

1910.

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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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# NORTHERN TERRITORY.

MEMORANDUM PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
HON. L. E. GROOM, MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, JULY,  
1909, IN CONNEXION WITH THE BILL FOR THE ACCEPTANCE  
OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, WITH SOME LATER FIGURES.

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Printed and Published for the GOVERNMENT of the COMMONWEALTH of AUSTRALIA by J. KEMP,  
Government Printer for the State of Victoria.

F. 11089.

## CONTENTS.

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	<b>PAGE</b>
Introductory Notes .. .. .	5
Statistics .. .. .	9
Climate .. .. .	11
Aborigines .. .. .	13
S.A. Legislation .. .. .	15
Land Tenures .. .. .	16
General Descriptions .. .. .	21
Agriculture .. .. .	26
Mining .. .. .	28
Artesian Water .. .. .	30
Finances under Agreement .. .. .	31
Constitutional Provisions.. .. .	36

The following are extracted from the Report of the Royal Commission 1895 :—

**DASHWOOD, C. J.**, Government Resident, Port Darwin.—The climate around Port Darwin is not particularly unhealthy for the male sex, but it is not very healthy for women and children. The place can never be settled by a European population. Has been in the Territory three years. Does not think Europeans can do labour of any kind continuously. The climate is suitable for Europeans who are their own masters, and can work or not, just as they like.

**HOLTZE, M. W.**, 15 years Curator of Gardens, Port Darwin.—Europeans can live and oversee work in swampy or damp ground. Europeans are not so healthy on the low lands as on the high. Children should be brought to a colder climate when nine years of age. His own children were healthy. Fever is brought about chiefly by the whisky bottle; but the European can work if he takes care of himself.

**LEWIS, John**, Resident 1871-5, travelled throughout Territory.—Climate not unhealthy, but unsuitable to any one with defective constitution. Country is not adapted for European labour. It is too oppressive and too unhealthy. They can work better now with the improved mode of living.

**PARSONS, Hon. J. Langdon**, visited Territory 1882, Government Resident, Port Darwin, 1884-1890.—It is not a white man's country. The health of most Europeans engaged in mining was undoubtedly injured.

**POWER, Corporal C.**, Police officer, 9 years' experience in different parts of territory.—Any steady robust European can work all the year. Does not know whether he could compete with Asiatics. Has seen Europeans well-sinking, mining, fencing, &c., on both high and low-lying lands. They are more subject to fever on the low than the high country.

**SOLOMON, Hon. V. L., M.P.**, 17 years' experience, business and mining.—European labour unsuitable for work on sugar and other plantations, but white men can work at mining when not exposed absolutely to the sun. One trained European miner can do same work as two ordinary Chinese miners. Men on the Overland telegraph line used a great quantity of quinine to keep themselves in health, but it is not necessary. Lived there seventeen years, and only had two attacks of fever. Women and children are healthy, but want a change every three years. They do not have sufficient exercise. The rainy season is the healthiest, the beginning of the dry season being unhealthy.

**VILKSON, C. C.**, 8 years' experience in mining districts.—Finest climate in the world. Men can work well.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF AVERAGE RAINFALL.

The following table is taken from the Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 3, p. 88 :—

Average Annual Rainfall.	New South Wales.	Victoria.	Queensland.	South Australia.	Northern Territory.	Western Australia.	Tasmania.	Commonwealth.
	Sq. Miles.	Sq. Miles.	Sq. Miles.	Sq. Miles.	Sq. Miles.	Sq. Miles.	Sq. Miles.	Sq. Miles.
Under 10 inches ..	79,629	Nil.	126,390	309,196	153,226	417,896	Nil.	1,086,337
10-20 ..	118,685	36,241	251,150	57,025	181,298	397,416	Nil.	1,041,815
20-30 ..	76,217	38,794	175,390	13,257	88,505	109,481	4,242	505,886
30-40 ..	24,685	8,072	67,310	370	16,765	37,498	7,397	162,097
Over 40 ..	11,156	4,777	50,260	222	83,826	13,629	14,576	178,446
Total area ..	310,372	87,884	670,500	380,070	523,620	975,920	26,215	2,974,581

The next table expresses the above figures in percentages—

Average Annual Rainfall.	Percentage of Area.							
	New South Wales.	Victoria.	Queensland.	South Australia.	Northern Territory.	Western Australia.	Tasmania.	Commonwealth.
Under 10 inches ..	25.656	Nil.	18.850	81.352	29.263	42.821	Nil.	36.521
10-20 ..	38.240	41.238	37.457	15.004	34.624	40.722	Nil.	35.024
20-30 ..	24.557	44.142	26.158	3.489	16.903	11.218	16.181	17.007
30-40 ..	7.953	9.185	10.039	.097	3.202	3.842	28.217	5.449
Over 40 ..	3.594	5.435	7.496	.058	16.008	1.397	55.602	5.999

#### ABORIGINES.

There are many tribes in the Territory. Those best known are the Larrykeeha in the Port Darwin District, and the Arunta in the Alice Springs District, MacDonnell Ranges.

