sidings)	459	369	439	381	320	333	372
Rails and fastenings, 60-lb. steel (main line and sidings, and including freight and laying)	679	699	681	650	687	692	683
Temporary station buildings (including platforms)	40	41	32	10	12	34	30
Water supply (temporary) ... ..	...	10	9	...	...	22	9
Signals	2	3	...	5	...	2	2
Telegraph	10	14	11	11	16	16	14
Engineering and surveying	216	168	191	128	168	105	153
Miscellaneous items	9	3	8	5	...	21	9
Interest on capital during construction	27	35	29	34	35	30	32
Total cost per mile to date of handing over	2,161	2,052	1,892	1,544	1,722	1,516	1,778
Approximate expenditure since opening	200	125	7	10	10	...	54
Total cost per mile (to 31st December, 1894)	2,361	2,177	1,899	1,554	1,732	1,516	1,832

* Estimated.

APPENDIX B.

RETURN OF WHEAT TRAFFIC ON MALLEE LINES.

(1st July, 1894, to 31st March, 1895—9 months.)

	Wheat.		Revenue.	
	Tons	cwt.	£	s. d.
Warracknabeal and Hopetoun line	48,007	0	38,636	15 0
Donald and Birchip line	25,181	0	12,634	10 0
Wycheproof and Sea Lake line	9,352	0	8,129	15 0
Boort and Quambatook line	9,314	0	7,147	10 0
Dimboola and Jeparit line	11,096	10	10,292	0 0
	102,950	10	£76,840	10 0

10th May, 1895.

R. G. KENT, Secretary for Railways.

In addition to the above-mentioned quantity actually carried, the following quantity of Grain was stacked at Stations on 15th May, 1895 :—

Line.	Quantity (Bags).	Estimated Revenue.
Warracknabeal to Hopetoun	167,865	£15,011
Donald to Birchip	37,800	2,107
Wycheproof and Sea Lake	200	19
Boort and Quambatook	7,000	597
Dimboola and Jeparit	17,000	1,752
Total	229,865	£19,486

This does not include Wheat stacked at first-named Stations on above lines.

20th May, 1895.

R. G. KENT, Secretary for Railways.

APPENDIX C.

RETURN OF REVENUE DERIVED FROM THE UNDERMENTIONED MALLEE LINES
FOR DATES AS SHOWN BELOW.

Line.	Old Line.	Mallee.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Birchip—January to 30th June, 1893	7,328 9 4	2,885 2 10	10,213 12 2
Beulah—January to 30th June, 1893	17,190 16 1	4,892 6 5	22,083 2 6

Line.	Old Line.	Mallee.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Birchip—July, 1893, to June, 1894	18,690 10 1	8,798 4 1	27,488 14 2
Beulah and Hopetoun—July, 1893, to June, 1894	39,210 3 6	13,207 5 9	52,417 9 3
Quambatook—Date of opening to June, 1894	1,287 1 4	188 14 5	1,475 15 9
Jeparit—19th June to June, 1894	1,316 2 11	89 15 11	1,405 18 10

NOTE.—Jeparit traffic prior to 19th June was carried by the Construction Branch.

Line.	Old Line.	Mallee.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Birchip—July, 1894, to 30th June, 1895	19,319 18 4	7,461 16 9	26,781 15 1
Beulah and Hopetoun—July, 1894, to 30th June, 1895	47,514 4 0	10,959 9 6	58,473 13 6
Quambatook—July, 1894, to 30th June, 1895	8,264 8 9	2,789 10 6	11,053 19 3
Jeparit—July, 1894, to 30th June, 1895	12,458 14 3	3,557 9 7	16,016 3 10
Sea Lake—From date of opening to 30th June, 1895	8,611 11 3	3,081 15 9	11,693 7 0

APPENDIX D.

RETURN SHOWING THE APPROXIMATE PROFIT AND LOSS ON WORKING THE
LINES CONSTRUCTED SINCE 1890 IN THE MALLEE FROM DATE OF OPENING.

