

1948.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

REPORT

ON THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

FOR

YEAR 1946-47.

By Authority :

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Darwin,
1st June, 1948.

The Honorable the Minister for the Interior,
Department of the Interior,
Canberra, A.C.T.

SIR,

I have the honour to present my first official report as Administrator of the Northern Territory.

I took up my appointment on 1st July, 1946, but, as you are aware, I spent some six weeks prior to that date in the Territory and took every opportunity to move around the area and visit as many of the districts as was possible. I then took over duties from the Government Secretary, who was Acting Administrator.

During this year I have endeavoured to cover all districts of the Northern Territory by air and by road, and I am pleased to inform you that I have been successful in meeting most of the inhabitants in the further remote areas which are normally inaccessible to the every-day traveller.

My main object for the first year of appointment was to look into the system of administration, and to ascertain whether the two major pursuits of the Territory, pastoral and mining, were being developed along the right lines.

I found it necessary to re-organize the Northern Territory Administration Branch proper, which re-organization has taken place to the great benefit, not only to the public servants working in the Administration, but to the residents of the Territory as a whole.

With regard to the two major pursuits, I am sure that with the appointment of the Director of Lands and the Director of Mines, these two important branches will function quite efficiently as there is already a framework which can be enlarged upon and be utilized to good purpose. I have no doubt that these two main branches will become even more solid as the years progress.

The Native Affairs Branch has had appointed to its service, Mr. F. H. Moy, M.B.E., as Director, and I am very happy to report that this officer has shown great promise already in his important position controlling aboriginal welfare in the Northern Territory, with its many and varied aspects.

The veterinary service of the Northern Territory was handed over from the Commonwealth Department of Health to this Administration during this year. This service, now known as the Animal Industry Division, is ably controlled by Lt.-Col. A. L. Rose, O.B.E., who will have eventually a staff of six veterinary officers serving under him. I have handed over to this Branch the whole control of stock routes, provision of bores on stock routes, as well as the normal functions of veterinary services. I am very pleased to state that this new branch is functioning excellently. I have every faith in a very successful future under the control of Lt.-Col. Rose.

The Branch is still situated in Alice Springs, and I consider it will remain there for probably three years before eventually transferring its head-quarters to Darwin.

All the Branches have now been transferred to Darwin with the exception of the Mines Branch, Courts and the Animal Industry Division.

I am sure that I can do no better for this first report than to summarize hereunder the various activities of the Branches, their progress and their success or otherwise as I see it. My future reports will follow this pattern of a brief summary in the general report with the various Branch reports being forwarded to your Department to be held there for reference or for distribution to interested persons.

1. GENERAL.

During the year the Northern Territory was visited by a number of people from all parts of the world.

Outstanding among these visitors were Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, who remained in the Northern Territory from the 15th August, on which day the Royal Party arrived in Darwin, until their departure for Canberra from Alice Springs on 25th August. Visits were made to Koolpinyah Station, Katherine, Manbulloo and Elsey Stations, Daly Waters and Tennant Creek. His Royal Highness again passed through Darwin by air, staying overnight at the Residency on 17th-18th January, 1947.

The distinguished American lecturer and explorer, Captain Carl von Hoffman, and party, arrived in Darwin on 5th September, and later travelled overland to Adelaide, securing motion picture and letterpress material, the tour being sponsored by the Department of Information.

From the 5th to the 9th November, Sir Harold Clapp remained in the Territory and visited inland centres.

run on sound, educational lines and is under the control of a capable committee. Treasury has been approached with a view to making available a subsidy of £250 per year to each approved pre-school centre.

GENERAL.

Although the teachers have been working under major difficulties, not only have they been teaching very efficiently but they have been raising interest in education, and parents' and school committees are now functioning in the major schools. The standard of work in the schools for the past twelve months reflects great credit upon the teachers and all who are supporting them. It is hoped that the Alice Springs School, in particular, will have a very high percentage of passes in the coming Intermediate Examination of South Australia.

7. PATROL SERVICE.

There is only one vessel in the Patrol Service at present, the *Kuru*, which is a converted Navy motor launch and was taken over from the Royal Australian Navy in June, 1946, and arrived in Darwin early in July.

During her first twelve months' service, the *Kuru* has covered the whole of the Northern Territory coastline and has steamed a distance of 8,141 nautical miles.

