

1949

VICTORIA

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY

REPORT

FOR THE

FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1949

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 37
OF THE LAND ACT 1928.

[*Approximate Cost of Report.*—Preparation not given. Printing (400 copies), £54.]

By Authority:

J. J. GOURLEY, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

No. 3.—[1s. 6d.]—12310/49.



REPORT.

Department of Lands and Survey,
Melbourne,
5th December, 1949.

*The Honorable R. C. Guthrie, M.L.A.,
Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey,
Melbourne.*

SIR,

I have the honor to submit for presentation to Parliament the following Report on the proceedings of the Department of Lands and Survey for the year ended 30th June, 1949.

The various phases of the activities of the Department are dealt with in the ten Sections of the report as follows:—

1. Occupation of Crown Lands under the Land Acts.
2. Unused Roads and Water Frontages.
3. Closer Settlement.
4. Farmers' Advances and Drought Relief.
5. Farm Water Supplies Advances.
6. Wire-Netting Advances.
7. Insurance.
8. Wheat Industry Stabilization.
9. North-West Mallee Settlement.
10. Appendices.

Since the preparation of last year's report, the *Land Act* 1928 has been further amended, and, as indicated in previous reports, it is clear that the revision of this now somewhat outmoded legislation should be taken in hand as soon as circumstances permit.

In addition to the responsibility for the administration of the Lands Acts, the Department is required to administer other legislation as set out hereunder:—

The Closer Settlement Act.

The Wire-Netting Act.

Part 48 of the Local Government Act (relating to unused roads and water frontages).

The Farmers Advances Acts.

The Drought Relief Acts.

The Survey Co-ordination Act.

The Vermin and Noxious Weeds Act.

The Agricultural College Acts.

The Farm Water Supplies Advances Acts.

The following new legislation affecting the Department was passed during the year ended 30th June, 1949:—

Camberwell Lands Act No. 5268.

Closer Settlement (Disposal of Land) Act No. 5281.

Melbourne North Land Act No. 5282.

Thornbury Land Act No. 5319.

North-West Mallee Settlement Areas Act No. 5321.

Land (Leases) Act No. 5350.

Revocation and Excision of Crown Reservations Act No. 5354.

Horsham Land Act No. 5364.

The Melbourne Botanic Gardens and the National Herbarium are under the control of this Department. The Director of the Gardens is Mr. A. W. Jessop, M.Agr.Sc., Dip.Ed., who is also the Government Botanist.

The selection of Crown Lands at the present time is practically confined to various odd blocks made available from time to time to meet the needs of individual land seekers, and for extensions to holdings already selected.

In a few cases, a number of blocks have been surveyed in the one locality where there has been a sufficient demand, but the continued shortage of labour and materials has operated against any large scale selection.

The position still obtains whereby a number of officers of the Field, Accounts, and Survey staffs of this Department devote a considerable portion of their time to work for the Soldier Settlement Commission.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. E. HUNTER,

Secretary for Lands.

SECTION 1.—OCCUPATION OF CROWN LANDS UNDER THE LAND ACTS.

(a) SUMMARY.

The total area of the State is 56,245,760 acres. This comprises:—

	Area.
	Acres.
Lands alienated in fee simple	29,767,882
Lands in process of alienation	2,921,903
Crown Lands remaining unalienated as at 30th June, 1949	23,555,975
Total	56,245,760

Crown lands remaining unalienated consist of:—

	Area.
	Acres.
Permanent Forests (under Forests Acts)	4,222,041
Timber Reserves (under Forests Acts)	717,453
Timber Reserves (under Land Acts)	161,941
Water Reserves	315,309
Former Agricultural College lands (unoccupied)	8,434
Reserves in Mallee	410,000
Other Reserves	549,392
Roads	1,794,218
Water Frontages, beds of rivers, lakes, &c., unsold lands in cities, towns and boroughs	4,627,180
Land in occupation as under—	
Perpetual leases	79,813
Leases of former Agricultural College lands	48,005
Grazing licences	8,849,249
Other leases or licences	20,024
Unoccupied	1,752,916
Total	23,555,975

For purposes of administration, the Head Office records are kept in the six geographical divisions listed below. The number of current leases and licences in each such division (exclusive of those under the *Closer Settlement Act 1938*) is set out in the table hereunder:—

Division.	Selection Purchase Leases.	Agricultural College Leases.	Grazing Licences.	Other Leases and Licences.	Unused Roads and Water Frontages Licences.	Total.
Bendigo	312	100	1,038	4,279	5,161	10,890
Eastern	1,340	44	1,108	1,892	9,567	13,951
Geelong	386	14	611	2,185	4,255	7,451
Hamilton	815	8	1,280	469	3,894	6,466
Melbourne	266	48	347	932	4,817	6,410
Mallee	2,658	3	688	925	4,470	8,744
Total	5,777	217	5,072	10,682	32,164	53,912

(b) SALES BY AUCTION.

Crown lands within any city, town, borough, or township, and country areas especially set aside for the purpose are sold at auction.

The purchase money may be paid in full at the time of sale or within 30 days thereof. Alternatively, a deposit of at least one-eighth may be paid at the sale and the balance of purchase money by equal half-yearly instalments with the addition of interest at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum.

The period allowed for payment by instalments extends up to ten years from the date of sale and is governed by the amount of the balance remaining to be paid after crediting the deposit.

