

Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation



The Stolen Generations  
(Timeline from the Long Road Home...)

**1908**

Roper River Mission was established.

**1910**

The South Australian *Northern Territory Aborigines Act 1910* was passed.

The Act was designed to “bring all contact between black and white under official control”, seen as necessary because of exploitative work practices and illicit trafficking in alcohol and opium.

A Northern Territory Aboriginals Department was to be established to be responsible for control and welfare of Aboriginals including the distribution of blankets, clothing, provisions and other relief and assistance and “to provide, when possible, for the custody, maintenance and education of the children of aboriginals”.

The Chief Protector of Aboriginals to be appointed under the Act was made “the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and every half-caste child” up to the age of eighteen years, except for the State children under the South Australian *State Children Act 1895*, regardless of whether the child had parents or other living relatives.

The Act also prohibited marriages between Aboriginals and Europeans without the written permission of a Protector of Aboriginals and provided for the establishment of Reserves and “Aboriginal Institutions” on which the Chief Protector could confine “any aboriginal or half-caste”. Aboriginal Institutions” could be proclaimed and granted leases not exceeding 21 years.

The South Australian Act legitimated a racial hierarchy of legal, social and economic status with Aborigines of mixed descent and other Aborigines at the bottom of the scale. Its provisions and the more specific provisions of later legislation encouraged a major dislocation of Aboriginal societies by allowing for the separation of children from their kin.

**1911**

The Northern Territory was transferred from South Australia to the Commonwealth. *The Northern Territory Aborigines Act 1910* remained in force, but was thought by the Commonwealth to be insufficient in some respects for Northern Territory Aboriginals Ordinance 1911, which was to be incorporated and read with the 1910 South Australian Act.

The Chief Protector was empowered to have the “care, custody or control of any aboriginal or half-caste if in his opinion it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the

aboriginal or half-caste for him to do so". This and the powers elaborated in the 1918 Ordinance underpinned the removal of children and their committal to institutions.

Bathurst Island Mission established by Bishop Gsell.

## **1912**

The Commonwealth government appointed W Baldwin Spencer for a year a special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Aborigines to administer the Department and report and make recommendations on Aboriginal and "part-Aboriginal" populations regarding the 'difficult problem of control, utilization and advancement of the largest population group of the Northern Territory'.

Spencer's recommendations were ambiguous in their detail. He believed that "half-castes" would never be accepted by the white community, but at the same time children should be segregated from the rest of the Aboriginal community. They should be educated to a very basic standard and industrially trained on Reserves by mission-supplied teachers to give them a subordinate place in the white economy, and should be encouraged to marry among themselves.

## **1913**

Kahlin Compound was established in Darwin and Kahlin School opened.

In Alice Springs Topsy Smith arrived in town with her children and was given tent accommodation behind the police station which soon developed into the original Bungalow (the Alice Springs Half-caste Institution). By 1914 children were being compulsorily removed to the Alice Springs institution.

## **1915**

The first permanent Superintendent and Matron appointed at Kahlin.

Ida Standley was appointed the first official Matron and teacher at the Bungalow, where Topsy Smith had previously been in charge.

## **1918**

The Aborigines Ordinance 1918 repealed the Aborigines Ordinance 1911 and the South Australian Northern Territory Aborigines Act 1910 ceased to apply to the Northern Territory.

The Ordinance was intended to increase the Administration's degree of control over Aborigines. The Chief Protector's powers under the 1910 Act and the 1911 Ordinance were retained and extended. Other provisions of the previous legislation were also incorporated in the new legislation, including those concerning the guardianship of children and "Aboriginal institutions".

The new Ordinance extended the definition of "half-caste" to include "quadroons". It also distinguished between men and women of mixed race aged over eighteen, with women indefinitely under the Chief Protector's guardianship unless they were currently legally married to and living with non-aboriginal husbands (although the Chief Protector could assume guardianship over any male if he wished).

