PLANNING
A PROGRAM
FOR ABORIGINES
IN THE 1950s
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Northern Territory Library Service
Darwin 1990
OCCASIONAL PAPERS

2. The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory, by Bishop John Patrick O'Loughlin. (1986)
15. The Queensland Road, by Peter Forrest. (1990)
INTRODUCTION

This informal talk was delivered by Harry Giese at the State Reference Library of the Northern Territory on 19 August 1987, as one of a series of 'lunchtime entertainments'.

Harry Giese had a distinguished career in Aboriginal affairs and in welfare administration in the Territory, serving as Director of Welfare from 1954 until 1970 and then as Assistant Administrator (Welfare) until the end of 1972. There is no one more qualified to speak about those formative years in the fifties, when he supervised the implementation of Sir Paul Hasluck's policies and programs.
PLANNING A PROGRAM FOR ABORIGINES IN THE 1950s

Speaking here is almost like coming home; because the Research, Policy and Public Relations Section of the Welfare Division was located in this building, and included in their operations an excellent library, both film and print, on Aboriginal affairs, put together mainly by Ted Milliken. Unfortunately, when changes were made in the Department in 1972, this library was dissipated to the four winds, most of it going to Canberra.

I am concerned that people should appreciate the circumstances within which decisions on Aboriginal affairs were made in the immediate post-war years, and so have an insight into the rationale behind these decisions.

This was a period in the Territory's history when a number of new and innovative programs for Aborigines were being developed; unfortunately there is a considerable amount of misrepresentation and misinformation abroad about what actually went on over that period.

To set the record straight it will be necessary to obtain the stories of people who lived through that period, including the people who planned and carried out the programs and the Aborigines who experienced the effects of such programs. This would include people like Bill Coburn, whom I see in the audience, who worked in the field as a teacher and as a patrol officer, and can speak of the relationships that were developing between the workers in the field and the Aborigines, particularly the leading Aborigines.

Only a very few of these Aborigines have had their stories recorded; probably the best known of these is Philip Roberts, whose work during this period, particularly in the medical and health fields, is told by Douglas Lockwood in I, the Aboriginal. Jane Goodale, in Tiwi Wives, relates the story of Happy Cook of Milikapiti, who was the second tribal Aboriginal full-time teacher. (Happy is still teaching at Milikapiti). There are many other women, such as Mungawa from Goulburn Island, who also became full-time teachers, and others who contributed by participating in the programs being provided in Aboriginal education, health, economic development, vocational training and local government.

In his book Desert People Dr Meggitt looks briefly at some of these programs. He and his wife lived for eight years with the Walbiri, travelling from Hooker Creek to Yuendumu to Philip Creek and Warrabri, and saw programs at work first hand. He uses Abie Jungala as one of his main informants.

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1 Now called Lajamanu
Abie is still living at Hooker Creek, and it would be very interesting to record his version of those years. Another Aborigine who made a major contribution to this community was Morris Luther, but unfortunately Morris is now dead.

I am glad that Brother John Pye is currently writing a book which includes the stories of some of the outstanding Aborigines from the Catholic missions.

It is very important that we record the stories of the Aboriginal people who were the recipients of the programs that were provided during this period. If we do not do this shortly, most of these people will have died and this part of our history will be lost forever. I am referring to people like Engineer Jack, Charlie Lingiari, Nat Williams, who was the leader of the Warramunga tribe that helped to set up Warrabri. Engineer Jack and Charlie Lingiari are still alive - they would be in their late sixties or early seventies. We have already lost Nat Williams and others like him, such as Silas Roberts, who could have made outstanding contributions to a clearer understanding of events of that period.

In order to view this period objectively and correctly, we must obtain as many perspectives as we can. I have one perspective, individual staff members would have other perspectives, depending on whether they were administrators, teachers, patrol officers and so on. The Aborigines would have yet another perspective. It is essential that we get the views of the Aborigines on what went on during this period; the views of the old men and women with whom the discussions were held when new programs were being introduced, and the views of the young men, the Tipilouras, the Tungutalums, the Lanhupuys, all past or present members of the NT Legislative Assembly.