During the year, 52 land sales were held comprising 313 town and country lots, but 65 of these lots were not sold as they failed to reach the upset price. The remaining 248 lots representing 820 acres realized £11,297.

A summary of the areas alienated by auction during the financial year of town and country land and the amount derived therefrom is as follows:—

TOWN LAND.

Area.	Amount.	Average Per Acre.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
203 lots comprising in all 260 acres 3 roods 1 perch ..	8,533 0 0	32 14 6

COUNTRY LAND.

Area.	Amount.	Average Per Acre.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
45 lots comprising 599 acres 1 rood 33 perches	2,764 0 0	4 18 11

During the year, it became necessary to declare void previous sales in respect of two (2) lots, and to forfeit the payments already made, viz., £40, but these cancellations were only effected after the purchasers had been given every opportunity to meet their payments.

For the year, the total amount received from land sales was £13,782 11s. (£13,140 7s. 4d. purchase money and £642 3s. 8d. interest). Of this amount, £924 10s. was from Mallee lands (£898 4s. 3d. purchase money and £26 5s. 9d. interest).

(c) MISCELLANEOUS.

GARDEN AND RESIDENCE LICENCES.

In Section 129, *Land Act* 1928, provision is made for the occupation of small areas under licence (not exceeding 3 acres in extent) for residence or gardening purposes or for both

The following table shows particulars of the applications approved during the year ended 30th June, 1949:—

Number of Applicants Approved.	Area Licensed.	Annual Revenue.
	Acres.	£ s. d.
One hundred and fifty-seven (157)	90	244 18 0

Section 131 of the Act provides that, when the sites have been occupied for a period of not less than three years, the holder may obtain a freehold title on payment of the difference between the appraised value and the amount already paid as rent. During the year ended 30th June, 1949, 130 applications under this section were approved in respect of an area totalling 197 acres.

SELECTION PURCHASE LEASES.

The following summary shows the number and area of approved applications under the Selection provisions of the Land Acts during the year ended 30th June, 1949 :—

	Applications Approved.	Area.
		Acres.
Other than Mallee	53	8,860
Mallee .. .. .	..	..
Total	53	8,860

BEE RANGES AND BEE FARMS.

Under Sections 132 and 137 of the *Land Act* 1928 licences may be issued for Bee Ranges and Bee Farms respectively.

To meet the needs of migratory apiarists Section 8 of the *Land Act* 1941 makes provision for temporary apiary sites for a period of three months.

The following summary shows the number of such licences current at 30th June, 1949 :—

Bee Ranges.	Bee Farms.	Temporary Apiary Sites.
161	158	48

EUCALYPTUS LICENCES.

Licences for land for the purpose of the manufacture or production of eucalyptus oil are granted under Section 141 of the *Land Act* 1928.

At 30th June 1949, there were 70 such licences current, most of which are in the Bendigo district.

PASTORAL OCCUPATION.

Under Section 121 of the *Land Act* 1928, licences are issued for the right to depasture on vacant Crown lands which are not required or cannot for various reasons be made available for settlement. These licences may be determined at any time during their currency, in the event of any development occurring to render it advisable to proceed with settlement. The tenancy is annual, but options may be granted for annual renewals not exceeding in all a further six years.

A total of 5,072 licences are in existence and the revenue from this source received during the financial year ended 30th June, 1949, was £34,662 5s. 4d.

INDUSTRIAL LEASES AND LICENCES IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA.

In the Metropolitan area, principally in South and Port Melbourne, Crown lands are let for commercial purposes under lease or licence in accordance with the provisions of Sections 125 and 129 of the *Land Act* 1928.

Leases may be issued for periods up to 75 years, whilst licences are an annual tenure only, but are renewable from year to year.

The capital value of the land is the basis on which the annual rental is computed whilst the provisions relating to the value of improvements largely influence the term of the lease granted in each case.

During the year, 6 new leases were granted, also 4 areas for which the leases expired were re-leased to the former holders. There are at present 121 leases and 252 licences in force.

The total revenue received from these sources for the year was £112,450.

SECTION 172, LAND ACT 1928.

Pursuant to this section and in prescribed circumstances, owners of freehold land may be given the exclusive right of acquiring adjoining Crown lands, not exceeding 30 acres in extent, at an appraised valuation. During the year, 698 acres were sold in this manner, the total purchase money being £4,099 6s. 10d.

PUBLIC HEARING.

During the year, 82 sittings of Local Land Boards, as provided for in Section 34, *Land Act 1928*, were held in various parts of the State, at which applications for land and other business comprising in all 677 subjects were dealt with. Nineteen appeals against Land Board recommendations were heard by the Minister, who upheld four, dismissed thirteen and deferred one. One appeal was withdrawn.

CROWN GRANTS AND LEASES.

During the year, 1,833 Crown Grants and 82 leases were prepared by the Deeds Branch and approved by the Executive Council.

CURRENT MATTERS RELATING TO REPEALED ACTS.

Village Settlement and Swamp Leases.

In 1884, an Act was passed to deal with Swamp and Reclaimed lands, and in 1893, legislation was enacted providing for small holdings known as Village Settlements. Further legislation of this nature was brought into force from time to time affecting these types of holdings. With the exception of 6 cases of Swamp lands (containing in all 308 acres) and 10 Village Settlement blocks (totalling 491 acres) these holdings have been made freehold, and the legislation is not now in operation except to permit of the completion of the remaining cases as they mature into freeholds.

