

1940.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

REPORT

ON THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

FOR

YEAR 1938-39.

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The following is an analysis of the year's transactions :—

	£	s.	d.
Value of estates current 30th June, 1939	3,994	3	10
Receipts as per cash book from 1st July, 1938, to 30th June, 1939	2,057	4	4
Interest on Commonwealth Savings Bank accounts	49	4	1
	6,100 12 3		
Disbursements 1st July, 1938, to 30th June, 1939—			
	£	s.	d.
Duty, fees and postages	130	5	3
Unclaimed estates paid to revenue	98	13	7
Claims paid to creditors of estates	771	18	6
Amounts paid to beneficiaries	2,055	14	6
	3,056 11 10		
Value of estates current 30th June, 1939	3,044	0	5
Assets as at 30th June, 1939—			
Commonwealth Bank balance	1,243	18	2
Commonwealth Savings Bank accounts	1,800	2	3
	3,044 0 5		

SHIPPING.

The following details give the movement of shipping in Darwin Harbour during the year :—

	1937-38	
Interstate and Overseas—		
Number berthed	56	37
Cargo discharged—		
General	29,230	13,678
Coal
Crude oil
Cargo shipped—		
General	2,879	2,153
Coal
Crude oil	800	471
Vessels trading in Northern Territory waters—		
Number berthed	24	39
Cargo discharged—		
General	329	616
Cargo shipped—		
General	833	633
Crude oil	403*	..

PATROL SERVICE.

During the early part of the year patrols by the PV. *Larrakia* were confined mostly to Bathurst and Melville Islands, the patrol personnel being required to attend court at frequent intervals. From June, 1938, until March, 1939, she steamed approximately 2,000 miles on patrol. A number of trips were made to assist the Defence Department.

In September, 1938, PV. *Kuru* was commissioned, but, owing to certain structural defects, was detained in Queensland waters until March, 1939. Since her arrival in Darwin she has run in a most satisfactory manner and gives promise of useful service. Since commencing duty at Darwin, PV. *Kuru* has steamed 1,300 miles on her various duties.

During the latter part of the year the *Larrakia* was sent to Sydney for a major re-fit and overhaul.

Re-organization of this service is now taking place.

NATIVE AFFAIRS.

One of the most important decisions made during the visit of the Minister (the Honorable J. McEwen) was that relating to the separation of the Aboriginal Branch from the Medical Services. For many years the Chief Protector of Aborigines had also been the Chief Medical Officer, as it had been considered that the question of aboriginal protection was very largely interwoven with medical service and hygiene and that, therefore, the duties of the two offices were to some extent complementary.

* Luggers and Lighthouse Vessels.

During the Minister's extensive survey of the Territory special attention was given to a wide range of problems connected with aboriginal administration.

Following the visit of the Minister, Cabinet approved of the establishment of a Native Affairs Branch under the control of an officer with administrative ability and training in practical anthropology. The position of Chief Protector was thereupon abolished and a new position of Director of Native Affairs was created. Mr. E. W. P. Chinnery, who had been Director of District Services and Native Affairs and Government Anthropologist in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, was seconded for appointment to the newly created position and to act as adviser to the Government on matters relating to native affairs. He arrived in Darwin on 18th April, 1939.

Mr. Chinnery immediately commenced an investigation into all matters and local conditions affecting the welfare of aboriginals and half-castes in the Northern Territory, so that he would be able to formulate proposals to give effect to the Government's policy.

In the course of his investigations the Director visited Bathurst and Melville Islands, Jay Creek Reserve, Hermannsburg Mission, Ernabella Mission (South Australia), Harts Ranges, Hatches Creek, Haast Bluff, and Tennant Creek. These journeys provided the Director with first-hand knowledge of a wide range of conditions affecting aboriginals and half-castes and European activities directly and indirectly associated with the responsibilities of the Branch. In consultation with the missionaries, protectors, employees, Patrol Officer Strehlow and others, the Director was able to go deeply into the problems connected with his work and their possible solutions.

