

1940-41.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

REPORT

ON THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

FOR

YEAR 1939-40.

Presented by Command, 19th March, 1941; ordered to be printed, 3rd April, 1941.

[*Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, not given; 730 copies; approximate cost of printing and publishing, £32.]

Printed and Published for the GOVERNMENT of the COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA by
L. F. JOHNSTON, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra.
(Printed in Australia.)

³ No. 24.—F.7551.—PRICE 1s. 3d.

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

	£	s.	d.
Value of estates current 30th June, 1939	3,044	0	5
Receipts as per cash book from 1st July, 1939 to 30th June, 1940	3,614	1	3
Interest on Commonwealth Savings Bank Accounts	40	9	9
	6,698 11 5		
Disbursements from 1st July, 1939, to 30th June, 1940	£	s.	d.
Duty, fees and postage	98	3	5
Unclaimed estates paid to Revenue	296	3	8
Claims paid to creditors of Estates	1,076	7	2
Amounts paid to beneficiaries	230	18	4
	1,701 12 7		
Values of estates current 30th June, 1940	4,996 18 10		
Assets as at 30th June, 1940 :—			
Commonwealth Bank Balance	1,741	9	7
Commonwealth Savings Bank Accounts	3,255	9	3
	4,996 18 10		

PATROL SERVICE.

Both the patrol vessels *Kuru* and *Larrakia* have carried out patrols during the year and very little mechanical trouble was experienced with either of them.

Kuru has fulfilled the early promise of useful service by steaming 10,000 miles on her various duties, frequently under most adverse weather conditions. In January last she rendered valuable assistance in the refloating of MV. *Merkur* at East Vernon Island, and her performance during the relief trip to Roper River at the time of the Mission Station's isolation by floods speaks well for the staunchness of the vessel's hull and the reliability of her machinery. *Kuru* has, as yet, undergone no large overhaul, but I do not think it will be necessary for the vessel to leave Darwin when overhaul becomes due at the end of 1940.

Larrakia, run as a two-engined ship, has covered 4,120 miles on patrol, with most satisfactory engine performance.

Both *Kuru* and *Larrakia* have done a considerable amount of co-operation with the Defence Forces since the outbreak of war, whenever this has been required.

There has been a definite improvement in the behaviour of lugger crews during the past twelve months and their contacts with natives have been reduced to a minimum.

NATIVE AFFAIRS.

The Commonwealth Government's policy of native administration was discussed with the Honorable the Minister for the Interior, Senator Foll, during his visit to Darwin in August, 1939, and it was decided that the Director of Native Affairs should prepare recommendations on the organization required to put into operation the policy of the Commonwealth Government set down in 1938.

At the same time, in view of stringent economies then found necessary for the requirements of defence, it was agreed that the recommendations should be confined to the minimum organization necessary to carry on essential services until conditions improved sufficiently for the full policy to be put into effect.

In accordance with the discussions with the Minister, the requirements of the Native Affairs organization were outlined, and at the same time attention was directed to the activities which should be developed as essential services.

The recommendations were presented in two sections, one of which dealt with Native Affairs generally, while the other was confined to the requirements of persons of part-aboriginal blood, the so-called half-castes of the Territory.

In due course, the Director's report was considered by the Minister, who determined that, although the recommendations contained therein were sound in principle, the plans outlined should be put into operation as a gradual process, as money became available.

The Minister decided to approve of certain specific recommendations, and during the remainder of the year, in addition to carrying out routine work, the officials of the Branch were engaged on activities directed to bring these decisions into effect.

ABORIGINAL AND HALF-CASTE POPULATION.

The census taken at 30th June, 1940, showed that the aboriginal and half-caste population of the Northern Territory was as follows :—

	Aboriginals.	Half-castes.
Adults—		
Male	6,229	261
Female	4,682	218
Children—		
Male	1,545	212
Female	1,442	211
Totals	13,898	902

The following table shows how they were distributed :—

	Male.	Female.
Nomadic	3,299	2,673
In Regular Employment	2,274	1,131
In Supervised Camps	1,882	1,951
Others	792	798
	8,247	6,553

CONTROL BASE, GARDEN POINT, MELVILLE ISLAND.