Section 49, Land Act 1869.

Section 175, *Land Act 1928*, conferred on licensees holding land under Section 49, *Land Act 1869*, the exclusive right of purchasing their holdings at a price to be determined by the Board of Land and Works. There are still 43 of these licences in force. Four applications for a freehold title were dealt with during the year.

Sections 49, 51, and 56, Land Act 1901.

Prior to the amending *Land Act 1911*, which introduced Selection Purchase Leases (now provided for under Division 4, Part I., *Land Act 1928*), the method of selection was by licence for the first six years, which matured into a lease, the purchase money being payable by half-yearly instalments for either 14 or 34 years, subject to the right of the lessee to complete the purchase and obtain his Crown Grant at any time during the currency of the lease.

During the year, 33 Crown Grants were issued for existing leases in respect of 6,481 acres and 92 cases yet remain to be completed.

(d) MALLEE LANDS.

PART II., LAND ACT 1928.

Under this part, special provisions are made respecting the selection of Mallee land—comprising the north-western part of the State which was mainly timbered with what was commonly described as Mallee Scrub. The Selection Purchase Lease provisions of Part I. of the *Land Act* apply to Mallee lands which are also subject to other conditions provided for in Part II. of the *Act*.

The transactions from 1st July, 1948, to 30th June, 1949, are as under :—

	Number.	Area in Acres.
Leases issued or approved—		
Selection Purchase Leases	11	399
Licences issued or approved—		
Garden, Store, Grazing, &c.	59	15,069
Leases Transferred—		
Selection Purchase Leases	42	18,822
Perpetual Leases	9	10,123
Agricultural Allotments	254	140,593
Licences and Leases cancelled for non-payment of rents, &c. ..	8	1,149
Number of Local Land Boards held	14	321
Number of cases dealt with at the Local Land Boards	54	883

On 1st July, 1949, the areas held under lease and licence were as follows :—

	Number.	Area in Acres.
Areas held under Grazing Licence, Section 121, <i>Land Act</i> 1928 ..	750	2,569,342
Agricultural allotments occupied under—		
(a) Agricultural Leases and Selection Purchase Leases	2,887	1,881,657
(b) Perpetual Leases	81	63,263

The Revenue derived was as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
Rents on Perpetual Leases	1,019	17	0
Rents on Agricultural Allotments	29,300	14	7
Rents of Selection and Conditional Purchase Leases			
Rents of Grazing Licences, Section 121, <i>Land Act</i> 1928 ..	14,293	17	3
Rents on other Licences and Leases	5,750	2	8
Payments on account purchase in fee simple	75	16	10
Valuation of improvements and cost of resumption			
Interest on improvements and cost of resumption			
Penalties and fines	2,017	10	3
Fees, Survey, Licence, Lease Mortgage, Transfer	982	11	7
	<hr/>		
	53,440	10	2

(e) RESIDENCE AREAS.

Rights to occupy sites for residential purposes under conditions similar to the old Miner's Rights are being granted pursuant to the provisions of the *Land (Residence Areas) Act* 1935 with respect to land in the outer zones of towns and townships.

District Land Officers administer this Act and record all dealings in connection with these residence rights, although the occupations are noted on the official working plans at Head Office.

During the year, 30 such rights were issued and 58 holders of existing rights exercised their option of converting to freehold titles as authorized by Section 12 of the Act. The total number registered at 30th June, 1949, was 6,912.

REVENUE.

The following table shows in detail the revenue contributed by the Department to the Treasury during the financial year ended 30th June, 1949 (exclusive of Closer Settlement) :—

Temporary Occupation.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Rents under Section 121, <i>Land Act 1928</i>	20,368	8	1			
Rents under Section 874, <i>Local Government Act 1946</i> (Unused Roads) ..	17,277	17	7			
Rents under Section 47, <i>Land Act 1869</i> , Divisions 6 and 8 of Part I., <i>Land Acts 1890-1901</i> , permits under Section 318, <i>Land Act 1901</i>	152,956	9	8			
Perpetual leases, Section 80, <i>Land Act 1898</i> , Section 63, <i>Land Act 1901</i> , and Section 55, <i>Land Act 1915</i>						
Auriferous Licences and Industrial Licences and Leases						
Rents under "Agricultural College" leases	11,783	19	2			
	<hr/>			202,386	14	6

Alienated in Fee-simple by Auction and Deferred Payments also Rents received towards Alienation.

By auction	12,242	3	1			
Sundry payments on account of purchase in fee-simple	23,465	1	9			
Rents under Sections 42 and 49, <i>Land Acts 1890-98</i> , Section 59, <i>Land Act 1898</i> , Sections 47, 50, 54, and 106, <i>Land Act 1901</i> , and Section 88, <i>Land Act 1915</i>	24,543	13	9			
Rents and balances of purchase money under Section 20, <i>Land Act 1869</i> , Section 11, <i>Land Act 1878</i> , Section 44, <i>Land Acts 1890-1898</i> , Section 61, <i>Land Act 1898</i> , Sections 49 and 56, <i>Land Act 1901</i> , Sections 8 and 13, <i>Land Act 1911</i> , and Sections 46 and 50, <i>Land Act 1915</i> , and Sections 44 and 50, <i>Land Act 1928</i>						
Rents and balances of purchase money under Sections 5-10 and 20-24, <i>Settlement on Lands Act 1893</i> , and Sections 318-322, 332-335, 344, 345, and 346, <i>Land Act 1901</i> , Sections 267, 268, and 269, <i>Land Act 1915</i> , and <i>Land Act 1928</i>	<hr/>			60,250	18	7

Miscellaneous.