Line.	Length.	Capital Cost to 30th June, 1895.	Revenue.	Local Working Expenses.	Approximate Profit on Working.	Interest on Capital Cost of Line and Rolling-stock, at 4 per cent. per annum.	Approximate Profit on Working.	Approximate Loss on Working.	Train Miles Run.
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Donald to Birchip	32½	71,565	19,145	7,677	11,468	6,350	4,485	...	51,009
Rolling-stock (estimated), from 28th March, 1893, to 31st December, 1894 ... ..	...	7,000	...	...	...	633	...	...	...
Warracknabeal to Hopetoun	38	82,177	29,059	10,297	18,762	6,542	10,975	...	69,009
Rolling-stock (estimated), 1st section, opened 5th January, 1893; 2nd section, opened 5th March, 1894, to 31st December, 1894 ... ..	...	12,500	...	...	...	1,245	...	...	...
Dimboola to Jeparit	23	36,500	3,647*	1,955	1,692	1,460	...	8	8,758
Rolling-stock (estimated), 19th June, 1894, to 31st January, 1895 ... ..	...	6,000	...	...	...	240	...	...	...
Boort to Quambatook	22	40,000	2,978	1,392†	1,586	1,467	...	64	7,422
Rolling-stock (estimated), 7th August, 1894, to 31st January, 1895 ... ..	...	5,000	...	...	...	183	...	...	...
Wycheproof to Sea Lake (opened 8th March, 1895), to 30th June, 1895	47¾	65,500	3,082	1,373‡	1,709	873	676	...	5,340
Rolling-stock (estimated) ... ..	...	12,000	...	...	...	160	...	...	...

* Jeparit traffic prior to 19th June, 1894, carried by Construction Branch, and not included.

† The working expenses include a sum of £83 8s. 9d., amount credited to cost of construction on account of revenue earned prior to date of opening.

‡ Includes £320 estimated amount to be credited to cost of construction on account of revenue earned prior to date of opening. From January, 1895, the revenue on the Donald to Birchip and Warracknabeal to Hopetoun lines is based on a division of receipts on the mileage basis, and no deduction has been made for tapering rates.

The Sea Lake line return does not afford any comparison for an annual result.

The capital cost has not been debited with any proportion of general construction charges.

The working expenses consist only of the actual local expenses, no junction or general charges being included.

Accountant's Branch,
15th July, 1895.R. SINGLETON,
Accountant.

APPENDIX E.

RAINFALL IN THE MALLEE COUNTRY.

Name of Station.	Average Rainfall.	Number of Years recorded.	Name of Station.	Average Rainfall.	Number of Years recorded.
Antwerp	17·59	2	Mildura	12·50	3
Albacutya	No record.		Minapre, "Karkaroo" ...	Not complete.	
Apsley	25·50	11	Minimay	21·99	4
Areegra	18·47	4	Morton Plains, Curyo South ...	17·70	6
Beulah	16·55	4	Narraport	17·55	8
Birchip, "Woodlands" ...	14·61	3	Netherby	25·46	11
Boort East	18·54	5	Nhill	18·68	8
Booropki, "Lemon Springs" ...	23·43	11	Nipo	Not complete.	
Brim	17·46	8	Serviceton	24·79	1
Brippick, "Neuarpur" ...	22·73	10	Serviceton, "Lockhart" ...	22·91	5
Dimboola	16·17	16	Springfield South, Pine Glen ...	22·61	1
Donald	17·99	9	Springfield, Swan Hill ...	16·17	4
Edenhope	24·95	4	Swan Hill	15·15	10
Glenlee	17·89	8	Swan Hill, Daytrap	13·42	2
Goroke	23·45	4	Swan Hill, Piangil	14·60	20
Goroke, "Hillsden, Dopewarra"	21·04	4	Swan Hill, Tyntyndyer Station	13·71	12
Gymbowen	21·96	2	Tittybong, Pine Grove Farm ...	17·43	5
Harrow, Pine Hills	23·42	11	Tyrrell Downs	15·91	10
Hopetoun	No record.		Waitechie, "Pine Ridges" ...	13·12	1
Kalpienung	No record.		Watchem, Moona	18·95	5
Kaniva	20·89	10	Woorak	18·81	7
Karnak, Oak Vale	21·46	3	Warracknabeal	15·47	16
Kinimakatka	21·05	1	Wycheproof	15·88	10
Kulkyne	No record.		Yanac North	18·28	3
Lake Corrong, Wiall... ..	16·00	11	Yelta	10·04	6
Kerang	14·99	15	Pine Plains	No record.	
Lalbert	No record.				
Lillimur, "Bauwong" ...	22·13	10	General mean for the area		
Lorquon	18·89	10	occupied by the above places	18·69	7·1
Marlbed	No record.				