The Control Base established last year at Garden Point, Melville Island, helped to regulate contacts between aboriginals and the Asiatic crews of pearling vessels.

Large numbers of aboriginals visited the Base from time to time and on one occasion 350 natives rested there. The average number of aged and infirm, and workers rationed reached 209.

Forty acres of land were prepared for an aerodrome, and further country was cleared for agricultural purposes. Experimental gardening continued and crops of melons and sweet potatoes were consumed by the natives.

Under the supervision of the Control Officer aboriginals erected a store and additions to the staff cottage, and fenced garden plots. Native huts were also completed. Iron-wood logs were cut in preparation for the erection of permanent buildings.

The base was visited by a Medical Officer on two occasions and medical surveys of the residents were carried out. Excepting for a mild epidemic of mumps, the health of the community was normal.

The Roman Catholic church intends to establish a training institution for half-castes at Garden Point in the near future, and when this plan comes into operation, the organization of the Control Base will be reviewed.

NATIVE EDUCATION.

During the year, 586 children attended schools for aboriginals in the Northern Territory, the daily average attendance of children at the Bagot Reserve being 22.

One hundred and forty-seven children received tuition in the Government Half-caste Institutions at Darwin and Alice Springs respectively, and an additional 160 half-caste children attended the Public School and the Roman Catholic Convent, receiving the same tuition as European pupils.

At the Alice Springs Half-caste Institution, two of the pupils passed the qualifying certificate examination conducted by the South Australian Education Department, in November, 1939, one gaining 620 and the other 479 marks out of a possible 700 marks, a creditable performance, as this is the first time pupils of this school have sat for this examination.

One of the successful candidates was awarded a bursary and is now continuing his education in the Church of England All Souls' School, Charters Towers, Queensland.

Classes in experimental agriculture and the growing of vegetables have been conducted by the Head Teacher. The pupils have built the necessary fences and gates and have satisfactorily performed the studies connected with these developments.

EXEMPTION FROM THE ABORIGINALS ORDINANCE.

Sixty-two half-castes were granted exemption from the provisions of the Aboriginals Ordinance.

MARRIAGES.

Permission was granted for the marriages of 27 female half-castes—9 with Europeans and 18 with half-castes, and also for the marriages of 6 female aboriginals—3 with Europeans and 3 with half-castes.

EMPLOYMENT.

Two hundred and ninety town licences and 351 country licences were issued, and 293 agreements were entered into by employers of aboriginals and half-castes.

The majority of aboriginal workers in country districts were employed in the pastoral industry, excepting in the Barrow Creek district where many aboriginals were engaged in mining.

AGED AND INFIRM ABORIGINALS.

Nine hundred and ninety-eight indigent aboriginals were rationed and clothed at Government ration depots throughout the Territory.

HALF-CASTES.

The total number of half-castes in Government institutions at 30th June, 1940, was 120 males and 141 females—a total of 261, as compared with 264 at the 30th June, 1939.

HALF-CASTE HOME, DARWIN.

The number of inmates under direct control at the Bagot Compound, Darwin, on 30th June, 1940, was 124, of which 85 were males and 39 were females.

The Half-caste Home, which functioned previously at the Kahlin Compound, was closed in September, 1939, and inmates were transferred to the Bagot Reserve, where they were housed in the new institution buildings. The evacuation of the Kahlin Compound was necessary because the area was required for defence purposes.

BAGOT COMPOUND.

The building programme was greatly delayed and it was not until the close of the year that workmen finally vacated the Reserve. The delays which rendered efficient control impossible subjected staff and inmates to considerable inconvenience, and plans for beautification projects could not be developed whilst the contractor and staff were in occupation.

An experimental agricultural plot produced crops of beans, sweet potatoes, and melons for the consumption of the inmates and 35 acres of land near the beach were planted with coco-nuts.

