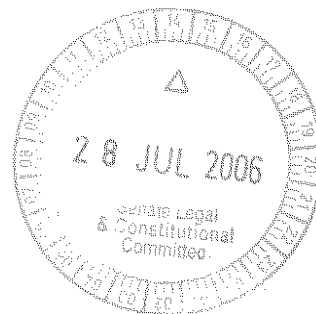


Committee Secretary,
Senate Legal & Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



26 July 2006

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you on behalf of Mrs Marjorie Woodrow who has asked that the enclosed material be accepted as her submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry into Indigenous Workers Whose Paid Labour Was Controlled by Government (Stolen Wages).

I am enclosing a form signed by Mrs Woodrow and copies of some letters, as well as a copy of Mrs Woodrow's story "Long Tome Coming Home". Also, as soon as I receive the requested copy, I will be forwarding a DVD of a Message Stick program (ABC TV) about Mrs Woodrow. She has also referred to another video which we have not been able to access yet further documenting her life experience as one of the Stolen Generation who was sent to work as a domestic servant after being in Cootamundra Girls Home.

Below are the results of a search of ABC archives on Mrs Woodrow which you may be of interest:

Marjorie Woodrow <http://www.abc.net.au/message/tv/ms/s1276747.htm>

At 78 years, Marjorie is a bright, intelligent, articulate, warm woman and many years ago, promised her old mates that she would 'fight on for our wages'. She has become one of the predominant peoples involved in the NSW stolen wages claim. After all the injustices, which have been metered out to her during her life, Marjorie strives to right the wrongs for her people. Marjorie Woodrow believes that she was born three years after the date stated on her 'official' birth certificate. She was born under a tree in a place known as Carowra Tank near Murrumbidgee in Central New South Wales.

Stateline <http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/nsw/content/2003/s869514.htm>

Stolen Wages <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/rewind/txt/s1218259.htm>

Mrs Woodrow is happy to be contacted directly by the Inquiry Committee and her contact details are as follows:

Mrs Marjorie Woodrow

Yours sincerely,



Janene Collins

On behalf of Mrs Marjorie Woodrow.

COPY

Dear Aunty Marjorie,

I really hope you get this letter because I think it is very important that I get to tell you what a honourable person you are.

You came to my school recently and your story brought tears to my eyes. Your book was just as touching and I hope you think all your hard work has paid off.

To come out and speak up after all you've lived through is such a heroic move. I've recently lived through hardship (alcoholism, violence etc.) and now that it's over I find it extremely hard to speak up. I know what you and your people have been through is ten times worse and to speak up about it and do something about it is just the bravest and strongest thing I think anyone has ever done. Your family must be so proud of you! My total respect goes to you.

I am not Aboriginal myself but I hope when im older I can make a difference for Aborigines. If it was up to me than I would give all of Australia back to the Aborigines and make peace for you all. I wish it was that simple, but im willing to put in a lot of hard work even if it only benifits one Aboriginal family, I think it's worth it.

It makes me happy to know there are people like you (especially you) doing everything they can. You are making a difference.

You touched me. And I would like to write on behalf of myself but also every other child you've touched who can't write to you.

yours honestly,

Kerriidwen West

COPY



THE CABINET OFFICE
NEW SOUTH WALES

AA05/14569 - SPB

18/08/2005

Ms Marjorie Woodrow

Dear Ms Woodrow

The Premier has received your recent letter concerning various issues.

Your views have been noted and Mr Iemma appreciates the reasons which prompted you to write to him on this occasion.

As the matter you have raised primarily concerns the administration of the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, Assistant Treasurer, and Vice President of the Executive Council, the Hon J J Della Bosca, MLC, the Premier has arranged to bring your approach to the Minister's attention.

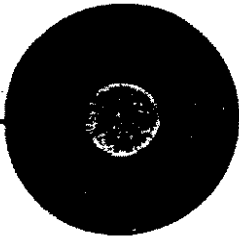
You may be sure that your comments will receive close consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R. Wilkins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Roger B Wilkins
Director-General

COPY



LINK-UP

GPO BOX 1139, CANBERRA CITY, ACT 2601
PHONE (062) 47 0648

*If a people should lose something,
And turn back, and look carefully for it—
They will find it. —Tatanka Yotanka*

CORAL EDWARDS, CO-ORDINATOR

15 August 1985

DEar Marge,

Thanks for your letter today. Isn't it good news about Mona. I'm glad she liked the picture, too. Probably in today's mail as well as this letter there will be an invite to the La Perouse meeting at the end of September. It would be nice if Mona and Mrs Peckham could come too.

We had an interesting time at Wilcannia. We met a lady called ^{my auntie} Gertie Johnson, (she is a Johnson by marriage) who knew about you, and recognised your photo in the Link-Up book. I think we may be going up there some time in October again to introduce Gloria and Beryl Lynette to their mother (they were the two girls from Wilcannia you may remember from our last meeting. We can talk about this at the September meeting - maybe we could work out some plan where we could meet you at Cobar and drive to Wilcannia from there if you'd like to come. However, this is not very definite yet as we haven't spoken to Gloria and Beryl about it yet, but we should know more by September.

The tape is here too. To tell you the truth, I was a bit disappointed in it. There was far more of me in it than I realised, or wanted. I thought my part was going to be just a few minutes at the end, but as it turns out there's more of me than there is of you or Bill Riley. I'm sorry its like that, but we can't do much about it now! The parts about you are nice, though, so I hope you'll enjoy that part.

Bye for now Marge, and good luck with the court case.

p.s.

Gertie Johnson said anytime you want to go out to see her, to do so.

*This letter show I should
of met mother's auntie 1981
the work is about done
right by Link-up
Magdalen Woodrow*

*and
Take a card*



Long Time Coming Home

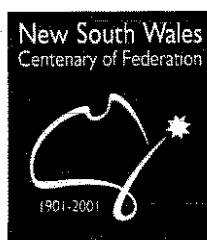
AS RECALLED BY

Marjorie Woodrow

COVER ILLUSTRATION
PAINTING BY ABORIGINAL ARTIST LEWIS BURNS
"Carved Burial Trees at Narromine"

National Library of Australia
ISBN 0-9579071-0-9

"This work has been assisted with funds received from the New South Wales Centenary of Federation Committee"



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FORBES 2001

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Written and organised by Dianne Decker with consultation and the permission of
Marjorie Woodrow

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.....long time coming home

as recalled by Marjorie Woodrow



Premier of New South Wales
Australia

FOREWORD

It is an honour to be invited to write the foreword to Marjorie Woodrow's life story as told by Dianne Decker. In telling her own story, Marjorie gives voice to countless others whose stories remain untold.

Marjorie was separated at the age of two. She did not see her mother again until 68 years later. The maltreatment she received from those charged with caring for her "welfare" will be sadly familiar to other Aboriginal men and women who were denied the love and guidance of their own families because of the policies of separation.

There is pain and sadness in this story but the strongest theme is courage, Courage and resilience and determination. Stories like Marjories's are finally being told; Australians are finally listening. With goodwill and commitment, we may be on the verge of a new beginning.

*Bob Carr MP
Premier of New South Wales
Minister for the Arts
Minister for Citizenship*

June 2001



"From a mother's own heart for no one else can
ever understand---

I have dedicated this book to the memory of my
mother Ethel Johnson and to all other Aboriginal
mothers who have suffered the terrifying ordeal of
having their children taken from them--many never
to be reunited.

I am one of the lucky ones - I found my mother after
many years of searching; for me it was indeed a
... long time coming home".

Marjorie Woodrow

June 2001

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the many members of my family (particularly my son-in-law Bert Clarke) who have supported and encouraged me to produce this important part of our history in Australia. I would also like to thank Artist Lewis Burns, Ms Robyn Bratton and Diane Moisis for spelling and computer assistance, Charles Johnson from Euabalong, Peter Rimas Kabaila for the Cootamundra Girls Home research reports, New South Wales Link Up, Tracy Tierney from Forbes Employment and Training, Mr Tom Dwyer, Printer at Court Press Forbes, Faith Baisden Photographics.

In particular I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the New South Wales Centenary of Federation Committee, and their Aboriginal History Grant, which made this project possible. The commitment of the New South Wales Committee's president, the Honourable Bob Carr and Chairman Honourable Barrie Unsworth to ensure that Aboriginal stories are captured and told, will be remembered by the generations as they learn more of Australia's shared history.

I especially thank my dear friend Mrs Dianne Decker A.M. from Forbes in New South Wales who has carefully recorded my memories, ideas, and thoughts. She was able to obtain the grant on my behalf to print the work and finally brought it all together after many miles, disruptions, phone calls and discussions - she has persistently believed in the importance of having my story told.

Marjorie Woodrow

INTRODUCTION

I enjoyed an instant rapport with and respect for Mrs Marjorie Woodrow when I met her in the health clinic at Murrin Bridge when I first began working within the community. Our friendship has grown strong over the years. I have carefully written this work at all times with respect and the strict consultation and permission of Marjorie. I was privileged to meet Marjorie's mother Mrs Ethel Johnson and later stayed with Marjorie when I worked out at Murrin Bridge. I consider it an honour and great privilege to have helped ensure that even this small part of Australian history has been recorded.

Her mother named her Margaret Rose and her Aboriginal name is Yama Karra - someone else decided she would be known as Marjorie. She had many surnames including Keewong (as her mother was given this name from the property where she lived and Marjorie was born) Wyman, Steadson, Steadman and Johnson. These names appear on many of the Government records held in the Police and Aboriginal Protection Board files. Yet still there is no birth certificate. This happened to most Aboriginal children when they were taken from their families and added greatly to the loss of identity, confusion and in many cases made it impossible to retrace and be reunited with their families. Most mothers put much thought into naming a child when they are born and that is always a parent's special privilege. Names usually have some special meaning about your child - even that right was taken from Marjorie and Ethel. The right to give and the right to bear your own name.

The history of our Aboriginal friends has often been ignored, denied or somehow made to seem as insignificant. Australia should hear and understand what Marjorie has been through during her life.

Read her story with an open heart. You cannot help but feel her pain and yet feel her wonderful, love and optimism for the future of her family.

Dianne Decker A.M.
FORBES

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CHAPTER 1



Pictured: Carowra Tank at sunset 1997



Pictured: The tree the old folk believe I was born under at Carowra tank, Roy Harris, Muriel Harris and Mamie King inspect the tree.

"I was born under a big tree at Carowra Tank"

At the time of my birth my mother Ethel was working as a housemaid on "Keewong Station" near Trida at a place known as Carowra Tank, between Hillston and Lake Cargelligo. Through my mother I am a Barkindji woman. My mother never told me who my white biological father was; she said, "it would be unwise for me to have that knowledge". It was not a willing experience I am much lighter than my other brothers and sister are. He was believed to be a white farmer from the Griffith area, perhaps an Englishman. I will never know. Later on some of my official papers my father was named as William Steadson, whereabouts unknown. I was also known under Steadman and Johnson. My mother was given Keewong as a surname after the property that she lived on, she was also known as Wyman. When Fred Johnson married my mother Ethel, he became my real father. He came from the Wonburrwa Tribe. Sadly Fred was committed, (as were many other Aboriginal people who were considered insane) to an asylum in Orange for over fifty years. He was never released and died in 1998. I visited him there but by then he was unable to speak.

Deakin
ACT 2600

29/11/78

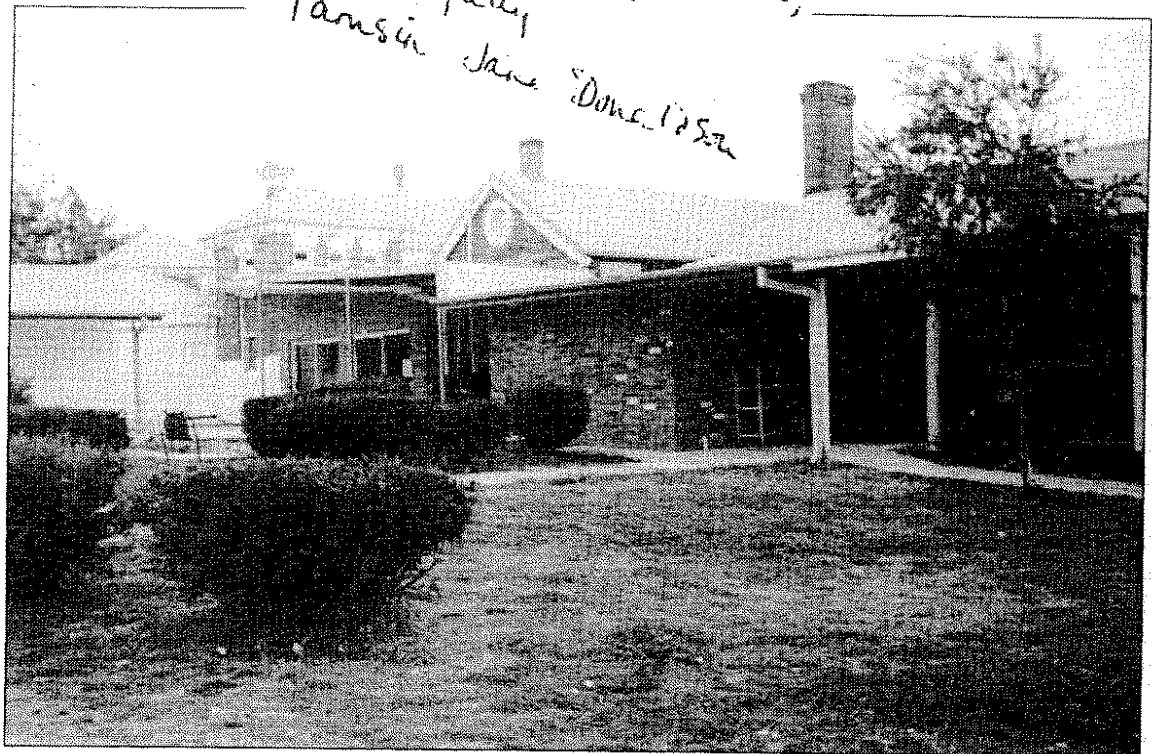
To whom it may concern,

This letter comes to you to confirm that Mrs Marjorie Woodrow is of Aboriginal descent, and is recognised as such by her relatives of Aboriginal descent.

Her mother was Ethel Keewong. Her mother's mother was Sarah Keewong, sister of Rosie Keewong. Rosie Keewong was the mother of Mrs. Eliza Kennedy am writing. Mrs Kennedy and her sisters are among the few surviving speakers of Ngijambaa, the language of the Wanggaaybiuran tribe, in whose tribal country Keewong Station was

taken up. The family's english surname
is derived from the name of this station,
which is between Ivanhoe and Coburg.
More information can be obtained
from Mrs. Eliza Kennedy,
7, Stillman St.,
Koorringal,
Wagga Wagga NSW.

I have known Mrs. Kennedy for
nearly seven years now. We have
been working together on a grammar
of Nguyambaa. Our work has been
supported by a grant from the Australian
Institute of Aboriginal Studies, where I
can be contacted. (tel. 46159)
If Mrs Kennedy were able to write,
she would be writing this letter.
Yours faithfully
Pamela Jane 'Dona' P.S.22



Pictured: Cootamundra Girls Home as it is today; now Bimbadeen Training College

CHAPTER 2

COOTAMUNDRA GIRLS HOME

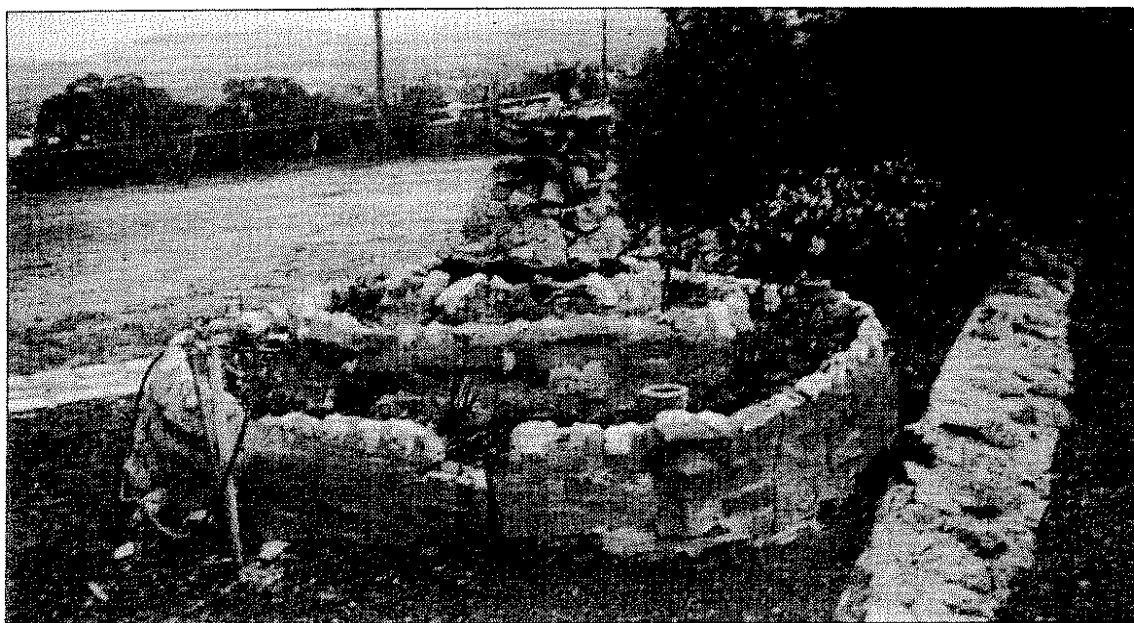
They said that I stole a pair of stockings and that was the start of all the trouble. Nearly sixty years ago it wasn't that easy for a teenage Aboriginal girl to prove her innocence in a white society. This was my first job and the work in the Griffith (N.S.W.) boarding house was hard to anyone who didn't have a natural vocation for scrubbing floors, washing, ironing and cooking for a small crowd of people. In the courtroom I was declared uncontrollable and placed in the Cootamundra Girls Home. I had not stolen those stockings. I hated injustice and as a so called inferior, totally Government controlled young black woman, I was not permitted to have an opinion or to speak up when I thought we were not being treated fairly. I think this was the reason they called me uncontrollable. That, plus my independent tendencies at times must have counted against me. Being the only Aboriginal there I felt resentful that I always seemed the automatic choice if something was missing then it had to be the Aboriginal who took it. Taken away at about the age of two years (like so many other Aboriginal children) I felt that I should not have been in that Griffith courtroom anyway. I could not remember my mother. I am sure somehow if the pain is too intense that our minds "block certain things out". I had vague recollections of "uncles" and "aunties" as I was fostered to different people after I was taken by the authorities. I never lost the deep down feeling of wanting to go home to my people, desperately wanting my mother. My mother was dead, or so I was told time after time. Sadly I believed this story for years. Later I accidentally discovered that this was a deliberate lie. How many other children, black and white, have been told the same lies, what a dreadfully cruel lie to spin to a vulnerable, defenceless child. Mothers are so important - your mother is different to everyone else in the world. Didn't they realise what they had done to us? The pain of a mother's desperate longing for her child and a child's great need for the nurturing of a mother- the agony of not knowing? Over sixty years later; after discovering by chance that my mother might be alive. It took only a short, but very determined effort before I found her and we met. We were re-united at Murrin Bridge Aboriginal settlement near Lake Cargelligo in Central New South Wales, and we had eighteen months together before my mother, Ethel Johnson, died in 1994.

...IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME COMING HOME.

Those eighteen months together were wonderful, but the lost sixty-eight years could never be repaid, even though I have found a new family of brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews. Back to 1939 and those stolen stockings. The Court decided I had stolen them - I've never worn silk stockings in my life! Described as a bad girl, I was sent to Cootamundra Girls Training Home as a state ward. I learned later that the idea of the Home was to separate lighter coloured Aboriginal girls from their parents for assimilation into the white community as domestic help. At Cootamundra strict discipline and domestic training was the order of the day - with punishment for those who neglected their chores. The punishment consisted of being placed in the "naughty girls room", a very small place, while you pondered on your wickedness, sometimes for days. One of the punishment rooms was the old morgue and we were always reminded of this as you were placed in it. Other punishment included being walloped with a leather strap. At first I felt a little odd at being dressed the same as all the other girls, with navy-pleated skirts, white blouses and black woollen stockings. We were all Aboriginal, we were never called by our names. It was always "number 108, step forward!" We had numbers sewn on our uniforms. Everyone could see that we were from the Girl's Home. We were branded just like cattle. It was like what we now know as prison camps. As day followed day my desire to go home got stronger. Where was my home? I was determined to find out, and made several half-hearted attempts to escape without giving the authorities much trouble.