APPENDIX F.

COPY OF OFFER STATING TERMS ON WHICH W. H. WOOD AND CO. WILL TREAT WITH THE GOVERNMENT RESPECTING LAND ON QUAMBATOOK EXTENSION.

Swan Hill, 25th June, 1895.

To the Chairman, Railways Standing Committee, Parliament House, Melbourne.

SIR,

I herewith beg to submit to you the terms upon which we are prepared to allow the Government to resume a portion of the land held under lease by us till 1903.

In consideration of a railway being constructed to Lalbert within a reasonable time, we will be prepared to hand over to the Government at once all our rights to mallee block 51A, county of Tatchera, with all improvements thereon, at 3s. 6d. (three and sixpence) per acre, to cover all improvements.

This block contains about 22,400 acres, and the improvements, consisting of fencing, timber, ringing, scrub clearing, and about 9,000 yards of excavation in two tanks (now nearly full of water), have cost us nearly £1,500.

I am, yours faithfully,

W. H. WOOD,
For W. Wood & Co.

APPENDIX G.

COPIES OF OFFERS MADE BY E. H. LASCELLES IN CONNEXION WITH THE PROPOSED EXTENSIONS FROM HOPETOON TO MINAPRE OR BIRCHIP TO MINAPRE.

Geelong, 25th January, 1895.
Cable address, "Yelkeer," Geelong.

The Secretary, Railways Standing Committee, Parliament House, Melbourne.

SIR,

I understand that your Committee intend paying a visit to Hopetoun for the purpose of inspecting proposed lines of railway from there. In case the Hon. the Minister of Railways may not have called your attention to my proposal that if a line is constructed from Hopetoun to Minapre, 16 miles N.E., I am

willing to hand over mallee allotments 659 and 660, comprising about 38,000 acres first-class agricultural land. I now repeat this offer, and may mention that I made an agreement with the late Minister of Railways, Mr. Richardson, to run a line past Minapre on above terms.

If you took a day's drive past Minapre I think you would see about the best piece of mallee country in Victoria.

I start for Hopetoun on Monday, and expect to be there for over a week. If I can be of any service in providing horses or traps please let me know, and either Mr. Cumming (my manager) or I will see to all arrangements.

Your obedient servant,

You had better address to Hopetoun.

E. H. LASCELLES.

3621/94.

MEMORANDUM.

We hereby agree to transfer absolutely to the Government of Victoria all our right, title, and interest in mallee blocks Nos. 659 and 660, as marked on the attached plan, containing 38,109 acres more or less, together with all existing improvements thereon, in consideration of the Government giving us equal rights as to subdivision in regard to other mallee allotments of an equivalent area in block 47B held by us in the neighbourhood of Lake Albacutya, and also constructing a railway from Hopetoun in the direction of block 27B, touching at some point on our pre-emptive right at Minapre; and we further agree to give such land as may be required for station purposes out of the said pre-emptive right to the extent of 15 acres. Dated at Melbourne this 4th day of April, A.D. 1894.

E. H. LASCELLES & CO.

Witness—FRED. H. RITCHIE.

St. James' Buildings, William-street,
Melbourne, 25th April, 1895.
Cable address, "Yelkeer," Melbourne.

The Chairman, Railways Standing Committee, Melbourne.

SIR,

In reference to my agreement with the late Minister of Railways to give mallee allotments 659 and 660, comprising 38,100 acres (rights of subdivision and cultivation being transferred to a similar area in one of my other mallee blocks), in consideration of a line of railway being constructed from Hopetoun to Minapre, I now beg to make an alternative proposal, viz., that if a line is constructed from Birchip to Minapre—which, *vid* Maribed, would be 30 miles in distance—I am willing to enter into a similar agreement as the one referred to. Should there be a rise in wheat this year, in which I have the utmost confidence, I anticipate that practically the whole of the unsold allotments within ten miles round Minapre will be taken up, so that, irrespective of whether your Committee decide on recommending a railway or not, if the wheat traffic is forthcoming, on commercial principles alone, a line is bound to be built. Of course, if the land is in course of being rapidly occupied, I withdraw my offer.