Before turning to the policies and programs Paul Hasluck developed in the Territory, let me briefly set the historical background as far as Aboriginal affairs goes. In this we are very fortunate to have the records of people like Basedow, Spencer and Gillen, the report of Bleakley, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, and of Donald Thomson, to name just a few. There were also the works of anthropologists such as Elkin, Meggitt, Strehlow, Stanner, the Berndts, and of linguists like Capel. All these had a bearing on the type of programs that were developed during the fifties.

Amongst this list, the name of Dr Mick Cook should not be forgotten. Unfortunately, it is fashionable today to deride his work, but I think it fair to say that there would be fewer tribal Aborigines living in the Northern Territory today but for the work which Dr Cook did towards malaria and leprosy prevention and eradication. He was a product of the University of Sydney, a Wandsworth Scholar, and had been to the London School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. In 1927, he was appointed to the dual posts of Chief Medical Officer of the Northern Territory and Chief Protector of Aboriginals.
Prior to Mick Cook, Baldwin Spencer and Basedow had held the position of Chief Protector of Aboriginals for short periods, but generally the South Australian Administration used policemen as Protectors. In those very early days, the major contribution to the 'welfare' of Aborigines was that, in times of stress, such as periods of drought or starvation, the Aborigines could come into the strategically located police stations and receive rations. After Mick Cook's appointment in 1927, although the police continued to act as Protectors, officials other than policemen were also appointed as Protectors.

Cook remained as Chief Medical Officer and Chief Protector of Aboriginals until 1939, when he resigned after a serious disagreement with the Minister for the Interior over the recommendations contained in the Bleakley Report. The position of Chief Protector of Aboriginals was filled by Dr EWP Chinnery, an anthropologist from Papua New Guinea. This marked a change in the Government's approach to Aboriginal Affairs, which was then taken away from the Health Department and established as a separate entity. Three months after he took up his post, the war forced Chinnery's evacuation to Alice Springs, and he never returned to Darwin.

The war resulted in a significant increase in the contact between tribal Aborigines and white people in the Territory, which, up to that time, had been very meagre and sporadic. Thousands of service personnel poured into the Territory, not just to the mainland, but to the offshore islands as well, to Bathurst and Melville Islands, to Milingimbi and Yirrkala, to Elcho Island. All along the north-south line staging camps were set up to service the road teams that brought supplies, services and personnel to the north, and Aborigines were encouraged to come into these camps and take up employment.

A large number of Aborigines did settle in these camps, at places like Barrow Creek, Mataranka, Katherine and Elliott. Most lived in encampments round the staging areas, but some were provided with barracks accommodation. Most of these Aborigines were from the Walbiri; some comment on this particular period in Aboriginal/white contact is provided by Meggitt.

At this time, members of the Services' Army Education Unit prepared a report on the condition and education of the Aborigines. The authors were Coates, later to become Professor of Education at Melbourne University, Chinnery, and Groves who became Papua New Guinea's first Director of Education during Paul Hasluck's regime.

After the war, the Government brought down the Northern Territory Administration Act of 1947. Among other things this set up the Northern Territory Legislative Council, a council of seven official and six elected members, which first met in February 1948. The Chifley Labor Government of the day appointed Mick Driver as Administrator, and Frank Moy was put in charge of Aboriginal Affairs. Moy had been a
member of ANGAU, a special group in New Guinea, and had some training in working in the field with indigenous people.

In 1950, the first Aboriginal schools in the Territory were established by the Commonwealth Office of Education. Education Officer Newby (later Director of Education in Papua New Guinea) set up schools at Bagot in Darwin and at The Bungalow in Alice Springs. Steps were also taken to open schools in other Aboriginal communities such as Jay Creek and Yuendumu, which had previously been set up as ration stations under the control of the Aboriginal Affairs Branch of the Northern Territory Administration, a departure from the previous practice of having ration stations under police jurisdiction.

In 1951, following Menzies' victory at the polls, Paul Hasluck became Minister for Territories, with responsibility for Papua New Guinea, the Northern Territory, Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and a few other dependencies offshore.

