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ABORIGINES.

(ANNUAL REPORT OF BOARD FOR PROTECTION OF, FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1927.)

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Subject:—Report of Board for Protection of Aborigines for the year ended
30th June, 1927.

Office of Board for Protection of Aborigines,
Sydney, 29th November, 1927.

Dear Sir,

In accordance with the established practice, we, the undersigned members of the Board for Protection of Aborigines, duly appointed under the provisions of the Aborigines Protection Act, 1909, have the honor to submit for the Chief Secretary's information the following report of the operations of the Board during the period 1st July, 1926, to the 30th June, 1927, together with the usual particulars of the numbers, location and present condition of the Aborigines throughout the State and the means adopted for their relief as far as the funds at our disposal would permit.

GENERAL.

The whole of the reserves and stations throughout the State were regularly visited by the Board's Inspector who reports that generally speaking the Aborigines are comfortably housed, and are reasonably well clothed and fed. Their health also has been satisfactory, there having been no epidemics of sickness during the twelve months. The individual cases of illness which did occur received immediate medical attention and hospital treatment where necessary.

For several years past the Board has adopted a policy of general improvement of the living conditions on its reserves, and can now point to such places as Cumeroogunga, Brungle, Walhallow, Wallaga Lake, Cabbage Tree Island, Cowra, Pilliga, Angledool, and many others, where the residents are living under conditions equal to and in some cases superior to those existing in some white settlements.

On most of its stations the Board has installed a water supply fed by engine or windmill and reticulated to the people's houses from overhead tanks, thus enabling them to keep their homes clean and encouraging them to establish gardens, and at some places annual prizes are given in furtherance of the latter objects.

Sanitary and garbage services have also been established and the people urged to take a pride in the general appearance and upkeep of their particular village. The duties of the Manager and Matron of a station include that of identifying themselves as closely as possible with the home life of the residents with a view to improving their mode of living.

Lack of funds has not permitted the Board to so far carry out the whole of its programme, but each reserve is being dealt with as opportunity offers and the money voted by Parliament is being well and wisely expended.

Rations, blankets and clothing have been issued to all deserving Aborigines, the aged and infirm and the children receiving them as a matter of right, while the able-bodied were assisted in this direction while out of employment. A careful and systematic check of the monthly free issue lists was maintained with a view to ensuring that the recipients of aid were rightfully entitled thereto.

Rail and steamer passes were issued to enable Aborigines to proceed to employment, to enter hospital and for other legitimate reasons.

The annual census of Aborigines was collected in June and the figures made available for State and Federal purposes.

ABORIGINAL STATIONS.

The managers of the various Aboriginal stations were able to submit satisfactory reports of the year's work.

Improvements were effected on a number of places, while an entirely new station was formed at Carowra Tank, *via* Ivanhoe. This became necessary because of the building of the Condobolin to Broken Hill line and the influx of numbers of new settlers, which deprived the Aborigines of a great deal of their former freedom to roam and hunt over the big holdings, and brought them in such closer contact with the white population that it was deemed advisable to form a settlement where they could be concentrated and catered for. A school, a manager's residence, huts and other necessary buildings were erected, and the place now has a population of about 150 persons, presided over by a teacher-manager and a matron.

Included in the school enrolment are pupils over twenty years of age who have never previously had an opportunity of securing instruction. They are proving apt pupils and will at all events be able to read and write before they leave. The matron also conducts a sewing class and instructs the girls in house duties, to which they take very kindly. The men secure employment as fencers and as sheep and cattle men.

Communication is maintained with Ivanhoe, 54 miles distant, by means of a 1 ton motor truck, which carries the whole of the stores and supplies for the settlement.

It is hoped to this year erect a windmill and install a water service at this place.

Sale stores are maintained on most of the Board's stations, and from these the Aborigines are able to purchase groceries, &c., at cost price, thus benefiting them in a pecuniary sense and also keeping them away from the towns and ensuring that some portion of their earnings is spent on their families.

Each station also has its dispensary, recreation hall, church, &c., and endeavour is made to create a community of interest among the residents.

COOTAMUNDRA HOME.

The work carried on at the Board's Training Home at Cootamundra of caring for and fitting Aboriginal girls for domestic service continues to be one of the most satisfactory features of the Board's activities. The average number of inmates for the year was forty-two. These girls receive a thorough grounding in domestic training, and upon attaining a suitable age are placed in approved situations where they are kept under the eye of a lady officer appointed for the purpose. A school is also maintained at the home to enable the younger ones to complete their education.

