

POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS.

THE first Australasian post-office was established by Governor Macquarie in the year 1810, Mr. Isaac Nichols being appointed Postmaster. The office was in High-street (now known as George-street), Sydney, at the residence of Mr. Nichols, who was, "in consideration of the trouble and expense attendant upon this duty," allowed to charge on delivery to the addressee 8d. for every English or foreign letter of whatever weight, and for every parcel weighing not more than 20 lb., 1s. 6d., and exceeding that weight, 3s. The charge on colonial letters was 4d., irrespective of weight; and soldiers' letters, or those addressed to their wives, were charged 1d. Very little improvement in regard to postal matters took place for some years.

In 1825 an Act was passed by Sir Thomas Brisbane, with the advice of the Council, "to regulate the postage of letters in New South Wales," giving power for the establishment of post-offices, and to fix the rates of postage. It was not, however, until 1828 that the provisions of the Act were put into full force. The rates of postage appear to have depended upon the distance and the difficulty of transmission. The lowest single inland rate was 3d., and the highest 12d., the postage on a letter increasing according to its weight, which was fixed for a single letter at $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce. Letters between New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were charged 3d. each (ship rate), and newspapers 1d. Other ship letters were charged 4d. single rate, and 6d. for any weight in excess. The privilege of franking was allowed to the Governor and a number of the chief public officials, and letters to and from convicts passed free under certain regulations.

In 1831 a twopenny post was established in Sydney; and in 1835, under Sir Richard Bourke, the Act of 1825 was repealed and another Act was passed, fixing the charge on a single letter at 4d. for 15 miles, 5d. for 20 miles, 6d. for 30 miles, and so on up to 1s. for 300 miles. In 1837 a post-office was established in Melbourne, and a fortnightly mail was established between that city and Sydney. Stamps were introduced in the same year in the shape of stamped covers or envelopes, which are believed to have been the first postage-stamps ever issued. By 1838 there were 40 post-offices in the state of New South Wales, which at that time, of course, included the territory now known as Victoria and Queensland; and in the Sydney office about 15 persons were employed. The revenue of the Department for the year was

£8,390, and the expenditure £10,347 ; while payments were made by the New South Wales Government to the post office at Kororaraka, in New Zealand, which was not created a separate colony until 1841. In 1847 an overland mail between Sydney and Adelaide was established. Stamps in their present form were issued in 1849, and the postage rates were fixed at 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. for town and 2d. for country letters, at which they remain in most of the states to-day.

Regular steam mail communication with Great Britain was first established in 1852. Until that time the Australian colonies had to depend upon the irregular arrival and despatch of sailing vessels for the carriage of mails ; but in the year mentioned the steamships Australia, Chusan, and Great Britain were despatched from England, making the voyage in 60 days, and causing a strong desire in the minds of the colonists for a more frequent and steady system of steam communication with the Old World. The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 hindered for a while the accomplishment of this object ; but in 1856 a line of steamers was again laid on, and the service was carried on by the Peninsular and Oriental Company and the Royal Mail Company for some years, but without giving so much satisfaction to the public as might have been expected.

As far back as 1854 a proposal was made for the establishment of a line of mail packets *via* Panama, and negotiations on the subject were carried on for several years between the British Government and the Governments of New South Wales and New Zealand. The result was that in 1866 the service was started, and continued in operation until the end of 1868, when it was terminated through the failure of the company by which it had been carried out. In the following year New South Wales, in conjunction with New Zealand, inaugurated a mail service *via* San Francisco, which, with a few interruptions and under various conditions, has been continued up to the present time.

The establishment of a mail route *via* America had the effect of stimulating the steamship-owners who were engaged in the service *via* Suez, and from that time there was a marked improvement in the steamers employed, as well as in the punctuality and speed with which the mails were delivered. The Peninsular and Oriental Company have carried mails for the colonies almost from the inception of the ocean steam service, with very few interruptions. Towards the end of 1878 the Orient Company commenced carrying mails between Australia and the United Kingdom, and have continued to do so ever since. In the year 1883 the fine steamers of the Messageries Maritimes of France entered the service, followed in 1887 by the North German Lloyd's, so that there are now sometimes two or even three mails received and despatched every week, and a voyage to Europe, which was formerly a formidable undertaking, involving great loss of time and much discomfort, is regarded as a mere pleasure trip to fill up a holiday.

In the year 1893 another mail service was established, by a line of steamers running from Sydney to Vancouver Island, in British Columbia.

There is also a line of steamers running between Brisbane and London, but the states other than Queensland make little use of these vessels.

Under the provisions of the 51st clause of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, the control of the Post and Telegraph services became vested in the Commonwealth, and by proclamation these services were taken over on the 1st March, 1901. The systems of administration, and the rates levied in force in each state at the date of union were however continued until the Commonwealth Postal Act was brought into operation on the 1st November, 1902, thus securing uniformity in all the states.

GROWTH OF POSTAL BUSINESS.

