

1897.
—
VICTORIA.

REPORT

OF

PROCEEDINGS TAKEN UNDER THE PROVISIONS

OF

THE LAND ACTS AND THE WATTLES ACT 1890,

DURING THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER,

1896.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

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REPORT.

*To His Excellency the Right Honorable Thomas, Baron Brassey, Knight
Commander of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath; Governor and
Commander-in-Chief in and over the Colony of Victoria and its
Dependencies, &c., &c., &c.*

Department of Lands and Survey,
Melbourne, 11th December, 1897.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I have the honour to submit the annexed Report by the Secretary for Lands of proceedings taken under the provisions of the Land Acts and the *Wattles Act* 1890 during the year 1896.

The Report has reference to the undermentioned subjects, which are dealt with in the order indicated :—

I.—Settlement.	III.—Pastoral occupation.
II.—Sales by auction.	IV.—Miscellaneous.

Appendices B and C give a detailed account of the work done in the Survey and Forest Branches of the Department.

I have the honour to be,

Your Excellency's most obedient servant,

R. W. BEST,

Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey,
and President of the Board of Land and Works.



To the Honorable Robert Wallace Best, Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey.

Department of Crown Lands and Survey,
Melbourne, 11th December, 1897.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit the following Report of proceedings taken under the provisions of the Land Acts and the *Wattles Act* 1890 during the year 1896.

I.—SETTLEMENT.

The general methods of alienation of Crown lands in Victoria, from the first sales to the 31st December, 1896, are shown in the following Table (A):—

TABLE A.

	BY AUCTION.				BY SELECTION.						General Total. Area.
	Country Lands.	Town Lands.	Suburban Lands.	Totals by Auction, &c.	Selection and Lease.		Certificate Selection.		42nd Section, Act 1865, &c.		
					No.	Area.	No.	Area.	No.	Area.	
Under Imperial Acts ...	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	...	Acres.	...	Acres.	...	Acres.	Acres.
Land Act 1860 ...	392,610	1,273	4,979	398,862	...	410,600	...	...	...	...	3,944,237
" " 1862 ...	422,610	2,800	31,295	456,705	...	1,363,243	...	59,992	...	...	809,462
" " 1865 ...	639,761	6,709	34,137	680,607	5,900	1,499,910	3,078	559,423	...	753,574	3,493,514
" " 1869 ...	986,175	17,229	32,693	1,036,097	Section 19. 65,980	10,517,612	...	...	Section 49. 11,710	183,562	11,737,271
" " 1878 ...	...	...	...	...	Section 11. 453	76,100	...	...	Section 10. 401	1,202	77,302
Totals ...	...	...	...	6,516,508	...	13,867,465	...	619,415	...	938,338	21,941,726
During year—	Land Acts 1884-1890.				Land Acts 1884-1890.						
1885 ...	23,917	2,106	877	26,900	...	...	...	...	...	...	26,900
1886 ...	16,727	2,134	420	19,281	...	...	...	...	...	...	19,281
1887 ...	16,661	2,800	104	19,565	Section 42. 83	11,310	...	...	...	...	30,875
1888 ...	15,549	4,373	102	20,024	290	49,745	...	...	...	...	69,769
1889 ...	10,601	2,244	835	13,680	409	63,906	41	5,383	...	...	82,969
1890 ...	8,941	3,094	166	12,201	505	91,974	33	4,409	...	...	108,584
1891 ...	4,989	1,801	563	7,353	507	88,610	26	2,069	...	...	98,032
1892 ...	7,681	2,336	603	10,620	482	74,841	16	1,960	...	...	87,421
1893 ...	3,448	2,844	254	6,546	702	99,795	13	1,554	Section 49. 13	58	107,953
1894 ...	4,737	2,111	...	6,848	883	97,628	76	1,668	Section 22. 78	363	106,507
1895 ...	1,904	1,444	...	3,348	574	46,507	39	1,896	...	106	51,857
1896 ...	1,471	1,179	...	2,650	792	43,202	34	1,272	...	35	47,159
Totals under Land Acts 1884-1890 ...	116,626	28,466	3,924	149,016	5,227	667,518	278	20,211	120	562	837,307

Auction 6,665,524 acres.
 Selection 16,113,509 „
 Total 22,779,033 acres.

NOTE.—Forfeitures have in each case been deducted from the area selected.

Table B shows the number of leases and licences under Land Acts 1869, 1878, 1890, and 1891 on 31st December, 1896, with the area and rental:—

TABLE B.

Section of Act.	No.	Area.	Annual Rental.
		Acres.	£
<i>Progress Payments.</i>			
Residence Licences—Section 19, <i>Land Act</i> 1869–1878	573	57,138	2,857
Section 42, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	4,340	520,122	26,006
Section 203, <i>Land Act</i> 1890...	36	10,479	524
Section 17, <i>Land Act</i> 1891 ...	78	867	87
Section 22, <i>Land Act</i> 1891 ...	120	562	45
Section 9, <i>Wattles Act</i> 1890...	1	131	6
Leases—Section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869–1878 ...	27,711	4,766,758	238,338
Section 44, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	1,109	179,946	8,997
Non-residence Licences—Section 11, <i>Land Act</i> 1878	4	2,770	277
Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1890	267	18,970	1,897
„ Leases—Section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869–1878	398	57,808	5,781
Section 50, <i>Land Act</i> 1890	33	4,161	416
Leases and Licences other than Agricultural or Pastoral—Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1869 ...	1,716	25,338	2,431
Section 65, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	4,382	79,880	6,312
Section 99, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	3,287	10,043	23,841
<i>Pastoral Occupation—</i>			
Section 3, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	35	146,992	536
Section 21, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	71	1,124,415	3,394
Section 32, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	9,554	3,717,221	35,188
Section 67, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	1,201	378,704	3,155
Section 123, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	3,263	5,413,877	12,936
Section 85, <i>Land Act</i> 1890 ...	76	3,172	1,577
Section 5, <i>Wattles Act</i> 1890 ...	19	7,532	57
Section 10, <i>Wattles Act</i> 1890 ...	1	548	17
<i>Mallee—</i>			
Pastoral Leases ...	3,467	8,567,186	15,000
Perpetual Leases ...	6	3,402	28
Total ...	61,748	25,098,022	389,703

SECTION 20, LAND ACT 1869.

This section, the rights of which were preserved by section 2 of *The Land Act* 1884, and are continued by section 2 of the *Land Act* 1890, bestowed on licensees under Part II. of *The Land Act* 1869 the right to acquire, on expiration of the term of their licences, the fee-simple of their selections, either by paying the balance of purchase money in one sum, or by deferred payments under lease.