Industrial enterprises were reduced owing to an acute shortage of reliable and competent half-caste assistants, but certain activities, such as the sewing and firewood sections, which in former years provided employment for a number of half-caste men and women, were conducted with a skeleton staff.

The average number of half-castes and aboriginals residing within the Reserve at night reached 400.

Two Recreation Centres were established in the Reserve—one for half-castes and one for aboriginals. Welfare work amongst the half-castes was carried out.

Recreational facilities for the aboriginal inmates were provided by the Branch and a mouth organ band of 30 aboriginal performers, assisted by child vocalists, gave several creditable performances, and on one occasion assisted in a Red Cross function in Darwin.

Extensions of this welfare work are contemplated for the new financial year.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.

Investigations into the requirements of the welfare of the widely scattered groups of natives in Central Australia, under the charge of Patrol Officer Strehlow, were conducted throughout the year.

Patrol Officer Strehlow, in conjunction with the authorities of Hermannsburg and Ernabella Missions, conducted a comprehensive survey in the Petermann Ranges, covering over 1,000 miles by truck and camel.

Following investigations, representations were made for the amendment of the boundaries of the Great South-West Reserve, by the excision of a large portion of country useless to natives, and the addition of food-producing and adequately watered areas adjoining the North-East corner of the Reserve as far as and including Haast's Bluff.

The possibilities of the Jay Reserve were also investigated. After unsuccessful attempts had been made to locate permanent water by trial bore, the possibilities of the Gall Springs were surveyed, but the prospect of locating a sufficient water supply is not bright.

OFFENCES.

The number of convictions against aboriginals and half-castes for the year under review represents a considerable increase on the figures for the preceding year, but the relative factors are more clearly outlined in the following table :—

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF CONVICTIONS FOR THE YEARS 1937-38, 1938-39 AND 1939-40.

—			Europeans and Asiatics.	Aboriginals.	Half-castes.
1937-38	..	..	438	206	49
1938-39	..	..	574	211	85
1939-40	..	..	1,324	267	99

The increase in convictions of aboriginals—mostly for petty offences—has been influenced by the activities of unscrupulous Europeans and Asiatics, especially those supplying liquor and opium to the aboriginal population. The traffickers, many of them comparatively new arrivals in Darwin, caused grave concern, and despite co-operation with the Police Branch, the iniquitous traffic is not yet suppressed.

Drastic amendments of the Liquor and Opium Laws and Aboriginals Ordinance have been drafted and recommended.

This legislation, when passed, together with the co-operation of Police and Bench, should contribute to the solution of this major problem.

Convictions recorded against Europeans for serious breaches of the Aboriginals Ordinance were—

Illegally entering Aboriginal Reserve	..	..	..	..	15
Supplying Liquor	..	..	..	..	17
Sundry Breaches	..	..	..	..	9
					—
					41
					—

The supervision of aboriginals residing in the town district of Darwin was improved by the appointment of a special Protector of Aboriginals, whose duties included the patrolling of beaches, camps, and localities where natives congregate for unlawful purposes. Large numbers of loiterers and incorrigibles were detained by the Inspector and were either removed to the Bagot Compound or imprisoned.

Four horses and plant were purchased to facilitate patrols in the country districts of Darwin. The principal object of these patrols is to discourage the drift of aboriginals from nearby islands to the mainland.

REVENUE.

The revenue for the Northern Territory increased from £134,770 in 1938-39 to £179,446 in 1939-40.

ROADS AND STOCK ROUTES.

NORTH-SOUTH ROAD.

The reconstruction of the 320 miles of road between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek was completed during the year and with the exception of one or two small sections which are to be metalled, the road stood up to traffic exceptionally well.

The portion of the North-South Road between Tennant Creek and Birdum, a distance of 315 miles, has been re-located and a commencement made on clearing and grading. At the end of the year, clearing had progressed to Helen Springs and the grader had reached Banka Banka.

Maintenance work was carried out between Alice Springs and the South Australian border, and a new road was constructed at one section which reduced the total distance by 10 miles and eliminated 6 miles of difficult creek crossings.