The growth of postal business in each of the states during the forty-three years from 1861 to 1903 is shown below. It will be seen that the number of letters for all Australasia in 1861 was less than the present total for any individual state, with the exception of Tasmania. The true total for Australasia is, of course, not to be found by adding the figures of the several states together, as interstate letters are counted both in the state from which they are despatched and in that in which they are received for delivery. A second total is therefore given from which this excess has been excluded:—

State.	Post Offices.		Letters and Post-cards.		Newspapers.		Packets.	
	1861.	1903.	1861.	1903.	1861.	1903.	1861.	1903.
New South Wales....	340	2,228	4,369,463	92,298,211	3,384,245	37,900,840	105,338	16,305,421
Victoria	369	1,646	6,109,929	105,922,527	4,277,179	37,706,769	....	14,058,309
Queensland	24	1,325	515,211	24,244,089	427,489	13,510,626	3,555	5,441,488
South Australia	160	706	1,540,472	24,407,908	1,089,424	8,274,442	....	2,749,042
Western Australia ..	..	218	193,317	15,786,777	137,476	9,171,203	....	4,483,613
Tasmania	100	878	835,873	9,911,692	895,656	7,201,733	....	2,960,620
Commonwealth ..	..	6,501	13,564,265	272,511,204	10,211,469	113,765,613	....	48,998,443
Commonwealth (excluding Inter-State excess) .....	..	..	12,844,300	253,799,472	9,603,000	99,580,261	....	44,314,366
New Zealand ..	..	1,844	1,236,768	63,140,920	1,428,351	19,696,434	....	19,895,363
Australasia.....	..	8,345	14,801,033	335,652,124	11,639,820	133,462,047	....	68,893,806
Australasia(excluding intercolonial excess) .....	..	..	14,061,000	315,541,674	10,941,400	118,035,458	....	63,907,387

A corresponding table to that already given, showing the number of letters, newspapers, and packets per head of population, is appended:—

State.	Letters and Post-cards.		Newspapers.		Packets.	
	1861.	1903.	1861.	1903.	1861.	1903.
New South Wales	12	65	10	27	1	12
Victoria	11	87	8	31	.....	11
Queensland	17	47	14	26	1	16
South Australia	13	66	9	23	.....	7
Western Australia	12	72	9	42	.....	20
Tasmania	9	56	10	40	.....	17
Commonwealth.....	11	70	8	29	.....	13
New Zealand	14	77	16	24	.....	24
Australasia*	11	67	9	29	.....	13

* Interstate excess excluded.

Western Australia takes the lead in the transmission of newspapers, Victoria in letters and postcards, and New Zealand in packets. A comparison of the average number of letters and postcards per head of population in Australasia with similar figures for the principal countries of the world is afforded by the table given below. It will be seen that on a population basis the correspondence of Australasia exceeds that of any of the countries named, with the exception of the United Kingdom and the Argentine Republic:—

Country.	Letters and Post-cards per head.	Country.	Letters and Post-cards per head.
United Kingdom.....	72	France	30
Australasia	67	Norway	28
Argentine Republic ...	70	Hungary	18
Switzerland.....	58	Japan	16
Germany.....	57	Italy	12
Sweden.....	58	Portugal.....	14
Austria	44	Spain.....	8
Denmark	43	Roumania.....	6
Canada.....	45	Chili	5
Belgium	38	Greece	3
Netherlands	34	Russia	5

RATES OF POSTAGE.

The inland letter postage is 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. on town and 2d. on country letters in all the states of the Commonwealth of Australia, except Victoria and South Australia. In Victoria the rate is 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., and in South Australia 2d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. on all letters posted for delivery within the state. In Victoria the minimum charge was altered in 1890 from 2d. per oz. to 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.; but the loss at that time was too great, and in 1892 the rate was again raised to 2d. per oz.; in 1901 it was once more reduced to 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. In New South Wales the city and suburban rate of 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., which is in force in the Metropolitan Suburban District, is also in operation within a 12-mile radius of Newcastle, and a 13-mile radius of fifty-four of the other principal country towns; also between Broken Hill and its suburbs, Harden and Murrumburrah, Narrabri and Narrabri West, and Wyalong and Wyalong West. The inter-state and intercolonial rate is uniformly 2d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. in Australasia. On the 1st January, 1901, New Zealand adopted a universal penny postage, and the loss attendant thereon for the year may be set down at about £34,000. By arrangement with the Commonwealth, New Zealand letters come to Australia for 1d., but letters to New Zealand are charged 2d. When this matter was settled it was further arranged that New Zealand should reduce its terminal rate on cable messages exchanged with Australia from 1d. to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per word; but, on the other hand, the Commonwealth made a liberal concession by reducing its terminal rate from 1d. per word per state to a uniform 1d. for the whole of Australia.

The diverse rates imposed on the carriage of newspapers in the various states of the Commonwealth, prior to the union, continued after the control became vested in the Federal Government, and up to the 1st November, 1902, when a uniform rate was imposed under the Post and Telegraph Rates Act, 1902. On all newspapers posted for delivery within the Commonwealth by registered newspaper proprietors, or by newsvendors, or returned by an agent or newsvendor to the publishing office, without condition as to the number contained in each addressed wrapper, a charge of 1d. per 20 oz. on the aggregate weight is imposed, and on all other newspapers posted within the Commonwealth for delivery therein, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 10 oz. or fraction thereof for each newspaper is levied. In New Zealand a charge of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each is levied upon all newspapers, town and inland. The intercolonial postage is 1d. each to all the states except Queensland, to which province the charge is 1d. each if not exceeding 4 oz., and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. additional for every succeeding 2 oz.