Interest on arrears	137	11	3			
Fees for grants, leases, licences, surveys, &c.	9,884	16	10			
Sale of Plans	3,137	13	2			
Receipts from other sources	29,870	12	0			
	<hr/>			43,030	13	3

Mallee Land Account.

Amount collected from holders of Mallee areas (credited in the Treasury to Mallee Land Accounts)	53,382	8	7			
	<hr/>			359,050	14	11

SECTION 2.—UNUSED ROADS AND WATER FRONTAGES.

Part 48 of the *Local Government Act 1946*, originally known as the *Unused Roads and Water Frontages Act 1903*, is administered by the Department. The revenue collected from the licensing of Water Frontages is paid to the credit of the Rivers and Streams Fund, whilst that received from Unused Roads is paid into Consolidated Revenue.

During the year, 741 new licences were issued and 596 licences were cancelled. Transfers were approved in 681 cases, and amendments to 357 licences were made.

The collections for the financial year 1948-49 were £27,879 16s. 6d., made up as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
Unused Roads	17,277	17	7
Water Frontages	10,601	18	1
	<hr/>		
	27,879	16	6

There was a decrease in revenue from Unused Roads of £271 14s. 5d. and an increase from Water Frontages of £222 17s.

SECTION 3.—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.

During the year ending 30th June, 1949, seasonal conditions throughout the State were favourable and in practically every district the yields from the current harvest were up to average, or even better.

The high prices obtained for grain, together with the increased revenue from sheep, wool, and lambs, enabled many settlers to overtake instalment arrears that had accumulated during previous adverse seasons, and generally speaking the financial position of the majority of settlers is now in a satisfactory state.

One lessee engaged in wheat growing voluntarily surrendered his holding and accepted compensation in accordance with the Marginal Area Scheme sponsored by the Commonwealth Government with respect to land which has been deemed as economically unsuitable for wheat growing.

Eight lessees, who accepted compensation under the provisions of the *North-West Mallee Settlement Act 1948*, vacated their holdings.

In addition to those cases quoted above, the leases of eight other settlers were forfeited for non-compliance with their obligations. In these instances, the Department had previously extended every possible leniency with a view to affording the lessees concerned an opportunity of meeting their obligations, and it was only when no alternative was left that forfeiture became inevitable.

The Board of Land and Works approved of 115 applications for consent to transfer, as well as 38 to sublet and 103 to mortgage. All of these applications were carefully scrutinized before such approval was signified, and the requirements of the *Closer Settlement Act 1938* were strictly observed in all cases.

Under the provisions of Section 26 of the *Closer Settlement Act 1938*, vacant holdings may be disposed of either by public auction or by tender and during the year, 1,546 acres 3 roods 12 perches were sold at auction for a return of £4,477 15s. 5d. The same Section of the Act provides that when any Closer Settlement area has been publicly offered for sale, and not disposed of, it may be sold by private treaty at not less than the reserve price when previously offered. In this manner, 917 acres 3 roods 6 perches were sold for the sum of £4,416 17s. 6d.

On 26th July, 1948, the *Closer Settlement (Disposal of Land) Act 1948* came into operation as an amendment to Section 26 of the Principal Act. This new legislation empowers the Board of Land and Works to certify that any vacant Closer Settlement land is required as a site for a public hall or for any other public purpose which it may approve or as a site for a church, and the Governor in Council may thereupon direct that such land be sold at an appraised price without submission to public auction or tender. In accordance with this provision, one area was sold as a site for Public Recreation. Several other applications of a similar nature were under consideration, but not finalized by the end of the year.

The accompanying Revenue Account shows a deficiency of £981,112 9s. 11d., and as pointed out on previous occasions, most of this deficiency is of a recurring nature brought about by the fact that the Board is still being charged interest on more than £19,000,000 of Loan Liability for which no interest bearing assets remain. This amount of dead capital was caused by the writing down of settlers' liabilities in 1937, by the Closer Settlement Commission to provide them with equities and at the same time to enable them to meet reasonable payments comprising instalments of purchase money and interest on the unpaid balance.

The accompanying statement sets out the financial position regarding Closer Settlement for the financial year ended 30th June, 1949.

Closer Settlement Act 1938.

LAND SETTLEMENT.

BALANCE-SHEET AT 30TH JUNE, 1949.