Gradually came the realisation that I had a better chance of finding them if I could get to Brewarrina in the Far West of New South Wales; as my people were from the Ngiyampaa clan. So after eighteen months at Cootamundra my mind was made up to make a determined effort to escape. Preparation came first. This involved recruiting three other girls of like mind who wished to find their families. Next came the gathering of provisions to sustain us on the journey. It was not difficult to put bits of food away in a calico bag, as I was on kitchen duty at the time. Bread, biscuits, apples and other sundries soon built up into a sizeable supply. The night was clear as we crept nervously over the fence. Everything was still, not a sound could be heard. Without looking back we walked quickly down the hill and through the almost deserted streets of Cootamundra hoping that no one would recognise our uniforms and ask what we were doing. It did not take long to reach the railway station and creep to a goods train standing idle in the sidings. There were open wagons with tarpaulins over some of them. Well, in books and films it seems easy in the U.S.A. for people to hitch rides on freight trains. We did not imagine any difficulty in getting aboard and under the covers. Forget it - it was nothing as easy as on the films! If anyone had been watching they would probably have hooted with laughter at the sight of four skinny Aboriginal girls jumping up and falling from the wagon, rolling over the ground, time and time again, desperate to get away. Eventually the two largest girls managed to get into one of the wagons. Tibby Briar and I were smaller and had to keep on trying. In desperation I tried an extra high jump and fell back badly on my ankle. With the aid of a stick that was lying under a tree I hobbled off with Tibby and as much dignity as possible. The food was a bit battered but two hungry girls made short work of the bits and pieces riding around in the calico bag. Our long walk then started. Hungry, cold and tired the fields stretched endlessly dark on both sides of us after we left town, whilst the pain in my ankle kept the feeling of misery close at hand. After an eternity of darkness, or so it was beginning to appear, we saw a welcome light and trudging up a long driveway we came across a farmhouse. We were too hungry and tired to bother about security so we knocked on the door. It was not as late as we had thought because the farmer and his wife were still up. They turned out to be a friendly young couple (with two children) who had heard of our escape on the radio. Our institutional uniforms with our numbers on them gave us away. "You'll have to give yourselves up!" we were told. But they were very kind and gave us a hot meal. A telephone call soon brought out a police car and we were pleasantly surprised to find the sergeant and constable very nice to us. But once out of the house we got hustled down to the car by the police, then we were both booted hard in the backside. "Get in there you little black bastards, you're nothing but trouble! I don't know why the whites worry and get concerned for you!" Back at the Home the matron said "You're both very naughty for what you did. Why did you do it?" We were terrified by then. They would never understand our need to get back to our people however much we tried to explain. So we didn't bother. The matron pointing at me said to the Sergeant "this one has always got a grin on her face which shows she doesn't care!" I admit I was always smiling, I couldn't help it - it was in my nature. A glint appeared in the Sergeant's eyes. "If you don't take that grin off, I'll knock it off you!" A sudden punch and he had clouted me on the mouth. His method worked only too well, because from that moment I became a changed girl. My smiling ceased as I sank back into myself and a black feeling settled over me as I thought hopelessly "What's left for us?" The two girls who managed to climb into the railway truck got clean away and eventually reached Brewarrina. They kept quiet and never had to return. Tibby and I were parted when I was transferred elsewhere at a later stage. I never saw her again. I learned years later that she had found her brothers and sisters but was too late to see her parents again. She got married and had two sons and a daughter. She could never forget the past and spent much of her married life haunted by the fear of the welfare officers taking her children. Tibby spent much time dodging around central New South Wales, too nervous to settle anywhere for long in case she lost the children. She died still feeling embittered. Back to my tale of Cootamundra, One night, Gladys, the girl in the next bed to mine in the dormitory woke us all up with a loud scream. The screaming was awful and we could not quieten her. By the time the matron and staff had arrived those agonising screams had shattered us completely.

At last an ambulance came and Gladys was taken away. We never saw her again, although many years later I learned that she had spent the rest of her life in a mental hospital. Out the back of the home was a big round well. It was an eerie, frightening place to walk past. Rumours were always being told that the naughty little ones had been put down the well or buried in the orchard under the fruit trees. When the home was being closed many of the records were directed to be burned by Matron Marshall and the well was filled in. I still have bad thoughts and nightmares about that well - was it just childhood fear? What really did happen to those children in the dark of night? Perhaps is it time the authorities dug it up.



Pictured: a garden built over the well after it was filled in-is it time the authorities dug it up?

In 1939 I was sent out from the girl's home to work on a farm for Mrs. E. Miller on "Little Dale", Cootamundra. The work seemed never ending, and consisted of doing the cooking, looking after twin boys of pre-school age, scrubbing the wooden floors, washing and ironing. For this I got my keep plus one shilling per week. If this wasn't slavery it was certainly very cheap labour. As the only Aboriginal on this farm I was not allowed to sit with the family. It became a very lonely life. I had to sit and eat on my own in the kitchen. At shearing time I would eat with the shearers. There were times when I wished it would become even lonelier as far as I was concerned. An elderly white man (an inlaw living on the farm) wouldn't leave me alone and kept on pestering me to go to bed with him. He scared me, and as the lock on the door to my room was flimsy I took to barricading my door with furniture at night. Apart from his suggestions he hardly spoke to me, but he kept on looking at me. No one seemed to notice. My worst moments came every Wednesday when the master and his wife went out for the day to play tennis. On these days I got into the habit of rushing through the chores so that I could keep out of the house as long as possible. Those two boys must have wondered why I took them for such long walks every Wednesday. Better tired than harassed I thought. Nobody knew the horror I felt at these times. This harassment never stopped and not being able to stand it any more I thought that if I could not remove the problem, then the next best thing was to remove myself from the problem. I certainly did not think that I would be believed at the farm, so running away seemed the best solution. After getting a lift into town I headed straight to the police station and spoke of the problem. "You're nothing but black trouble!" I was told. My credibility was less than zero. So were my spirits as I was whisked back to Cootamundra Girls Home. Once more my story was not believed and was thought to be a convenient excuse for running away.

A very angry Matron could see no future for me. "I can do no more for you" she said, "You're a very bad influence on all the other girls! So I can't have you staying here!" She had me placed in the little punishment room "solitary confinement" where I was kept out of everyone's sight, I was just a kid, not yet fifteen. I was kept locked in that tiny room until I was taken away a few days later. Kicked out of the Girls Home, what next? I had tried to escape several times, but being expelled seemed different somehow. There was no one to talk to and I suddenly became a very frightened young Aboriginal girl. My eighteen months stay at Cootamundra Girls Home had not been happy, but I was to find Parramatta much worse.



Pictured: Dora Williams with her daughter Joy and grandson Ken. Dora, now deceased. She was with me in the Cootamundra Girls Home. Many years later we met up through Link-Up New South Wales.

Following are the Research Reports on Cootamundra Girls Home by Peter Rimas Kabaila. It is interesting and gives the reader a very clear picture of what Cootamundra was like.

Cootamundra Girls Home: four eras of occupation

Peter Rimas Kabaila

Peter Kabaila, with degrees in architecture from the University of New South Wales and archaeology from the Australian National University, has a consulting practice in Canberra. He is currently researching Aboriginal places of the period following European settlement in Wiradjuri country.

Cootamundra is a large town on the edge of the New South Wales uplands, located at the junction of the Cootamundra and Muttama Creeks, which flow into the Murrumbidgee River. It became an important communications centre in the nineteenth century, lying on the main railway line between Sydney and Melbourne, and at the junction of two branch lines. However, it is best known to Aboriginal people for its famous, or infamous, Cootamundra Girls Home. This institution operated between 1912 and 1969, under the Aborigines Welfare Board. It was then transferred to the New South Wales Youth and Community Services Department as a home for girls of all races. More recently, it has become an Aboriginal religious education centre, retaining its older, alternative name of Bimbadeen.

From pre-European times through to the present day, the places and features in the landscape have been important to Aboriginal people as a tangible record, the primary document of past events. The ground known today as the old Cootamundra Girls Home or Bimbadeen Training College can be divided into four distinct eras of occupation. After thousands of years of being part of Aboriginal hunter-gatherer lands, the site became designated as crown land during European occupation and was first built up, in the late nineteenth century, as a hospital to serve the booming Cootamundra township. The site proved inconvenient, being separated from the town by the busy main line railway, and a new hospital

was built in the town centre. Later, the old hospital was turned into a girls home.

The new girls home started operation in 1912 and became the central institution in New South Wales for housing Aboriginal girls who were placed under state control.¹ After the home was finally closed in 1975, it was taken over by the Aboriginal Christian training college of Bimbadeen.

Each of these four phases of site occupation has left its own imprint on the memories, oral history, written records, and landscape of the place. It is worthwhile looking at the physical evidence of the site because it complements knowledge as seen through history, documents and memories.

Aboriginal land use before European settlement

In times before European settlement, Wiradjuri people moved over a bounded territory: their country. Their major patterns of movement were probably dictated by seasonal food supplies and by the practice of their ceremonial life. The Wiradjuri country included lands over the present township of Cootamundra and the hill of Bimbadeen which overlooks it. The junction of several streams at Cootamundra provided a reliable source of water and creek flats on which to camp. Axes and other Aboriginal stone artefacts have been found in the vicinity, and one archaeological survey recently recorded relics of Aboriginal campsites.²

A hospital for Cootamundra

In the 1880s, the Cootamundra township chose a landmark to site their first district hospital. It was a landmark hill on crown land, commanding a good view of the town below. The hospital building was marked by a foundation stone in 1887. Fifty years later, the old residents in the town still talked of the

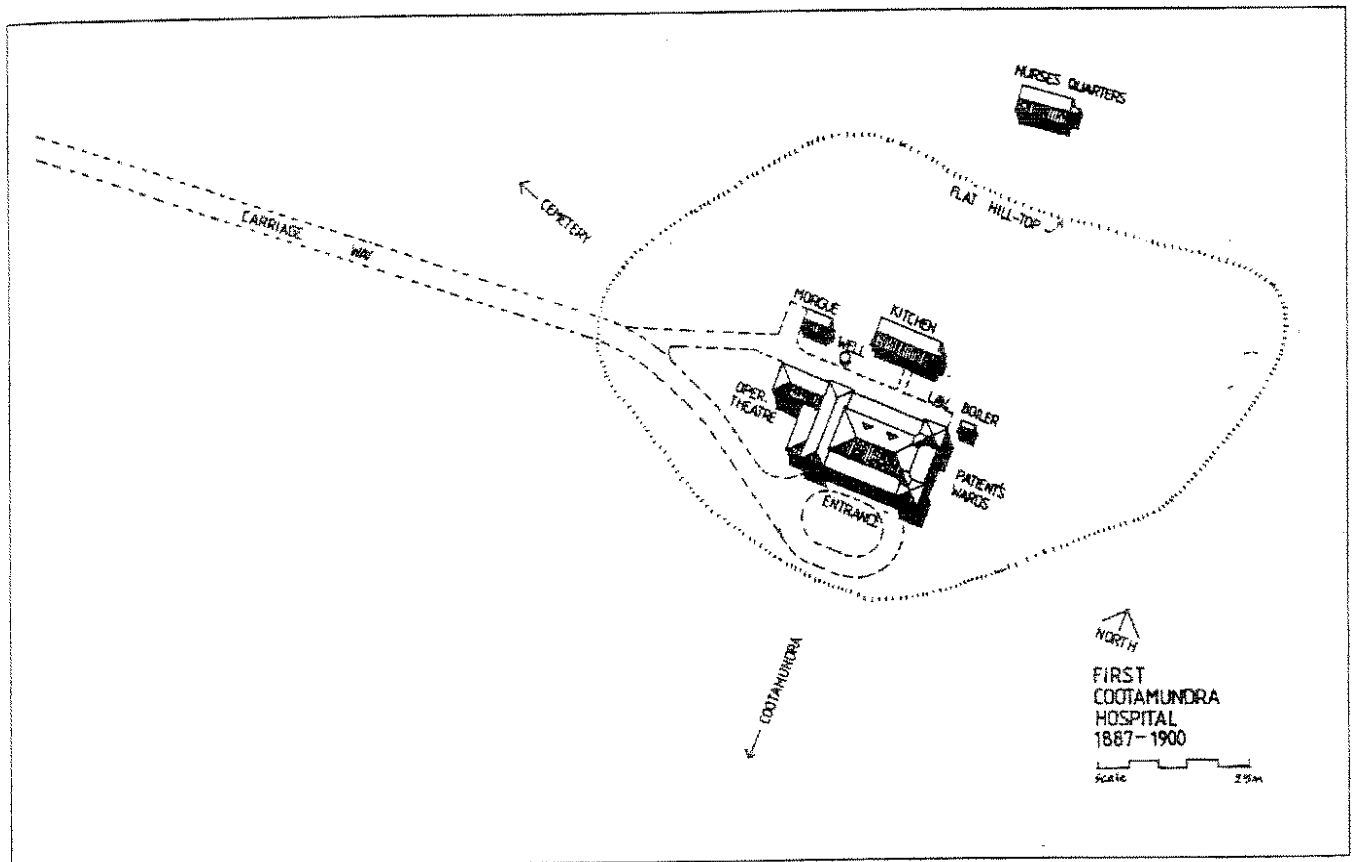


Plate 1

First Cootamundra town hospital 1887-1900: a reconstruction showing the arrangement of buildings.

sick people being hauled by hand in wooden trolleys across the railway tracks, having to wait for trains to be shunted, and then up the steep hill to the hospital. Or patients would travel up by horse and buggy, passing the morgue before pulling up at the old circular driveway at the front of the building (now the rear). Once they were installed in the hospital, they had a good view over the cemetery. From the hospital, it was downhill all the way to the cemetery; this may not have helped patient recovery. At any rate, the hospital site was eventually found to be unsatisfactory for its original purpose.³

It is clear from various building details, such as brickwork, windows and fascia styles, that the original hospital complex included not only the main block, but also separate buildings for the kitchen, morgue, nurses quarters and boiler room. The

morgue was a timberboard-lined, single-room building. Its entrance had a plain-boarded shed door. Inside it was fitted out with 2 ft [60 cm] wide wooden shelves, supported off the walls by wooden brackets, which could store about fifteen coffins. Traces of the original circular hospital driveway are still visible as a slight terrace in the lawn, although grass has completely covered the rock edging to the driveway.

A large brick-lined well, between the main building and the kitchen block, serviced both of these buildings. It supplied clean water collected from the roofs and was substantially built. It was covered with a cement domed top and hatch. Water was pumped up to a water tank on a stand, for heating in the boiler room. Some hospital refuse was thrown in to be burnt with the coke in the boiler. An archaeological test excavation has uncovered the

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milky-white bases of glass medicine bottles, glass medicine-bottle stoppers gone purple from exposure to sunlight, and a piece of the Staffordshire transfer pattern crockery popular in British colonies at the turn of the century. Pieces of thick, white earthenware cups and plates, the institutional crockery used in places such as hospitals and the girls home, lie both on the surface and underground. Two blank cartridges from .303-calibre service rifles were also found. The 1942 date stamp on one cartridge supports a rumour that crown land near the girls home had been used as a wartime army practice range.⁴

The buildings also contain within them various relics of the hospital's operation. The original hospital toilets had special hatches (later bricked over) for removal of the nightsoil or toilet pans. The small operating theatre had a large mirror framed into its pressed metal ceiling, and an early electric emergency button for calling the nurse is still mounted to one window frame of what was the main ward.

This first district hospital operated for only some six years, closing in 1895. The new hospital, constructed in the centre of town, opened in 1910.

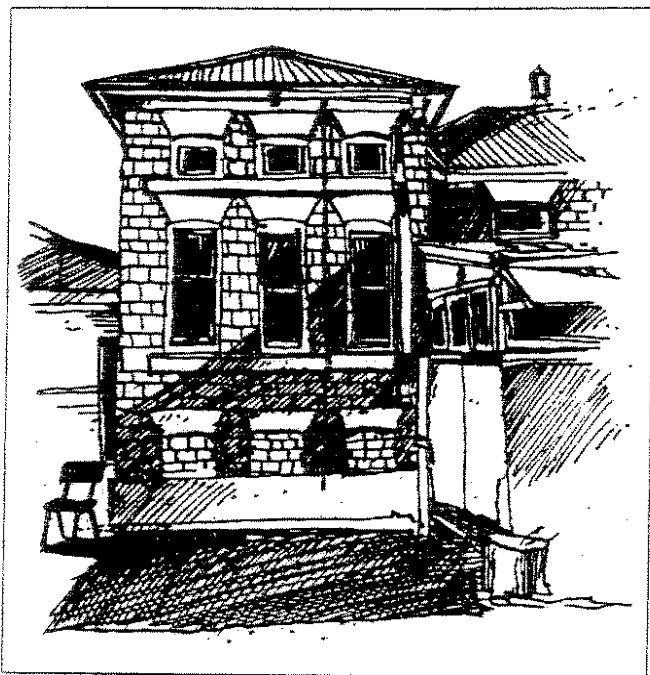


Plate 2

The girls' sewing room was originally built as a lavatory for the old hospital ward. Under the windows can be seen the bricked-up hatches.

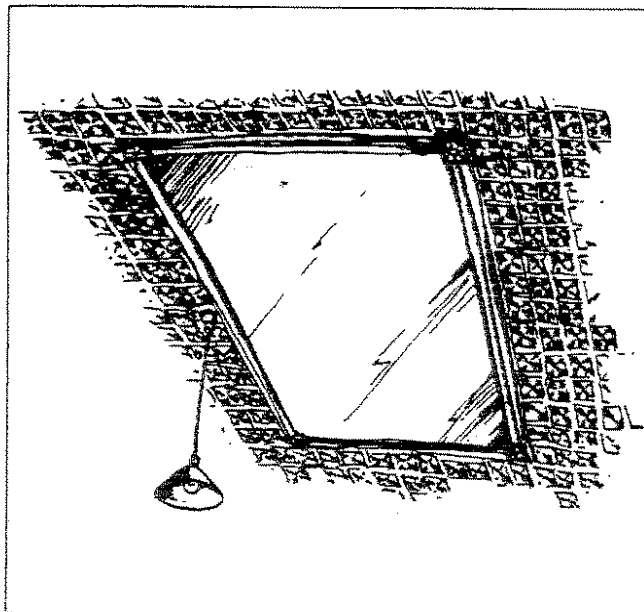


Plate 3

This large mirror was mounted in the ceiling of the operating theatre, which later became the matron's bedroom (now Bimbadeen's married quarters).

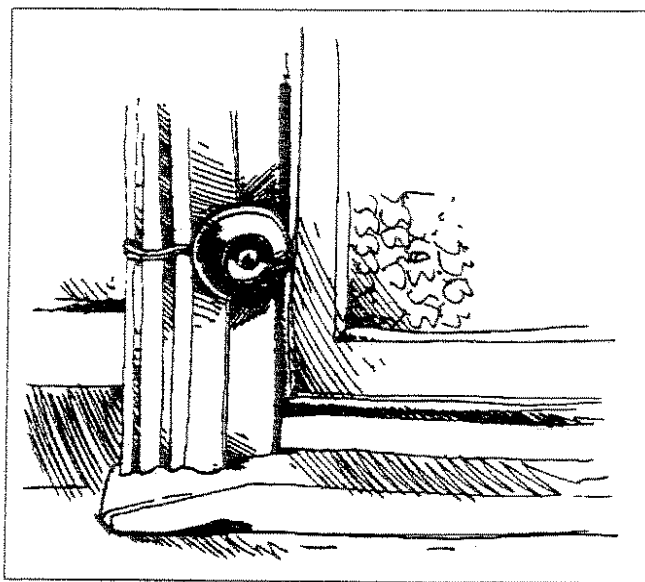


Plate 4

An electric nurse-call button, still attached to a window frame in what was, originally, the main hospital ward. This later became the girls home main dormitory (now a lecture room).