I am willing to enter into a substantial guarantee that 10,000 acres of mallee land, in addition to that already rolled, will be cleared within ten miles of Minapre this coming season, and I have no hesitation in stating that the very cream of the mallee country is to be found within that area.

I am also willing that only half the line should be constructed until such time as there is, say, 30,000 acres cleared for cultivation within, say, eight miles of each side of the last fifteen miles. Trusting that you will cause every inquiry to be made as to the quality of the land,

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

E. H. LASCELLES.

Lake Corrong, Hopetoun, 11th April, 1895.

The Chairman, Railways Committee, Melbourne.

SIR,

Since my examination, on Saturday, it has occurred to me that your Committee might be more satisfied with a guarantee of, say, 5 per cent. per annum for four years as net profit on the total cost of construction of the sixteen miles from here to Minapre; if so, I should be prepared to find a substantial guarantee to provide the money if the total receipts did not pay working expenses and such a rate of interest.

For the sake of example, we will say that for the first two years the line might be worked under the local rates system, and during that time give a profit; if then an alteration was made to through rates such profit would have to be added to the income of succeeding two years, provided these latter showed a loss, so that I should only have to pay on the loss below 5 per cent. on the four years' working.

Mr. Richardson had the choice of allotments 662 and 659 instead of 659 and 660; he chose the latter, but I am agreeable to again give a choice. If Myall was made a junction station, the site of a township might influence you in this matter. I have sold three allotments on 662; the money and bills for such sales would be handed over in lieu of the land.

No doubt you will see that a guarantee of interest would be likely to suit me best, as I feel confident that such a line, with so much splendid agricultural land on either side of it every inch of the way, and with similar country at the other end, must pay well from the day it is opened.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

E. H. LASCELLES.

APPENDIX H.

COPY OF OFFERS MADE BY DAVID ELDER, GENERAL MANAGER NEW ZEALAND
LOAN AND MERCANTILE AGENCY COMPANY LIMITED, WITH REFERENCE TO
LAND ON JEPARIT EXTENSIONS.

New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited,
Australian Inspection Department,
Melbourne, 18th June, 1895.

Thos. G. Watson, Esq., Railways Standing Committee, Parliament House.

DEAR SIR,

As promised, I beg to hand you herewith copy of the letter sent by this company, under date 11th May, 1893, addressed to the Secretary for Lands, relative to the sale to the Government of the whole of the mallee blocks of which this company is lessee.

Yours faithfully,

DAVID ELDER,
General Manager.

[Copy].

New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited,
Australian Inspection Department,
Melbourne, 11th May, 1893.

The Secretary for Lands, Lands Office, Melbourne.

SIR,

Replying to your inquiry as to the price we are prepared to take for mallee block 65A, I beg to state that we are reluctant to part with that block by itself, as, if we part with it, it will be impracticable to utilize the balance of the property for grazing purposes, except at a considerable annual loss. The lowest price which I am now prepared to name for this block is 3s. per acre.

For the reason above stated, however, we would much prefer that the Government should resume the whole of the land leased by us from them. To induce them to consider the purchase of the whole, I am prepared to name the low price of 1s. 3d. per acre. Seeing that the Government, if they did resume this land, would, I presume, shortly construct a railway to it, there can be no question but that the acceptance of this proposal would be most profitable to them. I may add that we are prepared to take the whole of the purchase money for these blocks (all of those leased by us) in $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. inscribed stock at par.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) DAVID ELDER,
General Manager.

* The rate of interest would now be $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—D.E.

New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company Limited,
Australian Inspection Department,
Melbourne, 25th June, 1895.

To the Chairman of the Railways Standing Committee, Parliament House, Melbourne.