REGISTERED LETTERS.

The number of registered letters and packets passing through the post-offices of the Australasian states has largely increased of late

years. In New South Wales the number of such letters in 1903 was 928,521. This number was exceeded during 1901, when the number registered was 1,213,277. Even in 1892, when the total was largely made up of correspondence relating to so-called "consultations," or lottery sweeps connected with horse-racing, which were established in Sydney, and to support which large sums of money were sent to that city from all parts of Australasia, as well as from other countries, the registrations only numbered 1,075,241. Probably not less than 600,000 of the total for New South Wales in 1892 were in connection with these lotteries. The Government of that state dealt with the evil in an amending Postal Bill in 1893, and this illicit branch of the postal traffic was removed to Queensland, where the number of registered letters at once greatly increased, and numbered 541,148 in 1895. But in 1896 the Parliament of Queensland passed an Act making these lotteries illegal, and the evil was transferred to Hobart. The registrations in the northern state in 1903 numbered 256,475. In South Australia 205,821 registered letters were dealt with during the year. In Western Australia 232,167 registered letters and packets were passed through the head office. In Tasmania 317,831 registered letters passed through the post; while in New Zealand the registered articles dealt with numbered 632,299. In Victoria the registered letters dealt with during the year numbered 876,968.

PARCELS POSTS.

Excepting Western Australia, where there was no inland service, there were inland, intercolonial, and international parcels posts in operation in 1903; but statistics of the services on a uniform basis are not obtainable. During the year 834,329 parcels, weighing 2,696,392 lb., with a declared value of £398,214, passed through the post-office of New South Wales, the postage collected amounting to £52,052; in Victoria 710,858 parcels, weighing 2,400,000 lb., with a declared value of £1,250,000, yielding a revenue of £34,804, were dealt with; in Queensland the number of parcels which passed through the post-office was 314,651, weighing 1,341,868 lb., and the revenue derived from the service amounted to £18,499; in South Australia 71,975 parcels, weighing 190,081 lb., were forwarded, and the revenue received was £4,089; in Western Australia 40,546 parcels, weighing 33,190 lbs., the declared value of which was £86,563, and which yielded a revenue of £1,588 were dealt with; in Tasmania 59,387 parcels, weighing 102,654 lb., with a declared value of £131,315, passed through the post, and yielded a revenue of £6,433; and in New Zealand the parcels dealt with numbered 327,629, weighing 1,161,584 lb., of which 59,655, weighing 226,959 lb., and valued at £151,236, were received from places outside the colony, and 17,577, weighing 41,707 lb., and valued at £20,844, were despatched from the colony.

MONEY ORDERS AND POSTAL NOTES.

In all the states there are money order and postal note systems in operation; and in all the states, except Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia, post-office savings banks. In Queensland there is a Government Savings Bank, but it is not placed under the administration of the Postmaster-General. The Victorian Post Office Savings Bank was amalgamated with the Commissioners' Savings Bank in September, 1897. Particulars of the working of these services will be found in the chapter dealing with "Accumulation."

POSTAL FACILITIES.

The following table shows the number of inhabitants and the area in square miles to each post-office for the year 1903. It will be seen that the most sparsely populated states have the greatest number of post-offices in comparison with their population, but in order to judge of the relative extension of postal facilities the area of country to each office must also be taken into account:—

State.	Number of Inhabitants to each Post Office.	Number of Square Miles of Territory to each Office.
New South Wales	642	139
Victoria	734	53
Queensland	393	504
South Australia	521	1,280
Western Australia	1,042	4,476
Tasmania	475	69
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Commonwealth	606	457
New Zealand	451	57
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Australasia	571	3·9

OCEAN MAIL SERVICES.

The Federal Ocean Mail Service, which is carried on by the Orient Pacific and Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Companies, is subsidised by the United Kingdom and all the Australian states. New contracts were entered into on the 1st February, 1898, for a period of seven years. The total amount of the subsidy is £170,000, of which £98,000 is payable by the Imperial authorities and £72,000 by the states in proportion

to their population. The sea transit rates collected from other countries and colonies making use of the service are credited to the Imperial and Colonial Governments in proportion to the amount of their contribution towards the subsidy. The following table shows the amount of the subsidy, with exchange, payable by each of the states during 1903, on the basis of the population at the end of the preceding year. In addition to the subsidy, there are other charges in connection with the service, such as transit rates in France and Italy and in Australia. After adding these, and deducting the postages collected in the states, and the proportion of sea transit rates payable by other countries using the service, the net cost charged to New South Wales in 1903 was £3,491, and to Tasmania £3,174, while South Australia obtained a profit of £2,119, Western Australia of £12,121, and Victoria of £456. No information is available regarding the position of the State of Queensland. New Zealand, although not a contracting party, yet avails itself of the Federal Service for the carriage of mail matter, and its net loss during the year amounted to £2,965 :—

	Subsidy, 1903. Net Cost, 1903.	
United Kingdom	£98,000	.....
Australasia—		
New South Wales.....	£26,040	..... £3,491
Victoria	22,555	.....
Queensland.....	9,592	.....
South Australia.....	6,805	.....
Western Australia	3,969	.....
Tasmania	3,312	..... 3,174
	—————	£72,273
		—————
Total	£170,273	.....