Seaborne activity on the coast has been nil, with the exception of a few small vessels bought from Commonwealth Disposals and which are proceeding to the eastern States.

8. PEARLING.

Pearling has not yet been resumed in the Northern Territory, and I understand the sole reason is the shortage of suitable craft. Once craft are available, then crews will be obtained. It has been decided that indenturing of labour may be permitted for the pearling industry under special conditions.

Two vessels have operated from Darwin, neither vessel, though, being completely fitted for pearling, and they were manned with amateur crews. These vessels failed to find any shell and eventually proceeded away from Darwin again.

Interest has been taken in pearling from Darwin by firms which are already operating from Broome in Western Australia and from Thursday Island, but nothing definite is as yet known of their intentions.

9. NATIVE AFFAIRS.

The year under review was essentially one of re-organization of all Native Affairs Branch functions which had been carried out in a severely restricted form by a skeleton staff with limited facilities during the war period.

When the Department of the Army relinquished supervision of natives from settlements which they had established, the Branch was faced with a rather difficult problem because those settlements were situated in localities quite unsuited for further development. Early demolition and abandonment was decided upon, and the establishment of new settlements to accommodate natives was resolved. At the end of this year a definite solution had been reached by the creation of four new settlements, the purchase of a pastoral property and considerable development of other settlements which had been retained from prior to the war.

Five hundred half-caste women and children who had been evacuated to Missions and settlements in southern States, and who had returned to the Territory in April, 1946, have now been repatriated fully to missions and homes in rural areas. Families who resided in Darwin before the war have been provided with accommodation in the town area or with dwellings in the Bagot Reserve, but all problems of rehabilitation have not been confined to natives formerly in Army employ or who were evacuated to southern areas.

Prior to the war a large proportion of mission station natives had lived a nomadic and natural life, but their sudden introduction to European food and amenities and their impact with large numbers of Service personnel created an additional problem and the missions have not seemed as though they are capable of a ready solution to this problem, mainly because they themselves are suffering under severe disabilities owing to lack of staff, supplies and transport facilities. During this coming year I anticipate that much progress and development will be made with these natives, as the missions have now been informed that they are to work in close collaboration with the Native Affairs Branch and every prospect exists for considerable improvement, when I hope that normal conditions will prevail.

STAFF.

Mr. F. H. Moy, M.B.E., was appointed Director of Native Affairs on 14th November, 1946, *vice* Mr. E. W. P. Chinnery retired. Mr. Moy immediately set about inspections of all Native Affairs' functions, settlements and mission stations which entailed extensive travel by road, sea

and air. Resulting from these investigations, a definite policy of welfare in all its phases was determined which follows very closely my own appreciation of Native Affairs' policy, and this means that the policy will be implemented in the forthcoming year by the inauguration of new projects and amendments to legislation.

Mr. V. G. Carrington, District Officer, Alice Springs, who had deputised for the Director of Native Affairs in the southern division, left Alice Springs on 7th May, 1947, for Brisbane, and this work in the southern district has been carried out by Mr. W. McCoy, Superintendent of the Bungalow Half-Caste Institution, who was appointed Acting Patrol Officer on 5th August, 1946.

Mr. E. Syms was appointed manager of the newly-acquired Beswick Cattle Station on 15th April, 1947.

Early in 1947 Patrol Officer Sweeny commenced a five months' course of special duty at the Sydney University and this course will be attended by all the Cadet Patrol Officers in turn, with, I am sure, a marked degree of improvement in their efficiency to fit them for their future work as Patrol Officers.

In common with the other Administration Branches, a complete re-organization of the Native Affairs Branch was carried out, and I am sure that in the future this Branch will not suffer from the lack of permanent officers which, in the past, has entailed important field and executive functions being performed by temporary employees.

LEGISLATION.

No amendment to existing legislation was effected during the year, although recommendations have been made with the object of abolishing the Aboriginal Medical Benefit Fund. An amendment to the Principal Ordinance to provide improved conditions of employment of aborigines in the mining industry was finalized and new conditions controlling employment of aborigines in the pastoral industry have also been determined. Workmen's compensation for aboriginal employees and native courts legislation also reached the drafting stage. All these amendments and improvements I hope to bring forward as legislation within the coming year.

