

ABORIGINAL LIFE AND CONDITIONS

Vital Statistics :

No general census has been conducted by the Commonwealth authorities since 1947. The figures then concerning the aboriginal population of New South Wales were as follows :—

Caste.	Males.	Females.	Total.
Full-blood	546	407	953
Mixed-blood	5,498	5,109	10,607
	<u>6,044</u>	<u>5,516</u>	<u>11,560</u>

It is safe to say that since this date the number of full-bloods has decreased and the number of mixed-bloods has increased.

Of the total number in New South Wales at present, 2,946 are resident on aboriginal stations under full time managership, and 2,155 on reserves, either unsupervised or partly supervised. Of the remainder, many are living in unsatisfactory conditions in unofficial camps in different parts of the State. These congregations have caused the Board considerable anxiety, and Welfare Officers have concentrated their efforts among them. It does not seem that any substantial alleviation of conditions can be anticipated until adequate funds are available.

Many more are living quite independently of the Board, and the measure of assimilation attained by these is pleasing to note.



Lovely sisters from Burnt Bridge,
Elvie and Marie Lang.

COOTAMUNDRA GIRLS' HOME

This Home is a compact block of buildings, which was originally the old Cootamundra Hospital. The area of land adjoining is not sufficient for any large scale development, but a small dairy herd, vegetable garden and orchard are maintained together with some poultry, which supply the Home with fresh milk, vegetables, fruit and eggs, to some extent.

The number of inmates increased during the year from 34 at the beginning to 51 at the close. Ages range from 5 to 16 years.

All girls of school age attend the Public Schools in Cootamundra, 28 being enrolled at the Primary School and 13 at High School. One girl obtained her Intermediate Certificate at the end of 1952, and others gained creditable places in school and on the sports field. Transport by free bus is provided. The girls are well received by other pupils at the school.

The Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare was present at the High School Speech Day, and the District Inspector of Schools and Headmaster spoke highly of the conduct and general deportment of girls from the Home.

The general health of the girls throughout the year was good. There was a mild outbreak of chickenpox and six children were affected. One was operated upon for appendicitis and there were a few minor ailments.

The girls take part in various forms of recreation and travel with their teams to adjacent towns for hockey, vigoro, basketball, etc. Games and reading are organised within the Home. A free pass at any time is granted by the Manager of the local cinema.

Special entertainment was provided at Christmas time and gifts were donated by the Firemen's Association. The Country Women's Association Younger Set kindly assisted at this function and provided games and supper.

A special feature is made of each girl's birthday, which is suitably celebrated on each occasion.

Prayers and Bible reading are held daily and the children attend Church and Sunday School in the town each Sunday. A business man kindly provides an offering for each girl attending Church.

Some improvements and repairs to buildings were effected during the year. New showers and basins were installed, a kitchen cupboard provided and the front verandah louvred. Guttering was replaced and the shower room, kitchen and one dormitory painted.

The staff at the Home suffered some fluctuations during the year, but despite difficulties, has displayed keenness and a kindly interest in the girls. The tone of the Home is excellent and the atmosphere very homely.

The Matron maintains a personal interest and contact with many girls in the district placed in employment from the Home. These girls are always welcome as visitors and avail themselves frequently of this privilege, especially at Christmas time.