

COMMONWEALTH SOCIAL SERVICES

Aborigines May Benefit

Child Endowment.

Aboriginal mothers in New South Wales are not in any way precluded from the payment of Child Endowment, but in some cases it is found necessary for the Board to administer the Child Endowment on behalf of the mother who might be considered incapable of applying the money for its proper purpose. It is pleasing to note, however, that the number of such cases has decreased over the years; whereas the number of cases administered at 30th June, 1951, was 148, the figure was reduced to 62 at the end of the year under review. This indicates clearly that aboriginal mothers have taken advantage of the opportunity to improve their living conditions and home methods sufficiently to warrant their being regarded as suitable cases for direct payment.

Maternity Allowances.

The Board does not now administer Maternity Allowances as a general procedure. Formerly it was the practice to provide a baby outfit to expectant mothers, have the Maternity Allowance paid to the Board, deduct the cost of the baby outfit and pay the balance to the mother. The discontinuance of this system requires that the mother should make her own arrangements for the clothing of her baby, and during the year there was not one single instance reported where the mother had not proved equal to this responsibility.

Pensions and Unemployment Benefit.

The Unemployment Benefit is paid to aborigines on the same basis as the ordinary individual, namely, to the genuinely unemployed. This payment is made irrespective of the applicant's caste or place of residence. In this instance it is apparently recognised by the Commonwealth that the worker, when employed, pays a Social Service Tax irrespective of his nationality and, when he is unemployed, he should have the benefit of his contributions.

The position in regard to pensions, however, is still unsatisfactory. Towards the end of the year, the Commonwealth did liberalise the conditions of payment to the extent that, on certain Reserves which are not under resident supervision, those entitled to a pension may now claim if they are also in possession of an Exemption Certificate. It is the opinion of the Board that there are few cases of aborigines in this State in which there is any justification for questioning their right to Social Services merely by reason of the fact that the applicant is an aborigine or caste aborigine.

This view has been approved and strongly represented by the Government on more than one occasion, and the suggestion by the Commonwealth that a Certificate of Exemption is regarded as a prerequisite to the granting of a pension, is disturbing. The Commonwealth has been requested to clarify its attitude to the question whether a Certificate of Exemption is a necessity to eligibility for a pension.



Ron Knox, of Boggabilla, with a big Murray cod from the Barwon

EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES GRANTED

Many Seek Independence

The issue of an Exemption Certificate is intended to indicate that the holder is ready for assimilation. It will be appreciated that the acute housing position existing over a period of years is a factor which compels an exempted aborigine to remain in his aboriginal environment.

The issue of a Certificate of Exemption is determined after careful enquiry into the applicant's background, mode of living and general character. The issue of a Certificate, therefore, cannot always be made solely for the reason of qualifying an applicant for a pension. There are certain factors which, whilst disqualifying an applicant for an Exemption Certificate, should not necessarily disqualify him for the payment of a pension.

Fifty Certificates were issued during the year under review and a comparison with previous years is as follows:—

	1951-1952.	1952-1953	1953-1954.
Granted	... 51	60	50
Deferred	... 2	...	2
Declined	3	6
Cancelled	... 1	1	3