BUFFALO SHOOTING INDUSTRY.

Following reports concerning the employment of female aborigines in the buffalo shooting industry, a full investigation was made and the following remedial measures were introduced :—

- (a) Employment of female aborigines prohibited.
- (b) Licences to employ aborigines will be cancelled if male aboriginal employees are not adequately paid and maintained.
- (c) Patrol Officers will undertake intensive supervision of buffalo shooting camps and will thoroughly investigate all aspects of the industry.

Results of such observations will provide me with a basis to amend legislation concerning the employment of aborigines in this industry, but it may take some time before all aspects can be examined as the shooters are remote from police supervision and Native Affairs' control, and are inaccessible for long periods of the year.

ABORIGINAL RESERVES.

On 27th June, 1947, I approved that an area of 845 square miles, situated on the Victoria River, south of Wave Hill Station, should be proclaimed an aboriginal reserve. This reserve will be called the "Catfish Reserve", and a native settlement will be established in the area at Hookers Creek. The functions of this settlement will be to serve as a haven for dependants of the natives residing on adjoining pastoral properties, serve as a centre for educational and medical facilities, and will provide scope for establishing native industry and training in pastoral pursuits, which will provide trained workers for employment in the pastoral industry.

FINANCIAL.

Approved estimates for the year provided for expenditure as follows :—

	£
Maintenance of aborigines including the aged and infirm ..	31,150
Maintenance of depots and establishments and half-caste children at missions	19,050
Assistance to native missions	4,280
Plant and equipment	3,470
Buildings and new works, water supply, roads	50,831
	108,781

NATIVE WELFARE—PROTECTION POLICY.

On 31st January, 1947, the Director of Native Affairs represented the Department of the Interior on a committee which met in Melbourne to discuss the welfare of aboriginals in its relation to the guided projectile range project.

On 3rd and 4th February, 1947, the Director of Native Affairs represented the Department of the Interior at a meeting of the Aboriginal Authorities of South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, under the Chairmanship of Professor A. P. Elkin. This conference discussed, *inter alia*, the welfare of natives in the Northern Territory and the development of native training under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme.

MISSIONS.

The return of the half-caste children of the Methodist faith to Croker Island was effected early this year and the mission is now endeavouring to carry out its functions which were disturbed by the evacuation due to the war. Many improvements have already been effected, including an extensive garden scheme and new buildings.

The female inmates of the Roman Catholic Half-Caste Mission at Melville Island, who were returned there last year from Hawker, South Australia, have settled down very well. The mission has purchased a number of Sidney Williams huts to provide extra dormitory and school accommodation. A plan of technical training for the boys has been formulated and will be put into effect when the equipment is obtainable.

The St. Mary's Church of England Hostel at Alice Springs was declared an Aboriginal Institution for the maintenance, custody and care of half-castes in December this year, and under the care of Deaconess Heath has rendered excellent service to half-caste children of Alice Springs. This hostel is controlled by the Australian Board of Missions.

The Aborigines Inland Mission has established a half-caste mission and crèche at the Bagot Aboriginal Reserve and this reserve also functions as a hostel for half-caste women employed in the Darwin area. Miss Shankleton has rendered valuable service to this community, both in the capacity of Superintendent of the Mission and as Native Welfare Worker. Native Affairs Branch is responsible for the rationing and clothing of the inmates, whilst provision of staff is the Mission's responsibility.

The half-caste children at the Mulgoa Church of England Half-caste Home in New South Wales have not yet been returned to the Territory as it was originally intended that accommodation would be provided for them at Groote Eylandt. However, I have suggested that they be accommodated at the Church of England Hostel, Alice Springs, and looked after by the Australian Board of Missions. This matter will receive consideration and the whole subject should be finalized during this coming year.

In December, 1946, permission was granted for two members of the Baptist Union of Australia to commence welfare work at the Yuendumu Inland Settlement, at Mount Doreen.

NATIVE SETTLEMENTS.

The purchase of Beswick Cattle Station was finalized in April this year, and an experienced cattle man has been appointed as manager. In the initial stages the station will produce beef for supply to native settlements in the northern division, but my aim is that ultimately this station will be developed as a training centre for aboriginals to fit them for employment in the cattle-raising industry and allied pursuits.