## **1921**

Emerald River Mission on Groote Eylandt was established by the Church Missionary Society.

## **1924**

Children were transferred from Roper River Mission to Emerald River Mission on Groote Eylandt which remained a “half-caste” mission until the early 1930s, after which children of school age were sent to Darwin or Alice Springs.

The Darwin “part-aboriginal” children were moved from Kahlin Compound to segregated accommodation in Schultze Street. The Home was still locally known as the Kahlin Home, and was officially known as the Half-caste Home, Darwin.

## **1927**

Dr CE Cook was appointed the first full-time Chief Protector of Aboriginals since 1914.

## **1928**

JW Bleakley (Queensland Chief Protector) was commissioned by the Commonwealth Government to report on “Aboriginals and Half-castes” in the Northern Territory. His report published in 1929 included sections about Kahlin and The Bungalow and recommended among other things that mixed-race Aboriginal children should be placed in the care of missions for industrial training. The report also recommended that children of different degrees of Aboriginal descent should be treated differently, and that some children of predominantly non-Aboriginal ancestry should be placed in southern institutions (some light-skinned children had already been sent south to institutions for fostering and adoption). Bleakley’s recommendations were mostly not implemented, although they were echoed in later policies and influenced their development.

The Alice Springs Half-caste Institution was relocated from the original Bungalow in Alice Springs to Jay Creek until November 1932.

## **1930s**

Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s before evacuation many children were moved from one institution to another, separating them even further from their families and also separating them from their “second families”, their companions in the homes. Shortly before the outbreak of war, children identified as Church of England were taken from government institutions to Groote Eylandt, and were later evacuated to NSW.

## **1931**

Because of overcrowding at the Kahlin Half-caste Home (77 children in a house designed for one family), 28 boys were removed from Kahlin to a new boys’ Home at Pine Creek until 1933.

## **1932**

The Alice Springs Half-caste Institution returned from Jay Creek to Alice Springs to new premises in the Old Telegraph Station (and continued to be known as The Bungalow).

## **1933**

The Pine Creek Home closed in 1933. Twenty-eight boys were transferred to The Bungalow and nine boys and one girl, with “part-Aboriginal” female staff, were admitted to the Half-caste Home, Darwin. (Five of these boys were later transferred to Bathurst Island and Oenpelli Missions because of a “predominance of Aboriginal blood”) Pine Creek was re-opened some years later, but only for long enough to serve as a way-station for children proceeding to missions under new government policies.

The first “Half-caste Housing Scheme” houses, financed from the Aboriginal Trust Fund, were begun.

## **1936**

The Half-caste Progressive Association had been vocal in calling for full citizenship rights, and the Aboriginals Ordinance was amended to make provision for the Chief Protector to declare a person to be “deemed not a half-caste”, in other words to be exempted from restrictions contained in the Ordinance. This exemption could be revoked.

The first “Native Patrol Officer” in the Northern Territory (TGH Strehlow) was appointed.

## **1937**

An area of land at Bagot was acquired for a new compound to replace Kahlin.

## **1938**

The Bagot land was gazetted as an Aboriginal Reserve.

Kahlin Compound closed and residents were transferred to Bagot. The Half-caste Home, however, remained where it was until the children were moved to Bagot in September 1939.

## **1939**

February: Announcement of “the McEwen policy”, a supposed “New Deal”.

The objective of the policy, drafted by EWP Chinnery, was to raise Aboriginal people’s status by educating and training so that they would become socially and economically assimilated and after “many generations” would qualify for “the ordinary rights of citizenship”. The level of education and training envisaged would not bring people into economic or social conflict with the white community, girls continuing to be trained for domestic service and boys for stock work and trades as had always been the case.

The policy statement announced the separation of the Aboriginal and health administrations in the Northern Territory and the creation of a Native Affairs Branch under a Director of Native Affairs. Dr CE Cook, Chief Protector of Aboriginals since 1927, resigned over the separation.

