

1877.
—
VICTORIA.

THIRTEENTH REPORT

OF

THE BOARD

FOR THE

PROTECTION OF THE ABORIGINES

IN

THE COLONY OF VICTORIA.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

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R E P O R T.

Melbourne, 30th June 1877.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY—

The Board for the Protection of the Aborigines has the honor to submit this its Thirteenth Report on the Condition of the Aborigines of the Colony.

1. A Royal Commission having been appointed in January last by Your Excellency to “enquire into and report upon the present condition of the Aborigines,” &c., the Board deems it inadvisable, pending the report of that Commission, to offer any remarks on the progress or management of the various stations under its control.

The reports of the late General Inspector and of the managers, which are appended, are generally so full that it is unnecessary to offer any comment upon them.

2. The Board has held twelve ordinary and seven special meetings during the past year, of which a return showing the attendance of the members is attached in Appendix No. VIII.

3. The Board has to regret the loss by death of one of its members, David Thomas, Esq., M.P., and the resignation of another, James McBain, Esq., M.P.

4. The number of natives usually frequenting and residing on the different stations during the years 1875-6 and 1876-7 is as follows :—

	1875-6.		1876-7.
Coranderrk	137	...	145
Framlingham	63	...	59
Lake Coudah	89	...	85
Lake Hindmarsh	67	...	65
Lake Wellington	81	...	86
Lake Tyers	63	...	87
	500	...	527

The Board, feeling the necessity for more accurately ascertaining the total number of Aborigines in the colony, had a census taken on the 15th March last, the result of which will be seen in Appendix No. IX. The census shows that only a moiety of the remnant of our native population is resident on the aboriginal stations. It is very desirable that the others, most of whom are at present supplied with food and clothing through the local guardians, should be brought under the civilizing influence of some of the stations.

5. The number of births and deaths at each of the stations during the periods specified is as follows :—

	Births.	Deaths.	Remarks.
Coranderrk	11	11	15 months.
Lake Wellington	5	8	18 "
Lake Hindmarsh	7	10	18 "
Lake Tyers	5	5	12 "
Lake Coudah	7	7	18 "
Framlingham	4	4	12 "
Total	39	45	

The Board is glad to observe that the excessive mortality amongst the Aborigines at Coranderrk which was so marked last year has very materially diminished, and that the health of the natives, both there and at the other stations, is on the whole tolerably good.

6. The gross proceeds of the product of the various stations are as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Coranderrk	1,731	1	8
Lake Wellington	459	13	2
Lake Hindmarsh	306	14	9
Lake Tyers	59	7	6
Lake Condah	89	11	0
Framlingham	28	0	0

It will be seen by this statement that the produce of the hop crop at Coranderrk is increasing in quantity as well as in value every year.

7. In Appendix No. XI. will be found a return of the number of children attending the schools at each of the stations. The Board would particularly direct attention to the report of the Government inspectors, under the Educational Department, on the Lake Wellington and Lake Tyers schools, showing how capable the native children are of receiving instruction.

8. The Board has been enabled this year, through the liberality of Parliament, to make a small grant of money to each of the stations, for the purpose of repairing and building dwelling houses and erecting permanent improvements, which were much required. At Ramahyuck a large dormitory and boarding house has been erected, at a cost of £157. At Coranderrk the huts worth being maintained are being made more comfortable and healthy by the supply of flooring boards, which will be properly raised from the ground to secure ventilation and avoid damp; while the materials for the erection of five new huts have been procured, and they will be proceeded with as soon as possible.

9. The Board has, since its last report, lost the services of its General Inspector, Mr. C. S. Ogilvie, who resigned his position; and his post has been supplied by the appointment of Mr. A. M. A. Page, who acts as General Inspector and Secretary.

10. In order to show that the Aborigines are capable of and willing to work, Appendix No. XII. has been attached, giving the number of bushels of hops which were picked by all who were employed at Coranderrk during the last summer, by which it will be seen that the Aborigines earned more than the European or Chinese laborers, and that the largest quantity gathered in one day by any two laborers (it being the practice in hop picking to work in couples) was by two of the aboriginal natives.

11. The Board is very desirous of placing all the stations in an independent position, and believes that, to accomplish this object, it will be necessary to enlarge some of the stations, fence in those which are unfenced, and supply all with an adequate number of suitable stock and implements. This would necessitate a special vote of £3,000; but the result would be that, at an earlier date, the stations would become self-supporting; the natives taught habits of frugality, independence, and industry; and the annual grant could afterwards be very considerably reduced.

(Signed)

F. R. GODFREY,
Vice-Chairman.

To His Excellency Sir George F. Bowen, K.G.C.M.G.,
&c., &c., &c.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

SIR,

69 Temple Court, 10th April 1877.

As I am about to retire from my position as General Inspector to the Board for Protection of Aborigines, and as I believe it is the intention of the Royal Commission to examine me before I leave Melbourne, I consider it my duty to give the Board so much of my experience as is contained in the following remarks.

1. I think missionaries necessarily make better managers than laymen, because they are likely to throw more heart into the work; and I think this more especially refers to the Moravians, because I believe they are not only educated for the purpose, but are so provided for by their church as to preclude the necessity of their taking any care for their worldly welfare.

2. I think great good has resulted from having centralized a large proportion of the Aborigines on the stations, as it has been the means of prolonging many lives; the young have been educated, and all have been advanced to a certain extent in civilized life; but it must be remembered that this system, so analogous to that of a poor-house, does little to encourage self-dependence, provision for the future, and other qualities necessary to make people useful members of a community.

3. I think, therefore, that a system of decentralization should now be gradually introduced *on all the stations*—by which I mean that the adults should be encouraged, under certain restrictions, to leave the stations in search of work, and that it should be *compulsory* on the youth of both sexes that they should be apprenticed to responsible masters and mistresses immediately after their education was completed, the stations never being closed against any in periods of sickness or distress, nor to the young when wishing to visit their parents or friends during the holidays.

4. This, on the adults, would probably have no other practical effect than showing them that if they elected to remain on the stations they must be amenable to the discipline there, as I do not imagine many would take advantage of the liberty offered them; but I think by apprenticing the youth a great advance would be made towards the absorption of the whole race into the general community eventually.

5. As Mr. Hagenauer informed me that some of the Aborigines on the station under his charge had been placed by him on the electoral roll for the district, I think the Board should consider whether this is an advisable proceeding, as long as they reside on any of the stations. My own opinion is, that even if it is legal, it is inadvisable.

6. As the Coranderrk station will not bear favorable comparison with any of the other stations, either as to its climate or its state of discipline, it may be well to remind you that it was the intention of the Board to counteract the effect of the severe climate there, on many of the people, by forming a new station in the more genial climate of the Lower Murray, to which any suffering from lung disease might be removed in the winter.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) C. S. OGILVIE.

F. R. Godfrey, Esq., M.P.,

Vice-Chairman of Board for Protection of Aborigines.

APPENDIX II.

SIR,

Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, 30th June 1877.

In accordance with instructions, I have the honor to report.

The number of Aborigines at this station during the past fifteen months has been:—

1876.			1877.		
	Total.	Average Attendance daily.		Total.	Average Attendance daily.
April	147	139	January	144	143
May	145	143	February	147	147
June	141	139	March	146	146
July	144	144	April	146	142
August	145	142	May	145	141
September	146	144	June	143	142
October	147	145			
November	144	142			
December	143	141			

The number of births during the above period was 11; deaths, 11; decrease, *nil*. Marriages during same period, 7.