With others, Dudley McCarthy (later to become Australian Ambassador to Spain) and Fred Rose (sometime Professor of Anthropology in East Germany), together with Penglase (another New Guinea expatriate) and Reg Marsh, who came from the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, and was to become an Assistant Administrator in the Territory, were given the task of developing legislation to be introduced into the Legislative Council, legislation which was to set the framework for completely new policy and administrative approaches to Aboriginal affairs.

This legislation sought to deal with people, not on a racial basis, but on the basis of their special needs. In the first Bill introduced to the Legislative Council in 1952, there was no reference to Aborigines. Instead there were references to wards. Anybody who met certain criteria in terms of special needs could be declared wards of the Government, and certain special provisions would then apply to them. In turn there would be certain restrictions on the exercise of their citizenship, since it was considered that they stood in need of special protection and care.

This Bill met a very stormy reception in the Legislative Council. Almost the entire Legislative Council walked out and threatened not to resume until the Bill was completely rewritten. Eventually, after much rewriting and several abortive journeys to the Council, the Bill had changed to the extent that only Aborigines could be declared wards.

At this time there was in Darwin a very strong association called the Half-Caste Association, which, when the Bill was first introduced, sent a deputation to Paul Hasluck, and said in effect, 'We do not want to be considered the same as Aborigines for the purpose of this legislation. We have fought for life and liberty in the War. From 1936 onwards, when we carried dog tickets, we have had some of the restrictions

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2 Now called Iwupataka
placed on us lifted. We do not want to be included in any restrictive legislation'.

As a result of this, no reference was made to half-castes in the supporting Licensing Ordinance revisions, and they were no longer required to carry 'dog tags'. However, they were still considered Aborigines for the purpose of the Western Australian Aboriginals Act. Thus several prominent half-caste footballers, such as Bill Roe, playing league football in Perth, could not have a beer in a pub with their fellow players unless they sought exemption from the law in that State.

In 1952 Hasluck amended the Mining Ordinance so that, for the first time in Australia, mining on Aboriginal reserves attracted payment of royalty, in this case half the normal royalties rate. Thus royalty payments of 1.25% of all production was paid into the Aboriginal Benefit Trust Fund, monies coming in afterwards from operations at Groote Eylandt and Yirrkala. I heard late last year that this fund has just been resurrected and it should have a fair amount of money in it by this time.

This provision was the first recognition in Australia that Aborigines were entitled to some of the special economic benefits that would flow from the development of Aboriginal reserves.

By 1956, 20% of the Northern Territory had already been set aside as reserves, and in that year Hasluck added a further 33,000 square miles\(^3\), after Central Australia had been devastated by drought.

It was at this time that Ted Evans, Jeremy Long and John Hargrave went out into the Gibson Desert and contacted the Pintubi people, the last group of Aborigines to see white men for the first time. Donald Thomson at one stage joined the group. Ted Evans and Jeremy Long received the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society for this exercise.

Frank Moy left the Native Affairs Branch in 1953, and Reg McCaffrey ran the Branch until October 1954, when I came to the Territory. I was given several pieces of legislation, included amongst which were those setting out the framework for future Aboriginal programs which I would have to administer. As stated earlier, the responsibility for drafting these bills rested with the officers of the Department of Territories and the Honourable Paul Hasluck, not with the Administrator and me. It was my job to take them and develop a series of programs which would meet the objectives in welfare, education, training, employment and so on, set out in the legislation. As an Official Member of the NT Legislative Council, it was also one of my tasks to justify this legislation, and the programs which flowed from it, to the Legislative Council.

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\(^3\) 33,000 square miles = 85,470 square kilometres
The Native Affairs Branch, as I found it in 1954, had a number of outstanding patrol officers; men like Penhall, Sweeney, McCoy, Holden, Evans and Lovegrove. There was the nucleus of an administrative staff in Martin Ford and a remarkable old man called Bill Potts, the Trust Fund Clerk, and there were one or two people who were called 'Managers' of places like Jay Creek, Bagot and Yuendumu. In all, there were about thirty-five staff members. Several of them, like Penhall and Evans, had done a six-month course at Sydney University under Elkin, to give them a basic knowledge of anthropology. This was something initiated by Frank Moy. We continued to draw on the wisdom and advice of Professor Elkin for some time. He visited the Territory two or three times a year and so far as was practicable addressed all new staff members, particularly teachers, before they took up their duties in the field.

