

1917-18-19.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA.

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REPORT

OF

THE ADMINISTRATOR

FOR THE

YEAR ENDING 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1918.

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*Presented by Command ; ordered to be printed, 25th June, 1919.*

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[Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given ; 326 copies ; a] proximate cost of printing and publishing, £42.

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

No. 129.—F.4812.—PRICE 1s. 6D.

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### SETTLEMENT OF RETURNED SOLDIERS.

Should there be any members of our Australian Army, who on their return are desirous of settling on land in the Territory, I can recommend no more suitable area than that on the East Alligator River, in the vicinity of Oenpelli. The soil is good, we know that marketable butter can be produced, and pigs grown with the minimum of trouble, while crops of various kinds can be readily cultivated.

He would be a poor sort of pioneer who could not make good, and a worse one who would feel despondent for long with as neighbours two such cheery and capable optimists as Mr. and Mrs. Cahill, who pioneered the district when the nearest neighbour was many days' journey away. They would act as guides and counsellors to newcomers. It is necessary, however, for many reasons, that only married men accompanied by their wives should be allowed to take up land in that district, and it is equally necessary that man and woman should be possessed of the true pioneering spirit without which there is no hope of success.

### FREEZING WORKS.

Early in the year a dispute occurred between the Company and the Queensland Branch of the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union regarding the rate of wages for the ensuing season, which eventually reached a deadlock, and it was decided not to open for the season. Ultimately, negotiations were resumed, and resulted in an agreement. But six valuable weeks were lost, and instead of 40,000 to 50,000 bullocks being treated before the drying of stock route waters precluded the travelling of cattle, only 29,011 could be handled. The small output meant a serious loss to the Company and to the Railways. The cattle treated all belonged to the Northern Agency group of stations and Victoria River Station, none offering from private stations.

From information to hand, it is clear that private station owners, even within 100 or 200 miles of the rail-head, find it pays better to overland their cattle to Queensland or even South Australia, where they arrive as stores, than to sell to the local Company because of the high costs of treatment here compared with Queensland. Unless some change occurs the Works will, therefore, not prove the stimulus to pastoral settlement that was anticipated.

### ABORIGINES.

The new Ordinance has met with some disapproval, but when its provisions are generally understood I venture to think that the bulk of the community will commend its provisions, especially those dealing with the employment of natives in town areas, where some discipline will in future be exercised over the native employee. The "combo" and his sympathizers naturally resent the drastic penalties for habitualling consorting with the aboriginal female, and keeping her as a mistress.

The native servant is exceptionally well treated in Darwin because of the scarcity. The wage is usually from 5s. to 10s. per week with food, clothing, and tobacco. It is not a subject for remark to see an aboriginal party drive to the picture show in a motor car. Were such his only dissipation, there could be no objection, but, unfortunately, grog, and even opium, are obtainable from certain whites as well as Chinese, and rarely will the native be induced to inform. Having little knowledge of the value of money, he is easily persuaded to pay whatever he has for what may take his fancy at the moment.

The Darwin Compound, with its Hospital and School, under the charge of Superintendent McDonald and Mrs. McDonald, continues a valuable institution, both the authority and influence of Mr. McDonald being recognised by white and aboriginal alike as conducive to good in the community.

Protector Cahill and Oenpelli Station are becoming of greater usefulness to the native population, and more and more "myall" aborigines come there from districts far afield for treatment and inter-communication.

The establishment of the Daly Farm as an aboriginal station should also prove of value in time to come.

Some improvements are being effected at the Alice Springs Compound and School, where Mrs. Standley continues her valuable work.

It is unfortunate that Undoolya blocks in the Macdonnell Ranges were not stocked by the Government, and utilized as an aboriginal station, as I recommended in 1913. By now the station would have shown a handsome profit, one that owing to the increased value of stock would have itself provided for all expenses connected with aboriginal protection.

### LIQUOR DEPARTMENT.

The business as a whole is still conducted at a profit, although the Victoria Hotel, chiefly reserved for travellers and visitors, and has no public bar, shows a serious loss. The Pine Creek Hotel is now also conducted at a loss since the rail-head was transferred to Katherine. The Club Hotel alone is able to make ends meet in the boarding part of the business. So far the Supervisor's anticipations of last year have not been realized.