The girls home

Two years later, the old hospital grounds were re-opened as a children's home. In 1912 the Cootamundra Home, for so-called orphaned and neglected children, had transferred to it 35 acres of hospital grounds with their brick buildings. On the hilltop, the original brick hospital buildings were re-occupied. Various timber-frame buildings, approximately datable by their Victorian period-style fancy weatherboards, were constructed, including the caretakers cottage and caretakers garage which may have originally been built to house the matron, and the school weathershed.

A year after operations commenced, the main building was altered, probably by infilling the front verandah, to provide extra accommodation for up to thirty-five girls. The main dormitory (former hospital ward), occupied by the older girls, 12-15 years old, had a central aisle and two rows of closely spaced beds, separated by small bedside hospital pattern cabinets. It was heated by an open fireplace. School uniforms were hung in wall cupboards at the opposite end of the room. A former verandah was occupied by the 6-11-year-old girls. Possibly in the 1930s, the long room, as it was known, was widened to fit a second row of beds, the new wall enclosed in glass 'Cooper' louvres. The old verandah step and posts are still there. The 'isolation room' was used as an infants dormitory for the 4-5-year-olds. While it was generally believed to have been a babies ward in the old hospital, to 'isolate' infants from the older inmates, the room was probably added in the 1920s, years after the hospital had closed. It was also used as the schoolroom in the early 1940s, before the girls were sent to school in the town. Another verandah became the box room, used for storing school bags and personal belongings. It was also a place of detention. The old verandah post is still there. The issue store was used as a locker room for the girls' personal belongings, as well as for items regularly issued, such as toothpaste.

In 1913 the old nurses quarters became an Aboriginal school, where the girls took sewing lessons to make clothes for Red Cross parcels to be sent to Belgian children orphaned during the First World War. That year, the Aborigines Protection Board's newly appointed 'home-finder' went to Warangesda mission and took children back with her to Cootamundra.⁵

In 1917, a local advisory committee was formed

and play equipment items, such as swings and see-saws, were installed.⁶ Annual fundraising was commenced, with a fete and concert being held in the town to raise money for the home, signs of a measure of support from the townspeople. By 1925 these yearly events had bought an organ for the schoolhouse (£11), a piano (£35), a wind-up gramophone and records, and a downpayment on a car for the home.⁷ Also, probably around this time, a tennis court was made and the driveway shifted to service the new building layout.

On the slopes at the bottom of the steep hill and near the dam, a vegetable garden and orchard were developed to supplement the basic girls home diet. The vegetable garden was started in 1920 and was worked by the older girls and, a year later, the orchard of one and a half acres was planted. The stock dam was enlarged to water the vegetables. The girls grew pumpkins, marrows, potatoes, tomatoes and lettuces. A windmill was put in at the bottom of the hill to pump water from the dam to the vegetable garden and orchard. The girls home was at that time modelled somewhat on Warangesda and other Aboriginal stations, in that it was a partly self-sufficient farming operation. Melons were grown for jam and lucerne for the cows. The home grew its own vegetables and had its own milking cows and produced its own dairy products.

Over the 1920s, the grounds were more fully established as a children's institution. In 1925 a number of renovations were carried out. A separate toilet block was built. It was a basic, freestanding corrugated iron shed, with a pan system ('thunder-boxes') set up for the twice-weekly 'night soil collection'. The matron's quarters had been relocated into the old hospital operating theatre, and staff used a separate outhouse near there. Any men on the site used the caretaker's outhouse. In addition to the weatherboard buildings, the more basic corrugated iron garage, laundry and dairy may possibly have been constructed around the same time as the toilet block.

The brick kitchen building was extended, about 1925, to about twice its original length, and a large wood cooking range was installed. The cook's quarters (possibly the former hospital kitchen and cook's bedroom) had a sitting room, and an attached bathroom and bedroom. Between the cook's quarters and the main building was a lattice way and assembly court. In the 1920s and 30s, the open brick drains at the side of the kitchen were whitewashed daily, and the brick-paved courtyard was used for

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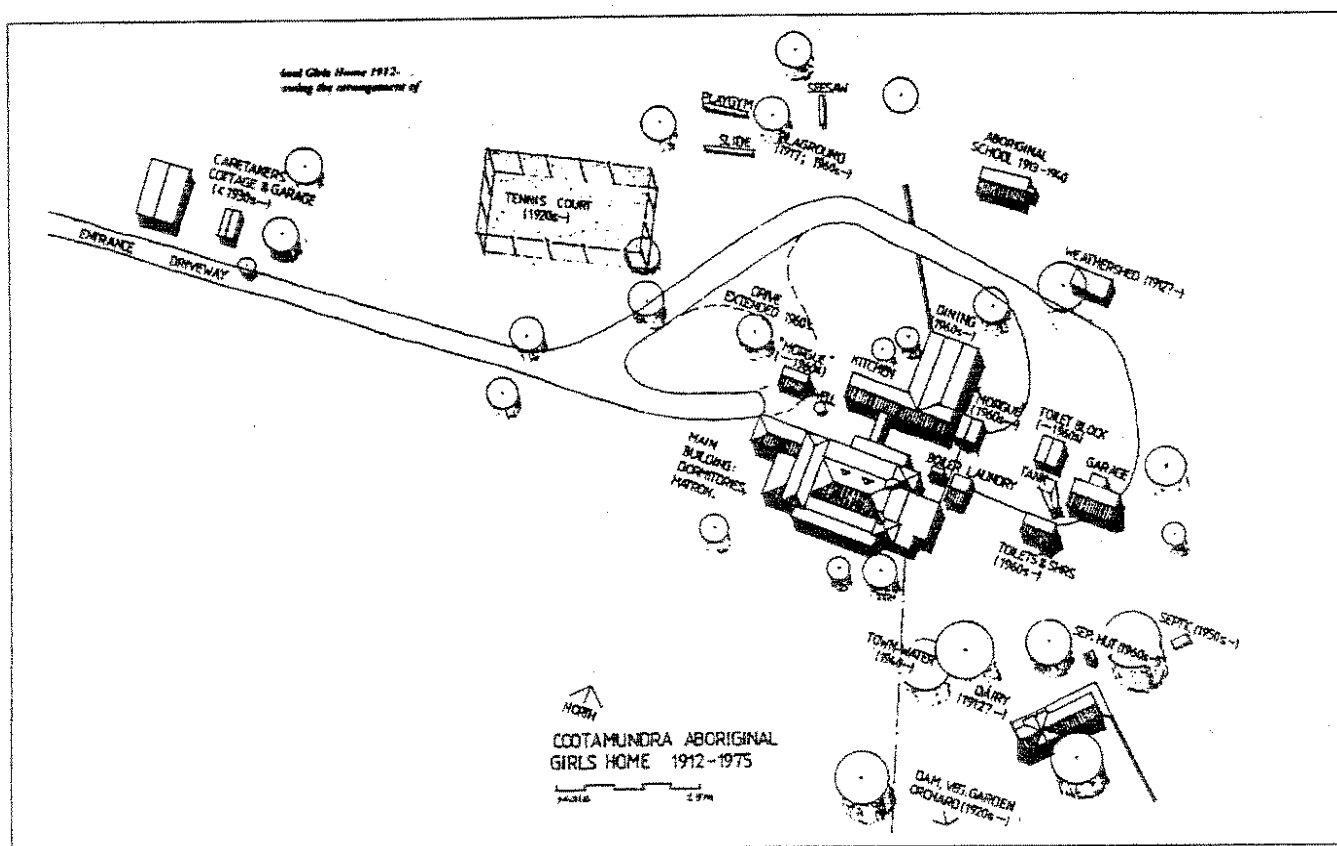


Plate 5

Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Home 1912-1975: a reconstruction showing the arrangement of buildings.

floor-scrubbing detention. In the 1940s to 60s, the courtyard was used for assembly before school. The girls cleaned their school shoes there daily.

At this time, the water supply at the girls home at the top of the hill was the original well and some overhead roof-water collection tanks.⁸ Water sometimes had to be carted by the girls from the dam up to the top of the hill. In 1940 the home received a town-water supply. A hot-water service, an electric washing machine and some outdoor play items were installed. Showers and basins were added in 1952, although the hot water was not regulated and the showers could not be used until about 1960. Also, there was no septic tank at the home, so the old 1925 toilet block was still used. Later in the 1960s, a septic tank and a new toilet and shower block were constructed, but student numbers were by then in decline.⁹

Old bottles have probably been cleared from the site. The only remaining bottle dump is underneath the caretakers cottage, consisting of about fifty neatly stacked beer and fortified wine bottles, all dating from years between 1943 and 1946. While someone has jokingly pointed out that the bottles suggest a caretaker drinking his way through the war years, the more accurate deduction is that the drinking was in sensible moderation and that an upper layer of bottles has been removed during a clean-up.¹⁰

Not much physical change appeared to result from the Protection Board being reconstituted into the Welfare Board in 1940. The girls home population fluctuated each year, but over the 1940s it was generally filled close to its capacity of forty-five to fifty girls. Various verandah infills were carried out at this time to increase the bed capacity.

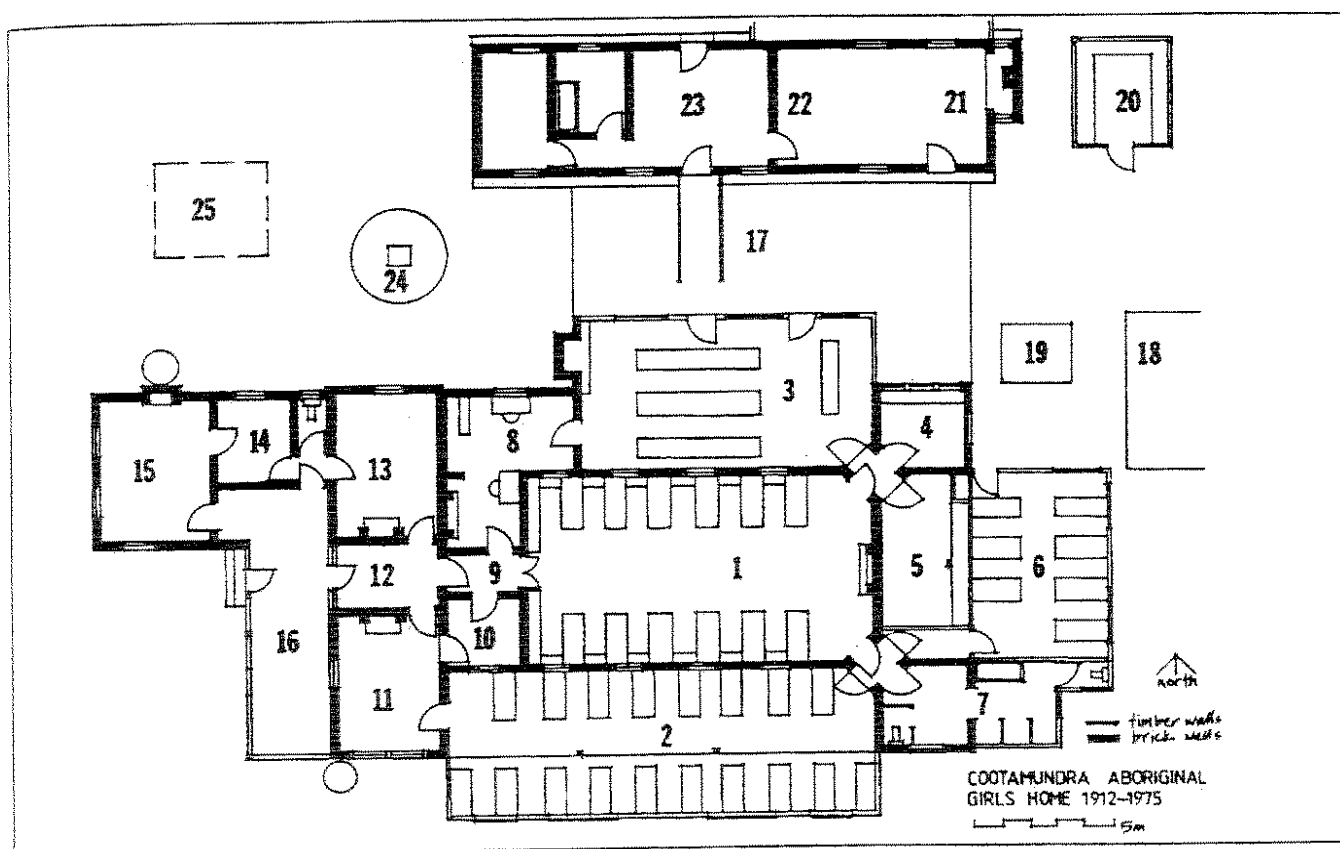


Plate 6

Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Home 1912-1975: a reconstruction showing the room functions.

KEY

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Main dormitory (former hospital ward) | 12 Hall |
| 2 The long room (former hospital verandah) | 13 Issue store |
| 3 Activities room (former hospital verandah and dining hall) | 14 Matron's bathroom |
| 4 Sewing room (former hospital lavatory) | 15 Matron's bedroom (former operating theatre) |
| 5 Box room (former hospital verandah) | 16 Sunroom (former hospital verandah) |
| 6 Isolation room | 17 Lattice way and assembly court |
| 7 Toilets/showers | 18 Laundry shed |
| 8 Ironing and study room (former operating room and nurses room) | 19 Boiler room |
| 9 Hall | 20 Food store (former morgue) |
| 10 Matron's office (former hospital dispensary) | 21 Kitchen |
| 11 Matron's parlour | 22 Dining room |
| | 23 Cook's quarters |
| | 24 Well |
| | 25 Morgue: location till about 1960 |

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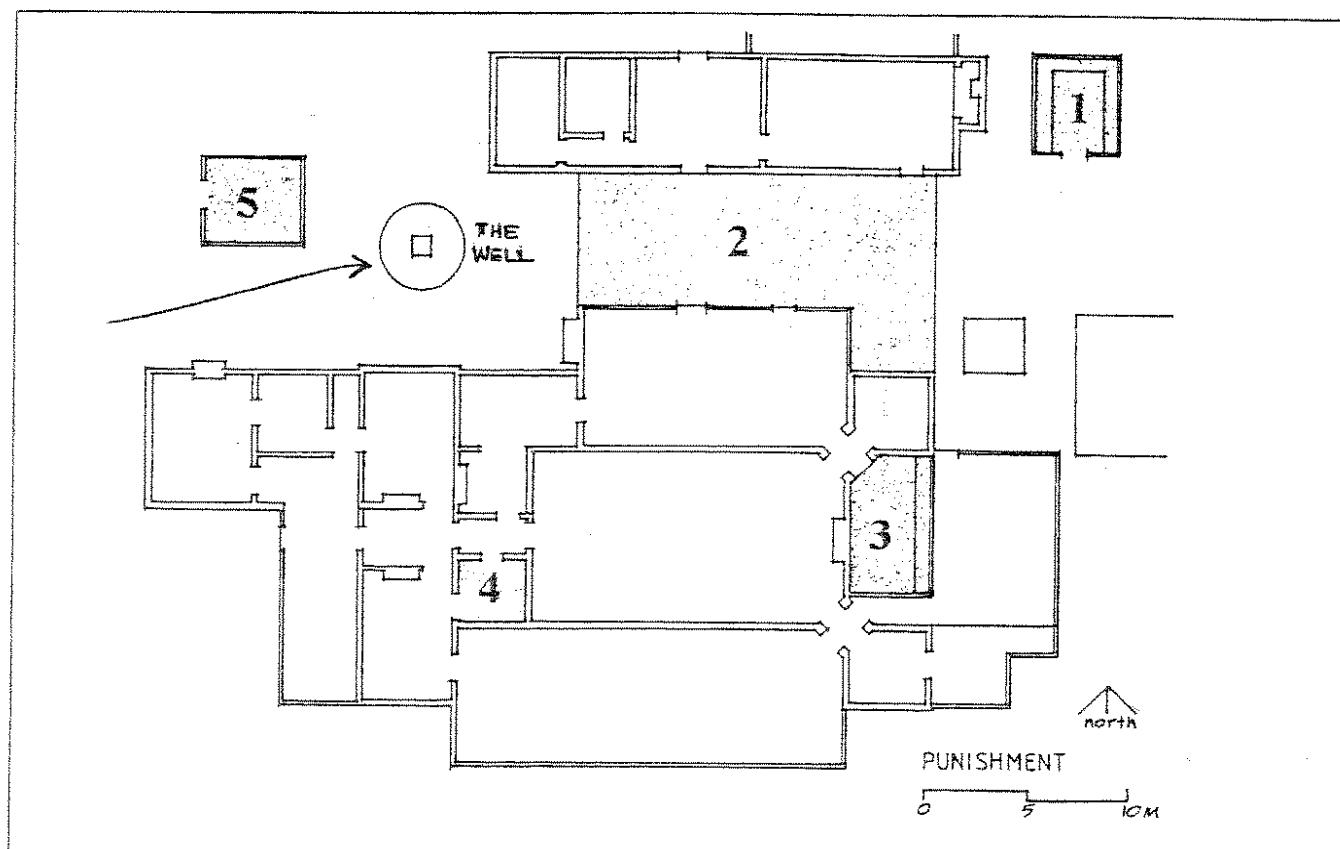


Plate 7

Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Home 1912-1975: location plan of places used for detention or punishment.

KEY

1 Morgue (food store): the former morgue retained its horrible name for discipline purposes: it was also a detention room. Once locked inside, there was no escape for several hours, and the inside was dark, especially if the detention was at night-fall.

2 Paved courtyard: a common punishment was to scrub this paving, brick by brick.

3 Box room: the box room was used as a 'cooling-off' and detention room, for several hours at a time. The door is scarred from years of girls hitting it with buckets and boxes, and kicking it to get out.

4 Matron's office: one of the matron's duties was to sanction punishments. The office had a strap hanging on the wall; its use was reserved for the most serious offences.

5 Morgue location up to about 1960.

A 'fibro' extension to one verandah converted it to a dining hall. It was heated by an open fireplace and its dining tables were laid out lengthwise, with a servery table at one end of the room. At around 1960, a new dining room was added to the kitchen block. The old dining room was then used for indoor activities, such as homework, board games, TV viewing and dance lessons. Next to the dining hall was the sewing room (former hospital lavatory) where, over the 1940s to 60s, a woman from the town was employed to sew clothes for the girls. The former operating room and nurses room was used for after-school study and homework, as well as by girls carrying out the ironing roster. The covered ironing board was made from an old coffin lid.

From 1945 onwards, all the girls went to school in town and so were not able to tend the vegetable garden daily. The garden had fallen well into disuse by 1955. An attempt was made to revive it; water was reticulated to it by galvanised branch line. But it was not far from the roadway and vegetables were said to 'disappear' into neighbouring properties. The labour-intensive vegetable garden turned out not to be viable, and so it was converted into a lucerne paddock. For a time, the electricity commission dumped their old transformer oil onto this land, effectively killing the lucerne paddock. By contrast, the old orchard remained productive throughout the years of the home's operation, mainly producing apples but also peaches, pears, plums, nectarines and apricots.

Over the 1950s, as well as being self-sufficient in fruit, the girls home still ran their own dairy and separated out their own milk and cream. In the late 1950s, a special milk and cream separation hut was even built. The old morgue was also moved, around 1960, to its present location. It was used as a food store, its wooden coffin-shelves stocked with preserves. Its relocation was quite an effort. The floor timbers were bolted together to keep them joined. The whole building was then rolled onto 3 in [7.5 cm] pipes and dragged along by the girls home truck pulling a chain. The same truck used to take the girls to school and was typical group transport in its day: a Bedford 5-tonner rigged with seats and a canvas cover.

The weathershed was originally built for lunchtimes, when the Aboriginal schoolhouse was in operation. After the girls began attending the public school in Cootamundra, they used the weathershed during leisure hours as a sort of theatre stage. There they invented plays and acted them out. Sometime

later, an electric record player was acquired to provide music for the plays, and for the girls it became their 'rock 'n' roll shed'.