One of the first things to be done was to look at ways of training patrol officers, and we used ASOPA to do this. The Australian School of Pacific Administration had been established as part of Hasluck's policy of recruiting young, and sometimes not so young, people, giving them specialised training for a year or two, and then moving them out into the field in Papua New Guinea. John Kerr, later Governor General of Australia, was the first Principal of ASOPA; the next was Charles Rowley, the author of a number of books on Aborigines. It was with Charles Rowley that we arranged for the training of patrol officers.

All patrol officers had to do a twelve-month course at ASOPA before undertaking any field work. They studied law, anthropology and public administration, and with teachers like McAuley, the poet, and Matties, in law, they received a liberal education which was as good as any university could have provided; special reference was also made to the job they would soon be doing. Jerry Long was one of the first to attend this course. He had an honours degree in history and anthropology from Sydney University and was also the first graduate assistant attached to a department head in the Northern Territory. I was able to convince the Public Service Board that the Territory needed to bring in and hold young people like him. After working for a couple years as my graduate assistant, he decided that he wanted to go out into the field.

It was also necessary to recruit teachers, as we had taken over Aboriginal education from the Commonwealth Office of Education in January 1956. This was done after a struggle, but we saw education as an integral part of our suite of programs and considered it essential that these should not be directed from outside the Territory, as would have happened if education had continued under the control of the Commonwealth Office of Education.

By arrangements with State Education Departments, selected candidates were granted scholarships in the various teacher training colleges in the States, with a two-week special orientation course in Darwin before commencing teaching duties. Senior officers from the Branch also went down two or three times a year to speak to scholarship holders. At a later stage, we also arranged for teachers to
attend a special ASOPA course while training at the NSW Teacher Training College.

An effective basic training program also had to be developed for nurses, though of course we did not have quite the same approach as in the case of patrol officers or teachers. Then we had to recruit people like farm managers, and mill managers, carpenters and mechanics. Obviously, we could not send them all off to do a course at ASOPA, but we did try to give them all an indication of what their jobs would entail and how they should best go about performing them. As we saw it, the first and most important prerequisite to implementing our programs was to have in place the specialist staff that these programs called for.

If we were to send teachers out to Aboriginal communities, we had to have reasonable accommodation available for them at these locations. This meant houses built to meet a wide range of climatic conditions, provided with water supply, electricity and sewerage. With the support of the Minister, we won a long and bitter fight with the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing and set up two work forces, one in the North and the other in the South, which, in four years, built three complete settlements in Central Australia. These work forces as part of their role trained a number of Aborigines in a wide range of construction skills.

There was Charlie Lingiari, the best trowel hand in Central Australia, who laid the foundations for most of the buildings at Warrabri; Teddy Williams became Teddy Plumber, when, like a lot of Anglo-Saxons before him, he took the name of his trade as his surname. Billy Foster became a painter. Engineer Jack did all sorts of jobs, but most importantly, as a Walbiri elder, he was able to organise and supervise the young men into the work gangs. They thus obtained training in skills which served them well in their future employment both on and off the settlement. Billy Foster subsequently did some painting on pastoral properties around Central Australia, and Teddy Plumber did plumbing work in private houses in Tennant Creek.

One factor which helped us considerably at this time was that there were a number of surplus ex-army Romney and Nissen buildings, which we used as garages, workshops and stores. The Nissens were also converted into single-person quarters, and were put to all sorts of other uses as well. The Romneys and Nissens were prefabricated, so most Aborigines could assist in their erection.

All in all, these work gangs were well employed on all settlements over a number of years in providing the essential physical resources, including Aboriginal housing, without which the new programs could not be implemented.

