

The Board and its Policy

Some Barriers Still Remain

1954 is rapidly drawing to a close, and it is interesting to look back on the Board's achievements.

During the year, the Board has pursued its policy, formulated in recent years, of the gradual assimilation of the aboriginal people into the general life of the community.

Education, better housing, regular employment in skilled or semi-skilled occupations by those capable of undertaking such work, and social welfare work by a team of trained Welfare Officers have been the chief means used throughout the year in the implementation of this policy.

Some barriers to the attainment of this objective still remain. They lie in the apathy and lack of initiative on the part of a great number of aborigines, and the prejudice of the white community and its reluctance to fully accept them. It can be said that the efforts of the Board are bearing fruit, and there is evidence on the part of not a few aborigines of an awakening to their responsibilities and a conscious effort towards self-help and a determination to establish themselves as acceptable members of the community. Toward these, there is a perceptible lessening of that prejudice which has for so long characterised the attitude of members of the white race towards the aborigine in Australia.

Additions to Board Staff

Speed-up in Maintenance Work

A number of changes took place in the personnel of Station staff which was, however, maintained at full strength.

The staff of Welfare Officers was increased from five to six, and the Public Service Board approved the appointment of a lady Welfare Officer with nursing qualifications. It is anticipated that she will take up duty early in the new year. This will materially strengthen the corps of Welfare workers and provide a much-needed service, particularly to mothers and adolescent girls.

The Public Service Board also approved the appointment of a Building Maintenance Officer and a Plant Engineer. These appointments will enable much-needed maintenance and repair work to be regularly undertaken.

Disappointments in Housing Scheme

Many Fail to Meet Obligations

The Board was able to complete the rebuilding of the Moree Station, and eight additional homes were erected there.

Towards the end of the year, commitments were entered into with the Housing Commission for the erection on town sites of six houses in Yass. These, when erected early next year, will be allotted to worthy aboriginal families. The Board also purchased a number of allotments in other country towns and will build on these in the coming year. It is hoped that funds will be available for the erection of some 50 houses.

During the year, an amount of £9,500 was granted by the Treasury to enable the Board to make advances to selected aborigines by way of loan, to enable them to purchase a home or erect a home on land they may already have acquired. Applications for such loans are now being considered.

Improvements and repairs to dwellings on other Stations have been effected and improved water supplies installed at some Stations and Reserves.

Since the War, the Board has completely rebuilt eight Stations, providing two and three-bedroom houses of modern design. For these, rentals of 15s. and 17s. 6d. per week are charged, in agreement with tenants. This is not regarded as being an economic rental, but as a means of inculcating a sense of responsibility and preparing aborigines to accept their obligations in the community.

While a few have regularly met their commitments, the response generally has been disappointing. The aboriginal people must realise that if they are prepared to accept the advantages, benefits and privileges of assimilation, they must also be prepared to accept its responsibilities.

They must give, as well as take!



Mr. Alex Christian, Harriet Perry, an ex-Cootamundra girl, Laurie Perry and Mrs. Ethel Christian at the Cowra Ball.