The following Table shows the transactions during 1896 :—

TABLE C.

Applications.		Grants Gazetted as Approved.	Leases Gazetted as Approved.	Purchase Completed.	Area Purchased.	Area Leased.	Balance of Purchase Money paid by Licensees.	Area Leased and afterwards Purchased.	Amount Paid by Lessees as Balance of Purchase money.
Lodged.	Dealt with.								
34	31	3	28	1,349	266,278	5,319	£ 22 8 0	266,245	39,472 0 0

NOTE.—The transactions of a like nature under section 11, *Land Act* 1878, are included in this Table.

Table D shows the number of applications under section 20 of *The Land Act* 1869 of holdings varying in extent from 80 acres and under to 320 acres, which were approved during 1896, inclusive of three grants which were issued in cases where the licensees paid the balance of purchase money at the expiry of their licences:—

TABLE D.

80 acres and under ...	11
Over 80 and under 160 ...	6
Over 160 and not exceeding 240 ...	1
Over 240 and not exceeding 320 ...	13
Total ...	31

NOTE.—This Table includes particulars of a like nature under section 11, *Land Act* 1878.

SECTION 31, LAND ACT 1869.

This section, the rights of which were preserved by section 2 of *The Land Act* 1884, and are continued by section 2 of the *Land Act* 1890, conferred on holders of licences, obtained under the repealed Acts of 1862 and 1865, to occupy lands for other than pastoral purposes, the right to acquire the fee-simple of the lands so held, credit being given in the purchase for all moneys paid by them as rent and survey fees.

In cases in which purchase has not been allowed on account of the auriferous character of the land, or of portions thereof being required or likely to be required for railways or other public purposes, such of the licensees whose payments represent an amount equivalent to the estimated value per acre of the land have continued in occupation at a nominal rental of One shilling per annum pending removal of objections or decision as to public requirements.

Table E shows the transactions during 1896:—

TABLE E.

Number of Applications.		Purchases Completed.	Area Purchased.	Balances of Purchase Money Received.			Survey Fees Allowed.		
Received.	Approved.			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
5	16*	16	Acres. 486	30	7	6	24	15	0

* The surplus of applications approved over the number received during the year consists of applications the previous objections to which have been withdrawn.

THE LAND ACT 1890.

Division 1, Part I.

Section 18 of this Act confers on licensees under section 49 of *The Land Act* 1869 the exclusive right of purchasing their holdings at a price to be determined by the Board of Land and Works. Two hundred and thirty-nine (239) applications, representing 4,232 acres, were approved during the year, and the sum of £459 2s. 6d. was received.

Division 3, Part I.—Agricultural and Grazing Lands.

Under this Division provision is made for the occupation of Crown lands for the combined purposes of grazing and agriculture.

Section 32 empowers the Governor in Council to grant leases of "Grazing Areas" for any term of years, provided that the term for which the land is so leased shall expire not later than fourteen years after the 29th December, 1884. Table F shows the extent of the operation of this section during each month of the year:—

TABLE F.

1896.	Number of Applications.		Area Leased.
	Received.	Approved.	
			Acres.
January	32	—	—
February	39	75	18,754
March	42	13	3,492
April	24	11	5,805
May	52	20	5,284
June	50	—	—
July	46	74	19,484
August	74	6	1,192
September	52	12	3,488
October	48	23	5,184
November	50	12	3,560
December	44	5	1,032
Totals	553	251	67,275*

* The annual rent payable in respect of this area is £663 14s. 4d.

NOTE.—With respect to the applications received it should be noted that in many instances several applications are made for the same Grazing Area.

Sections 42 and 49 provide for the issue of licences for agricultural allotments not exceeding 320 acres in extent. Table G shows the transactions under these sections during the year:—

TABLE G.

Section.	Number of Applications.		Area Applied for.	Area Licensed.	Fees Payable Yearly.		
	Received.	Approved.			£	s.	d.
42—Residence	892	792	Acres. 82,276	Acres. 43,202	2,160	2	0
49—Non-residence	38	34	2,072	1,272	127	4	0

Section 44 enables licensees under section 42 of this Division of the Land Act to acquire, on expiration of the term of their licences, the fee-simple of their licensed holdings either by paying the balance of purchase money in one sum or by deferred payments under lease. The following Table shows the transactions during 1896:—

TABLE H.

Applications.		Grants Gazetted as Approved.	Leases Gazetted as Approved.	Purchase Completed.	Area Purchased.	Area Leased.	Balance of Purchase Money paid by Licensees.	Area Leased and afterwards Purchased.	Amount Paid by Lessees as Balance of Purchase money.				
Lodged.	Dealt with.								£	s.	d.		
524	416	7	409	7	Acres. 140	Acres. 65,534	£	s.	d.	Acres. 53	£	s.	d.
							61	15	0		31	13	0

Table I shows the number of Crown Grants under section 44 of the *Land Act* 1890 of Licensed holdings varying in extent from 80 acres and under to 320 acres, the issue of which was approved during 1896:—

TABLE I.

80 acres and under ...	...	...	...	...	7
Over 80 and under 160 ...	...	...	...	...	0
Over 160 and not exceeding 240 ...	...	...	...	...	0
Over 240 and not exceeding 320 ...	...	...	...	...	0
					—
Total ...	...	...	...	...	7

NOTE.—This Table includes particulars of a like nature under section 50, *Land Act* 1890.

Under section 56 a lessee of an agricultural allotment of land under *The Land Acts* 1884–1890, or of an allotment under Part II. of *The Land Act* 1869 or any Act amending such Part, can give an “order” for the delivery of the Crown grant to any person who has made an advance of money on the security of a lease, the mortgage being transferred from the lease to the Crown grant. Seventy-six (76) orders, representing in all an area of 16,360 acres, were registered during the year.

Section 57 empowers licensees under Part II. of *The Land Act* 1869, and licensees of agricultural allotments under *The Land Acts* 1884–1890, to register liens at the Crown Lands Office upon the security of the permanent improvements effected on their holdings up to half the value of such improvements. Twelve (12) liens, comprising an area of 1,494 acres, were registered during the year, representing, as advanced on this kind of security, £1,180 12s. 6d.

Division 4, Part I.—*Auriferous Lands.*

This Division provides for the occupation of Crown lands classed “Auriferous.” Under section 65, licences for the purpose of residence or cultivation may be issued for lands not included within any city or town, and not exceeding 20 acres in extent. Under section 67, licences may be issued for grazing purposes only up to 1,000 acres.