These surveys and discussions resulted in a great deal of valuable information being gathered and this will form the basis of early recommendations in regard to the future activities of the Native Affairs Branch.

CONTROL BASE—ABORIGINAL RESERVES.

The Control Bases established at King River and Elcho Island to minimize contact between aboriginals and the crews of Japanese pearling luggers were closed on the 23rd September, 1938.

It was decided also, owing to the cessation of major constructional work at the Groote Eylandt Flying Boat Base, to close the Police Camp which had been established at Port Langdon. The police officer, who also acted as Resident Protector of Aboriginals, evacuated the base on 17th November, 1938. On the 27th March, 1939, a control base was established at Garden Point, Melville Island.

The Director of Native Affairs inspected the base on 8th May, 1939, and a definite policy was formulated as to future activities at the base.

Procedure was introduced to reduce the possibilities of unlawful contact between the crews of the luggers and the aboriginal inhabitants of the Bathurst and Melville Island districts without interfering unduly with the activities connected with their business.

Following the establishment of the base at Garden Point, a large number of Melville Island people have concentrated in its vicinity and the necessary steps are being taken to introduce helpful ideas of settlement.

Suitable bark huts have been erected under the supervision of the Control Officer, coco-nuts and mangoes have been planted and an extensive area has been cleared for the planting of native food and is now under cultivation.

In addition, a site containing approximately 25 acres has been cleared and prepared as a landing ground for aeroplanes.

With the creation of this settlement, the Control Officer has been in a favourable position to introduce new ideas of social behaviour amongst a large number of people who were formerly too wide-spread in small wandering groups to be under any kind of regular supervision and protection.

The health and progress of these people is now being carefully watched and attended to. By the end of the year the first steps of intensive control and assistance were well established.

Breaches of the law by crews of certain luggers were investigated and necessary action was taken by the Control Officer in collaboration with officials of the Patrol Service.

NATIVE EDUCATION.

A new position in the Aboriginal Branch, that of school teacher of the Aboriginal School, was created. School commenced in August, with an attendance of 39, being 25 boys and 14 girls. The year ended with an attendance of 42 children. The daily average attendance for the year was 35.9.

The teacher reported the pupils have become accustomed to school routine, which has inculcated in them a definite measure of discipline and respect for property. From an educational point of view, the year has been most fruitful. Much time has been devoted in an effort to secure a harmonious understanding between pupil and teacher, and the work set for a preparatory grade in the ordinary Education Department Schools has been covered and much of it appreciated by pupils.

During the year six hundred and seven children attended schools conducted at Missions in the Territory.

HALF-CASTE SCHOOLS.

Two Administration Schools are conducted solely for half-caste children; one at the Darwin Half-caste Home and the other at the Alice Springs Half-caste Institution.

Attendance figures were as follow :—

	Half-caste Home, Darwin.	Half-caste Institution, Alice Springs.
Net number instructed during year ..	50	113
Average attendance	41.5	98

Five teachers are employed; two at Darwin and three at Alice Springs. At the Darwin school the Queensland curriculum is taught with some modification in arithmetic, grammar, history and geography, extra time being devoted to needlework.

At the Institution school at Alice Springs, the South Australian curriculum is in force, with the same modifications as in Darwin. In addition, domestic arts are taught to the senior girls and woodwork to the senior boys.

Two hundred and seventy-two half-caste children attended schools in the Northern Territory during the year. One hundred and nine of these attended the schools conducted by the Administration and the Catholic Convent in Darwin. It is interesting to note that these children receive the same tuition as European pupils.

EXEMPTION FROM ABORIGINALS ORDINANCE.

Five male half-castes and six female half-castes were granted exemption from the provisions of the Aborigines Ordinance. Four exemptions were revoked.

