

NEW SOUTH WALES.

ABORIGINES.

(REPORT OF BOARD FOR PROTECTION OF, FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1923.)

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The Chairman and Members of the Board for Protection of Aborigines to
The Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department.

Office of Board for Protection of Aborigines,
No. 5 Richmond Terrace, Domain,
Sydney, 7 September, 1923.

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, 1922, to 30th June, 1923, 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.

INSPECTIONS.

The inspection of Aboriginal Stations and Reserves was regularly carried out by the Board's Inspector, while the Secretary also made occasional inspections as opportunity offered.

As a result improvements were effected in hut accommodation and the Reserves were as far as possible kept clear of young able-bodied Aborigines able to earn their own living.

A close watch was kept on the ration lists with a view to ensuring that no undeserving case was receiving aid.

The necessity for economy in the issue of blankets and clothing was also kept in view.

Suitable accommodation having been provided for the increased number of Aborigines residing at Pilliga, it was decided to reorganise same as a regular Aboriginal Station. A teacher's residence was accordingly erected and a teacher-manager appointed.

Practically every Reserve throughout the State was inspected at least once, the more important being visited at more frequent intervals, and as a result many improvements were effected. New huts were erected and existing ones renovated or rebuilt at Terry Hie Hie, Kinchela, Cumeroogunga, Urunga, Ulgundahi Island, Cabbage Tree Island, Bateman's Bay, and Roseby Park.

At other places building material, fencing wire, &c., were supplied, the work being done by the Aborigines under the supervision of the Manager or Police.

At Walhallow a fine new school was built to replace the former building destroyed by fire, but which was fully covered by insurance.

A school building taken over from the Education Department was removed from Jerseyville and re-erected at Kinchela, and in conjunction with this a girls' dormitory was established in which to house the children of Aborigines living too far distant to send their children to school.

The work of reconditioning the dwellings at Cumeroogunga was continued and the condition of the Station has vastly improved. The huts have been fenced in and proper street alignments made, a park established in the centre of the village, and the old wool-shed converted into a recreation hall where dances and entertainments organised by the Manager are regularly given.

COOTAMUNDRA HOME.

The Matron of the Board's Training Home at Cootamundra reports another satisfactory year of work and progress. At the 30th June there were 46 inmates in the Institution, 9 being drafted out to situations during the year. The health of the children was good, and the marked improvement in their appearance after admission was most noticeable. In most cases these children were rescued from neglected conditions on Reserves, &c., where they would invariably lapse into a life of vice if not taken charge of before reaching the age of puberty.

The townspeople of Cootamundra again deserve a word of appreciation for the interest they have taken in the activities of the Home and the welfare of the children who were, at various times, entertained

at musical evenings, concerts, picnics, and parties to the pictures. These events tend to improve the discipline of the Home by relieving the monotony of the training which is thorough and is reflected by the satisfaction of the employers with whom the girls are ultimately placed.

In October another annual sale of work and concert was held which, together with the result of the previous year's effort, enabled an amount of £95 to be paid off a new piano purchased for the Home.

During the year a much needed extension was made to the Institution by enlarging one of the dormitories. Two additional 2,000 gallon tanks were installed and certain alterations made to the roof which, it is anticipated, will result in the perennial water shortage being eliminated, the heavy rains at the close of the year filling all the overhead tanks and half filling the underground tank, which has a capacity of about 15,000 gallons.

SINGLETON HOME.

In addition to the Girls' Home at Cootamundra, the Board conducts a Home for Boys at Singleton. This Institution accommodated at the 30th June 25 inmates, 8 having been sent to situations during the year.

The third annual camp was held at Toronto where the boys thoroughly enjoyed three weeks under canvas.

The general health during the year was very satisfactory, despite the fact that there were various minor epidemics in the town.

It might be stated that, owing to their unsuitableness, the existing premises are being disposed of, and it is proposed to make arrangements for the disposal of the boys elsewhere.

ABORIGINAL STATIONS.

Satisfactory reports have been received from the Managers of the various Aboriginal Stations covering the period under review.

Work of a productive nature is carried on at a number of the Board's properties, and in most cases the operations for the year disclosed a credit balance.

On several of the Stations, Sale Stores are conducted in which are stocked such lines as groceries, &c., which find a ready sale among the Aborigines. The goods are purchased at wholesale rates and resold at a price which merely covers actual cost landed at the Station. The ability to secure supplies on the spot tends to discourage the Aborigines from visiting neighbouring towns where they might secure liquor.

During the year a new Station was created at Pilliga as it was considered that the population of the place warranted resident supervision. Several new huts and a Manager's residence were erected.