While all this was going on the Welfare Branch was also engaged in general welfare work, and undertook a couple of programs which contributed to the general well-being of the Northern Territory community. One of these was the establishment of a special loan scheme, the only one of its kind in Australia, which provided loans at
1% rate of interest repayable over 60 years to church groups and voluntary agencies to erect facilities. After several long years of negotiations with the central headquarters of the YMCA and the YWCA these organisations were persuaded to come to the Territory. When they did they received assistance for their buildings under this scheme. Retta Dixon Homes, St Phillip's College, Carpentaria College, St John's College, all received assistance, and this was done so that residential facilities would be available for young people from the bush to come into Darwin and receive further education.

In addition to that, we obviously had to do something about urban Aborigines. Mick Cook had built a number of homes in Darwin in the mid 1930s for part-Aboriginal families. The last of them, at the Daly Street Bridge on the GPO site, was demolished recently. This was the last example of special houses that Mick Cook built for part-Aboriginal families. I am not sure how many he built, but I can recall at least three or four of them being around when I came here in 1954.

There was no Housing Commission here in 1954. So as part of the welfare program we obtained funds to build special houses in Darwin for part-Aboriginal families. When I say special houses, I mean houses in addition to the Government's public service housing program. We only built about twenty in all in the Darwin area, which was hardly adequate. Half a dozen of these are still standing, having come through Cyclone Tracy, and a couple of them are still occupied by the same families that went into them in those early years.

This was an attempt to meet a special need at that time. There were then about 3100 part-Aboriginal people living in Sydney Williams huts in Parap, some eight families to a 60' x 30'4 Sydney Williams hut, with water laid on but communal toilet facilities. There were another 200 living in Vesteys Meat Works buildings - not only part-Aboriginal people, but also European people who had come back to the Territory and had no housing. Where the Casino now stands was a small beachfront community in make-shift housing with as many as several hundred people.

Fred Drysdale and Bernie Kilgariff between them were responsible for getting the Government to set up a Housing Commission. When the Housing Commission was established we vacated the field of building special houses for part-Aboriginal people in town areas, but we then started to build some houses for full-blood Aboriginal people in town areas. Phillip Roberts occupied the first one and he was visited by the Queen when she came out, I think, in 1962.

In addition to that, because the Education Department in the town areas (except for preschool education) was separate from the welfare program, we saw a need to give special assistance to part-Aboriginal children who wanted to go on to secondary and tertiary education.

\[ 60' \times 30' = 18.3 \text{ m} \times 9.1 \text{ m} \]
When I first came here there were no post primary or secondary education facilities at all. My daughter attended the first full matriculation class at Darwin High School. Up to that stage if your children wanted to do matriculation you had to send them down south or had to leave the Territory. As for Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal children, the welfare program only extended to preschool education. Beyond this was the responsibility of the Department of Education.

Accordingly, we saw a need to give special assistance to part-Aboriginal children who wanted to go on to secondary and tertiary education. Long before the Department of Education set up a high school on the old Darwin Primary School site we established a special scholarship scheme. Part-Aboriginal children who felt that they could undertake secondary and tertiary studies were given scholarships that provided for their total care and up-keep. Some of them went to boarding schools, some of them went into private homes. The first two girls from Retta Dixon Homes went to a family in Newcastle, and graduated from Newcastle High School. One went into nursing and she has been all around the world since. The other eventually became a telephone supervisor and had charge of a very big section of the telephone exchange in Sydney. She is back now living in Darwin. People like Pat Dodson, Neville Perkins, Margaret Valadian, and Mike Dodson all benefited from this scheme. They would not have had the chance of secondary education had they had no opportunity to move out of the Territory, and that, I think, was one of the very important parts of the program.

One of the other things that obviously had to be done was to look at the progressive removal of any protective or restrictive legislation. In 1962 Aborigines in the Northern Territory gained the right to vote. This was possible because of the census of Aboriginals which we had commenced in 1955. This was the first census of Aborigines in any Australian state. It was a list by name, tribal affiliation, and family grouping of all Aborigines resident in the Northern Territory.

The first list comprised of some 13,600 names and it was a massive undertaking. People like Ted Evans, Gordon Sweeney, George Holden, Les Penhall, and Bill McCoy were responsible for carrying out this herculean task. Gordon Sweeney had the responsibility for all the Aborigines in Arnhem Land, as he had been a missionary and had worked in that area.