No alienation of auriferous land can take place; therefore, all occupiers of the public estate under this Division are in the relation of annual tenants, and their occupation is subordinate to that for mining purposes.

The transactions during the year under sections 65 and 67 are shown in Table J :—

TABLE J.

Section 65.			Section 67.		
Number of Applications.		Area Licensed.	Number of Applications.		Area Licensed.
Received.	Approved.		Received.	Approved.	
313	215	Acres. 3,730	85	41	Acres. 10,422

WORKED-OUT AURIFEROUS LANDS.

By the 22nd section of the *Land Act* 1891 it is provided that whenever it appears to be no longer profitable to mine for gold within 50 feet of the surface of any unalienated lands of the Crown, such lands may, after inquiry by a warden, be declared to be "worked-out auriferous lands," and licensed in allotments not exceeding five (5) acres in extent. Every licensee who shall have complied with the conditions of his licence will, at the expiration of seven (7) years, be entitled to the fee-simple of the land at a price to be fixed by the Board of Land and Works, and the amount paid as annual licence-fees will be deducted from the purchase money payable.

During the year 6 applications under this section were received whilst 7 applications, including applications made in previous years, were approved for 35 acres.

PROGRESS OF SELECTION.

Table K shows the progress of selection under sections 32, 42, 49, and 65 of *The Land Acts* 1884-1890 :—

TABLE K.—LAND SELECTED.

Year.	Under Section 32.		Under Section 42.		Under Section 49.		Under Section 65.	
	Applications Approved.	Acreage.	Applications Approved.	Acreage.	Applications Approved.	Acreage.	Applications Approved.	Acreage.
1886	1,493	591,138	...	...	...	...	48	937
1887	3,621	1,328,169	83	11,310	...	...	198	3,742
1888	3,813	1,545,612	296	50,758	...	...	421	7,936
1889	2,348	925,939	418	65,862	41	5,383	627	11,578
1890	1,612	606,185	518	94,898	33	4,409	1,057	19,154
1891	1,288	479,667	539	95,634	37	3,597	560	10,220
1892	949	347,201	538	84,924	30	3,799	524	9,530
1893	584	211,401	799	115,126	25	2,403	597	11,002
1894	636	189,874	990	112,368	99	4,635	646	11,474
1895	374	91,227	767	72,029	39	1,896	305	5,376
1896	251	67,275	792	43,202	34	1,272	215	3,730

Reports have been obtained from Land Officers as to the proceedings of selectors and the progress of settlement during the year in their respective districts, and a digest of their reports is given in Appendix A.

LICENCES AND LEASES REVOKED OR DECLARED EXPIRED.

The following Table shows the number of licences and leases, under the sections specified, revoked or declared expired during 1896 :—

TABLE L.

		No.	Extent.
			Acres.
Licences—	Section 19, <i>Land Act</i> 1869	21	4,720
	Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1869	7	95
	Section 11, <i>Land Act</i> 1878 ... ..	...	...
	Section 42, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	193	25,522
	Section 49, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	16	2,444
	Section 65, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	115	2,080
	Section 67, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	107	34,866
Leases—	Section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869	40	6,168
	Section 21, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	15	267,930
	Section 32, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	599	238,556

NOTE.—The Treasury profited to the extent of £6,225 15s. 8d. through revocations and forfeitures during 1896.

Table M sets forth the grounds on which the licences and leases referred to in Table L were revoked or declared expired, and the lands resumed by the Crown :—

TABLE M.

		At Licensee's or Lessee's request.	Non-payment of Rent.	Non-compliance with Conditions.	Declared Expired.	Land Sold.	Land Abandoned.	Leases Surrendered.	Total.
Licences—	Section 19, <i>Land Act</i> 1869 ... ..	...	1	1	18	1	...	...	21
	Section 49, <i>Land Act</i> 1869 ... ..	...	5	2	...	...	...	...	7
	Section 11, <i>Land Act</i> 1878 ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Section 42, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	8	150	7	22	1	5	...	193
	Section 49, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	4	7	1	3	1	...	...	16
	Section 65, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	50	61	1	1	1	1	...	115
	Section 67, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	10	65	...	29	...	3	...	107
Leases—	Section 20, <i>Land Act</i> 1869	5	29	4	...	...	2	...	40
	Section 21, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	8	7	...	...	...	...	...	15
	Section 32, <i>Land Acts</i> 1884–1890	34	388	45	...	...	...	132	599
Totals		119	713	61	73	4	11	132	1,113

II.—SALES OF CROWN LANDS BY AUCTION.

The principle of deferred payments was introduced in Part V. of *The Land Act* 1884, now Division 5, Part I., *Land Act* 1890, one-fourth of the price bid being paid at the time of sale, and the remaining three-fourths spread over three years, payable quarterly, in instalments of equal amounts, bearing interest at the rate of £6 per centum per annum.

During the year, 2,650 acres were sold for £12,555. Interest to the amount of £1,234 19s. 4d. was paid with the instalments of purchase money as they fell due.

The area of country lands sold at auction during 1896 was 1,471 acres, of which about 933 acres were improved and subject to valuation, and 538 acres unimproved.

Table N shows the proceeds of sales by auction of country lands during the years 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, and 1896. Similar particulars for each year from the commencement of *The Land Act* 1869 will be found in the departmental Report for 1891 :—

TABLE N.

Year.	Area Sold.		Amount Realized.		Average per Acre.
	A.	R. P.	£	s. d.	£ s. d.
1892—6 months ending 30th June—					
Unimproved land	1,297	1 36	3,045	17 10	2 6 11
Improved "	2,738	0 24	3,265	9 6	1 3 10
" 6 months ending 31st December—					
Unimproved land	886	0 4	1,725	3 6	1 18 10
Improved "	2,759	1 31	3,167	0 10	1 2 11
1893—6 months ending 30th June—					
Unimproved land	923	2 24	1,826	14 0	1 19 6
Improved "	1,426	1 26	2,017	13 8	1 8 3
" 6 months ending 31st December—					
Unimproved land	625	2 35	880	18 9	1 8 2
Improved "	472	0 38	1,264	18 4	2 13 6

TABLE N—continued.

