

1914-15.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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REPORT

OF

THE ADMINISTRATOR

FOR THE

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CONTENTS.

	Page		Page
Aboriginals	24, 26	Keeper of Gaol and Labour Prison	29
Accommodation	83	Labour	14
Advances to Settlers	35	Land Settlement	8, 53, 57
Ants—White	45	Law Courts	80
Agriculture	10, 31	Lighthouses	79
Arbitration Court Award	15	Local Courts	80
Arltunga Battery	64	Machinery—Mining	74
Batchelor Farm	37	Maranboy Battery	61
Battery—		Mataranka Sheep Station	41
Arltunga	64	Medical Officer	91
Maranboy	61	Mines	59
Biological Research	14	Minerals	59, 68
Bores	60	Mining	9
Botanical Gardens	11, 41	Pastoral	56
Butter	32	Police	51
Chinese	16	Public Health	5, 83
Coastal Vessels	81	Public Schools	76
Courts—Supreme and Local	80	Public Trustee	78
Dairy Cattle	12	Public Works	14, 49
Dairy Industry	12	Railways	7, 18
Demonstration Farms—		Railway Construction	18
Batchelor	37	Roads	49
Daly River	39	Schools	76
Education	7, 76	Settlement—Land	53, 57
Experimental Farms	37, 39	Sheep	13
Entomologist	43	Sheriff	80
Farms—		Stock	13
Experimental	39	Supreme Court	80
Demonstration	37	Survey	9, 57
Freezing Works	7	Tanami Goldfields	64
Gaol	29	Termites	45
Geology	9, 75	Tinfields—Maranboy	63
Goldfields	64, 71	Veterinary	13, 46
Health—Public	83	Water Conservation	84
Hospital	91	Wells	66
Industrial	14	White Ants	45
Insects	43, 48	Wool	31
		Works—Public	14, 19

REPORT ON ABORIGINAL DEPARTMENT.

Aboriginal Department,
Darwin, 12th July, 1915.

His Excellency the Administrator,
Darwin.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

On the retirement of Mr. W. G. Stretton, the administrative work of the Aboriginal Department was attached to the Administrator's Office. The record for the past year is rather that of keeping in existence the organization laid down by Professor Spencer and Mr. Stretton, than attempting any new development. I have to thank Mr. Stretton for the advice and assistance he has so willingly afforded me since his retirement.

2. Speaking broadly, I think it may be said that the work of the Department has resulted in European employers of natives in the townships recognising that the aboriginal is a human being, to be treated as such, and, with few exceptions, one has little fault to find with the humanity of such employers. On the larger stations, I understand, the treatment of natives has always been fairly satisfactory, and it is satisfactory to be able to report that in the new settlement, at the Daly River and at Stapleton, there have been no complaints of the ill-treatment of natives, who appear to be ready and willing to work for any of the settlers. At the same time, if it is true that most employers are beginning to recognise their responsibilities to the native, there is also the necessity for teaching the native to recognise his share of the bargain in working for the white employer. Experience of the work in connexion with the protection of aborigines shows that the problem of the aborigines should be divided into "town" and "country" conditions, and to attempt to apply the same regulations to each leads to much difficulty.

3. Recognising that the aboriginal problem was different to those of ordinary administration, I obtained your consent to my meeting the inhabitants of Darwin at an open meeting, at which the question from the employers' point of view was fully discussed. A committee has been set up to make suggestions in regard to the amendment of the Act and Ordinance, and the draft of a proposed new Ordinance is nearly complete. Thanks are due to the Chief Protectors of Queensland and West Australia for the information and advice which they have given us.

4. The staff has undergone some changes during the past year. Mr. Beckett remains as inspector, and was absent for some months on a tour of inspection of the southern portion of the Territory. His report is attached hereto, and speaks for itself. I regret to report that Mr. Godfrey, who was Protector for the Darwin District, in addition to being Superintendent of the Kahlin Aboriginal Compound, died on 13th March, 1915. Mr. Godfrey's work at Kahlin and in Darwin generally was most successful. He had the confidence of the natives and of European employers, and never spared himself in the performance of his duties. Mrs. Godfrey, who acted as matron of the Compound, rendered valuable assistance, particularly in regard to teaching the native women and children sewing and domestic duties. Mr. Godfrey was succeeded by Protector MacDonal, transferred from Bowen Straits, to which station he was appointed on the resignation of Protector Murphy. Mr. Kelly, Protector at Pine Creek, has rejoined the police service, as the conditions at Pine Creek