The mail service has been performed with great regularity and expedition. The average time occupied by the outward and homeward services in 1903 was as follows :—

	Orient Pacific.	P. and O.
London to Sydney	33 $\frac{2}{10}$ days.	32 $\frac{1}{10}$ days.
Sydney to London	33 $\frac{1}{10}$,,	32 $\frac{1}{10}$,,

On several occasions the mails from London have been delivered in Sydney in 32 days.

The failure on the part of the Commonwealth Government to obtain suitable offers for the carriage of Australian mails to England will necessitate the introduction of the poundage system on the termination of the present contract.

In addition to the Federal Ocean Mail Service *via* Suez, New South Wales and New Zealand until November, 1890, subsidised the Union

Steamship Company, in conjunction with the Pacific Steamship Company, for a four-weekly service, *via* San Francisco, to the amount of £37,000, of which New South Wales paid £25,750, and New Zealand £11,250. Under the new contract which was entered into, the amount of the subsidy was largely reduced, the contribution being based on the weight of mail matter carried, and New South Wales made an annual payment of £4,000 to the New Zealand Government, subject to appropriation by Parliament. Various extensions of the contract have been made, and at present the New Zealand Government is working under an agreement with the J. D. Spreckels Company (the Oceanic Steamship Company of San Francisco) which expires on the 10th November, 1906. During the year 1903 the net cost of the service to New Zealand was £14,796. New South Wales incurred an expense of £602 during 1903 in connection with this service, and the share of Victoria amounted to £291. The average time occupied in carrying the mails by the San Francisco route during the same year was as follows:—

London to Sydney	34 $\frac{5}{10}$ days.
Sydney to London	34 $\frac{3}{8}$..

During 1893 a calendar monthly service between Sydney and Vancouver was established by the Canadian-Australian Royal Mail Line, the state of New South Wales granting an annual subsidy of £10,000, and the Canadian Dominion one of £25,000. This action was taken more in the interests of trade between the great British colonies in Australasia and America than in those of the postal service. The Government of New Zealand guaranteed a minimum payment of £7,500 annually to this line in consideration of Wellington being made a port of call. But on the expiry of the contract on the 31st March, 1899, a fresh agreement, to hold for four years, was made by the Shipping Company with the Governments of New South Wales and Queensland, by which Brisbane was substituted for Wellington as a port of call, on condition that Queensland paid a subsidy of £7,500. New Zealand, therefore, does not now subscribe to the Vancouver service, though negotiations are pending for the service to embrace that colony. The contract having expired on the 31st April, 1903 a fresh one was entered into for a period of two years. The subsidy paid is £60,000, and is allotted as follows:—Canada, £34,091; New South Wales, £13,636; Queensland, £10,227; and Fiji, £2,046. Sydney is the initial and terminal port, but a call is made at Brisbane and Fiji, and it is provided that the round trip shall not exceed twenty-one days. During 1903 the net cost of the Vancouver service to New South Wales was £8,757; to Victoria £65; and to Queensland £8,179. The average time occupied by the mails in transit from Sydney to London was 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ days.

The Queensland line of steamers, sailing from Brisbane, *via* Torres Straits, carries mails for the Queensland Government, payment being

made according to weight. This route is from four to ten days longer than those previously mentioned. Queensland, under a former contract, paid the company an annual subsidy of £55,000. This arrangement ceased in January, 1890, and under a new contract the state agreed to pay the company an annual subsidy of £19,800 for a four-weekly, or £32,500 for a fortnightly service. The latter service was commenced on 1st July, 1890, the monthly service having lasted nearly six months; but in November, 1891, the contractors, on account of the heavy losses under the fortnightly system, were allowed to revert to the four-weekly service, the subsidy being reduced to the smaller amount mentioned above, viz., £19,800. When the contract expired, an agreement was arrived at for the institution of a subsidised service for purely commercial purposes. This arrangement lasted but a short time, when the subsidy was abandoned by the shipping company, who preferred to run their steamers without restriction. Payment is now only made in accordance with the weight of the mails carried. The amount of mail matter despatched from the other states by the Torres Straits route is very small.

Besides those mentioned, the other steamship companies trading with the Australasian states carry mails, notably the Messageries Maritimes Company and the North German Lloyd's, sailing from Sydney; and the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company, and the New Zealand Shipping Company, sailing from Lyttelton, *via* Magellan Straits. The companies are paid by the states in proportion to the weight of mail matter carried, but the Messageries Maritimes Company and the North German Lloyd's are in receipt of large subsidies from the French and German Governments respectively.

The postage to the United Kingdom was reduced in January, 1891, from 6d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce *via* Italy, and 4d. *via* the long sea route, to the uniform rate of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. In 1891 the states were represented at the Congress of the Universal Postal Union held in Vienna, and on the 4th July a convention was signed on their behalf, by which they joined the Union from the 1st October of that year. From that date the rate of postage to all British colonies and possessions and foreign countries included in the Union was reduced to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

A common scale of postage on newspapers to the United Kingdom and foreign countries has been adopted by the Australasian states, the rate being 1d. for the first 4 ounces, and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for every additional 2 ounces.

