

# REPORT

OF THE RESULT OF AN

## INQUIRY AS TO THE DESIRABILITY OF SELLING THE NATIVE RESERVE AT ARAHURA.

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PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY COMMAND OF  
HIS EXCELLENCY.

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WELLINGTON.

1872.



## REPORT ON THE PETITION OF THE LEASEHOLDERS OF THE ARAHURA NATIVE RESERVE.

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Auckland, 14th June, 1872.

THE tenants of the Native Reserve Trust living at Arahura ask for relief, either in having power of purchasing the fee-simple of their holdings, or a reduction of their rents. The reasons set forth for such an alteration are, that the prices realized for the farm produce that they depend upon have become so reduced since the amounts of their respective rents were fixed, that they can no longer conduct farming operations at a profit.

Like the Greymouth Reserve, the Arahura land was made an exception to the sale of the district by the local Ngaitahu Natives, when they transferred the territory on the West Coast to Mr. Mackay, in 1860.

On account of the *pounamu*, or greenstone, that is found in the river-bed of the Arahura, the Natives stipulated that a belt of land half a mile wide lying on either side of the river, and to contain 2,000 acres, was to be made a reserve for their benefit and use. This land was formally handed over to the administration of His Excellency the Governor, by the Natives bringing it, on the 23rd of February, 1866, under the operation of "The New Zealand Native Reserves Act, 1856."

The high rates of garden produce which obtained at Hokitika in 1866 caused good land in available places to be in demand, and this land, situated upon or near the Christchurch road, was soon let for market-gardening and farming purposes. The land was chiefly covered with timber, some of it of a heavy description, and clearing was very expensive.

The overflow of the river and the sapping away of the banks has materially injured several of the farms. The diminution of the price of certain descriptions of garden and farm produce has considerably lessened the profits of the farming tenants.

It was not, however, shown that farming operations could not be conducted at a profit. There appears to be a certain market for all that can be produced at the present time, although such produce as oats, hay, butter and cheese, may be brought in at a low price from Canterbury and Nelson; yet milk, eggs, fruit, garden produce, and green fodder, can maintain a fair price against the rate of similar articles imported.

Some few of the lots are let to publicans and persons not dependent on gardening or farming.

### *Recommendation.*

I do not think that the Arahura settlers have, in asking to be allowed to purchase the freeholds, so strong a case as the Greymouth tenants, or that they have shown that an alteration of the nature of the trust is necessary. But I think that longer terms might be granted. The expense of clearing is very heavy, and many of the holdings require expensive river walls. On a short term the tenant would not be induced to clear the roughest parts of the land, however productive the soil might be.

The property might, for purposes of transfer and mortgage, be conveniently brought under the operation of "The Land Transfer Act, 1870," in the manner proposed in the Greymouth Report.

Where the holdings have been materially injured by the overflow of the river, the tenant might be allowed to surrender the lease, or, if the land has been improved, to take it for the remainder of the term on a rent reduced commensurately with the injury sustained.

CHARLES HEAPHY.

The Hon. the Native Minister.

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