have been considerably altered consequent upon the influx of railway workers, it was considered that the work there could be more easily and economically carried out by the police, whose staff had been increased. Mr. Kelly, of course, remains Protector for the Borroloola District. Mr. P. J. Love is still at the Daly River Station, where a substantial house has been erected, and he also acts as agent for the Advances to Settlers Board. Mrs. Jacobs resigned from the Kahlin School, owing to ill health, and I have pleasure in recording the faithful work performed by this lady whilst in charge of the school. She has been succeeded by Mrs. Holtze, who has had large experience in handling natives, and has known the Territory for many years. Mr. J. Cooper, honorary sub-Protector at Melville Island, also resigned, as he contemplated leaving Melville Island. Mr. Cooper has been of much assistance to the Department, particularly in taking charge of natives addicted to opium smoking and drinking, who required reformatory treatment. Now that he has resigned, the question of providing a reformatory station on one of the islands will require serious consideration. Both the Bathurst Island and Roper River Missions have willingly afforded all the assistance in their power in receiving natives who could not be trusted, but obviously there are limits to the work of a mission as a reformatory. The Rev. Regis Courbon, of Bathurst Island Mission, has been appointed Honorary Protector in the place of Mr. Cooper. The Rev. H. E. Warren, of Roper Mission Station, has also been appointed Honorary Protector for the district held for the mission operations. I wish to record my special thanks to the Rev. A. E. Laphorne, Wesleyan clergyman of Darwin, who, when Mrs. Jacobs was taken ill, and it was difficult to fill the position of teacher at the school, acted as such for some two months. Mr. Laphorne held Sunday School at the Compound during his residence in Darwin, and has in many practical ways shown his desire to assist and uplift the aboriginal.

5. At Oenpelli, dairy cattle which had been landed here from Queensland in very poor condition, and which did not thrive at Daly River, were sent to recuperate. Protector P. Cahill has already sent in a sample of butter from Oenpelli, which was submitted to an export firm in the south. They reported fully* (see Agricultural Report) and concluded their report as follows:—

"On the whole we are pleased with the sample of butter, and we see great possibilities ahead for the successful manufacture of same. . . . It has been proved beyond doubt that tropical countries can produce a butter that will carry and keep equally as well as butter made in more temperate regions."

The latest reports are that the cattle are now looking very well. The butter referred to was manufactured without any artificial refrigeration, and in February (one of the hottest months of the year). It is proposed to continue the experiment on these lines for the present year, and if results justify it, provision for a small butter factory will be sought. Mr. Cahill's wife and niece are supervising the dairy experiment, and deserve much credit for the way initial difficulties have been met, and largely overcome. I hope to make a fuller report when this experiment has been carried further.

6. With a view of reducing the number of buffalo bulls on Woolner reserve, a shooting party was organised by Protector Cahill. Some 360 hides were obtained, and these have been shipped to London. A good deal of the meat was preserved and sent to Kahlin Camp for use there. The war has unsettled the market for hides in the meantime, so that it is impossible to say what the financial results of the buffalo shooting will be.

7. At Kahlin camp, an additional building (used as a workroom) has been erected. Ordinary industrial work has also been continued, and several iron tanks, water canteens, &c., have been manufactured by the natives, under supervision, and sold. The average attendance at the school during the past year was some 25 children (mostly half-caste), and a large quantity of the clothing worn at the camp by the children has been made by themselves under the supervision of the matron (Mrs. Godfrey), who reports that the children take very kindly to such work, provided they do not get too much at a time. The health of the natives in the camps has been satisfactory, although, of course, there have been epidemics of measles and influenza. In addition to the workroom, a bake-house and oven has been erected by the natives, and it is hoped eventually to make all the bread required by the camp.

8. At Pine Creek, the commencement of railway construction created a difficulty which has been reported to you fully. I need only quote your own report last year, in which you wrote as follows:—"The possible effect on our non-moral native population of a large number of single men engaged in railway construction cannot be contemplated with equanimity, while the results to the men themselves, in a country where venereal diseases are too common, may be deplorable." The results you feared would be experienced are only too definite. Every effort is being made to minimise the evil, but it is an exceedingly difficult task.