In 1969, when the Aborigines Welfare Board was abolished, many of the girls home records were transferred to the Parramatta Girls Home, another government-run institution for 'neglected' children. For the following half-dozen years, non-Aboriginal girls were also admitted to the Cootamundra Girls Home until its closure in 1975. It was then handed over to the Aboriginal Lands Trust. The last member of staff was the caretaker, who finished in December 1975, after staying on for another six months at the request of the new land-holders.

The contents of the girls home were thoroughly removed. Although officially everything was to go to the Parramatta Girls Home, some belongings travelled a different path. Albert Namatjira had visited Bimbadeen on 20 December 1956 and given a painting to the home. It was framed by the shire council and hung in the lounge room. After the home's closure, the painting 'evaporated', until years later the caretaker's son was watching a television news interview and spotted the painting in the back-ground. It was hanging on the wall of a private Canberra home!

The girls home artefacts of probably greatest value were its documents, letters and personal files, stored in the matron's parlour. Some boxes may have been sent to Parramatta Girls Home. At the sudden closure of the Cootamundra home in 1975, the caretaker was instructed by Matron Marshall to burn three laundry baskets filled with documents.¹¹

Bimbadeen

The adopted Aboriginal name of Bimbadeen (possibly meaning 'frogs in the marsh') has been in use at the property for some thirty or forty years. Since 1978, Bimbadeen has been occupied by the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship, mainly as an inter-denominational Bible training college for Aboriginal people. The organisation receives no government funding. Students vary in age from teenagers to mature age, the minimum age being 18. Some train in biblical studies for Christian pastoral work within their own Aboriginal communities, and in other communities Australia-wide. Others enter into non-religious employment, but have a Bible-based ethic and training from which they work. In 1994 the college staff consisted of three teachers, with

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positions of principal, dean and administrator; in addition, there were a farm manager, a cook and ten students.

The Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship had inherited both the solid brick hospital buildings, and the weatherboard and iron girls home buildings. Over the next decade, the college carried out a series of repairs, demolitions and additions.

The orchard was regarded as non-productive and was removed. The former nurses quarters, later the school, was demolished. Various corrugated iron outbuildings were also demolished, including the laundry, toilet block and main garage. The boiler and water tower were removed, and the well was filled in.

The former morgue was stripped down and converted into a cool room. The old caretakers cottage, garage and dining room were relined in 'fibro' weatherboard, and three new timber-framed houses were built. Local perceptions of what constitutes an historic structure have resulted in plans to also demolish the weathershed and morgue, despite the fact that these relics of the girls home would be fairly easy to renovate and maintain.

Over recent years, several outbuildings were constructed, including a chicken coop and a pigsty, both of which quickly fell out of use. There are also several recently built steel agricultural sheds.

The main block, kitchen and additions still form the core of Bimbadeen's present-day facilities. A new vegetable garden has been built over the remains of the old one, and the original dam remains in use. The original dairy still supplies all the milk for the college. As in earlier times, dairy cows are milked by hand each day by students, and the milk and cream are separated on site. The dairy shed also doubles as a sheep slaughter area and saddlery store.¹² Under the transformed Bimbadeen 'layer' of new buildings, many of the old girls home structures continue to be used. Each era of occupation of the site is affected by previous uses.

Why is the girls home significant today? How was it run? What was it like to be there? The second part of this paper, to appear in a subsequent issue of *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, casts light on the answers to these questions by relating oral accounts of the girls home. It deals with the ambiguous role of Cootamundra as a 'home' for girls, the importance placed on regimentation in its daily life, and the importance of the girls home to Aboriginal history.

NOTES

1. The first mention of the girls home in the Aborigines Welfare Board's annual reports is in 1913.
2. An estimate of the pre-European Wiradjuri country area was made by Tindale in 1974, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, Australian National University Press. Revisions were made by White in 1986, *Dimensions of Wiradjuri*, Australian National University thesis (unpublished). Lithic scatters indicating open campsite activity are recorded in archaeological surveys lodged at the National Parks and Wildlife Service Queanbeyan office.
3. Much of the hospital story is based on site observation and deduction. Some notes and dates also from: S. Moorehouse 1951 *Official Souvenir: Commonwealth Jubilee Celebrations and Back to Cootamundra Week*, 10 March 1951, Cootamundra.
4. Details of excavation by author, June 1994: A possible 15 x 30 m surface area of ground near the septic tank cover was used as a dump for coke ash and cinders from the boiler room. The cinders were dumped over light-brown coloured ground, in a layer varying from about 10 to 45 cm thick. A 2-3 cm thick layer of topsoil has developed over the cinders, covered with pasture grass. A test excavation was shovelled out of random holes to sample for artefacts included in the coke. By 1955, the dairy had been in operation next to the former dump site for some time. Health regulations (in the 1950s) would not have permitted cinder dumping next to the dairy. From 1955 onwards, the caretaker used the cinders as fill or for road base. The main period of dumping was, therefore, considered to have occurred during the years of hospital operation and up to about the Second World War. The presence of coloured plastic fragments suggests that some dumping continued after the war, when plastics became widespread. Most glass and ceramic fragments were incinerated and fused beyond recognition. Some fragments, however, such as food remains (mutton bones: pelvis and rib) and ceramics, are still identifiable and it is this random sample that forms the basis of the author's interpretation.
5. Aborigines Protection Board Annual Reports 1915-16.
6. Aborigines Protection Board Annual Report 1918.
7. Aborigines Protection Board Annual Reports 1921-26.
8. Aborigines Protection Board Annual Report 1926.
9. Aborigines Welfare Board Annual Reports 1942-44, 1953-54. Also Ella Hiscocks (Matron 1945-67), interviewed by Peter Kabaila at Cootamundra in August 1994.
10. The bottles in this dump were identified as mainly beer and sherry, but also port and gin as well as one methylated spirits bottle and several cough medicine bottles. Many bottles have manufacturers' date stamps.
11. Details of grounds operation from 1950s through to closure: Ern Gardiner (caretaker 1955-75), interviewed by Peter Kabaila at Cootamundra in June 1994.
12. Details of Bimbadeen operation and buildings from 1978 to present: Lindsay Jaques (administrator 1978-94), interviewed by Peter Kabaila at Bimbadeen in June 1994.

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Rev Leonard McNally, Principal, Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship 'Bimbadeen', PO Box 313, Cootamundra NSW 2590; interviewees: former staff and girls of the home; illustrator and graphic designer: Ed Radclyffe; architect: Amanda Gaunt (volunteer fieldwork); archaeologists: Ian Brady (volunteer fieldwork), Wilfred Shawcross (artefact identification and dating); text checking and revision: Victoria Grounds, Wilfred Shawcross, Lesley Whitton; text formatting: Prof Algis Kabaila.

CHAPTER 3

PARRRAMATTA INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

A plain-clothes policewoman took me by train to Sydney, and at Central Station an uniformed policeman met us and escorted me to a modern two storey building in Glebe. From the sleepy town of Cootamundra to the strange and frightening hustle and bustle of Sydney. Made even more frightening as it had been a silent journey. The policewoman who escorted me would not speak one word to me during that long journey. No one would tell me what was going to happen. Around the building at Glebe were high brick walls, topped with a high netting fence and barbed wire along the top. I remember putting my knuckles in my mouth to stifle a gasp at the first sight of this building. Was this my new home? A group of fifteen of us girls (black and white) were taken to the Children's Court next day. There was no one to speak up for me and my overriding feeling was of terrifying isolation. The police were the only ones to give me advice, and that was to say that I had run away because I didn't like the job. Any mention of the dirty old man that had pestered me at the farm near Cootamundra would only get me into "really bad trouble". "This is all wrong!" I told myself, but I felt too scared to go against the police advice. The tears rolled down my cheeks as I did what they wanted. "You are uncontrollable!" thundered the Judge "And you are throwing away all the opportunities that you have been given in life!" Heaven knows I never wanted those opportunities, whatever they were supposed to be in the first place - I just wanted to be with my family. To me this was a very strange and different place, different rules - cruel with no justice - cold - nothing warm. "You, Marjorie Johnson, are a very naughty girl, completely uncontrollable. I will place you in the Parramatta Industrial School for Girls for two years, to be taught with strict ways. Maybe that will help you to live your life better than you are doing now". So that was that. When I was finished being lectured I was taken straight to Parramatta. I can remember being driven up to the big gate. The man opened the gate and drove the car in. When I looked around at the solid brick walls with two layers of barbed wire on the top I knew I was in gaol, not an institution like a children's home with space to move in. At Cootamundra there were things I didn't agree with, but we had more freedom. There were no high brick walls and the fences were low. But that Parramatta Girls Home, instead of calling it home, they should have called it gaol, because it was gaol to me. On arrival we were taken to a room and stripped naked; standing one by one in front of women officials, who examined our bodies for any distinguishing marks. Then we were made to take a shower and given our prison clothes, which were similar to those we wore at Cootamundra (navy blue tunics, white blouse). Why hadn't I told the true story when I faced the judge? Would he have believed me? Every day started the same. After showers came breakfast, consisting of one slice of bread and dripping and a slice of bread and jam. This was followed by a mug of tea and a dish of porridge. Sometimes there were weevils in it but we had to eat it anyway. It never varied. There were early morning chores before we were released for schooling in the compound and taught cooking, dressmaking, knitting, making paper flowers and house cleaning. And then, of course, the inevitable laundry work. Lunchtime began with prayers. We then had to sit at wooden tables on wooden benches shoved into long lines. We had to fold our arms behind our backs until our food was served. These long rows of tables made this enormous dining room look even more colossal. Our chests had to be well thrust out and the elbows tucked well in. We were told when to start. But take one step out of line, like not folding your arms properly or not looking as though you were saying your prayers you were ordered from the room, to stand outside and miss your lunch. Supervision was constant. All three to four hundred of us were counted for meals, counted for bed, watched in the showers and watched closely as we prayed at our bedside, before getting into bed.

It was to keep my mind active that I hit on the idea of teaching my language Ngiyampaa to six Aboriginal girls from Bourke, Brewarrina and Moree. Two white girls also joined my "class". Authorities saw no merit in the enterprise when it discovered our activity and I was forbidden to speak my native language again and punished by being put in a solitary cell and treated to a diet of bread and water. I could never understand the white mans' love of a diet of dry bread and water - especially when ordering it for someone else. During my two year stay at Parramatta I got to know the punishment cell better than most people and I ate plenty of dry bread and water. In the cell you had to wear a dress made from a chaff bag and its roughness made my skin feel sore. I was amazed to see these bag dresses hanging all along the wall of the tunnel thing on the way into the punishment cells. There must have been fifty of them hanging there-bag dresses. When you were put into the cell they took your dress and singlet and gave you this bag dress. Many times I had to take it off and sit there in my pants in the dark because it was the only way to stop scratching. One particular supervisor in the laundry must have been bothered by my attitude because she never accepted my starching technique and would make me do the same white coat over and over again. This would happen sometimes up to eight times and my heart would sink each time she dampened my efforts and kept on giving me the coat to do again and again. Every time that woman supervised me I would finish up in the solitary cell for a two day stay. I never found out why she disliked me, but some one should have told her that nobody's perfect. A lot of my time at Parramatta was spent in that solitary cell under the big building on a diet of dry bread and water. They could put you in solitary whenever they felt like it-they didn't have to go to the superintendent. One time I was sick with a bad cold and couldn't do anything; I spent three days for this in the punishment cell. No one cared. Another time I got put in there for not polishing the floor properly. I had to polish it with a rag and it was all done on your knees. We had to scrub it first with sand soap and cold water and then you had to put this polish on it. Then you had to shine it and if it wasn't shiny enough -well in you would go. I had hard scales on my knees from scrubbing those floors. We also had to scrub the benches that we sat on, they were bright white and they had to be scrubbed every day with sand soap and cold water, always cold water no matter how cold it was at the time. If you didn't do the job "good enough" in you would go to the punishment cell. After twelve months the big day arrived and I was allowed outside the walls with some other girls to play netball in the park. What a glorious feeling! The grass was springy, the trees waved nearby in the breeze, and there were ordinary passers-by who were neither prisoners nor supervisors. The Aboriginals amongst us, were never once allowed visitors. We enjoyed this rare chance to see ordinary outsiders. It only lasted a few minutes as two Aboriginal men from the nearby mental hospital were working in the sports area. They asked us how we were, and straight away we were marched back into our prison and lectured sternly against talking to black people. We were told to "consider ourselves white". What an amazing statement from so called sane and so called superior white supervisors. You can imagine how the eyes of some of the very dark girls rolled at this piece of genetic information. When we went to bed that night we were told to ask God in our prayers to "turn us white one day". One probation officer (Mrs English) a tall elderly visitor had adopted two Aboriginal girls and she told me more than once "Marjorie, you can cook, you can sew, you can knit and you are clever with your crochet work. You have the world at your feet. If you behave yourself and go to a good home and respect that person's home, you will be brought up as one of the family". She was a kindly lady and even she could not recognise how we were hurting. We already had our own families we just wanted to return to our people. The women who supervised us were generally big and strong with a beefy appearance, while many of the Aboriginal girls were skinny and not very large. I watched in horror as Katie, an Aboriginal girl, was savagely flogged with a strap that these women carried with them. Her legs looked terrible, all bloodied and bruised. She was a very black girl who had only been with us for one week.

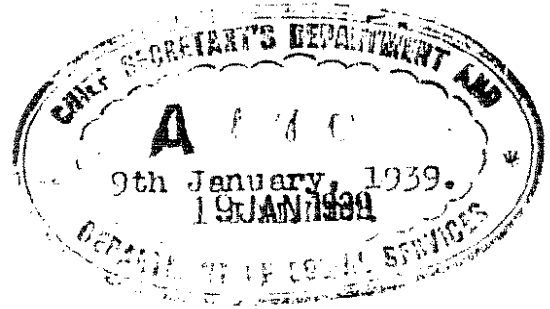
Katie was flogged because she kept screaming that she wanted to go back home to her mother. She had previously told me how she was with her mother and a baby in a buggy when a policeman seized her and dragged her from her family. They were looking for her father who was hiding in the bush. When they put Katie to bed I could see how bad her legs looked. But I never found out how she got on because when I woke up in the morning her bed was empty and made up. We never saw her again. Another Aboriginal girl who was only aged eleven years and who was pregnant was always hungry. As I was on cook house duties I was able to smuggle four cookies to her in my apron. This place, I was to find, must have had many eyes because at the lunch-time roll call I was called out of the line and put once more into that cell as punishment. This time it was for a stay of seven days, complete with the white mans' diet of dry bread and water. Of course, I had to wear that awful chaff bag dress which made me so sore. As so often happens, word got to me as to who had "dobbed" me in. It was one of the white girls, and when I came out of the cell I had neither forgiven her nor forgotten her. In those days my temper had a very short fuse and the first thing I did on being released from the cell was to jump into the lines of the girls and attack the informer. As she lay on the floor my hands went around her throat and my temper grew. The male supervisor grabbed me by the plaits of my hair and hit me hard across the bridge of my nose. They still had difficulty getting me off that girl - well I was very angry. With blood flowing from my nose this man dragged me back to the cell, opened the door and threw me in like a sack of potatoes. Thud! So much blood was coming from my nose that I had to take my dress off and use it to try and stop the bleeding. No one came and I got worried because I could not stop the bleeding. As I sat in pain and misery one of my friends knocked the cell wall with a stone and then called softly through the brick wall "Marjorie". "Please get the sister!" I yelled, not bothering to keep it quiet. "I can't stop my nose from bleeding!" When the hospital sister arrived she patched my face up and found that my nose was broken and very swollen. Later I found that the superintendent was disciplined for not checking on my condition. It seemed a lot of fuss for four biscuits and I hope that the young Aboriginal girl managed to enjoy them. So in my first year at Parramatta that "solitary" cell was to become a second home to me. I received frequent attention from the leather straps that the staff carried around. The staff could send you into the cell for a period without having to ask anyone. If they didn't like the way you scrubbed the floor - in you'd go. If they thought you were too cheeky - in you'd go. When I told some Aboriginal girls about having to wear a 'bag' dress - in I went for a week. Perhaps I was too explicit, but I began to feel like a marked person - I was fifteen years old! Once in the cell you were fed twice a day with dry bread and water. You got no dinner. They took away your top clothes and you had to wear that hateful bag dress. It was a demoralising feeling, to sit on the bed and gaze around the tiny cell at your new horizons. The bed, two air ventilators, a little toilet bucket, a great steel door and there was no daylight. For us Aboriginal girls, Parramatta was worse than it was for the white girls as they were allowed to have visitors, relatives and friends. No relatives were ever allowed to visit the Aboriginal girls. I learned years later, that my mother had managed to locate me but was not allowed in or to leave a message. She was warned about the consequences if she persisted in trying to contact me. Aboriginal children were just never allowed any visitors within the gaol or contact if working outside. In Parramatta you were kept totally isolated. As I sat in the cell, sometimes I reflected on how all of this was happening; because I had been taken from my family as a baby, for no reason I could discover. Then came the pair of missing stockings and finally the misfortune to be fancied by a persistent old white man who scared me. It did not seem right - and then I began to realise that in this world, being right was not enough. You had to have a voice that was heard as well.

It also occurred to me that I was risking staying inside forever if I kept on being put in the "solitary" cell, so I started to co-operate more. I began to concentrate on folding my arms properly at meal times and looking earnest when I prayed. Also I took particular care in saying "please" and "thank you". It was at about this time that I had a marvellous piece of luck. I was put on cooking duties in the kitchen and so missed out on the riot the girls had in the large recreation room. If I had not been in the kitchen I would almost certainly have been marked down for the riot. The girls (both black and white) revolted over their treatment. It was a flashpoint that had to happen. In the mayhem, furniture was overturned and broken. Screaming girls threw bricks through the large glass windows and the wild melee only stopped when alarm sounding police wagons came screaming to a halt outside in the yard. All the girls involved were taken to Long Bay Gaol- we never saw them again. I was lucky to be in the cookhouse at that time because the authorities told us that Long Bay was a lot worse than Parramatta. If so, it must have been a bad place. All my friends had left Parramatta before me. Then one day after nearly two years I was told there was a job for me and I was free to go. Goodbye that walloping strap, goodbye that "solitary cell", goodbye that chaff bag dress, goodbye all that floor scrubbing, goodbye all that strict discipline! Goodbye! Well, coming out of Parramatta I was a little hesitant in saying goodbye to all that floor scrubbing. I went into the domestic service scene quite easily - cooking, serving, washing, looking after children and floor scrubbing. Some people's lives organise themselves with a flash of enlightenment. The influence of the Parramatta Industrial School for Girls certainly remained vividly within me, but it took some time and the stimulus of the other influences over the years before I became convinced that helping my people was to become the prime object of my life. The judicial system left a bad taste. I never forgot the terrible feeling of being afraid and so very alone when having to face authority. The feeling of being unrepresented in an alien society at a very vulnerable time of my life. Remember I was only fifteen years old. How dare those elderly white men sitting high above you decide that you are wicked, relying on words from people who neither know you nor understand you! I should like to see how some of them would enjoy living on bread and water for days at a time. Just who should decide that one person's culture and beliefs are inferior to someone else's? Who should forcibly take children from their families and so terrify them that they hide anywhere when the Welfare and Police are hunting them down? I lived closely with many of these children, which combined with my own experiences of family deprivation gave me a strong sense of how wrong it all was.

Pictured: Nancy Edwards and Marjorie Woodrow "Inmates at Parramatta". They were united through Link-Up and have remained friends.



Following is a Series of forty two file documents from Police and the Aborigines Protection Board just some of the documents used to "keep track" of Marjorie. The documents trace Marjorie's path through Cootamundra and Parramatta, and finally seeking the Board and Police permission to marry. A Policeman was even sent out from Narromine to officially witness the marriage. Later attempts to continue to track her. Marjories' file shocked her "my file, at the Aboriginal Protection Board is three inches thick, it is very invasive. almost every breath I took was documented.



The Officer in Charge of Police,
GRIFFITH.

SUBJECT: Marjorie Johnson c/- Mrs. H. Whymonde, Gypsum
Mines, Griffith - question of placing her under
the care of the Aborigines Protection Board.

REFERENCE: Your report dated 30th December.

This matter has received consideration and it is
considered that the position can be best met by transferring the
girl to the Board's Training Home, Cootamundra, where she will have
a period of training before being placed in a situation.