TELEGRAPHS.

The electric telegraph was introduced into these states almost at the time of the earliest railway construction. The first telegraph messages were sent in New South Wales in 1851. In Victoria the telegraph line from Melbourne to Williamstown was opened in 1854. The first line in South Australia, from Adelaide to Port Adelaide,

was opened in 1856; and the first Tasmanian line was completed in 1857. In New Zealand the first telegraph office was opened in 1862; and the line from Brisbane to Rockhampton, the first in Queensland, was opened in 1864. Telegraphic communication was established between Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide in 1858. The first telegraph in Western Australia was opened in 1869, and communication between that state and all the others of the group was completed in 1877.

All the states show very rapid progress in regard to telegraphic matters during the period from 1871 to 1881. In the case of Queensland this increase was largely due to the construction of the line to the Gulf of Carpentaria; and in the case of South Australia, resulted from the construction of the lines to Port Darwin, and to Eucla on the boundary of Western Australia. The following table shows the length of telegraphic lines in each state at the last five census periods, and at the end of 1903, so far as the returns are available:—

State.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1891.	1901.	1903.
New South Wales	1,616	*4,674	8,515	11,697	14,272	14,395
Victoria .....	.....	*2,295	3,350	6,840	6,467	6,596
Queensland	169	2,525	6,280	9,996	10,246	10,180
South Australia	597	1,183	4,946	5,640	5,763	6,038
Western Australia .....	.....	*550	1,585	2,921	6,173	6,079
Tasmania .....	.....	*291	928	1,380	1,852	1,852
Commonwealth .....	.....	11,518	25,604	38,474	44,773	45,140
New Zealand .....	.....	2,015	3,824	5,349	7,469	7,779
Australasia .....	.....	13,533	29,428	43,823	52,242	52,919

* In 1873.

The next table gives similar particulars, but the figures represent miles of wire instead of miles of line :—

State.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1891.	1901.	1903.
New South Wales.....	1,981	5,579	14,278	24,780	46,133	62,356
Victoria .....	.....	3,472	6,626	13,989	13,480	15,883
Queensland	169	2,614	8,585	17,646	20,537	20,759
South Australia	915	1,718	7,228	†12,707	17,853	14,846
Western Australia .....	... ..	*750	1,593	3,546	9,104	9,369
Tasmania .....	.....	291	1,157	2,822	3,356	3,356
Commonwealth.....	.....	14,424	39,467	75,490	110,463	126,569
New Zealand.....	.....	3,287	9,653	13,235	21,705	22,920
Australasia .....	.....	17,711	49,120	88,725	132,168	149,489

* In 1873. † Including telephone wires.

The number of telegrams passing along the wires of each state and the revenue received by the Telegraph Departments during the year 1903 were as appended. In the total for Australasia a correction has been made for interstate telegrams recorded in both the despatching and the receiving state :—

State.	Number of Telegrams.	Revenue received.
New South Wales	3,638,591	£154,839
Victoria	2,820,338	106,839
Queensland	1,500,551	83,266
South Australia	1,606,598	74,840
Western Australia	1,587,734	68,137
Tasmania	449,347	17,289
Commonwealth	11,603,159	505,210
Do (Interstate excess excluded).	9,621,162	.....
New Zealand	5,139,383	166,536
Australasia	16,742,542	671,746
Do (Intercolonial excess ex- cluded).	14,673,452	.....

In the whole of Australasia there were on the 31st December, 1903, 4,282 telegraph stations, of which 987 were in New South Wales, 878 in Victoria, 481 in Queensland, 290 in South Australia, 172 in Western Australia, 321 in Tasmania, and 1,153 in New Zealand.

In no other country in the world has the development of telegraphic communication been so rapid as in Australasia, and in none has it been taken advantage of by the public to anything like the same extent. Taking Australasia as a whole, there are only four countries that possess a greater extent of telegraph lines, and only seven in which a larger number of messages is actually sent. In no other countries, however, except the United Kingdom, and Belgium, do the number of messages bear anything approaching the same ratio to the population. The following table illustrates these remarks:—

Country.	Length of Telegraph Lines.	Messages.	Messages per head of population.
	miles.	No.	No.
United Kingdom	49,450	92,471,000	2·18
France	90,590	47,280,070	1·21
Belgium	4,047	14,252,100	2·13
Netherlands*	4,010	5,728,222	1·07
Germany	83,258	45,216,963	0·80
Denmark	3,780	2,409,365	0·98
Sweden	10,077	2,813,830	0·54
Norway	9,978	2,278,639	1·02
Austria-Hungary	39,326	31,554,715	0·69
Switzerland	5,556	4,010,943	1·21
Italy	28,472	11,682,366	0·35
Spain	20,170	4,627,713	0·25
Portugal	5,301	4,054,240	0·75
Russia	106,417	101,639,542	0·98
Roumania	4,350	2,318,683	0·39
United States†	196,517	69,790,866	0·92
Canada	35,697	5,316,350	0·99
Cape Colony	7,634	4,439,459	1·77
Argentines Republic	29,397	7,000,000	1·39
Japan	16,128	18,073,407	0·40
Commonwealth of Australia	45,140	9,621,162	2·45
Australasia	52,919	14,673,452	3·10

* Government lines only.