DEAR SIR,

We last had this honour on the 18th instant, when forwarding a copy of the offer made by this company to the Minister of Lands for the resumption of the lands now held under lease from the Crown, and now again address you for the purpose of stating that, provided permission be given to the company to subdivide and cultivate, we are willing to pay to the Crown for such privilege threepence (3d.) per acre on all lands subdivided and cultivated.

We would prefer getting this permission in place of surrendering our leases to the Crown on the terms stated by us in our letter of the 18th instant.

We are of opinion that the adoption of either course will lead to our immediate settlement on the lands sufficient to create a payable traffic for a railway from Jeparit.

What we are anxious that your Committee should clearly understand is that we are willing to facilitate in every possible way settlement on these wheat lands, and that, in order that that desirable object should be accomplished, we are willing to surrender our leases on fair terms, or undertake the task of settling the land if the necessary permission be given.

It is well that your Committee should know that even if the Crown did resume on the terms named by us, we should even then be large losers through our occupation of mallee lands.

Yours faithfully,

DAVID ELDER,
General Manager.

APPENDIX I.

COMPARATIVE RETURN OF THE DARLING RIVER TRADE.

(Years 1893 and 1894.)

Values of Exports.

	1893.	1894.	Increase.
From Wentworth	£ 521,285	£ 609,299	£ 88,014

Estimated Tonnage of Goods Imported and Exported to and from Wentworth during the Years 1893 and 1894.

From—	Imported.			To—	Exported.		
	1893.	1894.	Increase.		1893.	1894.	Increase.
South Australia	Tons. 6,731	Tons. 6,888	Tons. 157	South Australia	Tons. 6,109	Tons. 7,975	Tons. 1,866
Victoria, <i>via</i> Moama, and from Mildura	2,301	2,474	173	Victoria	3,067	3,820	753
Total Increase			330	Total Increase			2,619

Estimated Tonnage of the Goods carried Up and Down the Darling River, from and to Wentworth, during the Years 1893 and 1894.

Up.				Down.			
Year.			Tons.	Year.			Tons.
1893			8,531	1893			9,108
1894			9,162	1894			11,637
Increase			631	Increase			2,529

Principal Items of Export from Wentworth during the Years 1893 and 1894.

Item.	1893.	1894.	Increase.	Decrease.
Cattle	17	699	672	...
Horses	15	36	21	...
Sheep	20,654	26,154	5,500	...
Manures	67	531	464	...
Meats, Preserved	96	36,208	36,112	...
Hides	991	1,225	234	...
Kangaroo Skins	283	169	...	114
Sheep	2,569	4,838	2,269	...
All other	1,071	2,208	1,137	...
Tallow	9,397	20,043	10,646	...
Wool*	52,079	58,246	6,167	...

	1893.	1894.	Increase.
* Wool to Victoria, No. of Bales	18,500	21,627	3,127
„ South Australia, No. of Bales	33,579	36,619	3,040
Total Bales of Wool	52,079	58,246	6,167

Customs House,
Wentworth, 30th March, 1895.

RICHARD MOONEY,
Sub-Collector of Customs.

APPENDIX J.

STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED REVENUE AND WORKING EXPENSES OF A RAILWAY FROM SEA LAKE TO YELTA, HANDED IN BY MR. LAVATER WHEN GIVING EVIDENCE AT MILDURA.