Arrangements might, therefore, be made for her to
be transferred, the Matron of the Home being communicated with
beforehand so that the girl may be met on arrival. It is noted
that escort can be provided from Griffith.

Requisitions for necessary fares may be issued
and endorsed "chargeable to this Department".

Please also complete the attached History Form and
return to this office.

WM. J. HACKAY,
Chairman A. P. Board,
per:

The Matron,
Aboriginal Training Home,
COOTAMUNDRA.

Forwarded for information and notation. Please
report hereon when the girl arrives.

The Secretary,
Aborigines Protection Board
J. English
INSPECTOR.
1-1939

H. b. opened.
Feb. 20. 1. 39.

A. C. PETERSON
Secretary.
9th January. 1939.

13 years old

TRINITY TRAINING
HOME

ALL MAIL TO

G.P.O.

OFFICE OF
BOARD FOR PROTECTION OF ABORIGINES,
CHIEF SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT (BRIDGE ST. ENTRANCE),
SYDNEY,
JRM.MDW.



Officer in Charge of Police,

SUBJECT: Marjorie Johnson c/- Mrs. H. Whymonde, Gypsum Mines, Griffith - question of placing her under the care of the Aborigines Protection Board.

REFERENCE: Your report dated 30th December.

This matter has received consideration and it is considered that the position can be best met by transferring the girl to the Board's Training Home, Cootamundra, where she will have a period of training before being placed in a situation.

Arrangements might, therefore, be made for her to be transferred, the Matron of the Home being communicated with beforehand so that the girl may be met on arrival. It is noted that escort can be provided from Griffith.

Requisitions for necessary fares may be issued and endorsed "chargeable to this Department".

Please also complete the attached History Form and return to this office.

WM. J. MACKAY,
Chairman A. P. Board,
per: *[Signature]*

The Chairman A.P. Board,
SYDNEY.

I beg to report that Marjorie Johnson was sent on to Cootamundra to-day. The Matron of the Training Home was advised by telegram and asked to meet the train.

Requisition No. 3722 for one 2nd class return fare Griffith to Cootamundra and one 2nd class single fare was issued. Form No. 2 is attached.

MRS. INSPECTOR ENGLISH

Thomas & E.H.
Sergeant 2nd Class
Griffith. 16.1.39.

B. FORM No. 2

ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD.

No. 1256

Date 16th January, 1939.

Name JOHNSON, Marjorie

Age 16 years Birthday 28. 5. 23

Place of Birth Mossageil

Religion

Reason for Board assuming control of child Inability of guardian to control her.
 Disinclined to remain in employment. Desires to be running the
 streets at all hours.

Father's name, occupation, and address Unknown.

Mother's name and address Ethel Johnson (deceased) *

Other relatives Mrs. H. Whymonde, Gypsum Mines, Griffith (aunt)

How many brothers and sisters?

Names and ages

Been in other situations?

Where and how long?

Further particulars (where living during childhood, and in whose care) Spent childhood on
 Mission near Menindee.

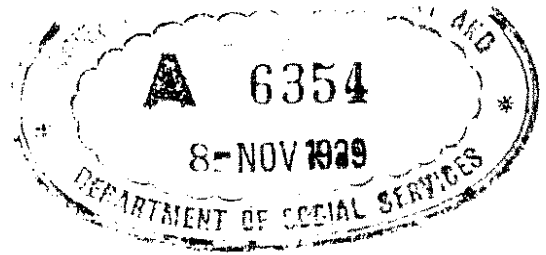
To which Home sent? Cootamundra.

Date 16/1/39

Certificate of admission

Disposal 3/6/39 Employ of Mrs. E. Miller "Littledale", Cootamundra.
 28/11/39 Present address C/- Mrs. E. Miller, 12 O'Connell St.,
 Parramatta (Mrs. Miller spending holiday with her
 people)

13 years old



REMINDER.

CHIEF SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT.

SYDNEY. 8-11-1939

WHEN REPLYING, PLEASE QUOTE NO. 136
ADDRESS ALL MAIL TO G.P.O. BOX 30A, SYDNEY, N.S.W.

" APPRENTICE

MAJORIE JOMSON

MRS E MILLER
LITTLEDALE,
COOTAMUNDRA



8 NOV 1939 DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

PERIOD—

1. 7. 39

to

30. 9. 39

Wages due £ 1.12 : 6

Exchange omitted from
last cheque £ : : 6

Arrears £ : : :

£ 1:13 : 0

I beg to remind you that the sum of £ 1 13 0
as shown in the margin hereof, is due in respect of the
abovementioned Aboriginal Apprentice in your employ.

Kindly remit same within 30 days of due date
accompanied by this notice. Cheques should be crossed and
made payable to Chief Secretary's Dept. In the case of
country cheques, exchange should be added.

Yours faithfully,

S. L. ANDERSON,

Under Secretary.

T. H. TENNANT, ACTING GOVT. PRINTER.

11785 5.39

RECEIVED
17/11/39

FILE
11785 5.39

ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD.

IME.

16 years old.

SUBJECT: Marjorie Johnson, aged 17 years, half-caste, in the employ of Mrs. E. Miller, "Littledale", Cootamundra. Now holidaying at 12 O'Connell St., Parramatta.

Mrs. Miller telephoned me this date and advised that her apprentice, Marjorie Johnson, had absented herself from home last night from 8.45 p.m. until 2 O'clock this morning.

It appears that Marjorie's cousin, May Whymonde, 17 years, who is employed by Mrs. Cohen, Hastings Parade, East Bondi, paid her a visit yesterday, spending the day with her at Mrs. Millers' home.

Mrs. Miller stated that both girls spent a happy day together (under her supervision) and that at 8.35 p.m. Marjorie requested to be allowed escort her cousin to the Railway Station. This request was granted and the girl was instructed to return home immediately after departure of the train at 8.45 p.m.

As the Railway Station is only 5 minutes walk from Mrs. Millers home, the girl should have arrived back at no later than 8.55 p.m. After waiting some time for the girl to return, Mrs. Miller and her parents commenced a search for her, but failed to locate her.

At 2 a.m. the girl returned home and stated that she had been kidnapped, but when further questioned, retracted her story and admitted that she had "picked up" with a strange man and had remained in his company until approximately 1.30 a.m.

She further admitted that she had misconducted herself with the man.

Mrs. Miller is a very careful and sympathetic employer and has had several of our girls in her employ. She has asked that Marjorie Johnson be removed from her home as she is alarmed lest the girl seek further trouble.

I beg to be advised in the matter.

J. English.

The Superintendent.

Inspector.
22/1/40.

*Refer matter to Parramatta Police with a view to securing a statement, and an endeavour to locate the other party.
Arrange for a medical examination if possible*

18037
"Brislington"
Parramatta

23rd January 1910.

The Aborigine Protection Board,

Sydney.

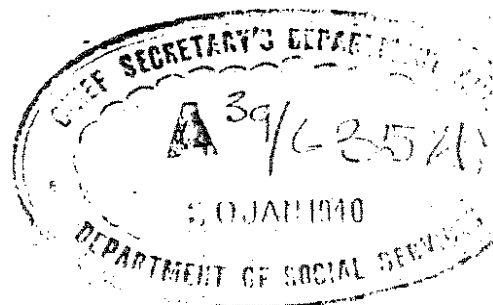
Memorandum of Fees due to

Dr. Keith Brown

For Professional Attendance

Cl: 1: 0.

The Secretary,
Aborigine Protection Board,
Box 30A. G.P.O.
SYDNEY.



Dear Mrs. English,

Reference the patient Miss Marjory JOHNSON:
aet: 15, c/o of Mrs. Miller, Cootamundra.

I medically examined this girl to-day. For some unexplained reason she was tempted away from the path of righteouness, and allowed a young man of her acquaintance to take advantage of her. She returned home early in the morning. There is a likeli-hood that she has had previous sex experience. She is of precocious sexual development, and is naturally seeking experience of this kind. After talking to her I am of the opinion that her recent relapse should be overlooked. I think that she has some very good points, and with the right encouragement should turn out quite well. I have asked Mrs. Miller to give her another chance. She should be re-examined in one week to exclude the possibility of venereal infection.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Punter

30.1.40

23rd January, 1940.

R. S. Hae Cathie Brown
M. B. P. B.

Inspector English.

14 years old

ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD.

A 39/6354.
IME.

SUBJECT: Marjorie Johnson, aged 17 years, half-caste, formerly in the employ of Mrs. E. Miller, "Littledale", Cootamundra. Now holidaying at 12 O'Connell Street, Parramatta.

In connection with this case I have to report that I communicated with the Police, Parramatta re them obtaining a statement from the girl. I then arranged for her to be medically examined by Dr. Keith Brown, of Parramatta who handles cases of this nature for the Child Welfare Department. A fee of one guinea will be charged for this service, and the medical officer's report will be forwarded to the Secretary of this Department when completed.

I then had the girl brought into this Office where was interviewed by Detective Sergeant Flint of Parramatta and myself in company.

The attached statement was obtained from the girl at the time of this interview.

It will be seen on perusal of the statement that the girl was a consenting party to the seduction and no further Police action will be necessary unless pregnancy occurs. In that event the Police will take steps to locate the man concerned.

The girl's employer, Mrs. E. Miller, informed me that she is willing for the girl to continue in her employ, but she will be absent from her home at Cootamundra for the next two weeks and request that other arrangements be made for the girl's accommodation during that period.

Pursuant of this development I have arranged with the Child Welfare Department for the girl's accommodation for a period of two weeks at "Corelli" Home for Girls, Marrickville.

The Superintendent.

J. English
Inspector.
30/1/40.

*Approved to pay fee of £1/1/-
Hrd English's action in arranging for the girls accommodati
for 2 weeks at Corelli is approved. *Path**

~~12 JAN 1940~~ 1 FEB 1940

ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD.

A 39/6354.
IME.MDW.

SUBJECT: Marjorie Johnson, half-caste, 17 years, formerly in the employ of Mrs. E. Miller, "Littledale", Cootamundra, at present at Corelli Shelter, Marrickville.

In reference to the above girl who is still at the Child Welfare Department's Shelter, "Corelli", Marrickville, her late employer, Mrs. Miller, informed me per telephone that she would be unable to re-employ the girl. Her reason for changing her previous arrangement that she would re-employ the girl is that Mrs. Miller has purchased another property and there is not suitable accommodation for the girl.

The Child Welfare Department might be requested to allow the girl to remain at the Shelter pending another situation being found for her.

An application for an apprentice has been received from Mrs. Truelove, Hawkesbury Road, Springwood, and inquiries are being made through the Police, Springwood, as to the home conditions and suitability of Mrs. Truelove as an employer of an aboriginal girl.

Subject to a satisfactory report re this applicant and her home, I would suggest that Marjorie Johnson be transferred to her employ.

Dr. Keith Brown, Parramatta, who examined the girl on two occasions informed me per telephone to-day that the girl is medically fit and that there is nothing to prevent her entering another situation.

The Superintendent.

J. English
Inspector.
15/2/40.

Child Welfare Department to be requested to hold the girl at "Corelli" for week or two longer, until new situation found for her.

Approval to go to the employ of Mrs. Truelove will be dependent on satisfactory police report and suitability of the applicant & her home. Two further independent references should be obtained.

The Secretary

AWH
17/2/40

A 39/6354.

27th February, 1940.
AOP.MDW.

Dr. Keith B. Brown,
"Brislington",
PARRAMATTA.

Dear Sir,

I am directed to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 23rd January regarding the girl, Marjorie Johnson, and to express my Board's appreciation therefor.

The girl, Marjorie Johnson, is at present an inmate of the Corella Girls' Shelter, Marrickville, and arrangements are being made for her transfer to a situation at Springwood, at an early date.

Steps are being taken to arrange payment of your account in due course.

Yours faithfully,

Secretary.



Office of
Board for Protection of Aborigines,
Chief Secretary's Department,
Box 304, G.P.O.,

Sydney 11th March, 1940.

Apprentice JOHNSON, Marjorie.

DEAR SIR or MADAM,

I beg to confirm the transfer to your employ on 5/3/40. of the abovenamed Aboriginal Apprentice, who enters your employ under the conditions and rate of wages set forth hereunder.

The Form of Agreement attached should be signed by you and returned to this Office as early as possible.

Mrs. W. H. Truelove,
"Manetta",
Hawkesbury Road,
SPRINGWOOD.

Yours faithfully,

Secretary.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

1. No aboriginal child shall be apprenticed to a hotel, boarding-house, or shop.
2. The Apprentice shall be provided with sleeping accommodation, to be approved by the Board's Officers or representatives, and such accommodation shall be liable to inspection by any person authorised by the Board at all reasonable times.
3. The Apprentice shall be fed, clothed, and lodged in a proper manner, and provided with medical and dental attention when necessary.
4. The Apprentice shall be allowed, when practicable, to attend Divine Service and Sunday School, and their moral training shall be duly cared for by the employer.
5. In the event of any change of residence by the employer, written notice thereof shall be at once given to the Board.
6. In the event of the Apprentice becoming seriously ill, dying, absconding, leaving, or meeting with any accident, information shall be at once given by the employer to the Board, and also to the local Police, who shall take immediate action and report to the Board.
7. Pocket Money at rates set forth hereunder shall be paid weekly to the Apprentice, whose receipt shall be obtained in the Pocket Money Book provided and at the time of payment, and such book shall be available for inspection by the Board's Officers or Police at any time.
8. Wages at the rates set forth hereunder shall be remitted quarterly to the Office of the Board upon receipt of a reminder.

RATES OF WAGES AND POCKET MONEY—FEMALES.

FIRST YEAR, commencing	—	£1 12 6	} To be ... is. To be ... is. 6d. remitted ... 2s. quarterly. ... 2s. 6d.	} To be paid weekly to Apprentice direct.
SECOND YEAR, do	<u>5. 3. 40</u>	2 5 6		
THIRD YEAR, do	<u>1. 4. 41</u>	2 18 6		
FOURTH YEAR, do	<u>1. 4. 42</u>	3 5 0		
THEREAFTER—At Fourth Year Rates.				

(An account for the Broken period at the commencement of the employment will be forwarded at the end of the first quarter.)

ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD.

W.D.W.

SUBJECT: Clothing outfit of the aboriginal apprentice,
Marjorie Johnson.

I have to report that on 5/3/40 I transferred Marjorie Johnson from Corelli Shelter, Marrickville, to the employ of Mrs. W. H. Truelove, "Manetta", Hawkesbury Road, Springwood.

On 12/3/40 I received a letter from Marjorie requesting that her glasses be repaired. On the same day I also received a letter from Mrs. Truelove advising me that Marjorie's supply of clothing was very small, and asked that she be allowed to purchase an outfit for Marjorie.

Mrs. Truelove and Marjorie called at this office to-day and Mrs. Truelove was given an order for an outfit on "Bidura" Clothing Store, Glebe.

I questioned Marjorie regarding the clothing she had when she left Cootamundra Home to go to Mrs. Miller's employ and she stated that she had a woollen skirt, jumper, shoes and stockings and a few articles of underclothing. When asked what articles of clothing Mrs. Miller had bought for her she said that Mrs. Miller had only bought her the one frock, a blue floral summer frock which is still in good condition; an overall, Mrs. Miller making Marjorie pay half the cost of some herself, and a few other odd articles of underclothing. Marjorie stated that Mrs. Miller did not buy her any shoes and when she was in need of a pair, she had to write to her father for them. Her father, I believe, also sent her other articles of clothing.

is next to be dealt.

Mrs. Truelove examined Marjorie's clothing and stated that the only sound frock she had was the blue floral one Mrs. Miller had bought for her to go to Cootamundra Show, the rest of her outfit consisted of two frocks which had been mended, and which Mrs. Truelove stated were now too small for the girl, overall, no stockings, two pairs of shoes which were practically worn out, two hats in good condition, two nightdresses which had been given to her by friends as presents, and a small supply of underclothing which is in a fair condition.

On the 11th March, I wrote to Mrs. Miller and asked her to furnish a list of clothing she had bought for the girl and when this is received I will confirm it with Marjorie.

L. Williams.

15/3/40.

The Superintendent.

*Referred to appropriate
for my personal
inspection
Miss K. H. H.*

It is now too late to insist on clothing being supplied by Mrs Miller, the clothing outfit should have been examined by Mrs English on the occasion of each inspection and the employer compelled to keep the proper outfit up to standard. The girl should not have

FORM 53.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

55 6049

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

JF/TD

WINCHCOMBE HOUSE, 52 BRIDGE STREET,

SYDNEY, 9th April, 1940.

The Secretary,
Aborigines Protection Board,
SYDNEY.



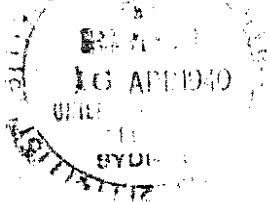
SUBJECT: Account in favour of Dr. Keith Brown for £1. 1. 0
- Examination of Marjorie Johnson.

I am in receipt of your communication of 16th March last, together with claim from Dr. Brown for £1. 1. 0 in respect of the examination of Marjorie Johnson, ~~but~~ Before consideration can be given to the question of payment, I shall be glad if you will kindly furnish me with a report concerning the nature of the examination.

Mr. Pearce
17-4-40

J.V. BOYLE,
Secretary.
per *[Signature]*

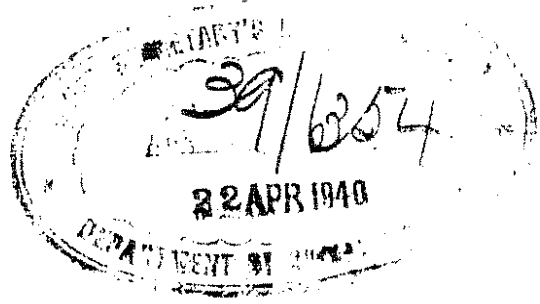
TEL: UW 8037



"Brislington"

Barramatta

15th April, 1940.



Chief Secretary's Department,

Board for Protection of Aborigines.

No. A 39/6354.

Memorandum of Fees due to

Dr. Keith Brown

For Professional Attendance

Marjorie Johnson:

Account Rendered £ 1: 1: 0.

*Pa/pos
please 10/11/40
23.4.40*

REMINDER.

MRS. E. MILLER.
LITLEDALE.
COOTAMUNDRA.

CHIEF SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT,

SYDNEY,

WHEN REPLYING, PLEASE QUOTE NO.

ADDRESS ALL MAIL TO G.P.O. BOX 30A, SYDNEY, N.S.W.

AN APPRENTICE

MARJORIE JOHNSON.

PERIOD—

1.4.40.

to

30.6.40.

Wages due £ 2 : 5 : 6
Exchange omitted from
last cheque £ : :
Arrears £ : :

£ 2 : 5 : 6

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

I beg to remind you that the sum of £ 2 : 5 : 6 as shown in the margin hereof, is due in respect of the abovementioned Aboriginal Apprentice in your employ.

Kindly remit same within 30 days of due date accompanied by this notice. Cheques should be crossed and made payable to Chief Secretary's Dept. In the case of country cheques, exchange should be added.

Yours faithfully,

S. L. ANDERSON,

Under Secretary.

FILE

T. H. TENNANT, ACTING GOVT. PRINTER.

ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD.

FILE No. *A 39/170*

Department. *Aboriginal Welfare Board*

Date. *11th September 1940*

REPORT re ABORIGINAL Employee *Mayorie Johnson*
Apprentice

IN the EMPLOY of *Mrs. W. H. Lavelle*

*"manetta" Hawkesbury Rd.
Springwood*

Date of Birth of Employee *28-8-1923*
Apprentice

Nature of Employment. *Domestic duties - general housework*

Date of Inspection. *10th September 1940*

General Health. *Good*

Adequacy & Condition of Clothing. *Excellent and adequate*
(in conformity with list supplied)

Work, Progress and Behaviour. *Works well. Progress v. Good and behaviour v. pleasing*

Treatment by Employer & Members of family. *Excellent*

Nature and condition of Employer's home. *Very comfortable and bright*

Is Pocket Money paid regularly? *Yes*
(Employer's Pocket Money Book to be inspected & initialled)

Particulars of sleeping accommodation. *Very comfortable - own*

Bedroom - centre of house

General Remarks. *Mayorie is a fortunate girl. She is being particularly well cared for. Her employer has won her confidence of the girl, and I was very impressed with the happiness of the girl.*

Directions re location of home. *Train to Springwood
Hawkesbury Rd. on left side of bridge*

Inspector. *J. English*

CHILD WELFARE ACT, 1939.
(SECTIONS 82 AND 83)
Aborigines Protection Act 1940.

