

The amount available for general public works purposes, therefore, was only £361,989, and against even this amount there were liabilities already existing to the extent of £195,484. The expenditure for the year 1891–92 (exclusive of the expenditure under Part II.) was £312,371, for 1892–93, £330,891, for 1893–94, £333,051, and for 1894–95, £300,817. The average for the four years has been £319,282. It is therefore satisfactory to find that we have been able to carry on our general public works for a period of nearly five years without having recourse to the London market for a loan for public works purposes. This is a very creditable achievement, and fully in keeping with the policy enunciated when the Government took office. During the four years referred to we have opened 152 miles of railway, and have spent in railway construction (again exclusive of Part II.) £617,004. We have constructed 1,711 miles of roads, and completed the purchase of 1,159,681 acres of Native lands. Considerable expenditure has also taken place on other services, the following being a summary of the whole:—

Railways ..	£617,004
Roads (except Roads on Goldfields)	235,842
Public Buildings (in addition to £118,573 for School Buildings, charged on Consolidated Fund)	164,114
Telegraph Extension	92,374
Roads and Works on Goldfields	84,454
Lighthouses, Harbour Works, &c.	28,285
Departmental ...	26,472
Purchase of Native Lands	17,841
Miscellaneous ...	10,744
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Total ..	<u>£1,277,130</u>

Of this amount £473,901 was provided from the consolidated revenue.

#### THE PRESENT POSITION

Honourable members will observe that the funds available will not, at the proposed rate of expenditure, carry us far beyond the end of the current year, and we shall have to depend to a large extent upon the usual surplus for the moneys necessary to go on with from the 31st March, 1896, and until Parliament next year has had an opportunity of considering the position. There is a reasonable possibility that, with the summer and the brighter prospects now looming ahead, employment generally will become plentiful. If this very desirable and much needed state of things comes to pass the number of men employed upon the public works of the colony can be reduced, thus insuring the moneys in hand being sufficient to cover the expenditure until further provision is made. I do not, however, think it practicable, at any rate for some time to come, taking into consideration the urgent necessity and importance of the great majority of the works in hand, to reduce the expenditure under Part I. to below £300,000 per annum. When, however, the railways now in hand are completed to paying points it may be possible to bring the expenditure under that part of the fund down to £250,000 a year. It is essential that the increasing settlement should be supplemented and aided with roads, buildings, railway communication, extra rolling-stock, and additions to open lines, and, now that our goldfields are attracting attention, and private capital is being invested in furthering the development of the mining industry, it would be suicidal for the State to remain apathetic, and I have no hesitation in saying that we must make provision for roads on goldfields, prospecting, water conservation, the construction of water-races or contributions towards the same, and for the construction of other minor works on the goldfields.

Under the head of "Lands Improvement," seeing how rapidly settlement is progressing, it is imperative that we should have the necessary surveys completed and the roads constructed, in fact, one of the greatest drawbacks to settlement arises from the fact that it is almost ruinous to the poorer class of settlers for them to be in occupation of their holdings for months prior to the