Year.	Area Sold.			Amount Realized			Average per Acre.		
	A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1894—6 months ending 30th June—									
Unimproved land	1,648	0	0	2,472	0	0	1	10	0
Improved "	920	0	0	1,058	0	0	1	3	0
" 6 months ending 31st December—									
Unimproved land	1,032	0	0	1,651	0	0	1	12	0
Improved "	1,137	0	0	1,279	2	6	1	2	6
1895—6 months ending 30th June—									
Unimproved land	449	3	14	1,025	12	8	2	5	7
Improved "	1,000	0	39	4,375	12	8	4	7	6
" 6 months ending 31st December—									
Unimproved land	280	3	2	1,288	9	9	4	11	9
Improved "	172	3	31	623	14	6	3	12	1
1896—6 months ending 30th June—									
Country unimproved	410	0	26	1,205	2	3	2	18	9
Country improved	484	1	25	772	15	3	1	12	1
" 6 months ending 31st December—									
Country unimproved	127	2	33	364	5	8	2	17	4
Country improved	448	2	14	631	7	6	1	8	2

Table O shows the alienation by auction, during 1896, of town and country lands, and the amounts derived therefrom :—

TABLE O.

Town Lands.			Country Lands.		
Area.	Amount.	Average per Acre.	Area.	Amount.	Average per Acre.
A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1,179 0 16	9,581 10 8	8 2 6	1,470 3 18	2,973 10 8	2 0 6

III.—PASTORAL OCCUPATION.

The Land Act 1884 came into operation on the 29th December, 1884, and the occupation of runs, under pastoral licence, under *The Land Act* 1869 ceased on the 31st December, 1884.

Section 3 of *The Land Acts* 1884–1890 provided, however, for the continuation, under grazing licence, of the occupation of such runs until the lands comprised therein were required for the purposes of the Act.

One area, comprising 16,000 acres, formerly held as a pastoral run under *The Land Act* 1869, was forfeited during the year.

The sum of £17,941 19s. was received during the year for grazing licences, under sections 3, 67, and 123 of *The Land Acts* 1884–1890.

The area of runs formerly held under pastoral licence under *The Land Act* 1869, and occupation of which was renewed under the provisions of section 3 of *The Land Act* 1884, was on the 31st December, 1896, 146,992 acres.

The amount of pastoral rent paid for each year since 1891 is shown in Table P below. Similar information for each year from the passing of *The Land Act* 1869 up to the end of 1891 is shown in the departmental Report for 1891.

TABLE P.

	£	s.	d.
1892	3,363	3	2
1893	3,329	2	5
1894	2,661	17	9
1895	3,874	7	10
1896	3,011	11	10

Fifteen (15) leases, comprising 267,930 acres, were declared void during the year.

For further particulars, reference is invited to Table Q.

TABLE Q.

PASTORAL ALLOTMENTS—SECTION 21, LAND ACT 1884-1890.

Number of applications received from 1st January to 31st December, 1896	...	9
Number of applications approved from 1st January to 31st December, 1896	...	5
Area leased	...	93,922 acres
Area available on 1st January, 1897, for application	...	1,872,638 „

THE LAND ACT 1891.

This Act came into operation on the 29th December, 1891.

During the current year many applicants for land have availed themselves of the provision made in section 7, whereby grazing areas of 320 acres and less in extent may be at once licensed by the Governor in Council.

Section 16 provides that areas not exceeding 20 acres and not contiguous or adjacent to Crown lands and areas not exceeding 3 acres required for church sites or for any charitable purposes may be sold. Under the provisions of this section 27 cases were approved, dealing with an area of 196 acres.

Section 17 provides for the application of the "betterment" principle wherever land has been or may be enhanced in value by railways or other public works. Since October, 1893, 78 licences have been issued for an area of 867 acres, the rental of which has been increased in accordance with this clause.

MALLEE.

The *Land Act* 1890, Part II., and the *Mallee Lands Act* 1896 deal with about 11,166,793 acres of land, exclusive of Mildura (250,000 acres), in the north-western district of the colony. In addition to the larger area, 155,207 acres have been laid off as roads through the mallee to permit of communication in this portion of the colony. The transactions for the year are as under:—

Leases issued	...	...	...	Blocks	...	Nil	Area	...
				Allotments	...	51	„	26,724 acres
				Perpetual leases (agricultural allotments)	...	6	„	3,402 „
Licences issued	...	...	...	Agricultural allotments	...	Nil	„	...
				Garden, Store, &c.	...	58	„	...
Leases cancelled for non-payment of rents and other causes	...	...	...	Blocks	...	1	„	154,240 acres
				Allotments	...	96	„	53,184 „
Licences cancelled	...	...	...	Agricultural allotments	...	1	„	320 „
				Blocks	...	5	„	170,382 „
Leases transferred	...	...	...	Allotments	{	Whole	237	„ 175,002 „
					{	Portion	57	„ 44,096 „
Land subdivided and made available for application	...	...	...	Blocks	...	Nil	...	...
Applications received	...	...	...	Allotments	...	...	...	66
				Blocks	...	...	...	Nil
Applications granted	...	...	...	Allotments	...	...	...	46
				Blocks	...	...	...	Nil
Applications refused	...	...	...	Allotments	...	...	...	20
Applications received for agricultural allotments	...	...	...	Perpetual leases	...	...	...	100
				Licences	...	...	...	35
Number granted	...	...	...	Perpetual leases	...	72	Refused	28
				Licences	...	25	„	10
				Blocks	...	...	...	Nil
Applications abandoned	...	...	...	Allotments	...	...	...	29
				Agricultural allotments	...	...	...	Nil
Number of Local Land Boards held	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	30
Cases dealt with	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	250

On 1st January, 1897, the areas available and held under lease were as follow:—

Available for application	...	...	...	Blocks	...	16	Area	1,532,504 acres
				Allotments	...	69	„	404,504 „
				Agricultural allotments	...	453	„	258,372 „
Held under lease	...	...	...	Blocks	...	66	„	5,453,918 „
				Allotments	...	3,401	„	3,113,268 „
				Perpetual leases	...	6	„	3,402 „
Agricultural allotments held	...	...	...	Licences	...	36	„	10,479 „

Note.—Three blocks containing 390,346 acres are permanently reserved for public purposes, and consequently are not included in lands leased or available.

The revenue derived was as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Rents on blocks	5,203	2	6
Rents on allotments	9,252	6	7
Rents on agricultural allotments	249	17	0
Survey fees on blocks	81	6	8
Survey fees on allotments	30	0	0
Valuation of improvements on allotments	157	16	0
Interest on valuation of improvements on blocks			Nil
Fencing rate	794	19	3
Fees—			
Application	£195	0	0
Lease	70	0	0
Transfer	300	0	0
Mortgage	250	0	0
Licence			Nil
		815	0 0
Total	£16,584	8	0

VERMIN RATES.

