

Guide to the Public Records of Tasmania: Section One;
Colonial Secretary's Office record group. Hobart,
Tasmanian State Archives, 1957.

During a seminar that was held for professional archivists by the Commonwealth National Library in 1954, a proposal was put forward that all State archivists should co-operate in producing a general guide to the Public Records of Australia in the 19th century. The original optimistic estimates of the time that it would take to complete such a project have not been realised but, with the publication of this first inventory by Mr. Sharman and Mr. Eldershaw of Tasmania, we may now fairly say that the project is under way and, since two other inventories have been completed in draft, it is to be hoped that future progress will be more satisfactory.

This particular inventory is a sound careful piece of work which should be of considerable value to anybody working in the field of Tasmanian history. It is arranged in the form recommended by the National Archives and includes records covering the period from 1824 to 1858 during which period the basic administration of the separate colony of Van Diemens Land was established. The introduction appears to give a valuable summary of the origins of the Colonial Secretary's Office but it is questionable whether it goes quite far enough. The picture of the office given is an outsider's picture and I personally felt that not sufficient weight was given to the internal organisation. Admittedly, it is possible that this sort of information is not as easy to come by in respect of this period as it is for later periods but even a consolidation of the various statements on functions into a list of functions would help to clarify the picture somewhat.

The descriptions of series are on the whole admirably lucid and my only criticism of this portion of the inventory is in the detail of titling and classification. Both titling and classification exhibit a tendency to inconsistency and, while consistency can easily become an unwarrantable fetish, unjustifiable inconsistencies can lead to misunderstandings. C3014, for example, consists of unregistered correspondence and is arranged in Part 1, General Correspondence, while at the same time Part 3 has been specially created to deal with two other series of unregistered correspondence which appear to be very similar. I would prefer as a general principle to see General Correspondence reserved for the central collected correspondence of the agency which has been officially registered, leaving all unregistered correspondence to be classified elsewhere. After all, any apparent relationships can be easily brought out by cross-reference. There are numerous other minor points of this nature but the generally high standard of description is the really significant point to be made.

The three appendices are:

- (a) A list of secretaries and colonial secretaries 1813-1852.
- (b) A list of the records available for Lieutenant Governors' periods.
- (c) References.

The only comment to be made here is that the references do not always clearly indicate the source. For example, reference number is as follows: "King - Hobart, Mar. 1804". I assume that this is a reference to Historical Records of Australia but this should be stated.

Finally, it would be desirable to improve the fastening of the volume if possible. The copy sent to me is already in pieces.

H.J. Gibbney.

NEWS AND NOTES

Miss M. Lukis of the Western Australian State Archives has left on a nine-months tour of archival establishments in America and England under the auspices of the Carnegie foundation. As a result of a visit which Miss Lukis has already made to the provincial archives of Saskatchewan in Canada, we have received a request from that institution for copies of Archives and Manuscripts.

Mr. Ian Maclean of the Archives Division of the Commonwealth National Library Archives Division has been granted a Commonwealth Public Service scholarship to study the management of public records in America and Europe during 1958.

Mr. K. Thompson of the Melbourne branch of the Archives Division, Commonwealth National Library, has now left the profession.