

1883-4.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.
NEW SOUTH WALES.

PROTECTION OF THE ABORIGINES.
(REPORT OF THE BOARD.)

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 26 March, 1884.

The Honorable the Colonial Secretary,—

Sir, Office of the Aborigines Protection Board, Sydney, 10 March, 1884.

We, the Board for the protection of the Aborigines in New South Wales, appointed by notification in the Government Gazette, dated the 5th June, 1883, have the honor to make the following report, and in doing so beg to state that we were not fully prepared, nor was it our intention, to lay before the Government an account of our labours until we had performed the duties entrusted to us for at least a year; but there are some matters which appear to us to call so urgently for action beyond the scope of our powers, that we deem it advisable to bring the same under your notice without delay.

Upon our appointment, we lost no time in arranging the order of business, and fixed every Monday at 4 o'clock p.m. as the time for our regular meetings, it being understood that any business requiring immediate attention should be submitted by the Secretary at any time to such members of the Board as could be readily consulted, in order that necessary action might not be delayed. Mr. Thornton was elected to the Chairmanship, but we regret to say he resigned his connection with the Board after the fourth meeting.

Having before us the returns prepared by the police throughout the country of the number and condition of the aborigines, already published as an appendix to Mr. Thornton's report, dated the 22nd January, 1883, the statements were carefully revised by the police, at our request, in the month of September last, with the following result:—

	Aborigines—full blood.					Half-caste.					General Total.
	Adults.			Children.	Total.	Adults.			Children.	Total.	
	Males.	Females.	Total.			Males.	Females.	Total.			
By returns, August, 1882...	4,994	1,546	6,540	...	...	1,108	1,271	2,379	8,919
Births ascertained	72	72	..	..	.....	40	40	112
	4,994	1,618	6,612	...	...	1,108	1,311	2,419	9,031
Deaths ascertained.....	130	8	138	...	...	4	4	8	146
Decrease, as per note*	317	31	348	...	...	2	64	66	414
Total decrease.....	447	39	486	...	...	6	68	74	560
By returns, September, 1883	2,622	1,925	4,547	1,579	6,126	621	481	1,102	1,243	2,345	8,47

* This decrease has probably been caused by the difficulty of making a correct census, owing to the wandering habits of the blacks in the remote districts, and by the border tribes crossing into other Colonies.

According to the above return, the decrease which can be accounted for is not very much in excess of the known births, whilst the decrease from all causes is in excess of the increase by 448.

The increase from births is only 0·02 per cent. on the adult population during the twelve months.

The number of children receiving instruction in the Public or other schools is 146.

▪ Appendix A.

At our request, a circular letter* was issued by the Inspector-General of Police to the Superintendents and to the members of the Police Force generally, laying down rules by which the Board intended to be guided in its operations, and inviting the aid of the police in carrying the same into effect.

Numerous applications for Government aid have been received from or on behalf of the aborigines scattered throughout the Colony, and we append hereto a statement of the supplies and other assistance afforded in response thereto.†

† Appendix B.

At the outset of our work we laid down as a general rule that assistance in the shape of food or clothing should be authorized only to such aborigines as from age, sickness, or other infirmity, were unable to support themselves, or to children attending school, whose parents were unable to provide them with food and suitable clothing.

No inflexible rules however could be laid down, as the habits and circumstances of the aborigines vary greatly in different districts. In some they are industrious and independent, working at farming pursuits, employing themselves as fishermen or as hired labourers, and in many cases not requiring any aid whatever for their maintenance. In other localities they are degraded by habits of idleness and intemperance, to misery, disease, and want. It is needless to expatiate upon the baneful influences to which the aborigines are subjected by their intercourse with our race.

The Board have experienced in numerous instances their inability to deal satisfactorily with cases which have come under their notice, and earnestly hope that their hands may be strengthened by legislative action such as is hereinafter alluded to.

The difficulties which the Board encounter, in their endeavours to befriend the aborigines, arise chiefly from the inability of such inexperienced people to protect themselves. Brought, as they occasionally are, under the most pernicious influences, it is scarcely wonderful that crime and immorality of the most flagrant kind should often be the result; the wonder is, rather, that so much good and so much capacity for good still remain. They are, owing to their natural simplicity, subject to imposition, and from their low moral standard are constantly liable to become the victims of debauchery and immorality.