Vermin rates, proclaimed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of local committees elected or appointed for the destruction of vermin, were collected and remitted to local committees as under:—

	£	s.	d.
Northern Vermin Board	299	0	0
North-Eastern Vermin Board	371	12	7
North-Western " "	32	1	6
Eastern " "	470	19	11
Western " "	170	6	8
Middle " "	81	12	5
Warracknabeal " "	257	4	7
Total	£1,682	17	8

Selection in the Mallee during the year 1896 has not been equal to previous years owing principally to two bad seasons. It is confidently believed, however, that the advantages given to selectors by the fixity of tenure and other provisions of the *Mallee Lands Act* 1896 will result in a marked increase in the area selected during the ensuing year.

IV.—MISCELLANEOUS.

SECTION 76 OF THE LAND ACT 1890.

In this section provision is made for the alienation of portions of land not more than 10 acres in extent at a price to be fixed by appraisalment. During the year 326 acres were sold in this manner, realizing the amount of £931 5s. 9d.

SECTION 102, LAND ACT 1890.—COMMONS.

Additional commonage, to the extent of 288 acres, was proclaimed during the year. Commons were diminished by proclamation to the extent of 254 acres.

Six (6) commons which were found to be no longer required were abolished.

SECTION 117, LAND ACT 1890.—PENALTIES.

The amount of penalties, at the rate of Five shillings per acre, received during 1896 for non-improvement by lessees under the Land Acts of 1862 and 1865, and interest on rents in arrear, was £248 0s. 1d.

SECTION 128, LAND ACT 1890.—PUBLIC HEARINGS.

During the year 1896, 348 sittings of Local Land Boards were held, at which applications for land and other business, comprising in all 2,877 subjects (including applications for mallee lands), were dealt with.

Four hundred and thirty-eight cases were publicly heard by the Minister during the year.

THE WATTLES ACT 1890.

The Wattles Act was passed with a view to afford special facilities for the cultivation of the various species of acacia which have a commercial value, but its provisions were not largely availed of during the year. During the twelve months two (2) applications for leases, embracing an area of 800 acres, were received. Two (2) applications for leases under section 5 of this Act were granted during the year for an area of 1,449 acres.

VERMIN DESTRUCTION.

The following is the expenditure under this head for year ending 31st December, 1896:—

Subsidy paid shire councils, &c., for destruction of dogs and foxes	...	...	...	...	...	£1,187	7	2
Wages of men working Crown lands, material, &c.	...	...	...	...	...	9,714	12	10
Salaries of inspectors and allowances to police rabbit inspectors	...	...	...	...	...	3,586	17	6
Total	...	...	...	...	...	£14,488	17	6

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

THOS. F. MORKHAM,

Secretary for Lands.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

REPORT ON WORKING OF LAND ACT FOR THE YEAR 1896.

District.	Applications Approved.						Report as to the Working of Land Act 1884-1890 on Holdings under Sections 42 and 65.	Report as to use made of Land leased under Section 82 Land Act 1884-1890.	Report as to Agriculture and New Rural Industries.	Remarks.
	Land Act 1890.			Section 65.						
	Section 32.	Section 42.	Section 65.	Section 32.	Section 42.	Section 65.				
No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.	...	...	...	...
Alexandra	4	1,653	2	89	1	20	Satisfactory	...	Chiefly for grazing purposes	There is a large amount of land available for selection in this district which is never applied for, as it is remote from railways and of an inaccessible nature.
Ararat	5	2,304	...	...	3	60	Satisfactory	...	Grazing	The vineyards recently planted are now coming into bearing, and the yields have been very satisfactory. Owing to dry season crops have not been up to average. Wool clip has been satisfactory; good prices realized.
Stawell	...	...	...	...	5	55	Satisfactory	...	Residence in few cases	A good many applications under section 99, for garden and residence purposes, have been dealt with; and there has been a good demand for large blocks for grazing purposes under section 123.
Bairnsdale	35	13,248	25	2,362	...	...	Satisfactory	...	Land principally used for grazing	
Ballarat	6	803	11	612	46	770	Very satisfactory	...	Used chiefly for grazing purposes	

Beechworth	7	2,197	24	2,565	4	53	Satisfactory	...	Conditions of leases are fairly complied with	There is not a very large area in this district fit for wheat growing, but the crop gathered last season returned a fair yield. The tobacco growers are watching with interest the cultivation and treatment of the area planted at the Government Experimental Farm at Edi. The grape crop this season was phenomenal. It has been stated that in the Rutherglen district so bountiful a vintage as the one just completed has never been obtained since vines were planted in that district, the wine being of the highest order both as regards saccharine and body	The area under vines is being added to each year. The fruit crop was abundant. The rainfall has been small, consequently there is a great scarcity of grass. The creameries in some places have been closed, owing to the falling off in the milk supply.
Benalla	4	1,361	12	675	...	...	Satisfactory	...	Land under this section is used for grazing purposes	A large area was under cultivation and the yield was fair. The prices obtained for wheat have given the farmers encouragement to put in a greater amount of crop this season, should a sufficient rainfall occur. The yield of tobacco was good, but the price realized was disappointing	No new rural industry to report.
Bendigo	...	...	13	1,259	18	336	In every way satisfactory	...	Grazing principally	Notwithstanding the unfavorable character of the season and the long rainless intervals experienced, the returns have in many instances proved surprisingly good. Farmers are not, however, discouraged by the small yields secured, and have undertaken their preparation for the approaching season with a vigour and energy deserving of much more favorable results.	Any allotments which may be thrown open for selection from time to time are keenly sought after by the sons of farmers already holding land in the district, and it is the evident desire of the selectors to turn their areas to the best advantage, as settlement generally is of a thoroughly <i>bona fide</i> character.
Camperdown and Warrnambool	Included in Geelong District	...	...	...	...	...	Satisfactory	...	The land is used for grazing purposes only	There are no new industries to notice. The butter, cheese, and bacon industries are still the most flourishing ones in this district, and are likely to remain so until the difficulties of transit between the agricultural land and the market are reduced.	
Castlemaine	20	3,450	30	702	39	765	Entirely satisfactory	...	Principally grazing	In portions of the district the returns from crops would average fairly well, but a number of cases are reported where the yield would be practically nil, owing to the severity of the season and the absence of a proper rainfall. No new industries to report	Large areas of what were formerly abandoned diggings have been levelled up and planted with fruit trees, &c. In many instances these young trees present a healthy and vigorous growth, giving every promise of an abundant yield in the future. Generally speaking, the cultivation of these lands has proved in every way successful.

APPENDIX A—continued.