The section of the policy relating to “half-castes” asserted that there were only “two classes of half-castes in the Northern Territory- those born in wedlock of half-caste parents and those born of an aboriginal mother and a non-aboriginal father.” This characterization further emphasized distinctions between people of different degrees of Aboriginal descent and failed to represent either the complexity of the mixed-race Aboriginal community or the realities of the situations in which children were and would continue to be institutionalized.

It was proposed that those children of mixed-race parentage who were “the responsibility of the Administration” (the children born of an aboriginal mother and a non-aboriginal father) should be given elementary education in government institutions, and then would be transferred to separate institutions for girls and boys for training in “useful occupations”.

The statement maintained that “(t) he near-white children should be trained apart from the half-caste children, and... in a separate Commonwealth institution. It may be possible to have them trained in institutions in the State...” While the statement tacitly set aside the idea of extinction or biological assimilation for the majority of the Aboriginal population, assimilation remained the logical consequence of proposals for “near-white”

people of mixed race. The statement was not clear about what might be the racial future of the children of Aboriginal mothers and non-Aboriginal fathers.

Implementation of the policy was delayed by the impact of the Second World War, first on Commonwealth finances and later on the whole society and administration of the Northern Territory.

### **1940**

Bagot Compound was taken over by the Army. People at Bagot, including “part-Aboriginal” children, were moved to a variety of destinations.

### **1941**

The first children were admitted to the new Garden Point and Croker Island Missions, including children transferred from the government institutions at Darwin and Alice Springs and the Home re-opened at Pine Creek for children awaiting transfer to the missions.

Completion of the transfer of all children from government institutions to missions was envisaged but was interrupted by wartime evacuation early in 1942.

### **1942**

“Part-Aboriginal” women and children, with some exceptions, were evacuated from towns, government institutions and missions to southern states.

Removal of children in the Northern Territory from their families virtually ceased for the remainder of the Second World War.

### **1946**

Many of the women and children evacuated in 1942 were returned from southern states to the Northern Territory.

When return of the Territory to full civilian control took place the Aboriginals Ordinance came back into force and the removal of children began again. Some children who would otherwise have been removed were considered too old for removal by this time and were left on pastoral properties with their families.

The Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM) home for mothers and children, the Retta Dixon Home, was established on Bagot Road. The Reserve was divided into two areas, one for Aboriginals of “full descent” and the other for the “part-Aboriginal” children in care. Children from Retta Dixon and the Lady Gowrie Hostel (St Mary’s) in Alice Springs were now to attend public schools.

St Mary’s Hostel, Alice Springs opened (at the Lady Gowrie Hostel).

Sixteen Children were removed from the AIM Institute at Manga Manga to the AIM at Bagot.

All “half-castes” who had served in the armed forces and had been given “clean discharges” were granted exemption from the Ordinance.

In this period following the war, the Native Affairs Branch Patrol Officer service expanded and eventually police acting as Protectors of Aborigines ceased to be involved in the removal of children.

### **1949**

Children originally evacuated from Groote Eylandt Mission in 1942 were finally returned to the Northern Territory, but to St Mary’s in Alice Springs rather than to Groote Eylandt.

## 1951

Hasluck, Minister for Territories, introduced new policies aimed at further social and economic assimilation of the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory: “Assimilation in practical terms means all persons of Aboriginal or mixed blood in Australia would live like White Australian do.” Education and training was the apparent focus for removal policy. A concerted program of fostering and adoption of children in southern States and the placement of children in institutions there or in hostels in the Northern Territory for education and training was developed. Families interstate who fostered children were paid for the care of the children.

Hasluck gave instructions for the preparation of new legislation for the Northern Territory which would release most Aboriginal people of mixed descent from the constraints of special legislation similar to the proposed Welfare Ordinance.

The Australian Half Caste Progressive Association, particular its returned service members, was again campaigning for full citizens’ rights. A campaign in the southern States was also being waged by similar associations of “part-Aboriginal” people.