† Western Union Company only.

From the above table it appears that in Australasia during the year over three messages were sent over the telegraph for each inhabitant. In the United Kingdom the number was nearly two and one-fifth for each inhabitant; and in the United States of America about one message to every inhabitant. The return for the United States, however, includes only the lines of the Western Union Company, which owns the principal part of the telegraph system of that country. The other countries shown in the table sent messages ranging from two and one-eighth per inhabitant in the case of Belgium, to about one-fourth per inhabitant in the case of Spain.

TELEGRAPH RATES.

The rates for the transmission of telegrams within the Commonwealth were determined by the Post and Telegraph Rates Acts, 1902, and came into force on the 1st November, 1902. For ordinary telegrams, not exceeding sixteen words, including the address and signature, the charges are 6d. in town and suburban districts within prescribed limits or within 15 miles from the sending station, 9d. to other places within the state, and 1s. for inter-state, that is, from any one state to any other, and for each additional word, an extra charge of 1d. in each case is made. On telegrams from and to Tasmania, the cable charges of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per word are added to those already specified, and double rates are imposed for the transmission of telegrams on Sunday, Christmas Day, and Good Friday, and between the hours of 8 p.m. and 9 a.m., and for urgent telegrams. In New Zealand a charge of 6d. for the first twelve words, including address and signature, and 1d. for each additional word on all inland telegrams is made. Urgent messages are transmitted upon payment of double the ordinary rates.

CABLE SERVICES.

Australasia is in telegraphic communication with Europe and the rest of the world by means of five cables, three of which are connected with the various Asiatic continental lines, one by America, and one by Durban and along the West Coast of Africa. The first of the three cables by Asia, which were all laid by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, Limited, was opened in October, 1872, joining Port Darwin to Banjoewangie, in Java, whence communication is provided with Europe by way of Batavia, Singapore, Madras, and Bombay. In 1879 a duplicate cable was laid down, the states of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania agreeing to pay the company a subsidy of £32,400 per annum for a period of 20 years, the amount to be apportioned between the states on the basis of population. At Port Darwin the cables connect with an overland wire, which extends to Adelaide, a distance of 1,971 miles, the construction of which involved an expenditure by the South Australian Government of about half a million sterling. The total length of line between Adelaide and London is 12,570 miles, of which 9,146 miles are submarine cable, and 3,424 miles overland wire. The third cable was laid in 1888 from Broome, in Roebuck Bay, Western Australia, to Banjoewangie. The length of line by this route from Perth to London is 12,296 miles, 10,811 being cable and 1,485 land wire. The eastern states are connected with Broome by a line running from Adelaide, *via* Port Augusta, Eucla, and Albany, to Perth.

The cable joining Tasmania to the continent of Australia was laid in 1869, the length being about 170 miles. It starts from the township of Flinders, near Cape Schanck, in Victoria, and terminates at Low Head, at the mouth of the Tamar, in Tasmania. This line is subsidised to the

extent of £4,200 yearly by the states of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania, the contributions being based on the population figures.

New Zealand was joined to the continent by a cable laid in 1876 the length being about 1,191 miles. The line has its Australian terminus within sight of the spot where Captain Cook landed on the shores of Botany Bay, and within a stone's throw of the monument of La Perouse. The New Zealand terminus of the cable is at Wakapuaka, near Nelson, on the Middle or South Island, whence another cable, 109 miles in length, is laid to Wanganui, in the North Island, with an alternate line from White's Bay across Cook Strait to Wellington. For the first ten years after its opening, the New Zealand cable was subsidised by the Governments of New South Wales and New Zealand, their annual contributions being £2,500 and £7,500 respectively. Under agreement, dating from the 1st January, 1893, the Company which laid the cable was guaranteed £26,258 per annum in return for the reduction of the cable rates from 8s. 6d. for the first ten words and 10d. for every additional word to 2s. and 3d. respectively, the Company to bear one-fourth of any loss. On the 1st May, 1885, an amended agreement came into operation under which the guarantee was reduced to £20,000, and the Company ceased to share in any loss. This agreement expired on the 30th April, 1900, and the Company in proposing a renewal claimed that the guarantee should be increased to £26,000. This was absolutely declined by New Zealand, and the Company then determined on a uniform word rate of 3d., and abolished the minimum charge of 2s. for the first ten words. This was agreed to, pending the laying of the Pacific Cable.

As a direct result of the completion of the Pacific cable of which the sections, Queensland-Norfolk Island and Norfolk Island-New Zealand, were opened for business on the 23rd April, 1902, the charges for New Zealand-Australian telegrams, except to and from Tasmania, were reduced to one uniform rate of 4½d. per word, and to Tasmania to 5½d.; the additional 1d. to Tasmania is to cover the transmission over the Australia-Tasmania cable. In addition to the reduction of the rates for telegrams to and from Australia, the opening of the Pacific cable has benefited senders of cable telegrams to places beyond Australia, by bringing about a general reduction of the rates in New Zealand to the more favourable rates obtaining in New South Wales and some of the other Commonwealth states. The rates on ordinary telegrams from New Zealand to Europe were reduced from 1st June, 1902, from 5s. 2d. to 3s. 4d. per word.