This was as I said a massive task, and one of the difficulties we encountered was that, in those days, Aborigines, when they moved across their tribal boundaries, had a tendency to take another name. There were also difficulties in spellings. We did not have many linguists in the field at that stage and we had to work out for ourselves how to spell the names. We relied on people like Capel, the Berndts and one or two others, including some people from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, to help us with this.
There were about six people who were expressly excluded from this list and these were the people from whom the restrictive provisions were lifted. There followed a general easing and lifting of these restrictive provisions. This included in 1962 the right to vote, in 1964 access to liquor, and of course you had the 1967 referendum when, despite all the mythology that is building up around that, only two things happened. One was that Aborigines would be counted in the Commonwealth census, and the other was that the Commonwealth could make laws about Aborigines. It did NOT confer citizenship on Aborigines - it did only those two things. What was happening around Australia was that protective and restrictive legislation was progressively being removed from the statute books.

In 1964, when the Welfare Ordinance was rescinded and the Social Welfare Ordinance was brought in, there was no reference to wards or to Aborigines, but there was a reference to the Director of Welfare having a special responsibility to provide assistance to those people in need, and we continued to operate under these provisions.

In all this, great care was taken in carrying out the various programs to assist in the retention of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal language. I take great exception to some of the things that are said about this by certain of the modern day anthropologists, who should know better about what in fact happened at that time.

Paul Hasluck was responsible for the Summer Institute of Linguistics moving their headquarters to Darwin from Melbourne. This was logical as the bulk of their work was in Northern Australia and in the Northern Territory. Funds were made available to provide linguists with houses and with allowances that would enable them to maintain themselves, because they did not get much money from the Summer Institute. This enabled the Summer Institute to put linguists into quite a number of communities. Although there was strong emphasis at that time on the teaching of English as a second language in the schools in Aboriginal communities, the Aboriginal languages themselves were used extensively by the mothers, and by the Aboriginal Teaching Assistants. Thus the process of recording the languages commenced, and the development of an orthography, so that the differences between the various dialects and English could be studied. That period saw an upsurge in the study of linguistics and the recording of Aboriginal languages.

Some of the early missionaries of course had done magnificent jobs in this respect in their own areas. There was Judith Stokes who spent nearly forty years on Groote Eylandt recording one of the most difficult languages - she is still living on Groote and working with Deaconess Farley. At Milingimbi there were Edgar Wells and Webb, an anthropologist and linguist, who had worked there before the War. There were of course the Strehlows and the Albrechts in Central Australia. In fact there were quite a number of people who supported this program.
At this time programs were also evolved in an attempt to support and promote the work of the Christian missions, which, unaided and unsung, had worked for many years in the communities. Biannual conferences attended by the missionaries and the Aboriginal elders from the mission communities were instituted, and at these we hammered out a program of assistance to the missions. This involved giving them subsidies for teachers, nurses, carpenters and others. It involved providing them with funds to build schools, if the Aborigines wanted to retain the mission education system, and equipment for the schools. All this of course meant a very considerable expenditure by the Commonwealth Government, which drew criticism from elected members of the Legislative Council, who said that more of this money should be spent on the other members of the Territory community and in furthering the general development of the Territory.

In the 1950s there were about 13,500 full-blood Aborigines in the Territory. They were divided roughly between those living on missions, those living on Welfare settlements, and those living on pastoral properties, so obviously something had to be done to improve the lot of those living on pastoral properties as well. In January 1955 Paul Hasluck, F J S Wise, the then Administrator, and I met representatives of the Pastoral Lessees Association to hammer out a program for the education, health and welfare of Aborigines on pastoral properties, and incidentally to lay the basis of a wage scheme, an industrial scheme, for Aborigines. The Wards Employment Ordinance had been agreed to way back in 1953, but it could not be brought into operation until a set of regulations, which laid down wages, conditions, rations, housing and so on that the pastoralists had to provide as part of their work contract with Aborigines, had been determined.