District.	Applications Approved.						Report as to the Working of Land Act 1884-1890 on Holdings under Sections 42 and 65.	Report as to use made of Land leased under Section 32 Land Act 1884-1890.	Remarks.
	Section 32.		Section 42.		Section 65.				
	No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.	No.	Area in Acres.			
Echuca and Kerang	5	809	30	1,922	...	...	Report as to Agriculture and New Rural Industries.	Farming operations are being greatly extended, and it is estimated that a much larger area will be under cultivation this year. In several portions of the district farmers are planting amber cane, and where a sufficient water supply is procurable the crops have done remarkably well.
Geelong	43	7,573	54	7,728	...	...	The returns from last harvest have, in a great many instances, exceeded expectation, notwithstanding the severity of the season. On the Gunbower Island, where selection has been comparatively recent, large areas have been cleared and prepared for cultivation, and the results so far have been very encouraging. Several persons are turning their attention to intense culture, so that further developments may be awaited with interest	Bad roads and difficulty of access greatly retard the progress of the selectors in the forest country
Hamilton	9	4,129	10	895	...	...	No new industries to note	The principal kind of settlement taking place at present is under section 99, and in many places very substantial dwellings have been erected.
Horsham	21	5,847	32	1,944	...	...	The land is principally used for grazing purposes	Owing to the unusual dryness there has been a great demand in all parts of the district for reserved land not previously rented. This has been taken up for grazing under section 123.
Melbourne	33	5,310	458	14,355	18	345	Grazing chiefly	A large amount of permanent settlement having taken place under section 42. A great number of 65th holders are applying to come under section 42.	
Omoo	1	504	6	724	4	80	Comparatively small area in this district held under section 32. Areas were originally small, and have mostly been brought under section 42	The district generally is in a prosperous condition. There has been a good rainfall, and the farmers and graziers have had a splendid season owing to the abundant supply of grass everywhere.	

St. Arnaud	11	1,831	42	2,525	69	1,113	Satisfactory	...	...	Grazing	...	...	No new rural industries to report. Average area under cultivation. In consequence of the small rainfall during the season the yield was not satisfactory, but the increased price of wheat helped, in many cases, to make up for the lightness of the crop.
Sale	...	31	10,538	36	3,326	3	51	Satisfactory	...	The greater part of the land under section 32 is used for grazing purposes only	...	...	The sugar beet factory at Maffra is the only new industry started in this district.
Seymour	...	16	5,718	7	1,519	5	82	Satisfactory	...	Used for grazing purposes	...	...	Crops for the season turned out much better than expected, and in view of higher prices produced satisfactory results
Warracknabeal								Satisfactory	...	Conditions being complied with	...	...	The staple product of the district is wheat. Only sufficient oats are cultivated to supply feed. There are no new rural industries

The only lands available in this district are mostly of an inferior quality. Applications for garden and residence areas are slightly increasing.

Except in the neighbourhood of Bangerang and portions of the country north of the 36th parallel the crops were generally poor.

APPENDIX B.

SURVEY BRANCH.

I have the honour to report as follows as to the work performed by the Survey Branch of the Department during the year ending 31st December, 1896.

SURVEYS.

1. The principal part of the surveys required in connexion with the selection and occupation of land continues to be effected by surveyors authorized to perform the work at schedule prices fixed by the Department.

2. During the year whenever officers in charge of Government survey parties have come in contact with the work of the authorized surveyors, they have, as a rule, found it satisfactory. These inspections, however, have been of a limited character, as they have been made by the field-officers only in connexion with their own operations.

3. The permanent staff of field-officers at the end of the year consisted of seven assistant surveyors two of whom have been acting as district surveyors—one in Melbourne and one in Gippsland.

The remaining assistants have been chiefly employed on the survey of main roads, subdivision of land for sale and selection, resurveys, and other work as specified under the following heads:—

- (a) Check and connexion surveys.
- (b) Subdivision of land for village settlement.
- (c) Survey of roads.
- (d) Traverses.

4. Expenditure on departmental surveys for the year 1896 has been as follows:—

Subdivision of land for sale	...	...	...	...	£935	1	2
Main road surveys	...	...	...	...	1,179	0	11
Resurveys for sale, selection, &c.	...	...	...	...	1,580	6	1
Check surveys and connexion lines	...	...	...	...	636	11	9
Feature surveys	...	...	...	...	478	11	9
Subdivision of land for selection	...	...	...	...	406	9	2
Village settlement surveys under the <i>Settlement on Lands Act</i>							
1893	...	...	...	...	338	15	8
Surveys of sites for public purposes	...	...	...	...	82	2	1
Standard lines, boundaries, engineering surveys, and miscellaneous work	...	...	...	...	111	14	3
					£5,748	12	10

5. The amount received as instalments on balances due on grazing area surveys, together with survey fees collected with first rents on surveyed allotments, was £2,392 10s. 1d.

6. The Department has also to be credited with the following amounts for printing, plan work &c., performed for other Departments:—

Mines Department	...	...	...	...	£55	15	0
Public Works	...	...	...	...	2	15	0
Government Printer	...	...	...	...	11	18	0
Defence	...	...	...	...	3	15	0

7. The amount paid into Trust Fund, Survey Fees Account, by selectors and others as survey fees for the year 1896 was £4,368 12s. 4d., while the amount withdrawn therefrom for payments to surveyors, refunds to applicants, and transfers to revenue was £4,025 12s. 1d.

COMPUTING AND ADJUSTING.

8. During the year 441 plans were examined and checked (varying from 1 to 600 lots), of which 76 were returned to surveyors for amendment of discrepancies. The field notes are filed and are produced for reference whenever required by surveyors or draughtsmen.

In the adjusting room 1,933 cases of discrepancies have been investigated, and 120 certificates of amendment prepared and issued involving altogether the preparation of about 2,053 plans and diagrams.

The staff consists of one officer in charge and seven assistants.

DRAUGHTING AND LITHOGRAPHY.

9. The staff has been engaged in compiling new locality and record plans of parishes, but owing to the very large amount of general work and the reduction of the staff, the preparation of compiled plans has been greatly retarded. Three new parish and eleven original plans (drawn from field notes) have been published, and thirteen compiled parish plans posted up for second and third issue.

The demand for parish plans on the 40-chain scale has necessitated the posting up and re-issue of a large number.

Requisitions from other Departments, as well as from municipalities and other public bodies, for plans and tracings have received due attention.

Technical descriptions for the gazettal of reserves (temporary and permanent), roads, &c., have been prepared.

The amount of work disposed of in the lithographic and printing branches has been large.