9. At Alice Springs, provision has been made for a school for white, half-caste, and quadroon children. The white children attend in the morning, and the coloured in the afternoon; so far, reports are to the effect that good work is being done. The teacher (Mrs. Standley) has also been appointed matron in charge of the bungalow in which the children are housed. Her latest report is as follows:—

"On the 1st April I took up my duties as matron of the half-caste girls' bungalow. I have started the sewing class, which tends to be a great success. Up to date the girls have completed 22 articles, dresses, bodices and knickers for themselves and shirts for the boys. On the completion of the girls' bungalow I hope

to get everything in full going order. At present doing all I can to improve their condition."

10. *Payment to Natives*.—The payment of wages to natives by various Government Departments has worked quite satisfactorily, and at the end of June there were 290 trust accounts in existence. The total sum standing to the credit was £775 13s. 5d. in current account, and in addition there were six accounts in the Savings Bank with a credit of £85. I have hopes that several of the larger stations in the Territory will also adopt the plan of paying a proportion of the wages earned by the aboriginal to the Protector, so that some idea of thrift may be inculcated.

11. *Mission Stations*.—I am pleased to say that the relations between the Department and the mission stations at Bathurst Island and Roper River have been of the utmost cordiality.

12. *Crime*.—The crime list shows a diminution on the number for the previous year. Only five cases were serious—one for murder and one for manslaughter, and three for assault. The native charged with murder was acquitted, the others being found guilty. There were also fifty-six minor offences. The difficulty of preventing the debauchery of natives by "low-down" Asiatics continues, but with the demolition of the Chinese slums in Darwin, at all events, nefarious practices will be easier to prevent and detect than formerly. Reports of rather an alarming nature were received from Melville Island in regard to alleged murders by natives, and the prevalence of venereal disease amongst them. Mr. Stretton, S.M. (late Chief Protector of Aborigines) and Dr. Holmes (Chief Health Officer) carried out an exhaustive enquiry into these reports, assisted by Inspector Beckett, and, as has already been reported, they found the alleged murders happened several years ago, and that venereal disease was practically non-existent at present. That there had been contamination of the natives by the crews of visiting boats was evident, and I fear there is little doubt such experience will be repeated if many vessels call at the island. However, the lease of the island has recently changed hands, and it remains to be seen if there is likely to be much change in its management. If it becomes necessary, the establishment of a departmental aboriginal station there, with a Protector in charge, will be recommended.

I desire to express my thanks to the Inspector of Police and his staff, who spared no pains in carrying out any request which has been made to them. The Chief Health Officer has also afforded much valuable advice, and has inspected the camps on many occasions.

H. E. CAREY,
Chief Protector of Aborigines.

REPORT ON ABORIGINALS.

The Chief Protector of Aborigines, Darwin.
SIR,

I have the honour to submit herewith my report concerning the general condition of aborigines inspected by me during the period 8th June to 20th December, 1914. I travelled from Darwin to Alice Springs, including divergencies to the Murchison and Davonport Ranges, covering an extensive area comprising the Frew and Elkerdra Rivers, and their tributary creeks. Both these rivers were traversed from end to end, and the natives wherever they could be found visited. Altogether a distance of 3,000 miles was covered.

From January to March I was absent from duty on sick leave, in May I accompanied Mr. Stretton, S.M., and Dr. Holmes, in their inquiries at Melville Island, and at the end of this month I proceeded to Boroloola and Roper district on a further extended tour of inspection.

In the settled districts passed through, along the railway line and at Pine Creek and Katherine, the natives are under the supervision of police, who are also protectors. In present circumstances the natives are not by any means efficiently protected or controlled. In my opinion they will continue to suffer, and be a constant worry to protectors and the reputable public until a better code of regulations shall be made law, and the punishment of people who unduly interfere with them, be increased to much greater severity. The principle difficulty experienced by all protectors in adequately protecting natives lies in the fact that aboriginal evidence seldom gets credence when opposed to statement made on oath. My own experience, based upon a careful consideration of numerous cases, is that aborigines rarely give false testimony in a court of law. They invariably regard court proceedings with the greatest seriousness. I have known native evidence to be distorted by native interpreters whose knowledge of the tribal language has been imperfect, but in few cases have I had any reason to doubt the sincerity of the native witness. The testimony of coloured aliens, though usually supported by some peculiar form of oath or affirmation, is no more reliable, frequently very much less so, than that given under a caution, by aborigines. Moreover, Asiatics and other coloured aliens, who are the greatest source of trouble amongst the aborigines, almost always are able to fee a lawyer for their defence, whereas the aboriginal is usually thrown upon his own resources to get through the best way he can. Should the aboriginal be a myall, the chances of a clear presentation of his case are small indeed.