The buildings and appointments are up-to-date and the surroundings attractive. Every effort is made to make the lives of the inmates as bright as possible with a view to improving their physical and mental condition. The townspeople of Cootamundra take a keen interest in the home and very few public functions take place to which the children are not invited. Motor buses are sent to convey them to picnics and other places of amusement, parties to the local picture theatres are arranged, and in addition concerts and other amusements are held at the home.

The orchard and garden, which are cared for under the matron's supervision by the girls themselves, ensure a regular supply of fresh vegetables, fruit and preserves, while a plentiful supply of milk and butter is provided by the Board's own cows.

A windmill, dam, underground tank, and a large number of overhead tanks guarantee an adequate water service.

A car which was supplied by the Board for the use of the officers and for the recreation of the children has now almost been paid for by means of bazaars and the sale of raffia work, &c. A fine new piano, a gramophone, and other things have been secured in the same way.

The health of the inmates during the year was satisfactory.

KINCHELA HOME.

The care and training of neglected Aboriginal boys is provided for in a home established at Kinchela on the Macleay River. Here about twenty-five boys have the advantages of an abundance of good food and clothing and an upbringing in fine surroundings. A well equipped school under the control of the Superintendent of the home produces satisfactory educational results, while a moral training by this officer and the matron is, of course, part of the boys' daily life.

Manual training is made a feature, carpentry and farming being taught. Crops of maize, pumpkins and other vegetables are grown, and the Board runs its own dairy cows.

Each year a Christmas holiday camp at the seaside is arranged, and it is, needless to say, thoroughly enjoyed by the boys, who cannot fail to benefit physically by the four weeks thus spent.

EDUCATION.

Throughout the State and where the number of children justify it schools have been established for the benefit of Aborigines only. They are staffed by teachers appointed by the Education Department and work under a special syllabus. The Department's Inspectors visit them regularly and very satisfactory reports are received regarding the nature of the work done and the results achieved.

Rations are issued to every child, while at some schools the Board provides a midday meal which is cooked for the children by the teacher under arrangement with the Board.

The children also have the benefit of medical and dental attention.

EMPLOYMENT.

As stated in previous reports adult Aborigines experience no great difficulty in securing employment in rural industries, timber getting, and fishing. Numbers of them have saved sufficient money to purchase their own homes and live quite independent of Government assistance, enjoying all the rights and privileges of the ordinary white citizen, except that of securing liquor.

The girls and boys upon attaining a suitable age are placed in carefully selected situations where they are kept under the supervision of the Board's officers. Portion of their wages is banked for them and earns ordinary rates of interest. Most of them have credits ranging from £40 to £100, and this money is available for them when they attain their majority.

After a reasonable time at service they are allowed to return to employment in their own districts or on holiday, whichever they prefer, and they thus have the opportunity of meeting people of their own colour and getting married. Large numbers of marriages take place every year, and the Board encourage

the young couples to establish their own homes. Having been removed from the environment of camp life at a fairly early age, trained and placed in first class private homes, the result must be that the standards of life of this younger generation will be superior to those of their parents, thus paving the way for the absorption of these people into the general population. It is recognised, however, that the process will be a gradual one and that good results cannot be achieved by revolutionary changes.

HEALTH.

The general health of the Aborigines has been satisfactory, and there have not been any epidemics during the year.

Medical officers are available at all centres of Aboriginal population, with few exceptions, and dispensaries containing an ample supply of simple drugs and remedies are maintained on each of the Board's stations.

CHRISTMAS CHEER.

The Christmas season is never allowed to pass unnoticed on Aborigines reserves. All Aborigines in receipt of rations are issued with sufficient ingredients for the Christmas pudding, while on practically every Aboriginal station a special dinner, sports and concert are arranged. Toys are also given to every child under 14 years of age throughout the State at centres where there are managers or teachers available to arrange the matter.

CONCLUSION.

The condition of the Aborigines in New South Wales may be regarded as satisfactory. With a few exceptions which are receiving attention as funds become available, they are comfortably housed, The aged and infirm, the children and those whose circumstances do not permit them to earn their own living, receive a regular supply of rations, meat, blankets and clothing, in addition to having medical treatment, hospital attention and medicine whenever necessary.

It would not be appropriate to conclude this report without expressing the Board's appreciation of the assistance it has always received from the members of the New South Wales Police Force, without whose help the Board would find it impossible to carry on its work.

JAMES MITCHELL,	Chairman.
E. B. HARKNESS,	} Members.
S. LASKER,	
E. SYDNEY MORRIS,	
A. W. GREEN,	
B. J. DOE,	

The Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department.