No. of Train Journeys, i.e., Average Number of Return Trips per Week.	Tons.	Miles.	Miles.	Miles.	Total Train Mileage assumed to carry Produce from Yelta to Melbourne and vice versa, equals paying Mileage plus dead Mileage.	Expenses of Working, at 3s. 6d. per Train Mile.	Interest on Capital Cost of Construction from Sea Lake to Yelta, 11½ miles, £269,600, at 3½ per cent.	Total Amount required to be earned Annually to pay Interest on Capital Cost and Working Expenses.	Through Charge per Ton of Goods to cover Cost of forgoing (Passenger Traffic not allowed for).	£ s. d.	Pence.	Charge per Ton per Mile for Goods only (Passenger Traffic not allowed for).	Calculated Receipts from Passenger Traffic, 30 per Week each way, at £3 per Return Trip.	Through Charge per Ton of Goods to cover Cost of forgoing (Passenger Traffic allowed for).	£ s. d.	Pence.	Charge per Ton per Mile for Goods (Passenger Traffic allowed for).	Receipts from Carriage of Goods at 30s. per Ton through Charge, i.e., 1d. per Ton per Mile and Terminal Charge.	Total Receipts per Annum from Goods and Passengers.	£	Annual Profits, i.e., Total Receipts less Working Expenses and Interest.
1	6,760	17,992	17,992	17,992	35,984	6,297	9,436	15,733	2 6 7	1 12 8	1 13	1 13	4,680	1 12 8	1 13	1 13	10,140	14,820	14,820	913 (loss)	
1½	10,140	26,988	26,988	26,988	53,976	9,445	9,436	18,881	1 17 3	1 8 0	1 29	1 29	4,680	1 8 0	1 29	1 29	15,210	19,890	19,890	1,009 (profit)	
2	13,520	35,984	35,984	35,984	71,968	12,594	9,436	22,030	1 12 7	1 5 8	1 13	1 13	4,680	1 5 8	1 13	1 13	20,280	24,960	24,960	2,930	
2½	16,900	44,980	44,980	44,980	89,960	15,743	9,436	25,179	1 9 10	1 4 3	1 03	1 03	4,680	1 4 3	1 03	1 03	25,350	30,030	30,030	4,851	
3	20,280	53,976	53,976	53,976	107,952	18,892	9,436	28,328	1 7 11	1 3 4	0 97	0 97	4,680	1 3 4	0 97	0 97	30,420	35,100	35,100	6,772	
3½	23,660	62,972	62,972	62,972	125,944	22,040	9,436	31,476	1 6 7	1 2 8	0 92	0 92	4,680	1 2 8	0 92	0 92	35,490	40,170	40,170	8,694	
4	27,040	71,968	71,968	71,968	143,936	25,189	9,436	34,625	1 5 7	1 2 2	0 89	0 89	4,680	1 2 2	0 89	0 89	40,560	45,240	45,240	10,615	
4½	30,420	80,964	80,964	80,964	161,928	28,337	9,436	37,773	1 4 10	1 1 9	0 86	0 86	4,680	1 1 9	0 86	0 86	45,630	50,310	50,310	12,537	
5	33,800	89,960	89,960	89,960	179,920	31,486	9,436	40,922	1 4 3	1 1 5	0 84	0 84	4,680	1 1 5	0 84	0 84	50,700	55,380	55,380	14,458	
5½	37,180	98,956	98,956	98,956	197,912	34,635	9,436	44,071	1 3 8	1 1 2	0 82	0 82	4,680	1 1 2	0 82	0 82	55,770	60,450	60,450	16,379	
6	40,560	107,952	107,952	107,952	215,904	37,783	9,436	47,219	1 3 3	1 1 0	0 81	0 81	4,680	1 1 0	0 81	0 81	60,840	65,520	65,520	18,301	

APPENDIX K.

STATEMENT SHOWING CULTIVATED LAND AT MILDURA.

Variety.	Acres.							Total Acreage.
	1888.	1889.	1890.	1891.	1892.	1893.	1894.	
VINES.								
Gordo Blanco	32½	160¼	411	1,329	56¼	90½	...	2,587¼
Currants	1	...	36	74¾	55	33½	...	200¼
Wine Grapes ... ..	...	...	21½	198	181	126	...	526½
Sultanas ... ..	...	...	8	14	22	21½	...	65½
Table Grapes ... ..	...	...	...	12	11½	...	...	23½
								3,403
FRUIT TREES.								
Oranges	21	108¼	115¼	238½	116¾	83	10	692¾
Lemons	12½	96	75¾	247	145	145½	23	744¾
Apricots	34½	45¼	139¾	247	544¾	604¾	...	1,616
Peaches	4	14	14	216¾	275½	354¾	...	879
Pears	7	...	6	33¾	3½	19½	...	69¾
Almonds ... ..	...	...	2	7¼	2½	6	...	17¾
Olives... ..	...	4	12	47	8¼	6	...	77¼
Apples ... ..	...	...	¼	3	½	1	...	4¾
Figs	2	...	35	54	65½	24½	...	181
Plums	6½	12	14½	38½	18	8½	...	98
Nectarines ... ..	...	1	...	5¼	9¾	1¼	...	17¼
Assorted ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	163¼
								4,501½
	121	440¾	891	2,765¾	2,023½	1,526¼	33	7,964½
Nursery ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	52½
Lucerne ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	208
Improved Land ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2,206½
								10,431½
Interplanted Land ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	140

The number of shelter trees planted in the plantations is given as 12,876. These include fruit-bearing trees, such as figs, olives, almonds, and plums, as well as ornamental trees.