The staff, including lithographers, printers, and plan-mounter, numbers 23.

ENGRAVING.

10. The plate of the Geodetic Survey of Victoria, "S," North Division, is in hand. Plates "L" north, "G," and "H¹" have been revised and posted up to date.

The staff is limited to one engraver.

PHOTOGRAPHY.

11. Transfers have been prepared for all departmental plans, and also for other branches of the service—the Mines, Public Works, and Government Statist. A large amount of work for the Patents Office was completed.

Staff, two—photographer and assistant.

S. K. VICKERY,
Surveyor-General.

APPENDIX C.

FOREST BRANCH.

A gratifying feature of the year 1896, from a national point of view, has been the steady increase of the mining industry, bringing about also a greater demand for mining timber. As mentioned in last year's report, it becomes a question for grave consideration whether this absolutely necessary supply can be kept up without endangering the prospects of a *permanent crop* of timber. It is in the neighbourhood of gold-fields like Maryborough and Bendigo that some of our most valuable young forests (box and ironbark) are to be found, and it is undoubtedly advisable to allow some of this timber to mature, so as to provide for the future requirements of our State railways. At present, however, we are able to supply props from thinnings, leaving the young trees a distance of 8 to 10 feet apart. Where this work is done by trained men or under trained supervision the result is very gratifying. By the clearing away of surplus crooked timber and scrub the growth of the trees left is accelerated, and the danger from bush fires reduced to a minimum. Thinning judiciously is, I consider, the most important element in the future management of our young indigenous forests, and where it has been carried out on proper lines—notably at Creswick, Barmah, Gunbower, Bendigo, and Maryborough—the results are remarkable.

A slight revival has taken place in the saw-mill trade; a number of mills have lately been established in good timbered country near the Forrest railway station. It is certain that, as the Otway and Beech forests are opened up by light railways, the wealth of timbers growing therein will be utilized for home use. There is also a possibility of an export trade being established if a slight rise of prices takes place in other countries, coupled with a reduction in the cost of production here. I feel convinced that the wood of many species of our Eucalyptus is suitable for street-paving blocks, and, with a view of determining this question, experiments are now being carried out by the Melbourne City Council, and sections of several of the better-class Eucalyptus are already laid down in Flinders-street through the courtesy of Mr. Mountain, C.E., the City Surveyor of Melbourne.

STATE PLANTATIONS.

In spite of the exceptionally dry weather the trees planted last season at Creswick, You Yangs, and Havelock have done remarkably well. On the average the failures have not exceeded 20 per cent. The Assistant Inspector reports that the whole of the trees in the plantation (Sawpit Gully) have made good growth, especially the pines and the oaks. Many thousands of seedlings were planted on the hills during the current year, principally *Pinus Laricio*, and although the season turned out unusually dry the percentage of failures has been small. The officer in charge of the plantations at You Yangs also bears testimony to the satisfactory progress made by the Eucalypts, especially bluegum (*E. Globulus*) and sugar gums (*E. Corynocalyx*) and the various exotic trees comprising oaks, pines, cedars, &c., planted in the reserves there during the last few years. The officer at Havelock praises especially the sugar gum (*E. Corynocalyx*), and suggests that it should be extensively planted in the local reserves, as it promises to produce splendid mining timber in a very short period and be useful later on for conversion into railway sleepers, &c. Towards the end of the year 1896 the royalty system was introduced in connexion with sleeper hewing. My views on this matter are too well known to need recapitulation, as I consider hewing in any shape or form a wasteful method of procuring railway sleepers. However, bringing the men under proper control is a step in the right direction. Formerly the hewer paid a nominal licence-fee only. He roamed about our forests, cut undersized timber, and virtually did as he liked. Now he pays 3d. per sleeper, cuts under the strict (but fair) conditions of a permit, which can be cancelled if such conditions are heedlessly or repeatedly broken.

It will be noticed that there is a slight falling-off in revenue when comparison is made with last year. Next year we anticipate a large increase, as royalty on sleepers may be looked upon as certain to swell our receipts, and sales of wattle bark will also assume large proportions.

It is to be hoped that the recommendations of the Surveyor-General and the Inspector of Forests with regard to setting aside large areas of valuable forest lands as permanent reservations will be favorably considered and adopted. Irrespective of providing for an adequate timber supply to our mines, railways, &c., it must always be kept in mind that our national prosperity depends upon keeping a certain proportion of the colony covered with arboreal vegetation. Already complaints are rife in the north-west portion of the colony as to the unwisdom of killing all the mallee scrub in that territory. Fears are expressed that the country referred to will eventually be reduced to a desert. In my opinion, these fears are well grounded, and can only be guarded against by judicious tree planting and by leaving at regular intervals belts of the native vegetation at right angles to the prevailing winds.

I venture to express a hope that the system of charging royalty on timber may be extended largely at an early date. It is the fairest way of dealing with forest produce, as the consumer is charged in proportion to the quantity he takes over.

The policy of the past in giving freedom to the miner, the splitter, and the sleeper-hewer has produced precisely the effects anticipated and prognosticated by me in my various reports now extending over nine years. I have warned Governments of the inevitable result of the forest vandalism so universally indulged in by every one of these classes of individuals, but still the freedom given has been "condoned" and added to from time to time, with the result that it has been found that the colony of Victoria has but very little timber for export purposes—then the discovery followed that grave waste of forest produce had been going on for years—and also that a marked and apathetic indifference to national wealth as exemplified in our forest resources had been shown by the people generally, and the unfortunate forest officials were thus only partially able to carry out forest conservation in consequence of persistent opposition by interested persons.

It is stated that there is not any timber for export in accessible places—this is true, and the reason simply is the freedom given to the miner, the splitter, sleeper-hewer, and saw-miller, combined with the want of proper supervision and expert knowledge of the conservation of forests in the past 40 years which has brought the forests of Victoria to their present condition of dismal ruin and decay.

These facts have to be faced, and in doing so what do we find? The miner is just as rampant as ever for the timber, only *now* it is the *young* forest he is just as eager to devour as in the old Ballarat days the *matured* forest was swallowed up by the great gold-fields. If every farmer of the country determined to cut his wheat for hay the colony would have to import flour from somewhere else, so the time is rapidly approaching when Victoria will have not only to lose an export trade in timber but will have to face the possibility of importing better-class railway sleepers from New South Wales or Tasmania at a price about three times that now obtainable in Victoria.