The natives in the settled districts are cared for by the Government. Medical comforts, blankets, tomahawks, fishing material, tobacco, and rations are supplied. The expenditure amounts to about £1,000 per annum.

Aborigines Missions have been established on the Finke River, in the interior, on the western side of the overland telegraph line, by the Lutherans, and on the Roper River by the Anglican Mission Association of Victoria. Both institutions receive an annual grant from the Government. For the financial year 1908-9 the amount voted was £750.

In the report of his visit to the Territory, Sir G. R. Le Hunte, Governor of South Australia, whose experience as an administrator in Fiji and British New Guinea, where the care of the native races is one of the primary objects of the Government, qualifies him to speak with authority, says :—

The aboriginal problem is another difficulty, and I do not think any attempt has as yet been made to cope with it. Yet it certainly demands attention. I was very much surprised to find on inquiry from those who can give the best estimates, what the number of the aborigines in the Northern Territory is. I found it vary from 15,000 to 30,000, the lower number being an estimate from an official and the larger from a private source. The late Chief Inspector of Police in the Territory, who is, perhaps, the best qualified to give one, told me that he thought the first too low and the second too high, and that it would be safer to estimate them at from 20,000 to 22,000. Only a small fraction of these are under any control, or, indeed in any contact with any form of Government or civilization. Very little is known of the large black population in the north-east districts, or in the interior. But nothing is done for those that are known except a periodical distribution of inferior blankets, a few pounds of stick tobacco, and a few bags of flour, which they have no means of cooking properly. Dr. Fulton informed me that many of the cases of serious internal maladies were due to the presence of uncooked and undigested flour. Nothing is done for their education; the small black boys I saw running about the township of Port Darwin ought to be in a school of some kind, or their parents should not be allowed to hang about the township. There is a nominal Protector of Aborigines—the medical officer at Port Darwin—but he has to stop there, and cannot go about the country, and his powers are purely nominal. What is required is a properly organized system of power and responsibility. There should be an official head, who should, in my opinion, be the Government Resident, under the Minister for the Territory; under him should be an organized department, a specially selected Protector, who should be a Justice of the Peace, and his chief executive officer, with proper powers and jurisdiction all over the Territory; he should be a travelling officer. Under him there should be assistant officers or sub-protectors, who might be the police constables in charge of the several districts. The Chief Protector should be directly responsible to the Government Resident for everything connected with the administration of the aborigines. There should be a separate vote for the cost of the aboriginal department in the Northern Territory; at present, I understand, there is only one vote for the expenditure for this service for both the southern and northern parts of the State, and the officials at the north do not know what is being expended out of it in the south.

It is a great pity that more of the aborigines do not seek employment from the white residents, but, with the exception of those employed on cattle stations, very few do continuous work. They hang about the townships and mining camps, with no good results to themselves or to others. In Queensland they are not allowed to do this, and it would be well if some similar rule were in force here. I do not know if it would be possible to prohibit the importation of opium except for medicinal purposes, but if it could be done it would be welcomed by all the respectable Chinese. The punishment of imprisonment for the sale of the drug to natives is no deterrent apparently to the low Chinese. It might be possible to get a seller deported from the country under the Commonwealth Alien Immigration Act; and if it could be done I would strongly recommend it—at any rate on a second conviction. The harm and demoralisation that they do is incalculable.

I am satisfied from my inquiries that there is no general ill-treatment of the aborigines in our Northern Territory, but it would be dangerous to say that cases of it do not occur in out-of-the-way places. Some of the characters that come across our borders are very unsatisfactory, and it may well be that we cannot claim absolute innocence; but the general feeling is not at all unkind towards the blacks, and any cases of misconduct are few and isolated. Probably the most common form of injurious treatment is the taking of lubras or young women, which has often led to much mischief; but I was glad to find that this is strongly discountenanced by the better class of men; indeed, the managers of the stations will not give employment to men who do this. I saw one case of a native girl, dressed as a boy, riding with a man in charge of some cattle; but he was not a white man. It should be made an offence, as it is in Queensland, for any one to harbor or even employ an aboriginal, except under the provisions permitted by law, and the protectors should have legal powers to remove any aboriginal when so found. In Queensland they have the advantage of certain mission stations to which unprotected aboriginal women and children can be mandated. The want of any such institutions in our farther Northern Territory is much felt. It would be worth while for the Government to subsidize any missionary society that would undertake to establish one there.

The excellent work done of recent years by the Queensland Government shows that by legislation and efficient administration the condition of the aborigines can be much improved, and ill-treatment and wrong can be stopped. I would recommend the adoption of similar measures to the careful consideration of Ministers.

More assistance should also be given to the police in patrolling the coast districts, especially on the north-east side. There are parts there which cannot be reached on horseback, and a good seaworthy launch is much needed. Strict supervision should be exercised over the relations of the pearling vessels with the aborigines. I have reason to believe that much that is very unsatisfactory takes place in that direction.