From these evils nothing can protect them but some controlling power which can, not only offer them what is for their good, but constrain them to the acceptance of it, which can, not only warn them of dangers, but restrain them from falling into them, and which can effectively espouse their cause and call in the aid of the law to punish those who injure them. Such a position the Board does not and cannot occupy without legislative enactment.

Should the Board by legislative authority be placed, as we advise, *in loco parentis*, and be armed with suitable powers, we believe that much which is now most distressing to contemplate, and a great deal which will not admit of public mention in detail, may be prevented in the future, and some of the chief obstacles to the improvement of this unfortunate race removed. Legislation in a similar direction has been found necessary and effective in the neighbouring Colony of Victoria, where an Aboriginal Protectorate has been for many years carried on, it is believed, with favourable results. We should recommend the introduction of a Bill,—

- 1st. Vesting in a Minister, or a Board, the custody and control of aborigines of all ages and sexes (with certain exceptions hereafter referred to) in like manner as a parent has the right to the control and custody of his children of tender years.
- 2nd. Vesting in such Minister or Board all property provided for the aborigines, although in their actual possession.
- 3rd. Empowering the Minister or the Board to supervise, confirm, or annul all agreements between aborigines and any other persons, or to grant aborigines certificates enabling them to enter into such agreements on their own behalf, and to suspend or revoke such certificates.
- 4th. Imposing penalties on persons harbouring any aborigine without the consent of the Board.
- 5th. Authorizing the Minister or the Board to grant to aborigines certificates of exemption from the provisions of the Bill.

By the instrumentality of the Magistracy and the Police (chiefly the latter) the Board has been enabled to inform themselves of the individual requirements of many families, and thereby apportion the means at their disposal in such a manner as to be most beneficial to the recipients. In

In former years the Government aid, though trifling in extent, did not reach those who were most in want, except as regards the annual issue of blankets given to all alike. Many of these unfortunate people would probably have perished but for private benevolence.

Many of the coast aborigines have been provided with boats and gear, and thereby can and do earn a sufficient livelihood; and there are also instances inland in which they have used their advantages to such an extent as to become independent of Government aid.

Instances also have been adduced in which some have successfully cultivated land reserved for them by the Government, or lent for the purpose by private individuals; and their efforts have been encouraged by us as far as practicable, by the supply of implements, and other assistance, until the crops are ready to be harvested.

Except for the necessity of their children receiving some education and discipline, the aborigines are, as a rule, in a far better condition when living in small communities, comparatively isolated, and removed from intimate contact with Europeans, than when congregated in large camps (such as those now unfortunately existing at Brewarrina), near townships and public-houses, where they are led into depraved habits, and where crime, even murder, is of common occurrence.

Although the Aboriginal Mission Stations at Warangesda and Maloga have not been in any way placed under the control of the Board, yet our report would be incomplete without some reference to these establishments, which, though maintained chiefly under the auspices of the Society for the Protection of the Aborigines, have been largely aided from the public funds.

We view with considerable interest the benevolent efforts made at these Stations, and suggest, for the sake of uniformity in the action of the State towards the aboriginal race, that it will be necessary, as early as may be found convenient, for the Government to decide what relation these Missions are to bear towards our Board, especially if it is intended that we are to dispense any aid from the Government to them in future.*

Large areas of land have now been reserved for the use of these people at both Stations. Schools have been established, under the control of the Department of Public Instruction. Pecuniary assistance for immediate wants has been liberally given by the Government, and applications are now being made for fencing, implements, boats, &c., &c., which if allowed, it seems to us, will place the establishments on such a footing as will require some oversight on behalf of the Government.

We understand that the annual reports of the Mission Stations are about to be published; copies thereof, if available in time to accompany this report, will be furnished, and it may be found convenient to consider them in connection with our remarks on the subject.

Upon some approved basis, regulations, and control, some permanent resorts for the aborigines will be necessary in different parts of the country, to be mainly supported by the Government. We fear private benevolence cannot altogether be relied upon for providing the requisite funds, though it is extremely desirable that all efforts in this direction should be warmly encouraged.

Whilst the State is liberally providing material assistance to the aborigines, a most important duty still devolves upon it, which, without further direction and monetary support, the Board scarcely feel themselves able to undertake.