These are self-pateut facts which cannot be shirked, and it is manifestly my plain duty to point them out in order that reform may be at once inaugurated. Should this state of things continue for a few years more, then the mining community will wake up to the fact that the timber they require is nothing but a mere scrubby bush of no use to any one, because the continual "copping" (*i.e.*, cutting of young trees down to the stump) has produced an inferior race of trees, diseased and grub infested. (This is most noticeable in certain portions of the Ballarat State Forest at the present, and is the direct outcome of the stupid system of allowing the trees to be continually cut down when quite young saplings, and the consequent growth from the "stool.") Unless, then, "standard" or seed trees are left at regular distances apart there will be no *seed* for reproduction, and as, under the present freedom given to the miner to cut trees, no safeguard exists that these standard (or seed) trees shall be left, because the authorities have determined that the miner shall be the arbiter as to what trees shall come out of the forest instead of the *trained expert*.

The mining community has no cause to find fault with the supervision of the forest officials over the great forests (Young) of Ballarat, Bendigo, and other centres, because mining timber is more plentiful by *reason of the thinning operations* of the Department *than ever before*, and consequently *cheaper*, and had it not been for the constant vigilance exercised and the keen supervision held over these forests *every one* of them would, at this date, be *in a condition of absolute scrub*. In 1888, the City Council of Bendigo unanimously asked the then Minister to take some action in *re* the conservation of the young forests of the great mining centres, and described them as *being* in a deplorable condition at that date. When I assumed charge, *twenty-three days* later than the date of that letter, I found the state of things even worse than represented. At the date of this Report what are the facts? Billions of fine sapling timber, from 20 to 80 feet high, are found in the forests of the mining centres named. Valuable ironbark timber, worth millions of pounds to the State, is growing up around Maryborough and Bendigo rapidly into marketable timber. Thousands of pounds worth of "props" have and are still being supplied to the mines, and those props are mostly the timber "thinned out" to enable the other trees to make head-way and grow into saw-mill timber and, what is even of equal importance, to provide *seed* for "natural reproduction."

It is just here that the sleeper-hewer does such irreparable damage if unrestricted in his work, so, likewise, the miner does incalculable damage by his "freedom" of selection when guided by his own "sweet will" and a lofty contempt for national interests as to the future conservation of the forests.

Unless, then, the forests are managed upon a system of close and systematic working under expert guidance, and timber only taken out of the forest in a way which will permit the produce to be utilized to the best advantage, forestry becomes a farce, and the community is leaning upon a broken reed, and when the fall comes it will be found that a wrecked and ruined forest is the invariable result of such neglect, and what has happened with the *old matured* forests will be repeated, only much more rapidly, with the young trees now so abundant round the great mining centres.

I most earnestly commend the above to the notice of the various Mining Boards of the colony. Forest conservation is a much more serious matter to the mining community than is generally supposed, hence it behoves all interested in mining to note the questions raised in this report.

FOREST REVENUE FOR THE YEAR 1896.

	£	s.	d.
Royalty on redgum timber	1,173	12	7
Grazing fees	1,407	13	6
Wood and jinker licences	924	10	0
Residence fees	13	0	0
Thinning areas and royalty on mining props	1,131	11	9
Royalty on wattle bark	209	0	3
Sale of wattle wood	26	11	8
Saw-mill licences	245	0	0
Timber areas	157	0	0
Royalty on railway sleepers	3	10	2
Sale of Government property	72	15	6
Conscience money	0	10	0
Other licences not specified above	57	3	8
Penalties	318	18	10
Total	5,740	17	11

During the year the officers of the Forest Branch have carried out inspection and supervision to my entire satisfaction, and I have much pleasure in testifying to the general intelligence and zeal of the officers, foresters, superintendents, nurserymen, foremen, and labourers in all work undertaken by them. The office staff especially deserve mention for zeal and industry displayed.

The following figures will give some idea of the work performed by the Forest Branch in planting exotic and native trees during the last few years :—

Years.	You Yangs.	Sawpit Gully.	Gunbower.	Macedon.	Havelock.
	Trees.	Trees.	Trees.	Trees.	Trees.
1888-9	12,000	8,350	—	6,000	—
1889-90	52,000	42,500	—	12,000	—
1890-91	56,000	17,000	—	8,000	—
1891-2	42,008	28,699	10,000	—	—
1892-3	28,810	16,000	8,000	—	—
1893-4	22,265	17,821	3,000	—	9,500
1894-5	19,180	15,527	530	—	1,840
1895-6	22,250	11,958	—	—	1,000
Totals	254,513	157,855	21,530	26,000	12,340

or a grand total of 472,238 trees* hand planted in permanent sites.

* This return does not include about 300,000 bluegums sown in permanent plantations at Havelock and You Yangs.

YOU YANGS.

The total cost of the You Yangs plantation is set forth to date—

1889-90—Fencing, planting, &c.	£1,264
1890-91	971
1891-2	768
1892-3	512
1893-4	371
1894-5	354
1895-6	279
	£4,519

RECEIPTS.

1889 to 1895—Sale of wattle bark	£950	0	0
„ „ Grazing fees	180	0	0
1896—Wattle bark, £23 5 0	}	26	8 8
„ „ wood, £3 3 8			
	£1,156	8	8

TREE DISTRIBUTION.

The distribution of trees is becoming more popular each year, and the results of the system are seen all over the colony of Victoria in the neat appearances presented by the country homes with plantations of trees in every stage of growth around them. The sugar gum is a universal favorite in all the warmer districts of the colony. It is a splendid sleeper timber tree, and flourishes where other trees fail or become stunted. Since I introduced the tree in large numbers, in 1889, over 100,000 have been distributed. For the mallee country or the dry arid plains of Riverina no better tree exists than the sugar gum; it is also of use in times of drought, as the leaves are edible and may be used in moderation mixed with other food for stock, &c., &c.

The Casuarina (she and he oaks) are native trees of great value in times of drought ; the recent legislation with regard to this tree has, in my opinion, conduced to its destruction, and the droughty years of the past have almost decimated the tree from Victoria. Land-owners, in their own interests, would do well to try and reproduce this valuable fodder tree on areas where trees have been cut down. Planting is not necessary, as all that need be done is to fence off enclosures wherever the tree has been growing, and by keeping stock off the trees will come up quite thick all over the ground. As Australian droughts invariably come in cycles, so it would be wise to "take time by the forelock" and reproduce a tree by such easy means as a stand-by for fodder purposes for starving sheep and cattle next time a drought strikes Victoria.

The distribution to the public has again been largely availed of, and, as usual, satisfaction is freely expressed by recipients.

GEO. S. PERRIN, F.L.S., F.R.G.S., London,
Conservator of State Forests, Victoria.