ABORIGINAL MEDICAL BENEFIT FUND.

Employers' contributions amounted to £906 8s. 9d., as compared with £895 1s. 10d. for the previous year.

Adequate supplies of drugs and dressings were available at all rural medical depots.

Station managements who contributed to the Fund were supplied with medicine chests free of charge.

Aborigines requiring hospitalization were treated at Darwin, Pine Creek, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs hospitals. Venereal disease treatment clinics were maintained at Bagot Compound, Darwin, Katherine, and Alice Springs.

Patients from Lake Nash and Rankine river districts were admitted to the Camooweal and Mount Isa hospitals.

The temporary Lock hospital for half-caste women which was established last year at the Bagot Compound was closed and patients were transferred to the new isolation wards of the Darwin hospital.

Aboriginal Trust Account, Darwin.

	£	s.	d.
Credit balance as at 1st July, 1938	5,537	7	6
Credits during the year 1938-39	8,365	9	0
Debits during the year 1938-39	7,461	18	5
Credit balance as at 30th June, 1939	6,440	18	1

Aboriginal Trust Account, Alice Springs.

	£	s.	d.
Credit balance as at 1st July, 1938	1,761	6	6
Credits during the year 1938-39	1,201	5	8
Debits during the year 1938-39	1,117	12	6
Credit balance as at 30th June, 1939	1,844	19	8

Aboriginal Vote.

The net expenditure as per appropriation was—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Darwin	9,796	9	7			
Alice Springs	4,199	3	2			
				13,995	12	9

EMPLOYMENT.

During the year 241 town licences and 333 country licences were issued. Three hundred and one agreements were entered into by employers of aboriginals and half-castes.

Two claims for Workers' Compensation were made by the Aboriginal Branch on behalf of half-castes who were injured in course of their employment. Both claims were successful.

General matters connected with the conditions of aboriginals and half-castes in employment are being carefully investigated.

AGED AND INFIRM ABORIGINALS.

Eight hundred and fifty-one aboriginals were rationed and clothed at Government Rationing Depots.

JAY CREEK ABORIGINAL RESERVE.

The conditions and possibilities of this reserve were investigated.

Under the supervision of Patrol Officer Strehlow a number of aged, infirm and sick aboriginals of the Aranda people were provided for within the reserve and certain incorrigible and insane aboriginals were treated and maintained with beneficial results.

The development of the reserve depends upon an adequate water supply and arrangements are now being made to test the area for water and to make the necessary provisions. Further steps are being taken for the erection of a store and the provision of other facilities to enable derelict aboriginals at present gathered around Alice Springs and ration stations to be removed to the Reserve.

HALF-CASTES.

The conditions of the half-caste population of the Territory are being carefully investigated.

The total number of half-castes in Government institutions at 30th June, 1939, was 103 males and 161 females, a total of 264 as compared with 280 at the 30th June, 1938.

HALF-CASTE HOME, DARWIN.

The number of inmates under direct control at Darwin at 30th June, 1939, was as follow :—

	Male.	Female.	Total.
Half-caste Home	9	91	100
Half-castes residing with employers	15	15	15
Half-castes residing at Bagot Compound	18	6	24
	27	112	139

Mention was made in previous reports that the accommodation and facilities at the present institution were inadequate, and that it was proposed to erect a new institution in a more favorable locality, preferably in a rural centre. Provision for a new institution was included in the estimates of expenditure in respect of the forthcoming financial year.

The health of inmates was satisfactory. One inmate suffering from a chronic ailment died at the institution.

The clothing, laundry and commissariat sections, besides providing lucrative employment for several inmates, enabled the training of younger girls in these essential domestic arts.

The demand for domestics in Darwin was greater than the number available.

Religious instruction was given by Ministers of the Methodist Church and the Church of England.

HALF-CASTE INSTITUTION, ALICE SPRINGS.