A cable connecting New Caledonia with Queensland at Bundaberg was opened in October, 1893. It was constructed by a French company, and is guaranteed by the French Government to the extent of £8,000, and by the states of New South Wales and Queensland to the amount of £2,000 each annually for a period of thirty years, in return

for which the Governments of these states are entitled to use the cable for the transmission of official messages up to the amount of the guarantee.

During the year 1890 the states opened negotiations with the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company for a reduction in the cable rates to Europe, which at that time were 9s. 4d. per word for ordinary messages and 2s. 8d. per word for press messages sent from New South Wales; and at a conference of the postal and telegraphic authorities a proposal to reduce the tariff to 4s. per word for ordinary messages and 1s. 10d. per word for press messages was agreed to, the states contributing to the subsidy undertaking to make good half the loss which the company would sustain by this reduction in the schedule of charges, and New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand at the same time agreeing to pay to South Australia a proportion of the loss to the revenue of that state which the lower charges would cause in the working of the overland wires. The amended tariff came into force in May, 1891, and the amount to be guaranteed to the company for the portion of the year during which the contract was in existence was £158,491. The sum earned by the company for the same period was £120,141, so that the deficiency on the eight months' business was £38,350, one-half of which was made good by the contributing states according to population. But this sum, combined with the amount of the subsidy, was more than the states were prepared to bear, and on the 1st January, 1893, the rates were fixed at 4s. 11d. per word from Sydney to London for ordinary messages, and 1s. 10d. for press messages. Even at these charges there was a loss to be borne, the total amount payable to the cable company being £21,778 in 1893 (as compared with £27,520 in 1892), and £6,191 in 1894; and to the South Australian Government £7,675 in 1893 (as compared with £10,415 in 1892), £822 in 1894, and £1,125 in 1895. Since the years mentioned the amounts guaranteed—£227,000 to the cable company, and £37,552 to the South Australian Government—have been met by the revenue, and the states have therefore not been called upon to contribute. Queensland later joined the other states in the guarantee.

The agreement between the Australian Governments and the Company expired on the 30th April, 1900. In July, 1899, the Company offered to lay a cable to Australia, *via* the Cape of Good Hope, to reduce the tariff per word from 4s. 11d. to 4s. at once, and later to 2s. 6d. under a sliding scale, if the states would agree to certain conditions. South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania accepted the terms offered and now enjoy the reduced rates. The other states refused, but notified the Company that they also would accept if certain alterations were made in the agreement, the alterations being intended to safeguard the Pacific cable, to which these states were definitely committed. On the 16th January, 1901, New South Wales entered into the agreement.

The following table shows the amount paid by each state towards cable subsidies and guarantees during the year 1903. From the 1st May, 1901, the whole of the subsidy in connection with the Tasmanian cable has been paid by Tasmania.

State.	Victoria- Tasmania Subsidy.	Queensland- New Caledonia Guarantee.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
New South Wales .....	.....	1,970 0 0	1,970 0 0
Victoria .....	.....	.....	.....
Queensland .....	.....	1,970 0 0	1,970 0 0
South Australia .....	.....	.....	.....
Western Australia .....	.....	.....	.....
Tasmania	5,200 16 9	.....	5,200 16 9
Total	5,200 16 9	3,940 0 0	9,140 16 9

The desirableness of constructing a Pacific cable, which shall touch only British territory on its way from Australia to America, was acknowledged by the Governments of most of the Australasian colonies as well as by those of the United Kingdom and Canada, and an informal Conference was held in London in July, 1898, of representatives of Great Britain, Canada, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and New Zealand, when it was suggested that Great Britain should pay one-third of the cost of laying such a cable, Canada two-ninths, and the Australian colonies the remaining four-ninths. This proposal was eventually adopted, and in July, 1899, a meeting was held in London by the representatives of the countries interested, and it was agreed that the cable should be laid and that the capital necessary to construct and manage it should be raised and controlled by a Board designated the Pacific Cable Board, comprising Sir Spencer Walpole, as president, representing the United Kingdom; Lord Strathcona, Canada; and the Australian Agents-General their respective states. A contract was entered into with the Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company of Greenwich, and the Australian shore end of the cable was laid at Southport, Queensland, on the 13th March, 1902, and the cable was completed to Vancouver, and opened for traffic on the 3rd November, 1902. The cable comprises four sections, with a branch to New Zealand from Norfolk Island, the length of the sections being: Brisbane to Norfolk Island, 834 nautical miles; Norfolk Island to Fiji, 961 miles; Fiji to Fanning Island, 2,093 miles; and Fanning Island to Vancouver, 3,240 miles, the branch from Norfolk Island to New Zealand measuring 537 miles.

From the report of the Pacific Cable Board for the year ended 31st March, 1904, it appears that a sum of £1,992,967 has been expended upon the cable. The gross revenue from messages for the year was £81,832

from which has to be deducted £2,008, being the sum paid to the Atlantic and Canadian Pacific Telegraph Companies for supplying the date and the time of filing all messages to and from the United Kingdom and the Continent, leaving the net message reserve at £79,824. The actual expenditure of the Board for the year amounted to £54,284. After making provision for interest the actual deficit on the year's transactions amounted to £89,810.