Liabilities.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1. Treasurer of Victoria for Loans—Land Settlement—									
Australian Consolidated Inscribed Stock ..	..	..	39,198,819	10	1				
Discount and Expenses on Issue of Securities ..	..	..	910,043	14	2				
			40,108,863	4	3				
Less—Loans Redeemed ..	1,529,682	17	10						
Australian Consolidated Inscribed Stock transferred to Commonwealth Government ..	2,160,960	0	0						
			3,690,642	17	10				
						36,418,220	6	5	
2. Treasurer of Victoria for Loans—Other Authorities—									
Cultivation Advances and State Wire Netting Advances taken over and included in Settlers' Outstanding Monetary Liability ..	..	..	..	..	..	100,950	6	2	
3. Treasurer of Victoria for Amounts Payable to Consolidated Revenue—									
(a) Arrears of Interest included in Settlers' Outstanding Monetary Liability ..	..	..	203,961	13	5				
b) Crown Lands, &c., included in Settlers' Outstanding Monetary Liability ..	..	..	404,966	12	9				
						608,928	6	2	
4. Treasurer of Victoria for Amounts expended from Consolidated Revenue on Erection of Buildings ..	..	..	..	..	..	871	5	0	
5. Sundry Persons for Amounts held in Trust ..	..	..	..	..	..	3,729	7	6	
6. Sundry Creditors ..	..	..	..	..	..	12,800	2	2	
7. Trusts for Gifts of Land ..	..	..	..	..	..	15,775	13	6	
8. Treasurer of Victoria for Provision to meet Deficiency—									
To 30th June, 1948 ..	..	..	21,814,841	6	5				
During the year 1948-49 ..	..	..	774,275	19	2				
			22,589,117	5	7				
Less—Interest earned and capitalised ..	..	..	169,925	9	2				
			22,419,191	16	5				
						59,580,467	3	4	

Assets.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1. Settlers and Others for Outstanding Monetary Liability in respect of Land and Advances—									
Lessees ..	5,906,109	3	5						
Purchasers under Contract of Sale ..	114,617	8	8						
Municipalities (Advances for Road-making, &c.) ..	1,057	19	8						
Miscellaneous Accounts ..	21,383	4	5						
									6,043,167 16 2
2. Settlers and Others for Arrears of Instalments due and payable—									
(a) Principal—									
Lessees ..	23,424	15	6						
Purchasers under Contract of Sale ..	3,893	10	2						
Municipalities ..	24	16	10						
Miscellaneous Accounts ..	511	4	4						
									27,854 6 10
(b) Interest—									
Lessees ..	61,737	5	1						
Purchasers under Contracts of Sale ..	617	19	7						
Municipalities ..	2	0	6						
Miscellaneous Accounts ..	223	4	9						
									62,580 9 11
(c) Crown Rents &c.—									
Lessees ..	19,999	5	6						
Miscellaneous Accounts ..	90	7	4						
									20,089 12 10
									110,524 9 7
3. Settlers for Interest accrued due to 30th June, 1949, not payable—									74,444 10 8
4. Liability of Settlers whose Advances have been recalled or whose leases have been forfeited ..									23,447 16 3
5. Land, Improvements and other Assets on hand—									
Land on hand at valuation ..	..	..	31,811	14	9				
Forfeited Leases—Balances ..	..	..	239,053	6	11				
Improvements and other assets taken over from settlers whose advances have been recalled ..	..	..	34,335	13	1				
									305,200 14 9
6. Sundry Debtors ..									507 16 1
7. Buildings at Book Value—									
Residences and offices of Inspectors ..	..	..	6,203	19	4				
Stanhope Memorial Hall ..	..	..	1,112	15	11				
									7,316 15 3
8. Shares held in Phosphate Co-operative Company ..									25 0 0
9. Balance of Loan Proceeds ..									3,485 1 6
10. State Loans Repayments Fund—Section 9, Act 3554 ..									11,022,216 18 4
11. Balance in Land Settlement Trust Account in Treasury ..									3,729 7 6
12. Loss—									
(a) Revenue Account—									
Accumulated Balance to 30th June, 1948 ..	..	..	40,529,337	3	2				
Balance for year 1948-49 ..	..	..	981,112	9	11				
									41,510,449 13 1
(b) Land Account—									
Balance at 30th June, 1949 ..	..	..	475,951	4	2				
									41,986,400 17 3
									59,580,467 3 4

I have examined the books and accounts and I am of the opinion that the above accounts show the true and correct position of the affairs of the Department in relation to *Closer Settlement Act 1938, No. 4597.*

J. F. GARTNER, Inspector of Audit.
23rd November, 1949.

J. E. HUNTER,
Secretary for Lands.

REX R. NEAL,
Accountant, Lands Department.
23rd November, 1949.

SECTION 4.—FARMERS' ADVANCES AND DROUGHT RELIEF.

Owing to the satisfactory season experienced in 1948–49 and the high prices ruling generally for primary produce, a number of farmers repaid the advances made to them under the Farmers' Advances Acts and the *Drought Relief Act 1940*. Only one application for assistance was received during the period under review and this was granted.

At the beginning of the year, amounts were owing in 530 cases, and of these, 131 repaid their liabilities during the twelve months. It will thus be seen that after making allowance for the new case, the number of farmers indebted to the Department is now 400, the amount owing being £91,157.

Under the provisions of the *Drought Relief Acts 1947* whereby a fund amounting to £180,000, supplemented by a contribution of £50,000 from the Commonwealth Government, was made available by this State in the form of grants to cereal growers affected by dry conditions in certain parts of the State in 1946 to enable them to carry on their normal operations, payments amounting to £453 5s. 1d. were made.

The distribution of grants under these Acts has now been completed, the total amount involved being £222,929 19s. 9d.

FARMERS' ADVANCES ACTS.

For the period from 1st July, 1948, to 30th June, 1949, expenditure under the Farmers' Advances Acts totalled £500 and receipts amounted to £19,667, making the financial position as at 30th June, 1949, as follows:—

	Advances.	Interest.	Total.
	£	£	£
Amount expended and interest charged to 30th June, 1949 ..	2,045,372	269,615	2,314,987
Less Receipts	1,486,281	184,100	1,590,381
	639,091	85,515	724,606
Less amounts written off as irrecoverable	463,834	69,098	532,932
	175,257	16,417	191,674
Less amounts transferred to Land Settlement advances	100,950	7,844	108,794
Balance Outstanding	74,307	8,573	82,880

DROUGHT RELIEF ACT 1940.