GEORGE H. TOLLEY,
Authorized Surveyor,
Sec. M. I. Co. Ltd.

APPENDIX L.

PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE RAILWAYS TO YELTA.

Name of Line.	Length to Construct.	Ruling Grade.	Sharpest Curve.	Length of good Land.	Length of inferior Land.	Estimated cost of Construction at Present Prices, exclusive of Land and Rolling-stock.		Estimated Annual Revenue from Moderate Development in a few Years.	Estimated Annual Maintenance and Working Expenses for Moderate Development.	Balance against Interest on Capital.
						To complete Line for moderate Traffic, inclusive of Fencing.	To open for Public Traffic, exclusive of Fencing and Station Equipment, &c.			
Sea Lake to Yelta (Wycheproof route)	Miles. 114	1 in 75	Chains. 20	About half	About half	£301,673 = £2,650 per mile	£269,600 = £2,368 per mile	£17,100 From Mildura population ... 9,000 From New South Wales traffic ... 6,000 £32,100	Maintenance, £60 per mile ... £6,840 Other working expenses ... 14,560 £21,400	£ 10,700
Hopetoun to Yelta (Hopetoun route)	122	1 in 75	20	About half	About half	£326,620 = £2,672 per mile	£291,899 = £2,388 per mile	£18,300 From intermediate population ... 9,000 From Mildura population ... 6,000 From New South Wales traffic ... £33,300	Maintenance, £60 per mile ... £7,320 Other working expenses ... 14,880 £22,200	11,100
Jeparit to Yelta (Dimboola route)	152	1 in 75	20	About half	About half	£404,907 = £2,655 per mile	£361,739 = £2,372 per mile	£22,800 From intermediate population ... 9,000 From Mildura population ... 6,000 From New South Wales traffic ... £37,800	Maintenance, £60 per mile ... £9,120 Other working expenses ... 16,080 £25,200	12,600
*Quambatook to Yelta ...	161	1 in 75	20	About two-thirds	About one-third	£426,650 = £2,650 per mile	£381,248 = £2,368 per mile	£30,150 From intermediate population ... 9,000 From Mildura population ... 6,000 From New South Wales traffic ... £45,150	Maintenance, £60 per mile ... £9,660 Other working expenses ... 20,440 £30,100	15,050
*Birchip to Yelta, <i>via</i> Marlbed and Minapre (only partly surveyed)	151	1 in 75	20	About 60 per cent.	About 40 per cent.	£393,053 = £2,603 per mile	£350,350 = £2,320 per mile	£27,180 From intermediate population ... 9,000 From Mildura population ... 6,000 From New South Wales traffic ... £42,180	Maintenance, £60 per mile ... £9,060 Other working expenses ... 19,060 £28,120	14,060

XXXX

* The information respecting the Quambatook and the Birchip routes was not included in the Report as furnished to the Minister for Railways. It has now been included at the request of the Railways Standing Committee.

NOTE.—The estimated revenue in each case is based on a population of five to the square mile of good country (assumed to be half the land) for a width of twenty miles, and for 3,000 persons at Mildura, reckoned at £3 per head, which is low for an agricultural population, and allowing £6,000 as the receipts from New South Wales traffic. The working expenses are taken as two-thirds, or 66½ per cent., of the receipts which should be ample for the supposed volume of traffic. I am of opinion that none of these lines would pay for many years without the development of the intervening country. No credit is taken in these estimates for increased revenue on existing lines derived from new development through the construction of any of these proposed extensions.

20th June, 1894.
(Signed) F. RENNICK,
Engineer-in-Chief.