The duty alluded to is the education and discipline of the young of school age, consisting now of large numbers of half-caste children. The Board see no other way to meet the difficulties attendant on this duty than by establishing homes, where those parents who may be willing to take up a quiet and comfortable abode may live with their children in close proximity to suitable schools, and where the means of employing themselves in industrial occupations may be found. To superintend these homes and schools the Board would propose to find proper persons of good character, with sufficient adaptability for the peculiar nature of their charge. As a rule, such homes and schools would most advantageously be placed in the vicinity of the coast or on the banks of the main rivers, where in either case boating and fishing might relieve the monotony of the aboriginal life, as well as furnish opportunities of adding to the stock of food.

The Board are of opinion that, where the aboriginal children are decently clad and sufficiently fed, no serious objection need be raised to their admission to the Public Schools, but a variety of circumstances might make this undesirable, when their admission should not be enforced contrary to the reasonable objections of the parties chiefly interested.

The Board believe that it will be necessary to treat the subject as occasion may arise, and to deal with it in a practical way the most suitable to each variety of case, establishing homes and schools where a number can be collected together, or providing schooling for them in any other way.

The

* Since this paragraph was written the Colonial Secretary's Minute dealing with this question, dated 25th February, has been received.

The question might arise that such schooling should be under the direction of the Department of Public Instruction, but the Board are of opinion that as the homes would necessarily be under their direction in common with the supplies of food and clothing, so the school should also form part of their charge.

The Board approach the subject of boarding-out aboriginal or half-caste children with more hope than confidence, but they think the means of making the experiment should be provided.

We observe with satisfaction the liberal provision which has been made upon the Estimates for the current year for aid to the aborigines, but we shall think it our duty not to hesitate to represent any further requirements which may appear to us to be reasonable in the interests of the race.

By the courtesy of the Lands Department, we have been furnished with plans and particulars of twenty-five reserves in different parts of the Colony, including a total area of 3,500 acres, which have been set apart for the use of the aborigines.

Upon investigation it is found that eight of these reserves are not occupied for the purpose for which they were intended; the rest generally have been turned to good account.

Instructions have been given to the police, who are also Crown Land Bailiffs, to ensure the aborigines unmolested occupancy of the land provided for them.

We have made several applications to the Minister for Lands for additional reserves, and hope that they will be granted and ultimately turned to good account.

The non-official members of the Board and the Inspector of Public Charities desire to record their thankfulness to the police officers and their subordinates for the assistance they have rendered to, and the sympathy they have evinced for, the aborigines in every case in which the help of the Department has been sought through the intervention of the Inspector-General. Without his aid it would have been almost impossible for the Board to have carried out the degree of usefulness which it is believed has been recently afforded to the blacks and their half-caste descendants.

RICHARD HILL, M.L.C.

PHILIP GIDLEY KING, M.L.C.

ALEXR. GORDON, M.L.C.

W. J. FOSTER,

Barrister-at-law.

EDMUND FOSBERY,

Inspector-General of Police.

HUGH ROBISON,

Inspector of Public Charities.

APPENDIX A.

[Circular *re* Aborigines. No. 693.]

Sir,

Police Department, Inspector-General's Office, Sydney, 3 July, 1883.

In drawing your attention to a notification in the Government Gazette, dated the 5th instant, of the appointment of a Board for the protection of the aborigines of New South Wales, I have the honor, at the instance of the Board, to invite your co-operation and assistance.

The Board desire me to acknowledge the valuable aid already afforded by the Police Department, especially in the preparation of the census of the aborigines resident in the Colony, which will be of great service for reference, and it is desired that any supplementary information obtained by the police at any time should be communicated to the Board.

The object in view is, as a matter of course, the amelioration of the condition of the aborigines, and the distribution of the Government bounty in such a manner as will prove most beneficial to them.

In future the distribution of blankets will be under the control of the Board, and any recommendations or suggestions in relation thereto will receive careful consideration.

As regards further assistance, food and clothing for the aged and sick, or helpless women and children, full information will be required in order that the limited funds at the disposal of the Board may be expended with fairness and discrimination.

Contracts for rations will in future be made upon the enclosed form.

The able-bodied should be encouraged to work, being given to understand that they will not be maintained in idleness.

The police should exercise supervision also over any boats, nets, or other implements or supplies provided for the aborigines, to see they are not injured, neglected, or improperly used by private individuals.

In the event of supplies of rations being authorized, it is hoped that the police will take an interest in seeing that the articles are of the stipulated quality, and not misappropriated in any way.

If medical attendance be necessary at any time on emergency, it will of course be obtained in accordance with the practice of the Service in that respect, but any general medical attendance deemed necessary should be the subject of special report and authority.

