

immoral, objectionable, and degrading practice and it can strike a fearful blow at our most strenuous efforts to create the strongest atmosphere conducive to assimilation.

“This illegal practice flourishes best when an unscrupulous supplier knows that his victim cannot obtain supplies legally, that he cannot, for instance, like his white workmates, go to a hotel and have a quiet beer.

“A good illustration of the attitude of some aborigines to the present situation is this reason given by one applicant for a certificate of exemption: ‘I want to get my liquor at the right price.’

“Most aborigines have resisted the people who would batten on them in this fashion. At the request of the Welfare Board in 1959-60, the Commissioner of Police obtained a special report on offences involving aborigines.

“The report showed that in this year 2,650 aborigines had been convicted on a total of 8,175 offences, of which 6,301 involved drunkenness and the remaining 1,874 were offences attributable to liquor, including having possession of liquor.

“Set against this is that fact that about 1,200 aborigines now possess exemption certificates, granted to them under Section 18c of the Act which enables them to buy liquor legally, as with any white person.

“The Board grants these certificates. It refuses few applications and it revokes even less—not even as many as five a year.

“Many aborigines of course, also living normal, respectable lives, have not applied for the certificates, feeling no need in their daily lives for exemption from the Act.

“The Welfare Board has assured me that welfare activity will be intensified so as to assist the aboriginal people to accustom themselves to the proper use of alcohol.

“The Board has already asked the Commissioner of Police to ask his officers to assist in every way possible. The Board will inform its welfare officers immediately assent is given to the Bill so that they may be able to give their full attention to seeing that its intent is observed by all concerned.

“Hotelkeepers and the community can also assist in a very real way to accustom the aboriginal people to this new right, by showing kindness and tact, and where necessary, giving wise counsel and guidance in cases which may show need of it.

“The Board also took into consideration that virtually all of those affected by Section 9 of the Act have only an admixture of aboriginal blood. In this regard it was demonstrated to the Native Welfare Conference, in Canberra, in 1961, that the experience in the Northern Territory where part-coloured people have had access

to liquor without restrictions since 1953, was that it had not had any damaging effect nor had it encouraged crime.

“It had not in general, any more than in any other white community, produced any neglect of family life, or a failure to meet responsibilities.

“I hope that persons of aboriginal descent will realise that they have an important part to play in ensuring that the confidence shown in them has not been misplaced,” Mr. Kelly concluded.

The Bill finally became law on March 30. The Chief Secretary, in announcing Royal Assent to the Bill, said:

“Removal of the ban on aborigines drinking is the expression of a principle important in our Australian community of granting justice to a minority and which was supported by the whole of the New South Wales Parliament.

“Hotel licensees, aborigines—in fact everyone who goes into any licensed premises, has an important role in seeing that the principle which has been adopted by Parliament is accorded the fullest support in its application.

“The Welfare Board has done everything possible to ensure that the adjustment to the new set of conditions will be smooth and untroubled and the success of the change will now depend on aborigines and the general community, the former in exercising moderation and the latter in showing tolerance.”

See story “Cops and Robbers” Days Over on page 8

Pauline Carberry, nursing one of her favourite visitors to Bomaderry Children's Home

