



THE VANISHING RESERVES

When Talbragar reserve—4½ miles from Dubbo, near the Coonamble Road—was set up in the 1890's it was a large establishment with a school and a teacher. Today only five houses remain.

The reserve, one of the most favourably sited in the State, has served its purpose well but it is gradually disappearing under the impact of the Aborigines Welfare Board's assimilation policy.

Rather than replace old houses with new homes at Talbragar the Board has built attractive town houses in Dubbo and is progressively demolishing the reserve.

The Board has built three homes in Bembroke Street, North Dubbo and two nearby in Siren Street. Other town homes have been purchased by aborigines through the Board.

The Board also conducts a hostel built in Bembrose Lane, about three years ago by Dubbo Apex Club to accommodate Dubbo Base Hospital convalescent patients and their relatives during their stay in the town.

It is the only hostel for aborigines west of Sydney and accommodates four adults and numerous children. Mrs. Pearl Gibbs is the caretaker.

The Dubbo welfare district embraces the towns of Carinda, Nyngan, Forbes, Lithgow, Mudgee, Coonamble and Coonabarabran.

OUR PICTURE

Aboriginal cousins Ethel (9), Greg (8) and Wendy Riley (6) pose with one of their dogs outside the house occupied by former police black-tracker Mr. Alex Riley and his wife on old Talbragar Aborigines Reserve

The five houses left at Talbragar are occupied by members of two families—the Burns and the Rileys. Three of these families are applicants for Housing Commission homes in Dubbo.

Two of the oldest and most interesting aborigines on the reserve are Mr. Alec Riley, a former police black-tracker, and his wife, who have been living there for almost half a century.

They are aged pensioners and say they are quite satisfied with life on the reserve. Their home, though old, is neat and splendidly kept. It is certain that the Board will agree to them living out their declining years at Talbragar—a policy which operates for old people on all reserves in the State.

Alec Riley these days spends much of his time looking after a friend, Mr. Salter, of Jones Creek, about 20 miles away. Mr. Salter has been in ill health for some time.

Near the Rileys lives Mrs. Pearl Burns, an invalid pensioner who has a family of five—three sons aged 23, 21 and 19 and two teenage daughters. She has applied for a Housing Commission home.

Mrs. Burns recalls that when she came to Dubbo from Wellington as a girl of 17 there were nine houses on Talbragar.

Summing up the attitude of most of the people on the Reserve, Mrs. Burns said that despite transport and other problems they are quite satisfied with the reserve.

“Both the reserve and the people on it are very clean”, she said. She said the houses were painted inside and were equipped with kerosene refrigerators or ice chests.