

Nature of titles submitted by lawyers.	<p>and is likely to be to the public, and have assisted greatly in introducing business into some of the offices. But the material profits of conveyancing practice will be so seriously disturbed by the public acceptance of Mr. Torrens' scheme, that it is not natural to expect to see lawyers as a body voluntarily exchanging the present emoluments of practice for the comparatively insignificant fees derivable under the Land Transfer Act. It has, however, throughout all the districts, been a matter for congratulation, that the legal profession have in very few cases exhibited that hostility which, had it been exerted, would not under the circumstances have occasioned any surprise. One circumstance, however, may be stated as significant of the legal appreciation of the uses of the Act, namely, that most of the titles submitted for registration by the profession are in some degree defective—not radically bad, yet not easily marketable. These titles are called by the profession "holding titles," as contra-distinguished from "marketable titles." In fact, the department is indebted to the legal profession for a large number of troublesome titles, involving inconsiderable values, and in respect of which the prospect of professional fees is not encouraging. In dealing with titles of this class, my instruction has been to render, through the office, every assistance in the amendment of the title previous to its being registered, and so guaranteed by the Government; but in no case is a title which involves any patent risk of a call upon the Assurance Fund to be entertained. Under the law, and the practice of the department, any title, however long and complex, may be investigated at a cost to the applicant of five shillings only; for, in the event of our declining to issue a certificate, we return all the fees deposited, with the exception of that amount. This scrutiny in a private office would cost the client a sum varying from one guinea to five hundred pounds.</p>
Facilities afforded for investigation of titles.	<p>After the Legislature has effected some necessary amendments in the Act, I would advise that Government sanction the publication of a hand-book, illustrating in plain language the advantages of placing properties upon the register book, and giving an explanation of the practice of the department.</p>
Hand-book required.	<p>As may be gathered from my estimate of the amount of business for the next financial year, I am very confident that the system will be in New Zealand a very great success. By correspondence with the Registrars-General of the neighbouring colonies, I have ascertained that in no case has the success of Mr. Torrens' system been at all equal to the rate of progress made in New Zealand during the first few months of its working.</p>
Success of the system.	<p>I never felt any doubt as to the policy of establishing ten district offices, notwithstanding the fact that, at the time this measure of administration was decided upon, there was no precedent in the Australian Colonies for such an extension of local convenience. Regarding the cost of the department, I trust that Parliament will be satisfied that every effort has been made to work economically. All the Districts are in full operation, with the exception of Marlborough, provision for which is, however, included in my estimate of the total expenses of the department for the current year, namely, £8,614 15s. For this sum the public will have the services of twenty-one barristers and solicitors, and eleven professional draftsmen, while full provision is made for clerical services and incidental expenses.</p>
Organization of the Department effected economically.	<p>It is proper that I should here state that I have in many instances secured valuable services by encouraging a hope in the minds of the gentlemen who are engaged in the department, that they may expect the public to consider their claim to an increase of salary, so soon as their zealous exertions have made the Land Transfer Act a great success in their several districts. I have every reason to speak in the highest terms of the zeal, intelligence, and industry which have been evinced throughout this branch of the public service.</p>
Officers.	<p>With regard to the practice of the office, having had the advantage of a correspondence, through the Government, with all the Lands Registration Offices in the Australian Colonies, and having also had the great advantage of Mr. Gawler's advice and assistance, I have succeeded in establishing an uniform practice which appears to have worked very satisfactorily, but it will be necessary to have new regulations after the Act has been amended during the coming Session of the Assembly. My principal endeavour has been to make the regulations as few and simple as possible, so that the general public will not be called upon for any great mental effort in the endeavour to master the routine of the department in its various details. I have prepared a suggestion that His Excellency the Governor should be empowered to make, alter, and amend regulations for the conduct of the department, as circumstances may suggest a necessity for action in that direction.</p>
New regulations necessary.	<p>In respect to the fees sanctioned by the existing Act, I am of opinion that they are sufficiently high in all cases. In some instances I should recommend reductions, with a view to promoting the popularity of the measure, feeling assured that although such reductions might be equivalent to a direct financial loss, yet the indirect advantage to the revenue, referable to a general acceptance of the system, would more than justify such reductions. Although the head of this department would naturally be gratified upon seeing large pecuniary profits resulting from its operations, still, if an intelligent political economist, he would be more satisfied to see the Colony deriving the much larger advantages which must flow from a general use of the increased facilities which the Land Transfer Act affords for commercial exchanges.</p>
Power should be vested in the Governor for that purpose.	<p>During my administration, I have frequently had the honor of drawing the attention of Government to the one great cause of uneasiness in my mind in reference to the working of the Act, and avail myself of this opportunity of recording my belief that the most serious damage and difficulty are almost certain to result should the Legislature fail to make immediate provision for correcting and completing the surveys of the Colony. The result of anxious inquiries in all directions is a conviction that it is my duty to recommend the Government to promote legislation without delay, enabling them to create a system of survey which shall operate over the whole Colony. I am aware that many difficulties surround such a proposal, but I am nervously sensible that while on the one hand I might succeed in making an approximation of the cost of correcting and completing the surveys, it would be utterly impossible for me or any one else to make even an approximation of the damage that must result from an extensive operation of the Land Transfer system, with its accompanying assurance of title, in the absence of that principal element of safety, a reliable survey of the lands a title to which is to be guaranteed. I hold very strong opinions as to the means by which a satisfactory survey of the country could be best</p>
Fees.	
Surveys.	