Under this legislation, which was enacted on 9th December, 1940, authorizing loans at special rates of interest, the position on 30th June, 1949, was:—

	Advances.	Interest.	Total.
	£	£	£
Amount expended and interest charged to 30th June, 1949 ..	399,487	6,337	405,824
Less Rebates on Manure	2,780	..	2,780
	396,707	6,337	403,044
Less Receipts from Settlers	384,353	5,784	390,167
	12,324	553	12,877
Less amounts written off as irrecoverable	4,537	63	4,600
Balance Outstanding	7,787	490	8,277

SECTION 5.—FARM WATER SUPPLIES ACT 1944.

The *Farm Water Supplies Advances Act* 1944 was passed with a view to assisting farmers to improve their water supply facilities (otherwise than for irrigation purposes) in cases where they were unable to readily obtain financial accommodation through commercial channels.

The Act was amended in December, 1946, to permit of advances being made for irrigation purposes and for drainage works.

Since the inauguration of the scheme, approval has been given to advances totalling £31,531, including £6,968 for the year under review. Owing to the shortages of labour and materials, much of the work has yet to be completed, and of the total advances approved, £15,757 has actually been expended.

SECTION 6.—WIRE NETTING.

The *Wire Netting Act* 1928 provides that land owners may obtain netting on a cash basis or by an advance on liberal terms for the purpose of making fences vermin-proof. Where an advance is made, it is repayable by annual instalments over a period of ten years and if deemed expedient the commencing date for repayment may be deferred for a period not exceeding three years.

Special provision is made for a rebate of 50 per cent. of the cost of the netting where a wire-netting fence is erected by an owner adjoining Crown lands. The cost of these rebates to the State for the year was £580 8s. 8d.

During the year, 788 applications were received, 383 being approved and approximately 303 miles supplied at a cost of £16,037. This netting is manufactured at the Government factory at Pentridge, but, owing mainly to shortages of raw materials, the production for the year was about 55 per cent. of the factory's capacity. The demand in recent years has far exceeded the output from the factory and the Department has a large waiting list of applicants who are supplied strictly in the order of receipt of their applications. In each case, the netting supplied is limited to the quantity necessary for the immediate protection of cultivation or pastures.

The total amount advanced under this Act to 30th June, 1949, was £544,158. An amount of £448,936 has been repaid. Interest collected amounts to £107,611, making total receipts £556,547.

The total amount which has been written off is £54,606 and the balance now outstanding is £71,197 9s. 8d.; the amount received for the year on account of principal and interest is £23,331 1s. 4d.

SECTION 7.—INSURANCE.

Under the provisions of the *Closer Settlement Act* 1938, it is obligatory on all holders of Closer Settlement Leases to take out insurance cover over buildings and fences. This also applies on all purchasers of Closer Settlement Land under Contract of Sale.

During the year 1948–49, premiums received on account of the Closer Settlement Insurance fund amounted to £13,820 3s. 2d., and £3,297 17s. was paid out in claims. Administration expenses for the year totalled £2,472 1s. 1d. and new claims involving an amount of £2,584 10s. 10d. were admitted.

The following statement shows the operations of the fund from its commencement in 1910 to 30th June, 1949 :—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Premiums received	646,541	9	7	Claims paid	387,269	3	1
				Cost of administration	53,484	10	6
				Credit balance	205,787	16	0*
	646,541	9	7		646,541	9	7

* Against this balance, there is a liability of £5,182 18s. 11d. for claims admitted but remaining unpaid at 30th June, 1949.

SECTION 8.—WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILIZATION.

The present scheme for the stabilization of the wheat industry, which was implemented in 1948 by the Commonwealth Government after a plebiscite of wheatgrowers, dispensed with the control of acreage sown by means of registration of farms and licensing of growers.

As this change came into operation from 1st January, 1949, the Wheat Industry Stabilization Committee of Victoria ceased to function on 31st December, 1948, and the Branch of this Department which had been established to carry out the necessary administrative work was disbanded as from that date.

Owing to the continued world shortage of wheat, growers were again permitted to sow any acreage they desired during season 1948-49 and licences to sow 3,430,689 acres of wheat had been issued by 31st December, 1948.

The seasonable conditions were favourable over most of Victoria and the yield was again above average. Early in November, the yield for season 1948-49 was estimated at 48,367,000 bushels and the actual yield proved the estimate to be most accurate.

Particulars of licences issued by the Committee since stabilization are as follows:—

Season.	Total Licences.	Owner or Tenant.	Sharefarmer.	Acreage.	
				Grain.	Hay.
1941-42	17,942	14,028	3,914	2,877,796	111,380
1942-43	16,007	13,049	2,958	2,614,331	40,856
1943-44	15,492	12,766	2,726	2,492,074	48,113
1944-45	16,187	13,499	2,688	2,616,839	79,093
1945-46	18,413	15,094	3,319	3,608,967	180,130
1946-47	21,190	16,784	4,406	4,086,344	110,087
1947-48	20,354	16,047	4,307	3,722,983	78,731
1948-49 (to 31st December, 1948)	19,297	15,257	4,040	3,430,689	64,973

SECTION 9.—NORTH-WEST MALLEE SETTLEMENT.