Considerable equipment has been purchased for the Snake Bay Native Settlement and my intention here is to establish a complete saw-milling project on Melville Island centre at Snake Bay. A timber survey has proved that sufficient cypress timber stands exist to supply Darwin with good sawn timber for many years to come. I can see no reason why this project will not become one of the most successful of any undertaken by the Native Affairs Branch. I expect the mill will be producing sawn cypress for Darwin rebuilding in this coming year.

Four bores have been sunk and equipped at the Haasts Bluff Native Settlement. I intend to purchase cattle next year to graze on this reserve. Considerable improvements have been carried out in the matter of accommodation for staff and gardens for inmates.

As mentioned previously, the Bagot Reserve is used now for half-caste inmates because I have removed the aboriginal population to a selected site at Berrimah, on which an abandoned Royal Australian Air Force camp was located. It is intended to proclaim the new site as an aboriginal reserve shortly and this reserve will be used as a lodging-place for aboriginals employed in the Darwin area and also as a transit depot for aboriginals passing through Darwin.

New buildings have been erected at the Yuendumu Native Settlement and water reticulation facilities for gardens and domestic use have been provided. An aerodrome has also been constructed and a modern wireless transceiver set installed.

The Delissaville Native Settlement has been greatly improved. A saw bench and engine have now been installed together with a number of Sidney Williams huts which have been erected by the inmates of the settlements. I anticipate valuable supplies of timber coming from the Delissaville area which should completely rehabilitate the settlement.

A considerable quantity of equipment and building material, including Sidney Williams huts, have been acquired from the Commonwealth Disposals Commission for the future use of any native settlements where it is deemed necessary. In all cases the demolition work was carried out by the aboriginals who are also assisting in the erection of buildings on the new sites.

VISITORS.

During the year many notable personages visited aboriginal reserves and missions, the most important visit being that of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. The natives entertained them with dances and songs at both the Jay Creek and Bagot Reserve settlements.

His Excellency Sir Willoughby Norrie, Governor of South Australia, visited the Bathurst Mission in May this year, whilst in August of last year Professor A. P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at the Sydney University, visited mission stations in the Arnhem Land Reserve and later, reserves in Central Australia.

Other prominent persons to visit the area included Captain von Hoffman, American explorer and lecturer ; Professor E. G. Moll of the Oregon University, United States of America ; and Mr. I. Lattimer of the British Overseas Airways Corporation.

10. LANDS AND SURVEYS.

As with other Sections of the Administration, following some years with head-quarters at Alice Springs, the Lands and Survey Section returned to Darwin during the year.

(A) LANDS.

During the year, blocks of pastoral country were advertised as open for selection, being the first blocks to be made available since the beginning of the war.

Activities were restricted considerably due to a shortage of staff. In the Elliott town site, town leases of lands were auctioned in January, 1947.

Areas occupied, reserved, and unoccupied as at 30th June, 1947, are shown as under, totalling 335,116,800 acres :—

	Acres.
Alienated	457,270
Leased or held under licence—	
Pastoral	104,497,920
Other tenures	49,703,470
Reserves	44,373,812
Unoccupied and unreserved	136,084,328
	£ s. d.
Land revenue collected for the year	38,495 19 8

(B) SURVEYS.

The year commenced with a shortage of staff but by its end, the return of three draftsmen from war service had improved the position. Field staff numbers remained unchanged.

Property claims for both existing properties and those destroyed during the war years engaged the attention of the Chief Surveyor and his staff, 200 cases of property investigation and reports being completed during the year.

Surveys of the layout of the new Darwin Town Plan have been continuous and changeable due to the several amendments made by the Town Planning Section of the Department of Works and Housing necessitating re-surveys. After investigations on the ground, a new township has been designed at Elliott and several lots were disposed of at auction.

Detailed surveys have been carried out in the following localities :—Darwin (including Royal Australian Air Force Airport), Adelaide River, Hayes Creek, Pine Creek, Katherine, Elliott, Barkly Tableland (deviation of stock route), Tennant Creek, Wycliffe Well and the Alice Springs district.

In August, 1946, the Chief Surveyor (Mr. A. R. Miller), became a member of the Town Planning Advisory Committee and later chairman of a sub-committee formed to deal with leasing and tenancies of Darwin properties and the control of new temporary buildings, and