## 1953

The Welfare Ordinance 1953 was passed but did not commence until 13 May 1957. The Aboriginals Ordinance 1953 and the Aboriginals Ordinance (No.2) 1953 had already been passed before the Welfare Ordinance and remained in force until they were repealed by its commencement.

The Aboriginals Ordinance (No.2) 1953 extended the definition of “Aboriginal” and removed references to “half-castes”, releasing people of mixed descent generally from being subject to special legislation but allowing for the individual declaration of such people as “Aboriginal”.

The Welfare Ordinance similarly omitted reference to race, and it was said that “The purpose of this Ordinance is to assist the work of assimilation”. It was assumed that most Wards would be Aboriginals of the “full descent”, but provision was made for people not already classified as Wards to be declared as Wards, with an appeal process (application to a Wards Appeal Tribunal) for people to appeal against their declaration as wards. Many of the powers contained in the earlier legislation were restated in relation to Wards.

The Ordinance stated that a person may be declared a ward

*If by reason of*

- (a) his manner of living*
- (b) his inability without assistance, adequately to manage his own affairs*
- (c) his standard of social habit and behaviour*
- (d) his personal associations that person stands in need of such special care or assistance as is provided for by [the] Ordinance.*

As with the old legislation this definition allowed the Director to take control over particular ‘part-Aboriginal’ people if he wished to.

To make sure that the Ordinance continued to control Aboriginal people it provided that only those who had voting rights for the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives and those under 21 but otherwise entitled to vote on reaching their majority could not be made Wards.

Effectively, this made all Aborigines Wards unless they were serving or former serving members of the defence forces or had already been exempted under the Aborigines Ordinance since the introduction of exemption in 1936.

The Director was to keep a "Register of Wards".

Children under the age of 14 were not to be separated from their parents under the Ordinance unless authorized by the administrator. Between 1953 and 1957 young children continued to be removed under the Aborigines Ordinance (No.2) 1953, however.

As all references to race had been removed from the Ordinance there was strong concern expressed by sections of the non-Aboriginal community that the Ordinance could target non-Aboriginal children for removal.

### **1954**

Establishment of Welfare Branch, and appointment of H C Giese as Director of Welfare.

### **1957**

The Welfare Ordinance (see 1953 above) commenced on 13 May and was amended twice during the year.

The Register of Wards was the first published on the day the Ordinance commenced. All Wards documented in censuses conducted by the Native Affairs Branch were declared in the Register, commonly known as "the Stud book".

### **1959**

A new Housing Commission program was established in Darwin. This gave accommodation to people from Winnellie and Parap Camps.

The Welfare Ordinance was amended.

### **1960**

The Welfare Ordinance was amended.

### **1961**

The Welfare Ordinance was amended.

Retta Dixon Home moved to new premises.

### **1964**

The Welfare Ordinance 1953-1963 was repealed by the Social Welfare Ordinance 1964.

Reference to the concept of 'wardship' central to the Welfare Ordinance was removed and the new Ordinance was expressed more generally. It was intended to provide for Assistance to people socially and economically in need of it, irrespective of racial origin. Its primary purpose, however, remained provision for Aboriginal welfare.

The Ordinance also provided for declaration of land as Reserves and provided for entry to Reserves for Aborigines and relevant officials. Others not qualifying for access to Reserve land were not provided for in respect of land other than by housing through Housing Commission programs in towns.

The legislation effectively considered the 'part-Aboriginal' to be successfully assimilated for the services and not to have an identity as Aboriginal.

### **1972**

The first Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established.

From this time on an Aborigine has been a person defined as such not legislatively but administratively according to three criteria:

- Self-identification
- Descent from an Aboriginal person
- Community recognition.

This definition began a new era where aboriginal people defined their collective identity. This is significant because before this time all policies about Aboriginal people were determined by racial purity.