But the first thing, I am sure, is to establish a properly organized department in the Territory. Whatever officers are appointed, they should of all things be able to travel about and see things for themselves. Administration from an office, however good in other ways and for other purposes, will not meet the needs of the case. To do any practical good, the officers must be in personal contact with the natives, and gain their confidence; otherwise they will never know what is really going on. A remark was made to me by a gentleman who has been a long time in the Territory, whom I met on one of our trips, to whom I was speaking about ill treatment of natives. He told me of certain notorious cases which had occurred in past years; he did not think any such took place now. But, he added, "they (the natives) do not know how to tell what happens, and if they could they would not be believed." I have no doubt that there is a great deal of truth in what he said. The first thing is for them to have some one they know they can tell, and who will at any rate find out if what they say is true.

His Excellency's visit was in April, 1905, yet, writing in February, 1908, the Government resident said—

The urgent necessity for legislation providing for the protection of aborigines is a matter which still continually forces itself into notice. The Northern Territory is now the only portion of Australia having a considerable native population which possesses no legislation worthy of a moment's consideration. Time and again during recent years it has been found necessary to take some action for which no authority existed to back it. Frequent though such occasions were, they were few compared with the instances calling for action which, however, could not be taken for the reason that it could not be persisted in.

Year after year the decrease in numbers of aborigines in the settled districts is observable, and particularly is this so in the numbers of young full-blooded native children. In addition to disease (unfortunately rife among these people), which is one of the causes for decrease, this result is further contributed to by the fact of so many lubras permanently leaving their camps and living openly with men of nationalities other than their own. The women, as a rule, are chosen because they are young and of superior physique to others of their tribe. Their absence, therefore, naturally tends to hasten the race extinction, which is slowly but certainly approaching.

## ACTS OF PARLIAMENT.

### RELATING TO THE SETTLEMENT AND DISPOSAL OF CROWN LANDS, ETC., OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY PASSED BY THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT.

The following list is based upon one compiled by Thos. Gill, Esq., Under-Treasurer of South Australia :—

An Act for regulating the sale or other disposal of Waste Lands of the Crown lately annexed to the Province of South Australia and for other purposes—No. 23 of 1863. Assented to, November 12, 1863. Contains Preamble and 17 Sections.

NOTE.—*Sections 8, 9, 11, and part 14 were repealed by Act No. 28 of 1872. Sections 1 to 9 were repealed by Act No. 271 of 1882. Section 10 repealed and new Section substituted by Act No. 383 of 1886.*

\* An Act to amend "The Northern Territory Act"—No. 3 of 1868. Assented to, November 24, 1868.

\* An Act to amend an Act No. 3 of 1868, intituled "An Act to amend the Northern Territory Act"—No. 2 of 1869-70. Assented to, February 9, 1870.

\* An Act to amend "The Northern Territory Amendment Act 1868"—No. 3 of 1871. Assented to, October 26, 1871.

\* An Act to regulate the sale and other disposal of the Waste Lands of the Crown in that portion of the Province of South Australia commonly styled the Northern Territory—No. 28 of 1872. Assented to, November 30, 1872. This Act also deals with mining, fishing, &c.

\* An Act to provide for the publication in the Northern Territory of certain matters and things required by law to be published in the "Government Gazette"—No. 5 of 1874. Assented to, November 6, 1874.

\* An Act to amend "The Northern Territory Land Act 1872"—No. 48 of 1876. Assented to, October 27, 1876.

\* An Act to provide for the Payment of Compensation to certain Selectors of sections of Land in the Northern Territory, of deficient area, and for other purposes—No. 71 of 1877. Assented to, December 21, 1877.

\* An Act to further amend "The Northern Territory Land Act 1872"—No. 158 of 1879. Assented to, October 25, 1879.

\* An Act to reduce the Rental of Lands leased for pastoral purposes in the Northern Territory—No. 179 of 1880. Assented to, October 25, 1880.

\* An Act to encourage the settlement of that part of the Province of South Australia known as the Northern Territory and to provide for the cultivation of sugarcane and other tropical products therein—No. 194 of 1880. Assented to, October 28, 1880.

\* An Act to amend "The Northern Territory Land Amendment Act of 1876," and for other purposes—No. 220 of 1881. Assented to, November 18, 1881.

\* An Act to amend Act No. 194 of 1880—No. 224 of 1881. Assented to, November 18, 1881.

NOTE.—*All the foregoing Acts marked with an asterisk were repealed by Act No. 271 of 1882.*

An Act to consolidate the Acts to regulate the Sale and other disposal of the Waste Lands of the Crown in that portion of the Province of South Australia commonly styled the Northern Territory—No. 271 of 1882. Assented to, November 17, 1882.

NOTE.—*This Act was repealed by Act No. 501 of 1890.*

An Act to amend "The Northern Territory Act, 1863," and "The Northern Territory Customs Act, 1882"—No. 383 of 1886. Assented to, November 17, 1886.