

REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE UPON LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

Your Committee having considered the evidence hereto appended, have unanimously agreed to the following Report:—

1. That the Asylums in the Colony have not (save in some localities) either proper or sufficient accomodation for the reception and care of Lunatics.

2. That it is expedient that the General Government should take measures to cause proper provision to be made in those parts of the Colony where the present provision is insufficient.

3. That a duly qualified Medical Officer from the United Kingdom, having special knowledge and experience in the treatment of the insane, be forthwith engaged and appointed, and who shall have the supervision and control of all the Lunatic Asylums in the Colony.

4. That the question of a General Central Asylum be postponed until next Session, by which time information will have been obtained from Reports of the Inspecting Medical Officer, which will serve to guide the action of Parliament.

5. That whilst steps should be taken to improve all the Asylums of the Colony, the state of that at Karori, near Wellington, urgently requires immediate attention and reform.

A. BUCHANAN, M.D.,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 1871.

Dr. Alexander Johnston, M.R.C.S., in attendance.

Dr. Johnston.

1. *The Chairman.*] Have you any special acquaintance with the subject of the management of lunatic asylums? Not of late years. I had charge of the Karori Asylum about eight years ago, and since that time I, of course, have had only occasional insane patients placed in the hospital.

2. How many patients were there at Karori at that time: about eight years ago? About thirteen.

3. Were the buildings of the same extent as they now are? I think they have enlarged the place since.

4. Did you use any curative means when you were there? No, I had no opportunity.

5. You simply attended them professionally? Yes, once a week.

6. You are aware that the Committee has been appointed to endeavour to collect evidence with the view to improve the existing institutions, and to form a central one. Can you give any suggestions to further these objects? My chief suggestion would be that there should be a thorough investigation by the Government, and a report brought forward. It would take one year to get that thoroughly and well done.

7. How often did you visit Karori? I was supposed to go to the asylum once a week, to see if any patient were ill. That was my duty at that time. The present medical officer is, I think, supposed to go there twice a week, but I do not think he looks upon himself as being responsible for the curative treatment of the patients, which would be entirely under the supervision of the people there. I mean to say that when I visited the Karori Asylum, I had no moral control; I merely attended the patients professionally in the case of illness.

8. *The Hon. Captain Fraser.*] How were the patients exercised? The quiet ones were out every day; but those who were not quiet did not get out at all.

9. How were they confined, were they ever chained? No, none of them.

10. Were they clean? Yes, the place was kept thoroughly clean. No chains were used. The strongest measures taken were using a strait jacket, just a canvas jacket.

11. When were you there last? I was there last about two years ago.

12. *The Chairman.*] When the patients were allowed out for exercise, were they allowed out in the yard only, or out in the fields? There was a paddock of about four or five acres, and they were generally allowed to go into that, and they were generally employed in bringing water or anything of that kind.

13. Would they be employed in the garden? I had small gardens made when I was there, about a quarter of an acre.

14. *The Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Had you any amusement for the patients? any curative treatment? No, none.

15. Had the attendants any special knowledge of the treatment of lunatics? No, I believe those who had charge of them were uneducated, and not at all capable to administer curative treatment: they had no special knowledge.

16. *Mr. Steward.*] Was there any classification attempted, between cases of confirmed lunacy and persons suffering from temporary insanity? No, there was no opportunity for special classification, because we could not separate the patients.