Order of Children's Court.

NEW SOUTH WALES,
TO WIT.

WHEREAS Marjorie Johnson (or Steadson)

^{Child}
a ~~child~~ (young person) of the age of ¹⁴ ~~seventeen~~ years is this day charged before this Court for that at Sydney in the said State on the twenty third day of October 1940 she is an uncontrollable young person.

~~such being *(a summary) (an indictable) offence~~

NOW this Court, having heard and determined the matter aforesaid, doth find ~~*(the said charge proved)~~ (the said ~~child~~ young person to be ~~a neglected~~ an uncontrollable ~~child~~ young person and doth hereby order that the said ~~child~~ young person be

*Strike out
whatever is
not applicable.

~~*released on probation to the care of~~
of _____ in the said State for a period of _____ months
from the date hereof upon the following terms and conditions: 1. That he be of good behaviour.

~~*committed for a period of _____ from the date hereof
to the care of _____ of _____
in the said State, a person willing to undertake such care, upon the following terms and conditions:~~

~~*committed to the care of the Minister for Education for the said State to be dealt with as a Ward
admitted to State control.~~

~~*committed (for a period of _____) to an Institution under
the said Act (and the Court doth recommend that such Institution be that known as _____).~~

COMMITTED to a home established under the provisions of Section 11 of the Aborigines Protection Act 1940.

AND THE COURT DOTH FURTHER RECOMMEND that favourable consideration be given to the discharge of the young person to any suitable relative or other person who may apply to take charge of her.

GIVEN under *(my) ~~(our)~~ Hand and Seal at this Court this ~~sixth~~

day of November 1940.

RESERVED FOR MINISTER'S USE.

The within named child or young person is to be detained by the Superintendent of

[Signature]
*(Special Magistrate) ~~(Justice of the Peace)~~ exercising the jurisdiction of a Children's Court at Sydney



ABORIGINAL STATION,

Date, 27th December, 1940

The Secretary,
Aboriginal Protection Board,
Domain,
Sydney.

I beg to report the undermentioned movements of
Aboriginal Apprentices and Servants.

J. English
MANAGER. Inspector

NAME OF APPRENTICE	LEFT EMPLOY OF	Transferred to the employ of, (Full initials and address of employer MUST be given.)	DATE OF MOVEMENT.
<p>Angie Johnson</p> <p>per file 27/12/40</p> <p>Mr. Peter 27.12.40</p> <p>Accounts Branch already advised of transfer and an amended account forwarded.</p> <p>Noted on History Card 22:1:1941</p>	<p>Mrs. W. L. Lush Springwood</p>	<p>Parramatta Industrial School</p>	<p>22.10.40</p>

9/6354
Brislington
11 NOV 1940
Parramatta

The Secretary,
Board for Protection of Aborigines,
Bridge Street,
SYDNEY.

Dear Sir:

In January of this year I made a thorough examination and gave a full report in the case of Marjorie JOHNSON. In your letter of the 27th February, 1940, you acknowledged this report and informed me that steps were being taken to arrange payment of my account in due course. In spite of frequent representations to your department for the payment of this account, which, in view of the work done, was a very reasonable one, you have constantly evaded my inquiries, finally referring me to the Board of Health as the department responsible for the payment of this fee.

Would it be possible for you to give me some definite information as to your department's attitude in this matter and thus save me incurring

c 16, A. H. [unclear]

PS
7/11/40
21.11.40

Handwritten: 25/11
"Mannetta",
Hawkesbury Road,
SPRINGWOOD.

21st October, 1940

(Dictated at 11 Phillip St., Sydney)

To:

Mrs. English,
Aborigines Board,
SYDNEY.

Dear Mrs. English,

Re: MAJORIE JOHNSON.

I am writing this in confirmation of our chat this morning relative to Majorie, when I stated the following :-

On Sunday the 13th October, Majorie stated that she was invited to a party on Sunday evening and mentioned the names of very respectable people in Springwood. When she left we told her that she was to start for home at a quarter to ten and be in doors by 10.30 p.m. The place where the party was held would be about $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles walk.

Some time after 11.0 p.m. Mrs. Truelove woke me to say Majorie had not returned and, after waiting until somewhere near 12 o'clock we decided to get up and wait the return of the young lady. At 1.30 am. Mrs. Truelove and I decided to have a cup of tea and, naturally, switched on the lights. While making the tea Mrs. Truelove said she heard a gate creak. At 5 o'clock in the morning, as Majorie had not returned and Mrs. Truelove remarked on the peculiar stand and appearance of our dog, which was looking intently at the lavatory door downstairs. On Mrs. Truelove opening the lavatory door she found Majorie there, who at once said she could not get in because she had lost the key, and while talking the key of the sun room door dropped out of her hand. Incidentally she was not supposed to have the sun room door key, but to come in by the front door (the key to which she also had) so that we could know what time she arrived home.

I questioned her upstairs as to the happenings of the evening. She stated she had been to the party, certain of the young people had seen her home and she left at a quarter to ten and arrived home at 10.30 pm. I told her that she was obviously telling lies and I gave her an opportunity of thinking what the truth was and telling me. After a little while I asked her what the truth was and she stated she had told the truth.

I there and then telephoned Constable Stuart of Springwood and he called upon me about 8 a.m. when I acquainted him with the position. He left to investigate and returned in just over an hour, when he questioned Majorie as to the happenings of the previous evening when she repeated exactly what she had told me. Constable Stuart emphatically pointed out to her that she did not arrive home until 1.30 a.m. Majorie stated that she wanted to leave Springwood, when Constable Stuart stated that she would stop with Mr. & Mrs. Truelove but would not be treated in the same kind manner as in the past.

Majorie left the room and Constable Stuart stated that he had ascertained Majorie had been at the home of quite a decent young fellow in Springwood and had spent the evening with this young man and his father and mother. She left about 10.15 p.m. but the young man kept her out until about 1.30 a.m.

In order that Majorie could have suitable recreation and enjoyment we allowed her, some weeks ago, to attend the pictures in the company of a young woman about 21 years of age, but according to Majorie she became very friendly with several young girls and fellows (all wellknown to me and highly respectable) and in some way or other her picture evenings were arranged with

In addition to carrying out our obligations to the Board in respect of Marjorie Johnson - that is providing her with a good home, not an undue amount of work and suitable clothing, my wife endeavoured to train this girl in the responsibility of womanhood and from the 18th June 1940 until the 8th October 1940 paid the girl the sum of 12/6 per week in order that she should have the privilege of clothing herself and learning how to expend money to the best advantage. Unfortunately, our trust was misplaced and, actually, none of the money was expended in clothing.

I am enclosing a book signed by Marjorie Johnson for each weekly payment of 12/6d., thus it will be seen that over and above our obligations to the Board we paid to this girl the sum of £10.12.6d. May I also call your attention to the note made by my wife in the book, reading as follows:-

" This money was stopped on account of the trouble Marjorie was after repeated chances
(signed) A. Truelove. "

I feel that there is no need for me to go into the circumstances of this girl leaving us of which you have a complete record on your files, and would appreciate a letter from you saying that in view of all the circumstances you will no longer consider I am indebted to you for the sum of £2.17.0 representing wages due to Majorie Johnson for the period of 1st July to 23rd October 1940.

Yours faithfully,

A. Truelove

ENCL: Small Red Notebook.

METROPOLITAN CHILDRENS COURT.

46483 6.10

SUBJECT: Case of Marjorie Steadman of Johnson.
REFERENCE: Appended report of Dr Keith Brown of the Girls Industrial School at Parramatta.

On the 6th inst this girl was before this Court, having been remanded as an uncontrollable child from the 23rd October last. She was submitted to Clinical Examination at the Girls Industrial School at Parramatta, and on the 4th inst the appended report of Dr Keith Brown was submitted to the Court.

In view of the nature of the report, the Court committed the girl to a Home constituted and established under S.II of the Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act, 1940, and the Court has specially recommended that favourable consideration be given to discharging the girl to any relative who may apply for her release. This recommendation, of course, to become operative only if and when the girl is certified to be free of any Venereal Disease from which she might be found to be suffering.

The girl has been transferred to the Girls Industrial School at Parramatta to continue the observation necessary. Action will now be necessary by your Board to either constitute or establish a Home under S.II of your Act in which this girl can be detained or else to secure the consent of the Minister of Public Instruction to permit the Child Welfare establishment in which she is detained to be so constituted and established as such a home. I take it that action will also be necessary for your Board to recoup the Vote of the Child Welfare Department for the expenses involved in the examination and Maintenance of the girl.

Committee Order is appended, the Superintendent of the Home in which she is detained should receive the same as an authority for the detention.

Court Officer.
8.II.40.

The Superintendent,
Aborigines Welfare Board.

Mr. P. H. H. 20/11

NEW SOUTH WALES.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

AEM. JS

WINCHCOMBE HOUSE, 525 BRIDGE STREET,

SYDNEY. 5th February, 1941.

The Secretary.
Aborigines Protection Board.
S Y D N E Y

SUBJECT: Fee of £1.1.0 in favour of Dr. Keith Brown
for examination of aboriginal Marjorie
Johnson.

REFERENCE: A 39/6354, previous correspondence.

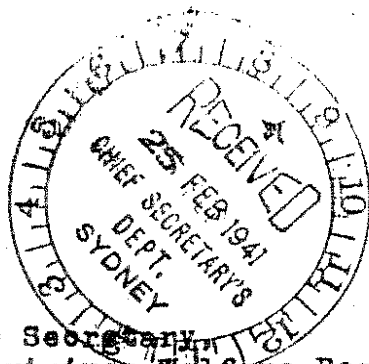
With reference to the above matter which has
again been referred to me, I have to advise that before
consideration can be given to payment of this claim, a
full report outlining the necessity for such medical
examinations *is required.*

J. V. BOYLE.
Secretary.
per: *[Signature]*

No. B.7957.

CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE
ADDRESSED TO THE DIRECTOR,
CHILD WELFARE DEPT.,
BOX 18A, G.P.O., SYDNEY.
TELEPHONE: 778.
599, EXT.

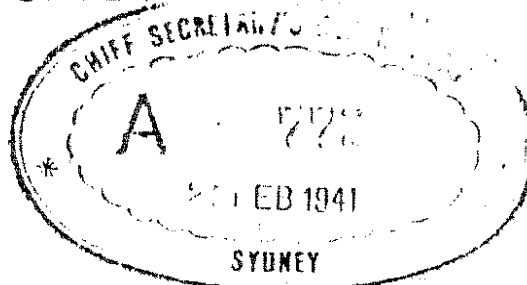
WBH-GH.



The Secretary,
Aborigines Welfare Board,
Chief Secretary's Office,
Box 30A, G.P.O., SYDNEY.

CHILD WELFARE DEPARTMENT.
EDUCATION BUILDING, BRIDGE ST
(BOX 18A, G.P.O.).

SYDNEY, 20th February, 1941.



SUBJECT:- Case of Marjorie Steadson (born 25.5.1923) - An inmate of the Industrial School for Girls, Parramatta.

On the 8th November, 1940, the Court Officer of the Metropolitan Children's Court advised of the committal of the abovenamed to a home constituted and established under the Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act, 1940. The girl was, however, admitted to the Industrial School for Girls for medical observation as she was suffering from an endocervicitis.

The Medical Officer, Dr. K.S. MacArthur Brown, now certifies that the girl is free from Venereal Disease and is not liable to convey infection. Under these circumstances, there is no legal warrant for the further detention of the girl at the Industrial School, and it is desired that you will arrange to remove her in terms of the Court Order.

G. D. MacArthur
DIRECTOR.
P. C. W. W.

SECRETARY, A. P. BOARD

26 FEB 1941

*found
5 years old
born in 1926*

all any papers?

*No Record
Ref
27/2*

ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD
~~ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD~~

Subject: Mary Jane Johnson (Shedman) D.C. in charge
Parramatta Industrial School (C.W. Dept.)

I have to report that Miss. Tleson, an Inspector of the Child Welfare Department called on me and informed me that the abovementioned girl is now available for employment.

Miss. Tleson intimated that her Department would be gratified if arrangements could be made to transfer the girl out of their custody.

A situation is available with Mrs. J. M. of Nyngan, whose home has been inspected and was the subject of a favourable report by the Police, Nyngan.

It is recommended that Mary Jane, should be transferred to this employment at an early date, as in her own interests, it is desirable that she be placed beyond the temptations of the metropolitan area.

E. English

Superintendent

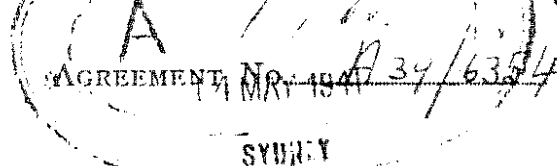
25. 3. 1941

The Superintendent.

Let me see Mrs Green's application. Who are the members of the family? In view of Mary Jane's easy morals it would not be advisable to place her in employment where she may be again tempted into immoral actions W.H.

The Secretary

1/ File seen 27/3/41 Approved to send Mary Jane Johnson to Mrs Green, Nyngan
W.H. 27/3/41



29th April, 1941.

Apprentice Marjorie Standson

I, (insert full name) Jane P Green hereby agree
to employ the abovementioned Apprentice, who entered my employ on 16.4.41 under
the conditions and rate of wages set forth hereunder.

(Signed) J. P. Green
(Witness) [Signature]
Date 27/5/41

Mrs. J.P. Green,
"Mangoplah,"
NYNGAH.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

1. No aboriginal child shall be apprenticed to a hotel, boarding-house, or shop.
2. The Apprentice shall be provided with sleeping accommodation, to be approved by the Board's Officers or representatives, and such accommodation shall be liable to inspection by any person authorised by the Board at all reasonable times.
3. The Apprentice shall be fed, clothed, and lodged in a proper manner, and provided with medical and dental attention when necessary.
4. The Apprentice shall be allowed, when practicable, to attend Divine Service and Sunday School, and their moral training shall be duly cared for by the employer.
5. In the event of any change of residence by the employer, written notice thereof shall be at once given to the Board.
6. In the event of the Apprentice becoming seriously ill, dying, absconding, leaving, or meeting with any accident, information shall be at once given by the employer to the Board, and also to the local Police, who shall take immediate action and report to the Board.
7. Pocket Money at rates set forth hereunder shall be paid weekly to the Apprentice, whose receipt shall be obtained in the Pocket Money Book provided and at the time of payment, and such book shall be available for inspection by the Board's Officers or Police at any time.
8. Wages at the rates set forth hereunder shall be remitted quarterly to the Office of the Board upon receipt of a reminder.

RATES OF WAGES AND POCKET MONEY—MALES.

FIRST YEAR, commencing	_____	£1 12 6	... is.	To be paid weekly to Apprentice direct.
SECOND YEAR, do	_____	2 5 6	To be ... is. 6d.	
THIRD YEAR, do	<u>16.4.1941</u>	3 11 6	remitted ... 2s.	
FOURTH YEAR, do	<u>1.1.1942</u>	5 4 0	quarterly. ... 2s. 6d.	

THEREAFTER—At Fourth Year Rates.

(An account for the Broken period at the commencement of the employment will be forwarded at the end of the first quarter.)

9. Interest at the rate of 6 per cent. sh⁵⁵ le on all accounts that are allowed to remain outstanding after 30 days from the d



6th June, 1941

Apprentice MARJORIE STEADSON or JOHNSON

I, (insert full name) Jane P. Green hereby agree
to employ the abovementioned Apprentice, who entered my employ on 16/4/41 under
the conditions and rate of wages set forth hereunder.

Mrs. J.P. Green,
"Mangoplah"
NYNGAN

(Signed) J.P. Green(Witness) E. RobertsDate July 1st 41

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

1. No aboriginal child shall be apprenticed to a hotel, boarding-house, or shop.
2. The Apprentice shall be provided with sleeping accommodation, to be approved by the Board's Officers or representatives, and such accommodation shall be liable to inspection by any person authorised by the Board at all reasonable times.
3. The Apprentice shall be fed, clothed, and lodged in a proper manner, and provided with medical and dental attention when necessary.
4. The Apprentice shall be allowed, when practicable, to attend Divine Service and Sunday School, and their moral training shall be duly cared for by the employer.
5. In the event of any change of residence by the employer, written notice thereof shall be at once given to the Board.
6. In the event of the Apprentice becoming seriously ill, dying, absconding, leaving, or meeting with any accident, information shall be at once given by the employer to the Board, and also to the local Police, who shall take immediate action and report to the Board.
7. Pocket Money at rates set forth hereunder shall be paid weekly to the Apprentice, whose receipt shall be obtained in the Pocket Money Book provided and at the time of payment, and such book shall be available for inspection by the Board's Officers or Police at any time.
8. Wages at the rates set forth hereunder shall be remitted quarterly to the Office of the Board upon receipt of a reminder.

RATES OF WAGES AND POCKET MONEY—FEMALES.

FIRST YEAR, commencing	_____	£1 12 6	} To be ... 1s. To be ... 1s. 6d. remitted ... 2s. quarterly. ... 2s. 6d.	} To be paid weekly to Apprentice direct.
SECOND YEAR, do	_____	2 5 6		
THIRD YEAR, do	<u>16.4.1941</u>	2 18 6		
FOURTH YEAR, do	<u>1.1.1942</u>	3 5 0		
THEREAFTER—At Fourth Year Rates.				

(An account for the Broken period at the commencement of the employment will be forwarded at the end of the first quarter.)

The Accountant:

This girl (Marjorie STEADSON)
is identical with Marjorie
Johnstone. Please note

Holli

WMB 20/5

John

Receipts Received	
Name	WMB
Date	20/5
Amount	F1839.5
Credit	100
Date	20/5





(A 2181) #
Mayone Steadson
"Mangopolah"
Nyngan
N. S. W.
30th July 1941.

Dear Mrs. English,

I am writing now to let you know that I am getting married, to, a man named Leslie Benton aged 22 years, who is also employed here. I have also informed my employer Mrs. Green.

I am sure I will be very happy with this man, as he has a good name.

As I am eighteen years of age and in this position I feel I would like to be out from under the board. The point is I would like to take possession of my past earnings as marriage takes up money.

I would appreciate it very much if Mr Pettit would send it as soon as whenever possible. Well Mrs. English I think it is due to me to thank you for all you have done for me in the past and trusting you in this matter I will now close.

Yours truly
Mayone Steadson

SECRETARY A. P. BOARD
15 AUG 1941

MRS. INSPECTOR ENGLISH
8 AUG 1941

In connection with the above matter the Police, Nyngan, might be asked to interview the girl, Mayone Steadson, regarding the proposed marriage. Also the man mentioned is employed by Mrs. Green.

ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD.



The Officer in Charge of Police,
NEW SOUTH WALES.

SUBJECT: Inspection of Aboriginal
Apprentices in Country Districts.

In accordance with the practice adopted in 1939, Aboriginal apprentices in country districts have been inspected by Officers of the Child Welfare Department, but in view of the instructions received from the Premier regarding the consumption of motor spirit, it has been decided to discontinue inspection by the Child Welfare Department in out-lying districts, when a special trip involving considerable travelling would be necessary.

It is desired therefore, that a report be furnished by you when you next have an opportunity to make an inspection in conjunction with ordinary police duties, or when you have occasion to patrol the Area. If possible a report is desired at least every six months.

Forms for your report are attached.

S. L. ANDERSON
Chairman,
per: *[Signature]*

1/8/41

10/12/41
Perkins
41/1431
Sec. A.W. Board
Sydney

Forwarded

Teleb. station

Serge 3/4

Wingman 30.8.41



ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD.

SYDNEY, 13th August, 1941

The Officer in Charge of Police,
NYNGAN

WHEN REPLYING, PLEASE QUOTE NO.

A11/2181

ADDRESS ALL MAIL TO G.P.O. BOX 30A, SYDNEY, N.S.W.

SUBJECT: Aboriginal girl Marjorie Steadson in employ of
Mrs. J.P.Green, Manglopah, Nyngan.

