

# “WHY NOT PENSIONS FOR THE OLD FOLK LIVING ON STATIONS?”

By **Norah J. C. Foster,**

*ex-Matron Walgett Aboriginal Station*

Well, my dark friends, you will remember that a few months ago I wrote about “Pensions for Aborigines” in *Dawn*.

No doubt many of you older ones have talked the matter over among yourselves, and perhaps you see the matter in the same way as I do. I think that if an Aborigine were allowed to remain in his cottage on an Aboriginal Station, and receive the Old Age or Invalid Pension, it would be a fair thing for him to pay a small rent for his home, and buy his food and clothing out of his Pension instead of receiving Rations from the Aborigines' Welfare Board.

At the present time Pensioners who have to pay rent, receive a slightly higher pension than those who own their own homes. The amount a week is four pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence for each pensioner who has to pay rent.

In short you would be on an equal footing with white Pensioners who have to pay rent.

This would be better, don't you think, than having to move to some shack in order to get the pension? Old people need warm houses and a little comfort, which you get on an Aboriginal Station.

Though nothing has come about yet with regard to pensions for those on Aboriginal Stations, do not lose heart for there are some of us working hard for your interests. For instance Mr. Michael Sawtell is doing all he can, and on May 7th, when the Gosford Country Women's Association held their 29th Birthday, Mr. Foster, whom you all remember better as “the Boss”, gave a speech in which he mentioned the matter of Pensions for those dark folk on the Aboriginal Stations, and some of the C.W.A. members were most sympathetic and could not see why you should not receive Pensions, as long as they are given on the same basis as those paid to white Pensioners, namely that you keep yourselves and pay rent from your pensions.

It seems that the matter has been gone into before by the C.W.A., but the matter of paying rent for your cottages and keeping yourselves was not previously mentioned when they were in touch with politicians. They think that if this were put before the Government, it might get you somewhere. Anyway, let us hope so. It would work out almost as cheaply for the Government as the present system of providing you with clothes, food and blankets, wouldn't it? Naturally you would prefer to have the Pension, because most people prefer to have a little money to spend in what way they choose, and you would feel more independent.

When you have lived in your little cottage on a Station, it is indeed hard to go away from all friends and relations merely because you want to be eligible for a pension.

It is the Federal Parliament which deals with the matter of pensions, and if you want them, you yourselves must fight for them, namely by contacting your Federal Member for your district, and he will bring the matter to the notice of Parliament.

After all, the Government cannot be expected to know whether you are satisfied or not with the present position as regards pensions, unless you state your views. I think everyone would be happy to know that pensions were granted to the old and the sick who live on Stations, so you have the good will of many people in your efforts to better your conditions.

Norah J. C. Foster,

Ex-Matron and Teacher Walgett Aboriginal Station.



**These three pretty little girls are all dressed up ready for a party. They are sisters, Coral, Lorraine and Lyla Cain of Coonabarabran.**

## MISSING PERSONS

An enquiry has been received from a relative desiring to contact the following:—

Dorothea Margaret Combo.

Mrs. Percy Green (nee Rita Combo).

Do you know where they are? If so kindly send their addresses to the Aborigines' Welfare Board, Box 30, G.P.O., Sydney.