The direct Cape cable, from Durban to Fremantle, which provides an alternative all-British route to that of the Pacific, was completed on the 19th October, 1901.

TELEPHONES.

In connection with the telegraph departments of the various states, telephone exchanges have been established in the capitals and other important centres of population. In order to popularise the use of the instrument, the charges in some of the states have within the last few years been reduced, and the result is seen in a satisfactory extension of this means of communication. Information regarding telephones in the different states during 1903, so far as can be ascertained, will be found in the following table:—

State.	Exchanges.	Telephones.	Length of Telephone Wires.	Revenue.
	No.	No.	miles.	£
New South Wales	57	16,155	.....*	105,002
Victoria	20	7,610	22,995	86,600
Queensland.....	15	3,749	5,613	27,321
South Australia...	10	1,974	4,572	23,209
Western Australia	13	3,332	5,431	30,324
Tasmania.....	16	1,236	1,300	8,910
Commonwealth	131	34,056	.....	281,366
New Zealand	81	12,105	9,834	71,028
Australasia	212	46,161	.....	352,394

* Not ascertained.

In the Australasian states the rates for telephones at places of business range from £5 to £10 for the maximum length of wire—generally one mile, the colonies with a half-mile radius being New Zealand and Queensland—and the charge is higher in the city than in

the country. In New South Wales and Victoria the city and suburban rates are £9 per annum, and the country rates £8 in the former state, and £7 in the latter. In South Australia the city rate is higher, being £10 within one mile radius of the telephone exchange, and for each additional half-mile up to three miles an extra £1, and for every additional quarter of a mile above three miles one extra £1. Queensland, for a radius of half-a-mile, has a uniform rate of £6, which is also the charge made in Tasmania, for a one-mile radius, in Hobart, Launceston, and Zeehan, while for the suburbs and country districts the rate is a matter of arrangement. In New Zealand a distinction is drawn between exchanges continuously open and those not continuously open, the charges being respectively £7 and £5; while in Western Australia, for commercial subscribers within one mile radius of the telephone exchange the rate is £7, and for every additional half mile, £1 per annum. The charges for telephones at private residences are, of course, less than for places of business. In New South Wales, Victoria, and New Zealand, the rate is uniformly £5; and in Queensland, £6. In South Australia the charge is £5 within one mile radius of the exchange, and for each additional half mile up to 3 miles, an extra £1, and for every additional quarter of a mile above 3 miles, an extra £1; in Tasmania, it is £4 10s. in Hobart, Launceston, and Zeehan, and a matter of arrangement in the suburbs and country; while in Western Australia the charge is £5 within one mile radius of the exchange, and for every additional half mile £1 per annum.

POSTAL AND TELEGRAPHIC FINANCES.

The following table shows the revenue and expenditure of the Postal and Telegraph Departments of the states during 1903 :—

State.	Revenue.				Expenditure.
	Posts.	Telegraphs.	Telephones.	Total.	
	£	£	£	£	£
New South Wales	652,761	154,839	105,002	912,602	884,963
Victoria	448,486	106,839	86,600	641,925	582,520
Queensland	191,931	83,266	27,321	302,518	425,568
South Australia	166,400	74,840	23,209	264,449	240,987
Western Australia.....	122,862	68,137	30,324	221,323	277,021
Tasmania	75,412	17,289	8,910	101,611	100,232
Commonwealth	1,657,852	505,210	281,366	2,444,428	2,511,291
New Zealand	343,207	166,536	71,028	580,771	526,747
Australasia	2,001,059	671,746	352,394	3,025,199	3,038,038

In the expenditure shown in the table, interest on the outlay on post-office buildings and telegraph lines and maintenance of buildings is not taken into account. If allowance be made for these, so far as is possible from the very imperfect returns concerning the expenditure on post-offices in each state, the total expenditure and the deficiency in revenue would be as follow :—

State.	Departmental Expenditure.	Interest and Maintenance of Works and Buildings.	Total charge.	Deficiency in Revenue.
	£	£	£	£
New South Wales.....	884,963	120,076	1,005,039	92,437
Victoria	582,520	96,960	679,480	37,555
Queensland	425,568	68,036	493,604	191,086
South Australia.....	240,937	59,909	300,896	36,447
Western Australia	277,021	27,058	304,079	82,756
Tasmania.....	100,232	8,956	109,188	7,577
Commonwealth	2,511,291	380,995	2,892,286	447,858
New Zealand	526,747	78,535	605,282	24,511
Australasia	3,038,038	459,530	3,497,568	472,369

With the progress of settlement and the increase of population, the expenditure on the postal and telegraphic services naturally expands year by year, and it is apparent that in order to keep pace with the growing needs of the community the department must be administered on ordinary business principles. Hitherto the application of such principles has not been obvious, and perhaps it has not been possible; but now that the affairs of the six states are centred under one control, much of past extravagant expenditure will be avoided, and there is every prospect of the service becoming self-supporting—that is, returning a revenue sufficient not only to meet current expenditure, but provide a surplus to cover maintenance of works and buildings, together with interest on capital cost.