GOVERNMENT RATIONS.

Further afield where settlement is sparse, aborigines are for the most part living their lives in their own way contentedly enough, except in several places in the interior, where the haphazard distribution of Government rations has pauperized whole tribes, and rendered them idle, useless and unreliable. This is particularly noticeable in the vicinity of some telegraph stations on the overland telegraph line, where numerous natives hang around waiting for the dole of flour handed out to them from time to time. Owing to the number of natives who share in the distribution,

the allowance to each native is quite insufficient, consequently a whole tribe is kept in a state of constant hunger and whining complaint. It is stated by the distributors of rations that only those who are old and infirm, and the helpless young, get rations. That is true, inasmuch that it is to these that the rations are handed actually, but by reason of the peculiar communistic customs of these people, the rations are in every case passed on to others as soon as they reach the camps. As a matter of fact I have proved, by personal observation, that the old and infirm who are supposed to benefit most, really benefit the least. A most telling instance of the harmful effects of giving indiscriminate charity to a native tribe is exemplified in the Warramunga, which congregate at Tennant's Creek. According to the oldest settlers, this tribe was once the most numerous, most intelligent, and physically the best in Central Australia. They were great hunters, and were independent of all assistance. To-day the greater bulk of the tribe hang around the telegraph station, whining for flour and tobacco, and eking out the pittance given them by bartering stone knives and spear heads with passing travellers and prostituting their women. Moreover, they are the cause of serious trouble to travellers with stock on account of the lack of permanent water at Tennant's Creek. The only water supply at this place in the dry season is a soak-well upon which every one depends, when the waterhole close by dries up. This well gets low at the end of the dry season, but so far as I can learn, it has only once given out entirely. However, travellers are frequently held up and warned that they cannot get water for horses at Tennant's Creek, though at the same time upwards of a hundred natives and their dogs may be making free use of it. There is no reason whatever why this tribe should be encouraged to laze about the telegraph station, kept on Government rations, in a state of semi-starvation, while their natural hunting grounds, unspoiled by the squatter, teeming with game, splendidly and permanently watered, are available to them. The Warramunga tribe can easily obtain a good living on its own heritage along the water-course in the Davonport and Murchison Ranges. The Aluari, a neighbouring and friendly tribe on the east, who have a number of the Warramunga married amongst them, is a really fine tribe of aborigines, who occupy their country in a state of primitive savagery. This tribe many years ago, when the Frew and Elkerdra Rivers were stocked by the Alowie Pastoral Company, endeavoured to drive the settlers away by spearing cattle and attacking camps. According to the old men of the tribe, with whom I have talked, and white men who were in the country, the tribe suffered terribly for their mistakes. The stock were withdrawn, and the country lay abandoned for over twenty years. When a few years ago the old Frew station block was reoccupied by Messrs. Hanlon and Wickham, who put cattle and horses there, the natives met them with friendliness. A perfect understanding was arrived at by which both sides undertook to respect each other's rights. Mr. Hanlon told me that the natives had frequently rendered him great assistance by informing him of the wandering of his stock into the desert, where they would have perished for the want of water, and that not once had any of

his stock been hunted or interfered with in any way. The men have helped him to build huts and yards, and always have shown themselves eager to work and assist when required. In return the grazier gives them a liberal supply of meat whenever he kills, and rations when they work; protects them from molestation, and generally treats them in a fair and friendly way. What the grazier gives the natives in the way of food is a matter of small importance to them from the point of view of supply, for their country contains plenty of food. What the squatter gives is regarded as a friendly gift. During my journey through this part of the country, I did not see one native who was not well nourished and strong, with the exception, of course, of a few men crippled in tribal fights, and a few women injured by tribal punishment.