A communication has been received from the abovenamed in which she states that she desires to marry a young man named Leslie Benton, aged 22 years, who is also employed by Mrs. Green. This girl is 18 years of age and has a credit with the Board's Trust Account amounting to £12/11/7.

It is requested that you interview the girl regarding the proposed marriage and also furnish a report regarding Benton, after consultation with Mrs. Green. Your report should deal with his character, his mode of living, etc.

Marjorie Steadson should be advised that when your report is received, the matter will be submitted to the Board.

11/14/82
S.L.ANDERSON,
Chairman,
per *[Signature]*

FILE No.....

Department. *Child Welfare Department.*

Date.....31st. August, 1941.....

REPORT re ABORIGINAL Employee *Marjorie Johnson or Steadman*
Apprentice

IN the EMPLOY of.....*Mrs. J. P. Green*.....

.....*Mangaplah*.....

.....*Hygon*.....

Date of Birth of Employee *28th May, 1933*.....
Apprentice

Nature of Employment.....*Household duties*.....

Date of Inspection...*28th August, 1941*.....

General Health....*Good*.....

Adequacy & Condition of Clothing...*Clothing adequate and in good order*....
(in conformity with list supplied)

Work, Progress and Behaviour...*Progress good, behaviour good*.....

Treatment by Employer & Members of family...*Good*.....

Nature and condition of Employer's home...*Good home, maintained in good order*

Is Pocket Money paid regularly?...*Yes*.... Book inspected and initialled...
(Employer's Pocket Money Book to be inspected & initialled)

Particulars of sleeping accommodation...*Room set apart from rest of house occupied by family, but still within the curtilage of the dwelling, comfortably and adequately furnished, and kept clean and tidy.*

General Remarks. From my observations, and inquiries *Marjorie Steadman* is progressing favourably, she appears to be endowed with more than the average intelligence, and her employer informs me she is a good worker and of clean and orderly habits.

Directions re location of home...*Hygon to Mangaplah by car*...

...*80 miles*... of *Brewarrina* to *Mangaplah* by *R.F. 16 x*

...*60 miles*.....

Inspector...*H. P. Harris*.....

Rank....*Constable 1/C No 2220*.....

...*Hygon, 31/8/41*....

Police Station, Nyngan.
31st August, 1941

SECRETARY'S OFFICE

A

2181

SYDNEY

Sergeant 3rd Class Charlton.
NYNGAN.

SUBJECT:-

Marjorie Steadman, Aboriginal apprentice, in employ
of Mrs P.J. Green, Manglopah, Nyngan.

REFERENCE:-

File A41/2181, attached.

I beg to report I have interviewed Marjorie Steadman, her employer Mrs Green, and Leslie Charles Benton in connection with Marjorie Steadman's application to get married.

Mrs Green informs me that Marjorie Steadman is a good worker, clean and tidy, and of good character, if permission to marry is granted she will still continue in her employ and will reside in a cottage on the holding near Mrs Green's home.

Marjorie Steadman informs me she is desirous of remaining in Mrs Green's employ if she is permitted to marry, as she and her husband can then save some money to enable them to set up a home of their own, as at the present time they are not in a position to do so, but having in mind the fact that Mrs Green is willing to provide a cottage, furnished for them to live in provided they remain in her employ, and they being satisfied to do this realising the advantage offered them.

Leslie Charles Benson, who is desirous of marrying Marjorie Steadman, is 23 years of age, his parents reside at Tarcoon near Brewarrina, he has been employed by Mrs Green for the past 10 months, is a good worker, of steady temperate habits, and honest, he has no Aboriginal blood, is a native of New South Wales. From my inquiries I would say that Benson is a young man of good character, he receives £2/15/- per week and keeps as general station hand at Manglopah.

The Chairman,
Aborigines Welfare Board,
Sydney.

Constable 1/C No 2220.

Forwarded for the information of the Chairman.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE
31-8-41

Sergeant 3/C.
Nyngan. 31-8-41.

MRS. INSPECTOR ENGLISH
4 SEP 1941

ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD.

A41/2181

ING. LW.

SUBJECT: Marjorie Steadman (Johnson) half-caste (very fair) -
proposed marriage, (aged 18 years.)

I have to report that the abovementioned girl requested permission to marry Leslie Benton, white man, aged 22 years, who is also working for her employer, Mrs. Green, Manglopah, Nyngan. In view of the favourable nature of the attached Police report, I consider that no obstacle should be placed in the way of the proposed marriage.

It might be remembered that at one period, this girl's actions caused fears to be entertained for her future moral welfare and for her to be decently married, with some possibility of security, is very gratifying under the circumstances.

x I understand that Marjorie's father resides at Griffith with a Mrs. H. Whymonde, Gypsum Mines, and the Police Griffith might be requested to locate him for the purpose of obtaining his consent to the marriage. The Police might also be advised re the favourable report on the prospective husband received from the Nyngan Police.

J. English

Inspector.

10/9/41

The Superintendent.

x Marriage approved subject to consent of father. Call for report from Griffith Police. *[Signature]*

11 2 10 11

MRS. INSPECTOR ENGLISH

17 SEP 1941 - Seen. The Police, Griffiths, might be asked to locate the girl's father - Steadman or Johnson (thought to be residing with Mrs. H. Whymonde, Gypsum Mines) with a view to obtaining his consent to the marriage. *[Signature]*

17
9

The Chairman,
A.P. Board,
Sydney.

2181
20 SEP 1941
SYDNEY

I beg to report that I am unable to get any information which would assist in tracing the father of this girl. I understand that he was never married to her mother, and coloured people to whom he is known say they have not heard of him for some considerable time.

MRS. INSPECTOR ENGLISH
2 OCT 1941

Sergeant 2nd Class
Griffith. 28.9.41.

3 OCT 1941

As the whereabouts of Marjorie Steadman's father is unknown, it will be necessary to seek the consent of the Guardian of Minors at this morning. A letter might also be forwarded Marjorie Steadman advising her about her request to be allowed to marry Leslie Benton, & receiving consideration of the might also be forwarded a copy of the letter from her Trust Account as requested by her.

WITHDRAWAL OF THE SUM OF £5 : - : -
FROM BOARD'S TRUST ACCOUNT APPROVED.

Cheque to be forwarded to Marjorie Steadman (or Johnson) as early as possible

Credit £12.15.2

URGENT

THE ACCOUNTANT.

3 OCT 1941

SUPERINTENDENT.

Vr No 4469 passed for payment

Supt. J.B. 10 OCT 1941

Langoplah
Via ~~Adyngan~~

RECEIVED
13 JAN 1942

13 JAN 1942

SYDNEY

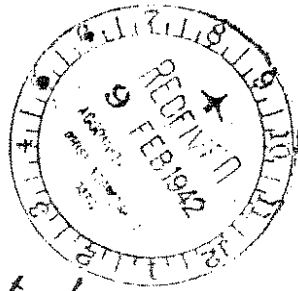
Origines Department
Per Sir

Margie Henderson
was married to Leslie Benson
on the 2nd of December 1941
at Warromine. She left my
employment on the 23rd Dec.
to be married. They returned to
my employment on the 8th
January. She is employed as
cook general

yours faithfully
J. F. Green

A/S 21 (Mrs Insp English)

See. D. 21. Jan 14 file B



Mangoplah
via Wyngan
Feb 4th 1942

Chief Secretary
Aborigine Welfare Board

Dear Sir

as Johnson now Margie Steadman
has now left Mrs L Benton
with her - husband somewhere about
Vanomine
They left here on the 18th of
January - do not know their
address

Yours Faithfully
J. P. Green

9th February, 1942


Mrs. J.P. Green,
Mangoplah,
via NYNGAN.

Dear Madam:

I am returning herewith cheque in favour of M. Stedman for £2.18. 6, forwarded by you to this office, being wages due in respect of Aborigines apprentice Marjorie Johnson (or Stedman).

To enable the Board to place the sum in question to the credit of the apprentice's Trust Account it will be necessary for you to make out the cheque in favour of the Chief Secretary's Department, therefore, it would be appreciated if the enclosed cheque could be altered accordingly and returned to this office at your earliest convenience. *Alteration should be initialed*

Yours faithfully,


Acting Accountant.

REMINDER.

Mrs. J.P. Green,
"Mangoplan",
NYNGAN, N.S.W.

CHIEF SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT.

SYDNEY, 2nd March, 1942

WHEN REPLYING, PLEASE QUOTE NO. _____

ADDRESS ALL MAIL TO G.P.O. BOX 30A, SYDNEY, N.S.W.

" APPRENTICE

Marjorie Johnson

PERIOD—

to

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

I beg to remind you that the sum of £ 2 : 18 : 6
as shown in the margin hereof, is due in respect of the
abovementioned Aboriginal Apprentice in your employ.

Kindly remit same within 30 days of due date
accompanied by this notice. Cheques should be crossed and
made payable to Chief Secretary's Dept. In the case of
country cheques, exchange should be added.

Yours faithfully,

S. L. ANDERSON,

Under Secretary.

Wages due	£	:	:
Exchange omitted from last cheque	£	:	:
Arrears	£	2 : 18 : 6	
	£	2 : 18 : 6	

LW

11th December, 1953

C7193

Aborigines Welfare Officer,
Box 46 P.O.,
DUBBO.

SUBJECT: Trust Account - Marjorie Benton
(nee Johnson or Steadson)

REFERENCE: Your report of 27th November.

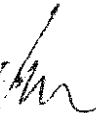
Marjorie Johnson (or Steadson) married a white man named Leslie Benton at Narromine on 27th December, 1941. At that time she was employed by Mrs. J.P.Green, Mangoplah, via Nyngan.

On 29th December, 1941, a telegram was received from this girl, requesting trust money, the address being given as Mrs. L.C.Benton, C/- T.Jacobson, Third Ave., Narromine.

At the time of her marriage, it was understood that Leslie Charles Benton's parents resided at Tarcoon, near Brewarrina.

Perhaps enquiries at the above addresses may reveal the present address of this girl.

The present whereabouts of her own parents is unknown.

H.H. GABBY 

11th Dec 1953

TELEPHONE _____



Aborigines Welfare Board

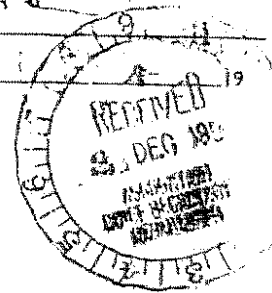
OFFICE OF ABORIGINES WELFARE OFFICER

C6528

4 DEC 1953
C 7193

*Trust Account - Marjorie Johnson
(nee Benton)*

The Superintendent
of Aborigines Welfare,
Box 30, G.P.O.
SYDNEY.



SUBJECT: Trust Accounts, Wards and Ex-wards.

REFERENCE: Your letter of 7th August 1953, C1594.
My letter of 28th October 1953, C6528.

I desire to advise that I have no trace of the whereabouts of Marjorie Benton, nee Johnson or Steadson. Perhaps you could advise where she originally came from, and if possible where her husband came from also.

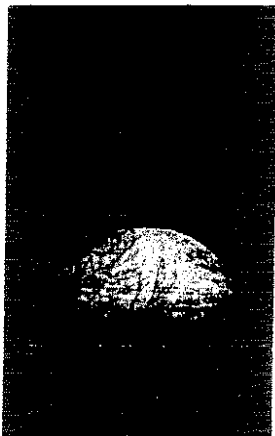
Further to the information supplied on 28th October, I have to advise that:-

Percy Button is at present at Wilcannia, having recently arrived there from a trip into Victoria.

Violet Cain, is not a daughter of Quesnie Robinson as advised earlier, but a niece now living in Sydney.

P. E. Felton

P. E. FELTON.
A.W.O.



Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales

14th Floor, 47-53 Macquarie Street, Sydney, 2000

Telephone: (02) 241 3901

BG1/F228

BG/km

27 June 1988

The Principal Archivist
The Archives Office of NSW
2 Globe Street
THE ROCKS NSW 2000

Dear Sir:

ACCESS TO ARCHIVES

Would you please allow Ms Marjorie Johnson access to the following records of the Aborigines Protection Board and the Aborigines Welfare Board:

Ward Register 1916-1928

	<u>File No.</u>	<u>Bin No.</u>
Marjorie Johnson	22923	8/3004
Marjorie Benton	7193	8/2825
	19634	8/2968
Leslie Charles Benton	7193	8/2825

Permission for access is only granted to the designated records for a period of two weeks commencing on 27 June 1988. Permission is also given for photocopying of the relevant records.

She has signed the no pain or embarrassment clause and will deliver a copy with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Neville G. Perkins, OAM
DIRECTOR OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Attach (1)

13. 6. 90..

Marjorie relives her hell



Parramatta revisited — Marjorie Woodrow remembers two years of hell at the Parramatta Industrial Girls Training School 53 years ago

MARJORIE Woodrow is an Aboriginal woman who has suffered from white Australia and now she wants to talk about it.

Her tribal and family culture was wiped out by the white invaders and Marjorie doesn't want us to forget.

"When they broke up the tribes, the whole thing disintegrated — all the customs, myths and taboos," Marjorie said in Westmead, where she lives with her eldest daughter.

Marjorie was two when her mother died and she was raised by aunts who worked on western NSW properties for white owners.

She went to work at 13 in a boarding house in Griffith, but a pair of stockings went missing and although she always wore socks, Marjorie was blamed. She was judged "uncontrollable" and placed in the Cootamundra Girls Home.

Then she was found work on a nearby farm but she lived in constant fear of the attentions of an old white man there.

When she told the Cootamundra police she was sentenced to two years at Parramatta Industrial Girls Training School, again, for "being uncontrollable".

Her stay there is vividly described in Marjorie's book — One of the Lost Generation.

"Instead of calling it a home, they should have called it a jail because it was jail to me," she said.

Every day, after a breakfast of bread and dripping and a bowl of porridge, Marjorie had "white skills"

by CHRIS FLYNN

flogged into her — cooking, sewing, knitting and crocheting as well as "essentials" such as how to make plastic and paper flowers.

"We were no more blackfellows, we were now white people and we were brought up decent, respectable and we were to forget the black life we had because it was filthy," Marjorie said.

Apart from floggings, periodic solitary confinement and having her nose broken by a supervisor, Marjorie having to wear a hessian dress.

Also in the book are some of the official documents drawn up through Marjorie's dealings with bureaucracy.

One Aboriginal Protection Board letter quaintly refers to Marjorie "holidaying" in Parramatta.

Now Marjorie wants to tell the young people of Australia a little of their recent history. She's been invited to speak at 14 schools in Sydney so far.

"I get good attention and respect," she said.

"Teachers say, if they'd taught this sort of thing out of a book, the kids would say 'How do you know?', but when I say it, they believe it," she said.

(NEWSPAPER CUTTING CUMBERLAND) MARJORIE RELIVES HER HELL! 13-6-1990

Aboriginal State wards 'used as slave labour'

NSW Aborigines are demanding an inquiry into claims that generations of Aboriginal wards have been used as "slave labour".

The call comes as the Queensland Government is inquiring into allegations that \$20 million in wages owed to Aboriginal workers before 1975 has disappeared.

The wages were kept in trust by the now-defunct Queensland Department of Native Affairs.

Experts in NSW claim thousands of Aboriginal wards were exploited by the Aboriginal Welfare Board (disbanded in 1969) and employers.

Aboriginal magistrate Pat O'Shane, head of the NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in 1981-86, said: "There's absolutely no doubt Aboriginal wards were quite often not paid for their work."

"It was, in a sense, slave labour."

Louise Blazejowska, who has studied welfare board records, said: "The board used generations of Aboriginal children as slave labour for white people in NSW."

Ms Blazejowska, now a researcher with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, investigated 40 cases of Aboriginal wards when she worked as a

BY STEPHEN SKINNER

lawyer for the Aboriginal Legal Service in 1988.

She said the indexation of "hundreds of boxes" of ward files from the 1930s to the 1960s had been carried out in 1987.

The last letter on the files of former wards usually referred to trust account monies, made up of child endowment payments and wages supposed to be paid for work as domestic servants and farm labourers.

"It was almost impossible to work out where the money had gone because the records were so bad," said Ms Blazejowska.

Subsequent inquiries by the NSW Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Youth and Community Services and Treasury — initiated in response to widespread claims of money never being paid — have also been hindered by bad record-keeping.

One in six Aboriginal children have been taken from their families this century, compared with one in 300 white children.

Aborigines Fay Clayton, 44, and her aunt Marjory Woodrow, 68, were taken from their families.

They told of sexual harassment and beatings — and some kindness — as wards of the State working as domestic servants and farm labourers.

Mrs Woodrow said she received only £14 of her wages kept in trust. She said at age 18 she was refused money from her trust account to help pay for her wedding.

"I think the Government should be made to give the money back to us," she said.

Ms Clayton was one of six children taken away from her parents at Leeton, near Wagga.

"I never saw any of my wages. I was never shown a wages slip," she said.

Mr William Sullivan, secretary of the Aboriginal Welfare Board in the late 1950s, dismissed the claims of exploitation of workers.

"Wards would have had no problem in obtaining their trust money," he said.

"The only reason I could think of is that some of them might have gone bush and not been locatable."

"There weren't that many wards. The board held only a small portion of their wages."

"If they weren't happy with the conditions, they could have left their employment. Most of them did."

A spokesman for the Department of Family and Community Services said he doubted there was any deliberate attempt by the board to exploit wards. He said much of the money could have ended up in consolidated revenue via unclaimed monies.



TAKEN FROM THEIR FAMILY: Mrs Marjory Woodrow (seated) and her niece Fay Clayton. Picture: BEN RUSHTON

NEWSPAPER CUTTING: ABORIGINAL STATE WARDS USED AS SLAVE LABOUR

CHAPTER 4

NARROMINE AND FAMILY

After finally being given permission to marry by the Police and the Aborigines Protection Board as it was stated on the Aborigines Welfare Board report A41/2181 "I consider that no obstacle should be placed in the way of the proposed marriage. It might be remembered that at one period, this girl's actions caused fears to be entertained for her future moral welfare and for her to be decently married, with some possibility of security, is very gratifying under the circumstances"; signed J English Inspector. I married Leslie Benton at Narromine Methodist Church. After marrying Leslie Benton we settled down at Narromine (Central New South Wales). Shortly afterwards my husband joined the army and my first daughter (Lesley) was born at the old hospital in Maringo Street which was run by two sisters. When Leslie returned from the war, it was hard; war changes people. We went to work on Burraway Station. We lived in a tent for over six years with five children. Whilst living in the tent, we cooked in camp ovens and on open fires. Our washing had to be carried to the bore about one hundred yards away. Clothes and soap in one hand, wooden washing board to scrub the clothes in the other hand; water bag and biscuits tied to the baby's pram and all the other little children tagging along. I had to take another trip to carry the buckets and washing tub to the water bore. After washing, the clothes were hung on the barbed wire fence and later that day I would return to get the dry clothes off the fence - quite an exercise. Sometimes my husband would drop the metal buckets and washing tub off as he went past on his way to work to save me a trip. In the tent our furniture was made up from large wooden tea boxes and our chairs were kerosene drums with cushions and frills carefully sewn to fit for added comfort. Our fridge was a charcoal, bag drip cooler; our ironing was done with a heavy flat iron heated up on the hot coals of the open fire. The children's beds were made from wheat bags threaded with a pole up each side, sitting on a forked gum stick, sharpened on the other end and driven into the ground. Eventually the property owner, Mr Scott gave us corrugated iron to build a tin kitchen near our tent and he also gave us a black cast iron wood stove and eventually a kerosene fridge. After a while we moved into the nice new home that the owner built - it was the first real house of my own that I had lived in. Those early years of marriage were happy ones. We mixed with the other Aboriginal families, had good wages, two cows to milk and a plentiful supply of lamb.