The total number of inmates at 30th June, 1939, was 123, comprising 76 males and 47 females—admissions during the year numbered 34. Thirty-seven inmates were discharged and, of these, seventeen boys were placed in employment in the pastoral industry.

Adverse reports were received concerning the inadequacy of the accommodation and the lack of facilities at the institution. Inspection revealed that the buildings were unsatisfactory and that considerable expenditure would be involved if the necessary extensive repairs and alterations were to be effected. As it was proposed to erect a new institution in another locality, approval was obtained to effect only essential repairs of an urgent nature.

A general improvement in the health of inmates was noticeable. All inmates were examined by a medical officer, who reported favorably on the children's physique.

The Superintendent reported that discipline of inmates was excellent.

A marked improvement in the general behaviour and demeanour of school children was noticeable.

During the last six months, domestic arts, woodwork and agriculture have been included in the curriculum. The number of children attending school at the 30th June was 98.

Church of England, Roman Catholic and Methodist clergy gave regular religious instruction to inmates.

Permission was granted for the removal of two quadroon girls from the institution to the Church of England Child Welfare Home in Melbourne, where the Church authorities have undertaken to educate them.

No difficulty was experienced in finding employment for boys and girls who had completed their schooling.

HALF-CASTE HOUSING SCHEME.

Notice was received that seven houses erected under this scheme are situated on lands which will be resumed for defence purposes. It is anticipated that the amount of compensation payable on account of these resumptions will make possible the erection of new homes in a more suitable locality.

Twelve houses are now occupied by owner-tenants and a proposal to extend the scheme is now under consideration.

BAGOT COMPOUND.

Industrial disputes and belated shipment of materials delayed the completion of the new Compound buildings. It is anticipated that the buildings will be available for occupation in October next.

An agricultural plot, comprising 10 acres, was cleared in which tobacco, peanuts and sweet potatoes were planted. The Superintendent of Agriculture supervised the planting and reported favorably on the crops and opportunities for development in this important and valuable industry.

Rice was planted in an experimental plot in a swamp area, but an unexpected prolonged dry period after planting caused the crop to fail.

Thirty-five acres of jungle land along the sea-front have been cleared preparatory to the planting of coco-nut trees, which will be undertaken at the commencement of the wet season.

Aboriginal and half-caste inmates were found employment in road-making, clearing land, cutting firewood for Government institutions and well-sinking. These activities were conducted within the Compound area.

On the 16th April, a display of native curios and native dancing was held at the Compound to entertain passengers of the Cunard liner *Franconia*, which visited Darwin in the course of a world cruise.

Prior to the appointment of Mr. Chinnery, Dr. C. E. Cook, C.B.E., was Chief Protector of Aborigines as well as Chief Medical Officer in the Northern Territory for a period of eleven years. I pay a high tribute to the value of the work carried out during that time by Dr. Cook, both as Chief Protector and Chief Medical Officer.

In addition to making important and far-reaching proposals, many of which are now incorporated in the Commonwealth Government's aboriginal protection policy and have been adopted by some of the State Governments, he was responsible for the successful performance of the work entrusted to his branch during the difficult depression period.

During his term of office as Chief Protector, Dr. Cook received the decoration of Commander of the British Empire and was awarded the Cilento Medal.

REVENUE.

The revenue for the Northern Territory increased from £117,563 in 1937-38 to £134,770 in 1938-39.

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION.

At the direct request of the Town Council of Darwin the Government took over the functions of the Council in 1937 and the Administration is responsible for all municipal activities and services, including electric light and power.

The funds provided by the Government have enabled the Administration to carry out work in Darwin which would be far beyond the capacity of the revenue received by the Town Council.

The construction and kerbing of footpaths has been extended, and many have been provided with a permanent surface which is not affected by rain, and contributes very materially to the improved appearance of the town.

This applies also to the town roads, most of which have been treated with bitumen and, notwithstanding the heavy increase in traffic, are in good order.