A good deal of grazing country has recently been applied for in the vicinity of the Frew and Elkedra blocks, and the probability is that the country will soon be stocked. It is to be hoped that the good understanding now established there will be carried on by others who may come in. Provided that the marriage laws and family customs of these people be not interfered with by new comers, there will be no danger of any outbreak between this fine tribe and the white occupiers of the country. I have purposely dwelt a little on the concerns of the Aluari tribe, in order to make it plain that the Warramunga, who are costing the Government a large sum of money each year, can just as easily maintain themselves on their own grounds which adjoin the Aluari, and are even better provisioned and watered, and with which tribe they can mix with perfect amity.

Another tribe—the Kaitichi—which has settled down round the Barrow Creek telegraph station, is also drawing Government rations, and deriving very little good from same. It is true that in this district waterholes, which formerly were regarded as permanent, have been filled in with drift sand by the encroachments of stock, and the natives, who continued to stay in the vicinity, have had to rely upon the stock wells sunk by the Government. There is, however, good hunting ground and permanent water in the tribal district of these people, to the west of the telegraph line, and on this country the able-bodied members of the tribe can find an abundant living. About a dozen very aged and infirm people are here, who appear to have no tribal friends left; these the Government could easily provide for at a small cost, were the rest of the tribe forced to go out to hunt. That the tribe are not by any means dependent upon Government rations is made clear by the fact that the supply at times runs right out. Months may elapse before the next supply arrives. Yet, although certain well meaning people have made a great deal about starving natives, no natives appear to have died of starvation. A telling instance of the absurdity of many of these alarmist reports was some time ago furnished at a station on the overland line, from which the report was sent out that aboriginals were dying of starvation. Instructions were issued to send relief rations immediately. The relief arrived at its destination over six months afterwards, when everyone had forgotten all about it. All the same, Mr. F. R. W. Scott, telegraph master at Barrow Creek, has frequently spent much of his own money in providing for aged aboriginals about his station in times of want. His sympathetic kindness to the natives has been unvarying.

At Alice Springs, the next location south, where rations are being distributed, and in the

outlying districts, settlers are much more numerous. As a consequence, the family lives of the aboriginals have been disturbed. The able-bodied have been taken into the service of householders, storekeepers, camel drivers, drovers, and others, the aged and young being left to fend for themselves. Thus many old people are absolutely dependent upon the Government for subsistence; and, as the half-caste progeny and their offspring are rapidly increasing, a well-equipped depôt will be a permanent necessity at this centre. At Alice Well the distribution appears to have been conducted on the wholesale scale; the year's supply received in August, 1914, was finished by the end of the next month.

In regard to Charlotte Waters it is likely that the natives drawing rations there have as much to do with South Australia as the Northern Territory, and some of them come in from the Finke River, where a mission station is subsidized by the Government to assist the natives.

The mining fields at Arltunga having quietened down to a state of inactivity (comparatively), most of the aboriginals who hung about the field have either gone "bush" or gone out amongst the grazing holdings. There seems now to be no need for large supplies at that place. I understand that the Protector at Arltunga did not transmit an order for supplies for 1915.

With the exception of Alice Springs, rations at all other places of distribution might reasonably be cut down by half. I would suggest (with the exception of Alice Springs) the only things sent be flour, tomahawks, blankets, and a few rolls of Turkey red for waistcloths, as the only natives requiring clothes in the far interior are those working for white people; the clothing required for them should be, and probably is, provided by the employers.

I wish to draw attention to the fact that in every instance the aboriginal flour inspected by me was of an inferior quality, in most cases decidedly bad. I do not know whose particular duty it is to pass the rations, but, as the Government pays a fair price for them, it should be somebody's duty to see that a fair article is delivered. It may be contended that the flour deteriorates in transit; to some slight extent this may be so, but as the flour delivered to white consumers generally arrives in fair order and condition, there is no reason why that ordered by the Government for aboriginals should not carry as well.

HALF-CASTES.