The attention of the police should be at all times directed to the necessity for enforcing the law as regards the supply of spirituous liquors to the aborigines, or against persons improperly lodging or wandering with them.

Generally, the Board rely with confidence upon your co-operation and that of the police generally in the task they have undertaken, which is to provide for the reasonable wants of the aborigines, and to protect the remnant of the race as far as possible from the injurious effects of contamination by vicious or thoughtless members of the community.

The Superintendent of Police,—

I have, &c.,

EDMUND FOSBERY.

APPENDIX B.

Barrington.—Supplied with rations, and land ploughed for aborigines engaged in farming.

Bega.—Supplied with rations and clothing.

Boat Harbour.—Rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.

Bombala.—Rations supplied.

Botany.—Supplied with rations, clothes, huts, and medical attendance, &c.

Braidwood.—Rations supplied to five very old and infirm aborigines.

Camden.—Rations and medical attendance supplied.

Collarendabri.—Rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.

Coonabarabran.—Rations supplied to three old and infirm aborigines and two children.

Coonamble.—Rations supplied.

Cootamundra.—Medical attendance supplied to aboriginal women.

Copeland.—Rations and medical attendance supplied; had their land ploughed for them.

Coraki.—Rations supplied.

Cox's River.—Rations supplied to four old and infirm aborigines and seven children.

Dubbo.—Rations supplied.

Dungog.—Medical attendance supplied.

Eden.—Medical attendance supplied.

Eugowra.—Rations supplied.

Forster.—Rations supplied to six old and infirm aborigines.

Gloucester.—Rations supplied.

Grafton.—Clothing supplied.

Gresford.—Clothing and rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.

Hawkesbury.—Rations supplied to four infirm aboriginal women.

Illawarra.—Had their boat repaired.

Inverell.—Rations supplied.

Jervis

* 525—B

- Jervis Bay.**—Clothing, sail, oars, rope, paint, fishing-lines and hooks ; also rations supplied to aborigines.
- Kangaroo Valley.**—Rations supplied to two old and infirm aborigines.
- Kempsey.**—Farming implements, clothes, medical attendance, &c., supplied.
- Kiama.**—Rations supplied to three old and infirm aborigines and six children.
- Kogarah.**—Rations supplied.
- Macleay.**—Clothes and rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.
- Moruya.**—Oars, sail, oil, and paint supplied ; also clothes and rations for seven old and infirm aborigines.
- Mungindi.**—Clothes and rations supplied to two old and infirm aborigines.
- Nambucca.**—Rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.
- Narrabri.**—Rations supplied.
- Narrandera.**—Rations supplied to five old and infirm aborigines.
- Nelson's Bay.**—Farming implements supplied ; also rations for old and infirm aborigines and children.
- Nowra.**—Oars, rope, fishing-lines, hooks, paint, clothes, and rations supplied.
- Palmer's Island.**—Rations supplied to two old and infirm aborigines.
- Penrith.**—Rations supplied.
- Picton.**—Rations supplied.
- Port Macquarie.**—Rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines and children.
- Pudman's Creek.**—Rations supplied to a destitute half-caste woman and her five children.
- Raymond Terrace.**—Rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.
- Rolland's Plains.**—Rations and clothing supplied to two old and infirm aborigines.
- Sackville Reach.**—Farming implements and rations supplied.
- Seaham.**—Rations supplied.
- Snellharbour.**—Rations supplied.
- Shoalhaven.**—Boat repaired.
- Singleton.**—Rations, clothing, and farming implements supplied.
- Taree.**—Rations supplied.
- Terrara.**—Oars, sail, rope, and paint supplied for boat.
- Tilba Tilba.**—Rations supplied to five old and infirm aborigines.
- Tingha.**—Rations supplied to three old and infirm aborigines.
- Tomakin.**—Rations and clothing supplied.
- Tomboy.**—Rations supplied.
- Turlajah.**—Rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.
- Ulladulla.**—Rations supplied.
- Wagga Wagga.**—Tent supplied.
- Warialda.**—Rations supplied to four old and infirm aborigines.
- Wellington.**—Rations supplied to seven old and infirm aborigines and four children.
- Willisboro.**—Clothing, rations, and farming implements supplied.
- Wingham.**—Rations supplied.
- Wollombi.**—Rations supplied to six old and infirm aborigines.
- Yarrawa.**—Clothing and rations supplied to old and infirm aborigines.
- Yass.**—Clothing, rations, medical attendance, and school requisites supplied.

[6d.]

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