Following upon the report of the Mallee Fact Finding Committee in 1946, the North-West Mallee Settlement Areas Act was passed in 1948. (This Act was the subject of an amendment in 1949).

The purpose of the legislation is to bring about a re-allocation of lands within defined Settlement Areas in the North-West Mallee, to provide larger areas under Perpetual Lease which will permit of sheep grazing, and wheat growing on long rotation, and it enables compensation up to £1,050 to be paid in any one case to occupiers who vacate their holdings.

The legislation provides for the appointment of a North-West Mallee Committee consisting of the Secretary for Lands, a field officer of the Lands Department, an officer of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and a person (Mallee farmer) experienced in Mallee conditions.

The functions of the Committee are to inquire into and make recommendations to the Board of Land and Works concerning the re-allocation of lands, which occupiers should be required to vacate, and the amounts of compensation to be paid to outgoing settlers.

The Committee, after inspecting the land, and meeting individual occupiers, recommended the delineation of the "Millewa" Settlement Area, and such was proclaimed in Gazette of 9th March, 1949. Progress has been made by the Committee in its deliberations concerning the re-allocation of the lands in this area, and it is expected that other "Settlement Areas" will be proclaimed and dealt with in due course.

SECTION 10.

APPENDIX "A".

VERMIN AND NOXIOUS WEEDS ACT 1928.

REPORT BY MR. E. J. PEMBERTON, SUPERINTENDENT.

During the year, the control of Vermin and Noxious Weeds on unalienated land involved the Department in considerable expenditure. The total amount voted for the Financial Year 1948-49 was £148,000 which was expended in the payment of wages and expenses to workmen, on subsidies to Municipalities for the destruction of dingoes, wild dogs, foxes, and wombats, and for the purchase of material and equipment.

VERMIN DESTRUCTION.

Rabbits.—The Department of Crown Lands carried out maintenance work in connection with unalienated Crown lands. Land owners made a reasonable response in compliance with the requirements of the Act. During the year, tariff restrictions caused a shortage of fumigating material, such as Cyanogas. This was somewhat set off by the fact that Bi Sulphide of Carbon was in much better supply although insufficient to meet requirements, and the importation of supplies of Chlorpicrin from Sterling countries assisted materially in making up for the shortage of ordinary fumigating substances. Larvacide, which is the American trade name for Chlorpicrin, was also brought into Australia and was distributed through agents to primary producers. There was a greater demand for Carbon Monoxide Gas machines, and these were more readily available than has been the case for several years past. However, the general shortage of equipment, including wire netting, continued throughout the year, and because of this, owners and occupiers of land were at a disadvantage in carrying out work on vermin destruction. The trapping of rabbits, chiefly for carcasses, was carried out by land owners and by regular trappers. The carcass market remained good, but the demand for skins was far from satisfactory, and thus this form of destruction was chiefly carried out where travelling freezers or proximity to transport made it possible for carcasses to reach cool stores. Where trapping was carried out as the chief means of rabbit destruction, it was found, as with previous experience, that these animals bred with greater rapidity and spread over larger areas, making them more difficult to deal with. There was a reasonably good response to the Proclamation published on 1st December, 1948, which ordered the simultaneous destruction of rabbits to commence and continue on and from 16th February, 1949.

Wild Dogs.—The control of dingoes, wild dogs, and dogs run wild throughout the mountainous areas of the State and in the Mallee contiguous to the South Australian border was continued, the methods employed for their control being trapping, poisoning, and shooting. Because of the easing of the export position in Great Britain, it was possible to obtain good supplies of traps. These were distributed throughout the infested areas of the State and where necessary made available to land owners who co-operated very well in this work. An interesting development took place in the decision of Messrs. Lanes of New South Wales to manufacture a suitable trap in Australia for the control of Wild Dogs. This Department co-operated in the testing and the suggesting of improvements to these traps, and they are now being distributed at a rate considerably cheaper than the imported article, with which it compares very favourably.

Wombats.—Work by the Department and land holders generally in dealing with wombats was satisfactory. Checking the activities of these animals is necessary for protection of wire-netting fences, which, because of the difficulties in obtaining supplies of new netting, cannot be replaced. All complaints were promptly investigated.

Foxes.—There was a noticeable increase in the number of these animals during the past season due to the fact that skin sales were practically negligible. Because of this fact, land owners and sportsmen practically refused to destroy foxes, except where they became a menace to sheep and poultry. Consequently, much discussion took place when rural organizations met with a view to increasing the bonus and to making it worth while to destroy these animals.

EXPENDITURE ON VERMIN DESTRUCTION.

	£
Rabbits	14,575
Wild dogs	4,750
Wombats	875
Foxes	75
	<hr/>
	20,275
	<hr/>

SUBSIDIES PAID TO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS.

Dingoes—Wild dogs	1,237
Wombats	575
Foxes	50
	<hr/>
	1,862
	<hr/>

NOXIOUS WEEDS.

The destruction of noxious weeds was carried out to an extent consistent with the availability of man power, equipment, and materials. This type of work continued to be unattractive because of the fact that it entailed much camping out and the handling of dangerous chemicals. It was found that men offered for work on rabbit destruction more readily, because of the value of carcasses and skins, which the workmen prepared and marketed in their own time, but in connection with weed destruction there is no such scope for additional monetary gain. Equipment continued to be scarce, and materials were also in very limited supply. The only improvement shown was that Atlacide (which contains Sodium Chlorate) became available in liquid form, but at a price which was unattractive to the land owner. There was considerable development during the year in connection with the new Hormone substances which are likely to play a major part in weed control in the future. These materials appear to have great possibilities and are coming to us in various forms, each having its own particular function.