In addition, we provided funds, under the same terms that we provided to the missions, for pastoralists to build schools, infirmaries, and to employ teachers and nurses. The subsidy we paid for a teacher and nurse meant that a number of pastoralists in the Northern Territory did not go bankrupt in those very savage years of the drought, because the pastoralist's wife was able to get a full-time job and a full wage as either a nurse or a teacher - and many of them performed some quite remarkable tasks. There was for instance Mrs Durack of Kildirk, who taught a class where two of her sons did most of their primary school education: they both went on to become Rhodes scholars. That same class also produced quite a number of Aboriginal children who did remarkably well educationally.

On the cultural side, encouragement was given to Aborigines in numerous ways. The importance of art, dance and language was stressed. In dance, Aborigines came to Darwin when the eisteddfod was established, and at one of the later eisteddfods some 1000 Aborigines came to Darwin to participate - special facilities had to be set up at the showgrounds to accommodate them.

After prolonged correspondence with Dr Coombs, the then Chairman of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, I finally convinced him that it was
perfectly feasible for Aboriginal dance teams to perform before southern audiences, and, with Stefan Haag as producer, an Aboriginal dance team drew large crowds in Melbourne and Sydney. This was the first Aboriginal dance team from the Territory to venture South. Later, Stefan took another Aboriginal dance team to Japan. In fact, every encouragement was given to Aborigines to preserve their culture. The then 14-year-old David Gulpilil was encouraged to come to Darwin and compete against all the dancers from Port Keats, Bathurst Island, Bamyili and others. He came, and he won the senior men's dance presentation.

The final aspect considered at that time was to what extent economic development could take place in these communities. One of the prospects was timber milling. Every one of the northern missions had a small breaking-down bench where they cut the timber to build the mission houses and a few other buildings, because it was too expensive and too time consuming to import cut timber. There were three sawmills alone at Bathurst and Melville Islands. All the Catholic missions and most of the Methodist missions had sawmills, and the Aborigines were already engaged in this work.

Despite what has been said quite recently about the Conservation Commission being the instigators of the Top End's forestry projects, it was a person called Bateman, an officer of the Forestry and Timber Bureau of the Department of the Interior, who actually laid the foundations for these programs. He used to come up here for three months every year to make an inventory and to check up on forest conditions in the Northern Territory. He was the first to suggest that Cyprus pine should be replanted and, with Charlie Barchard, Mill Manager at Snake Bay, arranged the first plantings, which were made by women. If you go to the Islands you will see some of the trees there with the names of the old men that helped to plant them still on the pegs on the ground.

Forestry, I still believe, has some prospects in the Northern Territory and perhaps this will be borne out when the Tiwi Land Council does something about a small woodchip industry. This was examined very seriously back in 1970 when a delegation from the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Fund Committee went to Eden to have a look at the recently established chipping industry in that area.

Pastoral projects had been established by Hermannsburg and one or two of the other mission groups. Though they had some problems, places like Beswick and Haasts Bluff were able to run cattle to feed the community and also have a small turn off. However, these enterprises faced major problems because of restrictions imposed by the governments of the day, restrictions deemed necessary for audit reasons and to establish proper bureaucratic control over finances. This resulted in all sorts of restrictions that no self-respecting pastoralist would ever have tolerated, which made the running of these places extremely difficult.
Considerable work was done at Bagot in the development of clay production and pottery, but this faltered after 1972 and Cyclone Tracy finally laid it to rest. This involved the training of potters from Port Keats, Bathurst Island, Milingimbi, Bamyili and a number of other places. They made their own clay, which they collected from Gunn Point. They then processed it, fired it, and were setting up shops and exhibits. Bathurst Island I understand is the only place that has persevered with this project.

Tourism and fishing were looked at in a number of areas. Assistance was given to the establishment of the Standley Chasm Kiosk. I still believe that tourism offers magnificent opportunities for Aborigines to work in their own time and at their own pace. Perhaps we were a little premature and brought a little too much pressure to bear on them at that time, but if you have travelled through Arnhem Land you would appreciate the potential of that area. It leaves Kakadu, for instance, for dead, and in the longer term Aborigines will develop these areas in the economic advancement of their communities, which in turn will lead to the development of a substantial part of the Territory.

There is a great deal more that I can say, but unfortunately time prevents me.