

Mr Sidey.

FIRE INQUESTS.

ANALYSIS.

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| <p>Title.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Short Title. 2. Interpretation. 3. Where fire occurs owner to report to police. 4. Police to report to Coroner. 5. Coroner to determine whether inquest shall be held. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Coroner's report when no inquest held. 7. When Justice may hold inquest. 8. Right to enter and view premises. 9. Coroner's report when inquest held. 10. Tabulated statement to be prepared. 11. Regulations. |
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A BILL INTITULED

AN ACT to provide for the Holding of Fire Inquests.

Title.

BE IT ENACTED by the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. This Act may be cited as the Fire Inquests Act, 1914, and shall be read together with and deemed part of the Coroners Act, 1908 (hereinafter referred to as the principal Act).

Short Title.

2. In this Act, if not inconsistent with the context,—

Interpretation.

“Minister” means the Minister charged for the time being with the administration of the Fire Brigades Act, 1908:
 “Prescribed” means prescribed by this Act or by regulations thereunder.

3. (1.) Whenever a fire occurs which destroys or damages, or has threatened to destroy or damage, any building or other insurable property, the owner or occupier of such building, or the owner of such other property, shall, within twenty-four hours after the outbreak of such fire if it occurs in a city or borough, and within forty-eight hours in other cases, give a notice in writing in the prescribed form to a constable or other prescribed person.

Where fire occurs owner to report to police.

(2.) Every person who commits a breach of this section shall be liable to a fine not exceeding *fifty* pounds unless the Court is satisfied that he had not a reasonable opportunity of complying with the provisions of this section.

4. (1.) It shall be the duty of such constable or prescribed person as aforesaid forthwith to transmit such notice to the police officer in charge of the district in which the fire occurred, and a copy of the said notice to the Coroner whose residence is nearest to the place where the fire occurred.

Police to report to Coroner.

(2.) Such police officer shall, as soon as possible after the receipt of such notice, make a report in writing (hereinafter referred to as the police report) to such Coroner.

(3.) Any police officer in charge of a district in which a fire has to his knowledge occurred, but of which he has not received notice under this section, shall forthwith notify the Coroner whose residence is nearest to the place where such fire occurred, and shall cause inquiries to be made as to the said fire, and, as soon thereafter as possible, send a police report thereon to the said Coroner. 5

Coroner to determine whether inquest shall be held.

5. It shall be the duty of the Coroner to consider the police report, and to hold or cause to be held an inquest in respect of every such fire, unless he considers that the cause of the fire is clearly apparent, and is such that no object can be served by holding an inquest. 10

Coroner's report when no inquest held.

6. If the Coroner determines that no inquest shall be held, he shall, within *seven* days after the receipt of the police report, transmit the same to the Minister, together with a written statement, to be signed by him, setting forth his reasons for such determination. 15

When Justice may hold inquest.

7. If the Coroner determines that an inquest should be held, but that it should be held at a place distant more than twenty miles from his residence, he may nominate a Justice of the Peace to hold such inquest and shall forward the police report to such Justice. 20

Right to enter and view premises.

8. For the purpose of the inquest the Coroner and the jury (if any) and such person or persons as the Coroner or jury may require for his or their assistance may enter and view any premises or place where the fire has occurred or where it may be suspected to have originated and have all reasonable access through other premises for that purpose. 25

Coroner's report when inquest held.

9. At the close of every inquest the Coroner or Justice of the Peace, as the case may be, shall sign a report of the finding of the inquest, and shall within one week thereafter transmit to the Minister such report together with the evidence taken at the inquest. 30

Tabulated statement to be prepared.

10. (1.) The Minister shall, for each year ending the thirty-first day of March, cause to be prepared a tabulated statement in the prescribed form setting forth separately in respect of each city, borough, town district, and county in New Zealand— 35

- (a.) The total number of fires that have occurred during the year;
- (b.) The total number of fires in respect of which inquests have been held under this Act; 40
- (c.) The total value of the property destroyed or damaged;
- (d.) The total amount of insurance effected on such property;
- (e.) A general description of such property (including a statement in the case of buildings as to materials and methods of construction); 45
- (f.) The causes of the fires; and
- (g.) Such other particulars as may be prescribed.

(2.) Such statement shall be laid before Parliament within thirty days after the thirty-first day of March if Parliament is then 50

in session, and if not, then within fourteen days after the commencement of the next-ensuing session.

(3.) The Minister shall cause a copy of such statement to be sent to the Secretary of every Fire Board constituted under the 5 Fire Brigades Act, 1908, and to the clerk of every Borough Council and Town Board.

11. The Governor may, by Order in Council gazetted, make such regulations as he deems necessary or expedient for the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of this Act. Regulations..