Wherever there is or has been a settlement of white or alien coloured people, half-caste children born of aboriginal mothers, are in evidence. The half-castes noticed by me along the overland telegraph line ranged from infants in arms to adults—men and women. The large proportion of infants makes it plain that the work commenced by the Department of gathering in and educating these children will have to be extended, as they are scattered widely over the whole of the Territory. The task will be no small one, but, in the interests of the children, the work should be undertaken wherever possible. Amongst them are many bright-faced, intelligent boys and girls, who, if given a chance to obtain an elementary education, would be able later in life to look after themselves and compete successfully for employment in the labour market. In their youth these children live in camps, and assimilate the habits, customs, and superstitions of the full-blooded aboriginals, and when later in life they are impelled by a natural desire to assert the "white side," and live and work with the whites, they find it practically impossible to escape from the

thralldom of the tribe, the members of which never give them peace so long as they can keep in communication with them. The fact that descent is traced through the maternal side, and that every half-caste regards his mother's husband as his father (the actual father being frequently unknown, and always tribally ignored), assists in cementing the half-caste to his tribe. These things make it difficult to give the half-caste a fair start on the road to a civilised life, unless he or she be removed in infancy, before even environment begins to affect the child's character. Wherever possible, this, I am of opinion, should be done. The Department has half-caste children at the compound at Kahlin, and at the newly-established home at Alice Springs, for whom education is being provided, but there is room for much extension of this work. The lot of the half-caste man is necessarily much easier than that of his sister. The boy is usually snapped up at an early age by some white man, who often enough teaches him a good deal of variable value. Generally, amongst other knowledge, he learns something useful, principally stock work, and is thus able to knock out a living, though this is often a hard and ill-requited one. He may have had a dozen masters before he is fifteen years of age, filling in time between jobs by returning to his tribe, who always give him a sympathetic welcome. Thus, unless he should have the luck to be taken in hand by some one who may take an interest in him, he remains to all intents and purposes a blackfellow.

The half-caste girl who remains with the tribe anywhere in the vicinity of a civilised settlement has one inevitable destiny, and that the most degraded,

It is freely stated that all half-castes are morally worthless; that the taint is in them, and that it must inevitably manifest itself. This, in my opinion, is cruelly false, and in nearly every case uttered without thought. That the half-caste girl without proper protection is more likely to become degraded than a white girl goes without saying, for she runs the risk, when the time and opportunity are favorable, of being actually sold by her tribal relatives for prostitution or taken away by force by some unscrupulous man who keeps her just as long as he cares to do so. Where half-caste girls have been given a fair chance and kindly treatment they do not go wrong; in fact, they exhibit a plain repulsion to follow any such sort of life. In cases where half-caste girls are living in open immorality, the history if looked into proves the impossibility of the girl taking any other course.

At Alice Springs and the districts around the half-caste problem is a very serious one. Half-castes are increasing, and the progeny of half-caste women are also becoming numerous.

These quadroon and octroon children are in many instances purely and positively "white." Several infants seen by me in the arms of lubras had golden hair, blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, and skins as white as that of any fair white child. Where available, these children, with their dusky mothers, have been brought to a building close by the police station, where food and clothing are provided for them. The accommodation, however, was quite inadequate to cope with the demand, for it has since been increased, and the constant care by a suitable matron was urgently necessary. The appointment of Mrs. Standley as matron of the half-castes' home followed my representation upon this point, and should relieve the position considerably. The white fathers of some of these children are known, but none of them offer to support their offspring. The half-caste children of school age now in the home are being taught at the local State school. They were, when I saw them, taking an interest in their lessons, and making commendable progress. Mrs. Standley, their teacher, stated that their intelligence was quite up to the average, and, in fact, one or two were more than ordinarily bright.

Corporal Stott, Protector at Alice Springs, told me that the half-caste men working in the district were quite as efficient as any others; several held fair positions on the larger stations, and were regarded as good cattle men. One young man, who has been looked after from infancy by Mr. F. R. W. Stott, of Barrow Creek, has land under permit from the Crown, and owns cattle, horses, and sheep. He is a steady young fellow, free from vice of any kind. Possibly other young half-castes would be as well off as he were the same opportunity and treatment afforded them.

One of the Cable Guard in Darwin is a half-caste; according to Captain Lewis, he is one of the smartest and most reliable young soldiers in the Corps. His white comrades think highly of him, for, in addition to his general military efficiency, he is a fine shot and a good all-round athlete and sport.

As I have stated in a separate report, here is a future for the half-caste youth. The military life is one they would take to with the greatest zest, and for which they are eminently suitable. As regular soldiers an honorable future would be assured them. They are for the most part strapping, well-set-up, young men, quick, alert, and courageous, and all good horsemen.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. T. BECKETT,

Chief Inspector of Aborigines.

19th June, 1915.