Salt was available in limited quantities. 750 tons were purchased and this enabled previously treated areas of St. John's Wort to be maintained.

Biological work for the control of St. John's Wort was continued and the development of the Chrysomela Beetle has been very satisfactory. These insects continue to increase in great numbers in the Ovens Valley and the North Gippsland District, and many areas of infested country have now been practically cleared of the weed. Large numbers of beetles were collected and transported to every known infestation in Victoria, and to other States in the Commonwealth. The Vermin and Noxious Weeds Branch rendered every possible assistance to the Division of Entomology, C.S.I.R.O. under whose care and control this work is being carried out. During the year, C.S.I.R.O. workers have been making a thorough study of the life habits of these insects.

Cape Tulip.—In accordance with the arrangements made in 1947 with C.S.I.R.O., control measures in connection with Cape Tulip have been continued by Professor H. C. Trumble and Mr. A. J. K. Walker of the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, Adelaide, South Australia. Tests carried out are proving very interesting, but it is as yet too early to definitely establish the ultimate result of the treatments under review.

Hoary Cress and other Cruciferous Plants such as wild radish, wild turnip, &c. The work of Hoary Cress control is still being conducted in association with C.S.I.R.O. in the Murtoa District, and in the southern part of the State similar work is being carried out. Materials being used are chiefly those of the Hormone group, and these are giving most satisfactory results in the control of the Cruciferous weeds, while not affecting the cereal crops which are usually affected by the presence of these weeds. New methods of spraying are being evolved where, by using low pressure boom sprays, large areas can be covered in the minimum of time and using a minimum amount of material, thus keeping the cost of treatment within economic range.

Ragwort.—Because of the varying seasons and the unsatisfactory supply of non-poisonous weedicides, and the shortage of labour, this plant has again made some headway. Tests for the most economic means of control are being maintained, and it is hoped that during the coming year these results will be made known.

APPENDIX " B ".

REPORT BY MR. O. G. PEARSON, SURVEYOR GENERAL.

Survey Branch.

The volume of work in all sections of the Survey Branch continues to show a steady increase and it has been rather difficult to meet all demands as promptly as could be desired.

As regards field surveys, steady progress has been made in the survey of Soldier Settlement Estates and most of the estates that have been passed to me for survey have either been completed or are in the hands of a surveyor. One departmental surveyor has been engaged on Soldier Settlement work for the whole year and one for rather more than half a year. Several private practising surveyors have also been engaged on this work at contract rates. Crown land surveys are not in quite such a satisfactory state, but are being effected as speedily as possible with the limited field staff available.

Aerial Photographic Survey.

During the year, an additional 3,500 square miles was flown and a new contract for a further area of 3,000 square miles in the eastern part of the State has been let.

Field work for purposes of control for plotting from air-photos and securing detail by ground parties has proceeded satisfactorily and in co-ordination with the requirements of the draughtsmen has assisted in the production of the Castlemaine, Maryborough, and Dunolly sheets of the Standard Topographic Map series, whilst the Creswick and Daylesford sheets are in course of production. These maps show all topographical details and contours at 50 feet intervals and are produced in colour.

These maps are produced from the air-photos by means of the Wild Autograph Plotting Machines.

In addition to this standard mapping, a planimetric map series covering the Feathertop, Tawanga, Oneco, and Gembrook sheets, using the slotted templet method with air-photos, is now in course of preparation. These maps, which show full topographic detail of country that has never been mapped, are for all practical purposes quite accurate and can be produced at considerably less cost than the Standard Topographic Map Series. They do not show contours, but are produced in colour with hill shading and form a valuable addition to the map series now under production. All these maps are produced at the one standard scale of 40 chains to an inch.

In addition, photomaps or mosaics have been produced as fast as facilities permit. These maps are in great demand by other departments and authorities.

So far, it has not been possible to undertake to supply the requirements of the general public, but it is hoped that this will be possible in the near future.

Compilation.

During the year, 56 plans including 15 new compilations were prepared and more than 150 plans were prepared from field notes of surveyors.

The re-subdivision of the State for Commonwealth Electoral purposes entailed the preparation of 33 division, 260 subdivision and key maps and occupied the time of several draughtsmen for about six months.

Mapping for the Central Plan Office and other routine work occupied the full time activities of the remainder of the staff.

Examining and Computing.

The work in this section, which comprises the preparation of certified plans, the examination of surveyors' plans and the supply of survey information has been maintained at a high level and except for examination cases is well up to date.

Central Plan Office.

This office was established under the provisions of the Survey Co-ordination Act and has rendered valuable service.

During the year, 525 Notices of Intention to survey were received, noted, and investigated.

Additional permanent marks to the number of 1,611 have been established, bringing the total to 5,165 since the proclamation of the Act.

It is proposed to proclaim certain areas as proclaimed survey areas under the provisions of the Act in the near future.

Forty-eight certificates of examination of a Standard Tape have been issued for tapes received for testing since the completion of the tape tunnel last August.

Sales of plans, which include some 2,300 photomaps and 6,500 prints of air photographs, have shown a considerable increase.