During recent years a considerable diminution of the numbers of Aborigines residing on Aboriginal Stations and Reserves has been noticeable, due, it appears, to the Aborigines desiring to be free of supervision and restrictions imposed upon them on Reserves where they have to comply with the rules and regulations. Many have learned to earn their own living and to be independent of Government assistance, which is a satisfactory result of the Board's policy, which encourages the Aborigines to, as far as possible, maintain themselves; but it is feared that in many cases numbers of the Aborigines who have left the Reserves would have been better off had they remained, in view of the fact that, in leaving, they forfeited the benefits of good housing accommodation, regular supplies of food and clothing, and schooling for their children, to which they were properly entitled.

The only remedy to meet cases of this kind would be an amendment of the Aborigines Protection Act, giving the Board power to, in their discretion, prohibit such Aborigines from leaving a Reserve. The question, however, is one which the Board will continue to watch before taking any drastic action.

EDUCATION.

Separate schools for the education of Aborigines are established at various centres where the population warrants same, and these are regularly visited by Inspectors attached to the Education Department copies of whose reports are furnished to the Board, and disclose that good work is being done.

The Aboriginal child readily adapts itself to work calling for imitative powers, and consequently writing and manual work to be found in an Aboriginal school compares very favourably with that of the average white child. Quite a number of first and second prizes have been won by exhibits of paper folding, sewing, &c., placed in country shows from Aboriginal schools.

Some difficulty is experienced in compelling parents to send their children to school regularly, but this result is usually achieved by a threat of withdrawing all assistance until the child resumes regular attendance. All school children are issued with half rations, and an arrangement made in certain places whereby a hot meal is provided for each child in the middle of the day has been attended with success.

HEALTH.

The usual arrangements for the safe guarding of the health of the Aborigines were continued, the services of Medical Officers being requisitioned whenever required. The Managers of the various Aboriginal Stations and many of the Teachers were also kept supplied with such simple drugs and remedies as appeared necessary.

The Board has also rendered assistance to the Director-General of Public Health in a campaign against Hookworm which has badly infected the Aborigines residing on the North Coast. Systematic measures have been adopted to stamp out the malady.

There were not any other serious epidemics, and altogether from a health standpoint the year was a satisfactory one.

CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS SEASON.

The Christmas Season was not allowed to pass without the proper celebrations on the Aboriginal Stations, where sports were held and prizes presented to the competitors.

The residents on Reserves were also supplied with ingredients for a plum pudding, and every school child was presented with a toy.

CLOTHING AND BLANKETS.

Supplies of summer and winter clothing were issued during the months of September and April respectively, blankets being also distributed to deserving cases during the latter month. Care is always taken that discretion is used when distributions are made with a view to ensuring that able-bodied persons, in a position to obtain their own living, do not receive the concession. In fact it is the Board's policy to, as far as possible, assist the Aborigines to help themselves, and it is found that good results follow the use of such discrimination.

EMPLOYMENT.

Reports indicate that Aborigines have little difficulty in securing work. In this they are always assisted in every possible way, and passes are issued to enable them to proceed to employment upon the understanding that cost of same is repaid within a specified time.

No difficulty whatever is experienced in securing employment for the girls and boys who are first trained in the Board's Homes at Cootamundra and Singleton, and excellent results have been secured in this branch of the Board's operations. Some hundreds have substantial amounts standing to their credit with the Board's Trust Account under an arrangement whereby an employer must pay the bulk of wages to the Board, where it accumulates at compound interest and is held in trust for the employee. Kept under strict supervision, they are thus in a better position upon the expiration of the term of employment than they would be if allowed to handle their own earnings, which would doubtless invariably be squandered.

CONCLUSION.

The appreciation of the Aborigines Protection Board is due to the members of the Police Force for the great assistance rendered and the keen interest taken by them in the work of caring for the Aborigines throughout the State.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES MITCHELL, Chairman.

W. A. ARMSTRONG,

E. B. HARKNESS,

H. D. McLELLAND,

B. J. DOE,

THEO. H. HILL,

A. W. GREEN.

Members of Board for
Protection of Aborigines.

CENSUS OF ABORIGINES TAKEN AT NOON ON 4TH APRIL, 1923.

Full-Bloods.							
Living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	521
Not living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	693
Receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	417
Not receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	767
Half-Castes.							
Living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,978
Not living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	2,805
Receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,182
Not receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,601
Quadroons.							
Living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	150
Not living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	871
Receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	90
Not receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	931
Octoroons.							
Living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	8
Not living on reserves	...	...	...	...	...	...	296
Receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Not receiving aid	...	...	...	...	...	...	294

Total number of all castes, 7,322.

FIGURES FOR PREVIOUS YEARS.

	Full-bloods.				Half-Castes.				Total.
1917	1,236	...	...	4,921	...	...	6,247
1918	1,451	...	...	5,041	...	...	6,492
1919-20	1,238	5,990	7,228
1920-21	1,281	6,270	7,551
1921-22	1,231	4,740	5,971
1922-23	1,214	4,783	5,997

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NSW Aborigines Protection Board

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