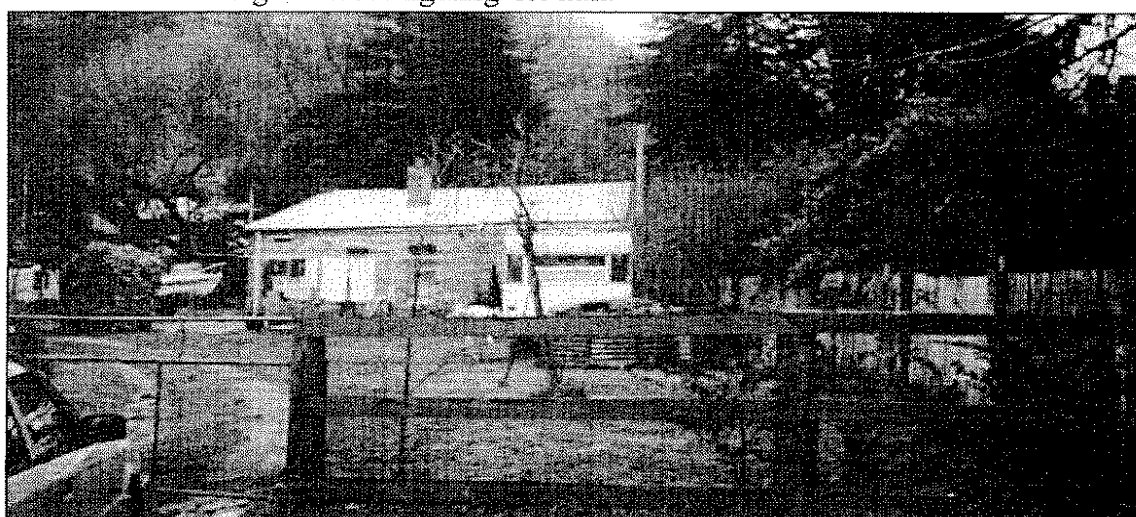
Pictured: Marjorie Benton holding her son Brian David Benton (later killed in a car accident) also with her are daughters Kathleen, Janice and Lesley in front of their new house on Burraway Station.



After my marriage broke up I found life hard bringing up a mob of children. There were no hand outs in those days. One day I was visited by a minister from the church and was told that my young son Brian David Benton (five years old) could be put in a boy's school and that my ex-husband would pay for this. Later I found that this did not happen. Instead I got a letter from the court saying that because no money had been paid my son was now a state ward. I cried tears of hate. The Welfare history was repeating itself and I could not let this happen to my little boy. To fight this I moved to Dubbo and also had many, many trips to Sydney. Finally but not until five years later I got my son back again. Brian was ten years old, so much had been lost. Then I took a last trip to Sydney to get the money from the Department that my ex-husband had been paying in to them for four months only to find that the Authorities had deducted four hundred pounds for their expenses. The Authorities of the day had really shown its greed. My second husband, Wally Woodrow, was a Scotsman. He was a tower of strength to me and helped the children and me a lot - especially in times of crisis like above. In 1968 the Welfare hounded my daughter Kathleen after she gave birth to her son Brian Robert. My daughter Kathleen was convinced (with pressure from the Welfare Department) to adopt her child out; he was only three weeks old; Kathleen was just sixteen years of age. I was living in Lithgow at the time when the Welfare came into my home and took my tiny grandson. I remember I was out in the back yard hanging out the baby's nappies when the Welfare drove into our yard with my daughter, told her that it was nothing to do with me as she was the mother (sixteen years old), directed her to pick up the baby and take it with them to the adoption office in town. I then entered my home and asked what was going on.

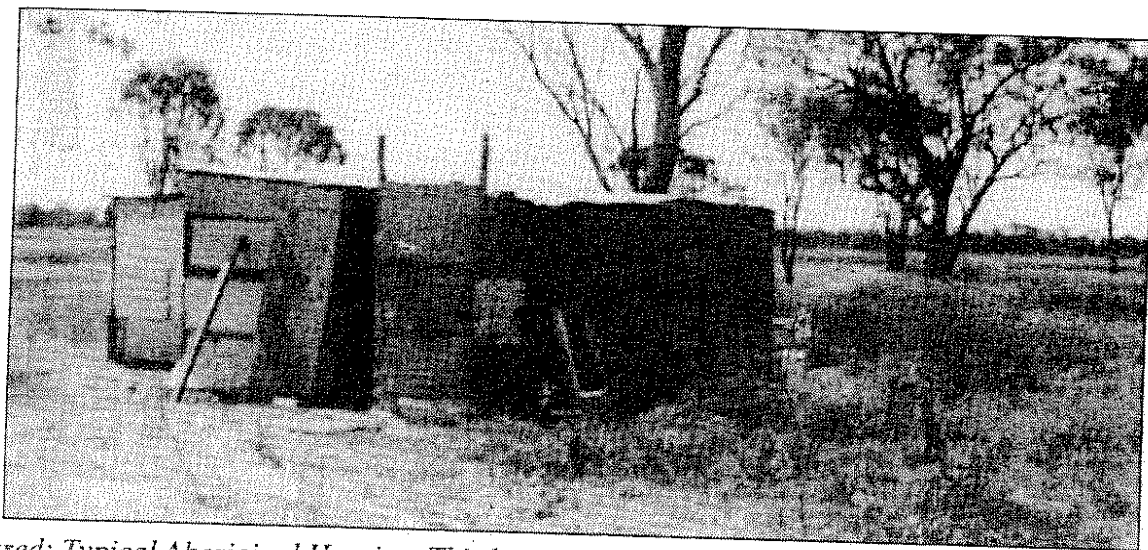
No! Not again, Not ever again -- When my husband Wally came home at four o'clock in the afternoon we went down to the little shop on the corner and as he was a legacy man from the war we boldly rang the Sydney Morning Herald hot line. With courage fired up I then spoke to the head Welfare Officer to tell him that they had twenty four hours to return my grandchild or the Herald was going to print my story and assist my appearance on National Television. By the time we walked home, the Welfare car, Police Detective and my grandchild were in our side yard.

The Detective said to me "it was a pity that there weren't more grandmothers like you in Australia"- with the support of a loving husband, I was becoming stronger and well able to speak up for my family and myself. It is so important to fight for your children and take no injustice or dirt from the authorities. But it can be exhausting mentally and physically. Wally and I never forgot this ordeal. We were finally left alone and I was later told the Welfare Officers concerned were criticised and later sacked. This Welfare Officer was said to comment that he didn't know how he was going to feed his family. My grandson is a fine young man today and we are so proud of him. There are no regrets about fighting for him.



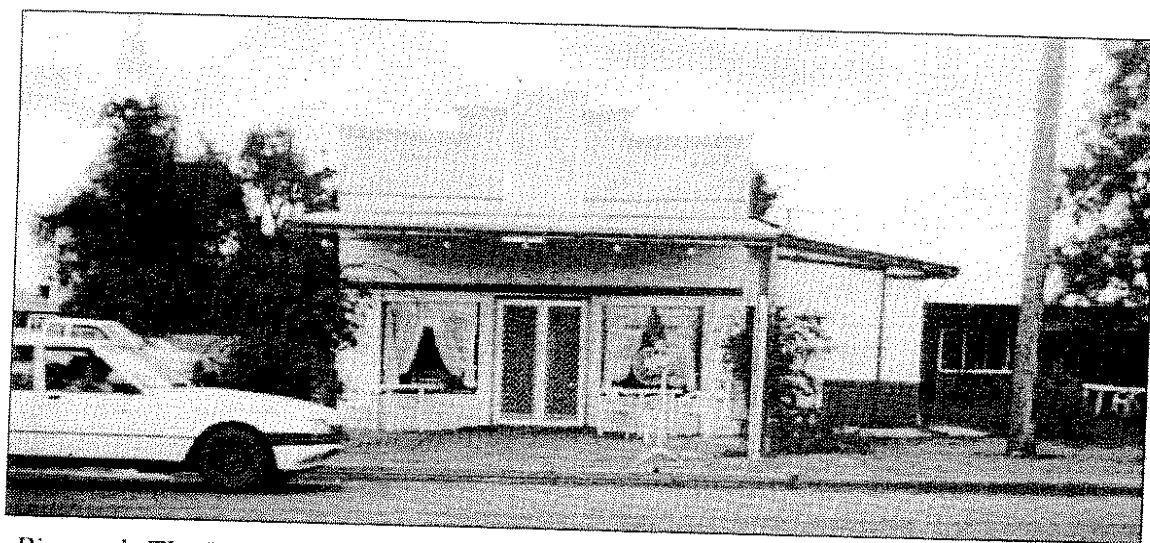
Pictured: From our home in Morts Estate Lithgow the welfare forcibly took my three week old grandson Brian Robert Benton, from here I first learned to successfully challenge the 'Authorities' and win for our children.

In the early days at Narromine, Les and I would come into town in a horse and buggy to do the shopping. The Narromine Mission was just across the river from the town and the Aboriginal people lived in tents, corrugated iron or tin huts made by flattening out kerosene tins.



Pictured: Typical Aboriginal Housing. This home was where Mrs Betty Peckham raised twenty six children at Danderloo (a little village near Narromine). It had a dirt floor and no facilities. Made from corrugated iron and flattened out kerosene tins.

Everyone carried on with whatever they had to do but many were always moving on so that their children would not be taken away. Our living was made through rabbiting and fence mending. We were paid four shillings per pair for rabbits. It was a hard but happy life for our children. Later my second husband Wally managed to sell the house he used to live in at Lithgow and we put all our resources together and bought a roadside cafe in Nevertire on the Mitchell Highway, just sixty kilometres north-west of Narromine.



Pictured: The Boomerang Café at Nevertire run by Marjorie and her husband Wally Woodrow

Most of our customers were travellers, truck drivers, bikies and coach people. We were not popular with some local people. They would throw beer cans onto the tin roof and shout about not wanting a black woman in town. Some of the wealthy farmers sons would call in after they had been drinking and told us they didn't like "black people in business, it's not right you know!" We were there for a few years. In the end we were glad to leave and return to Narromine which had always felt friendly. We sold the cafe to an Aboriginal lady named Val White, sadly I believe the harassment continued. It did not seem fair. During my thirty years in the area I raised eight children; now have thirty-six grandchildren to date, forty-six great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren. In later years events have clearly shown the injustice of the "taken" children. The cases of myself, my son and grandson; and later finding that many years ago my own mother was also a "taken" child. Also I am increasingly concerned about the amount of drug abuse, violence and alcoholism amongst local Aboriginals. I could see all about me the lack of any real initiatives from the authorities to deal with the problems. Increasingly I began to feel that I must do something about it.



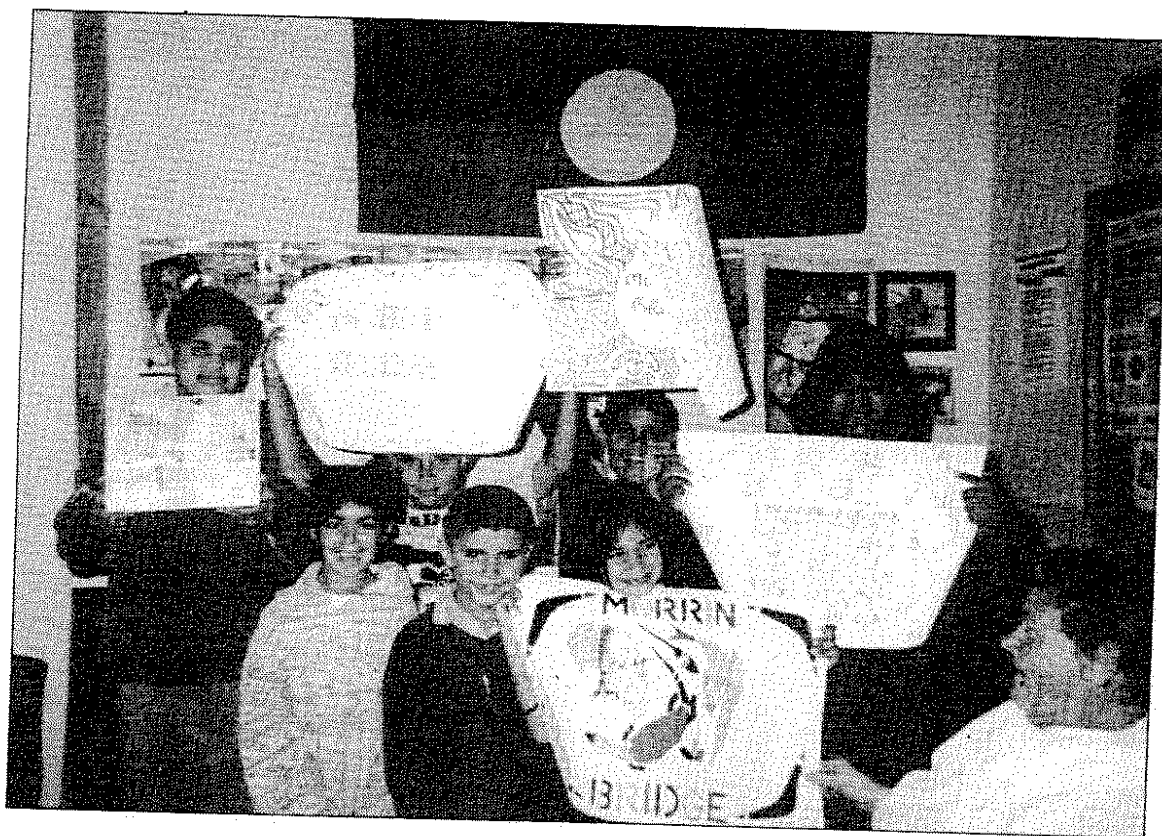
Pictured: Marjorie standing in the doorway of a corrugated iron home. She was visiting friends on "Willow Bend" Mission at Condobolin in 1980.

CHAPTER 5

GETTING ON WITH LIFE

I began putting the pieces of my life together in my mind. All these pieces each made an influence towards my attitude and actions. There were my experiences as a "stolen" child; my recollections of Aboriginal culture; my fights to preserve sacred trees in the Narromine area: this is a story on it's own-I first discovered the trees while living and working near Dubbo. There were four trees in a row all with carvings on them and it was obviously a very special place. I revisited this special site on a number of occasions. Later when I was in our shop at Nevertire I told Suva Dunn, the National Parks and Wildlife Sites Officer from Dubbo, about them. We went out with Suva to register and record the trees. I had my young grandson Brian Benton (named in memory of my own son Brian who had been killed in a car accident) with me. Brian sketched the trees for me on paper and I kept that drawing for many years. My grandson Brian had also been involved in a minor car accident a few years before and still had a piece of glass embedded under his eye socket. After visiting the area that night we both had identical dreams. We both had a vision of native men dancing around a campfire. They had feathers around their ankles, were painted up and beating boomerangs together. Then an elderly man with white hair and a white beard spoke in his language. He explained to me in English or somehow I understood what he was saying. As I was on the site and there were no elderly men I was now initiated by the dead to teach my grandson the culture and how to care for the site. He also said my grandson could lead the young in the future. My grandson was afraid and said he did not want to return to that place as it was eerie. At that moment the piece of glass dislodged from below his eye through his mouth and he had blood on his hands. I took him to the doctor and explained what had happened. The doctor said he did not doubt me as he did not understand or know what power the Aboriginal culture possessed. I was not afraid and really felt as if the spirit of that elderly man was about healing and not fear. I even felt there was a special feeling of power from the earth. That feeling has remained with me. I have visited the site a few times since, and in spite of the farmers efforts, the area has not been successfully farmed-sadly since then many of the stone artefacts have been taken from there and the trees have been burned. These are the trees that feature on the front cover of this book, beautifully painted by my artist friend Lewis Burns, from the Red Earth Gallery at Dubbo. They were painted from my grandson's drawings and Lewis painted them during one of his teaching expeditions to Murrin Bridge (organised by Dianne Decker). The farmers burnt these sacred trees because they feared we would claim their farmland. I have given many lectures about our culture and heritage to black and white children in the schools. Children are very interested in our history, they are not afraid to ask any of the hard questions that everyone wants to ask. Throughout the search for my mother, my dealings with Link Up (the organisation which tries so hard to re-unite "taken" children with their original families) and my meeting or contact with a number of prominent people, I have always tried to help my people the best I can. Determined to help my people, I have sat on many committees, addressed many schools, and contacted prominent people mainly face to face. If you have something worth saying it's easier than you think to talk to busy people. Often really busy people have more time, somehow, to talk with you than less busy people. I have met either briefly or frequently people like the late Albert Namatjira. Senator Neville Bonner, Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonoccal) "Mum" Shirl, Charles Perkins, Doc Cunningham, (Black Santa). Jimmy Little, Senator John Faulkner, Senator Sue West, Robert Tickner then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs), Michael Mansell (by phone) Senator John Heron (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs), Brisbane Lord Mayor Jim Sorley. Then former Forbes Shire Councillor Dianne Decker who has stayed with me many times while teaching at Murrin Bridge or visiting in Brisbane or Sydney.

Every one of these people, to a large or small degree, has influenced me in the realisation that it was possible for me to be of help to my people. I worked, on and off, for five years with "Mum" Shirl in Redfern. Seemingly an ordinary person, she had a terrific faith in her ability to break through officialdom to reach those Aboriginals she felt needed her help. Who can forget her famous catch-cry when trying to visit those many Aboriginal men in jail "But I'm his Mum!" That's how she got her nickname and in the end the authorities had to give way and allow her special rights to visit any Aboriginal in need in the prison system. I remember how we used to help the young Aboriginal people in the city. Prominent people like these helped give me the confidence and impetus to work for my people, whether we spent some time together or just met briefly, the influence was felt. Often what you do seems unrewarding and you may feel disappointed. Sometimes when all the community worked together with the children, it gave me a wonderful buzz. We became the first Aboriginal community to win a state Tidy Town award. To me the most important thing is fighting to keep the Aboriginal culture from being misunderstood or swamped accidentally or deliberately by the white man's life style and then just disappearing.



Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow with the young ones on Murrin Bridge

CHAPTER 6

TRAGEDY -

The biggest test of my faith came on the 17th March 1978, on a terrible day while we still running the cafe in Nevertire. A police Sergeant and a Constable from Warren walked into our cafe and suggested we close it for the rest of the day. Before he went on I knew something dreadful had happened. It was to tell us that my son Brian, his wife Patricia and my little grand daughter Chantelle "Telli", who had been visiting us, had all been killed in a horror road smash. The other driver died also. The Sergeant was very upset at having to bring this news. Patrina, my other grand daughter had not gone with her parents that day, but had remained with us. Since growing up Patrina has become a member of the Rescue Squad, and many of her activities involve dealing with traffic accidents. Patrina is a Lieutenant of the Australian Army Cadet Corp at Mudgee and until recently has worked as a custodial officer at the Lithgow Correctional centre, she has two children.



*Pictured: Brian and Patricia Benton
Accidentally killed in a car accident.*



*Pictured: Lieutenant Patrina Benton
Australian Army Cadet Corp Mudgee*

With all the pain that this accident caused, my anger over my earlier life began to diminish, as I realised that anger was not the main thing. The real thing was to help my people; and that also involved understanding all people's points of view. We all have only a limited time on earth and to succeed we cannot waste too much of it feeling anger or sorrow

DREAM ELDER

Another major influence in my life came whilst I was at Narromine. This was the coming of the Dream Elder into my dreams. It was not like a dream when this man stepped into my dreams. He is so real, and it was more like a vision. At first I must admit, I was scared. In the 20 or so years he has been appearing at intervals he has never changed his appearance.

He often comes when I am worried or have decisions to make, and appears mostly as a face. Although I do know that he has a long grey beard and has much grey hair on his head. He wears a leather band around his head. Over the years his words have been wise and helpful and he is always urging me to help my people. The Dream Elder is one of the main reasons that I have felt compelled to help the Aboriginal people as best I can. I cannot explain any of this - I just accept it.



Pictured: An early photo of historian Peter Read taken in Canberra. He was largely responsible for setting up Link-Up New South Wales. The organisation has helped many Aboriginal families be reunited. Coral Edwards and twin girls from Wilcannia are with him.

CHAPTER 7

MEETING MY MOTHER

It was pouring rain when Dawn Johnson (a Health Worker from Queanbeyan) and I arrived at the Aboriginal community of Murrin Bridge on 22-5 -1993.

The sky was leaden grey and whilst my heart should have been gloriously happy, I felt mainly fearful and apprehensive. Dawn had driven me up from Queanbeyan to meet my mother. It was sixty eight years since we had parted - would she accept me? Would she really be my mother who I had been told was dead all those years ago. We were met by a man I found to be a nephew, Alan Johnson. He went up to an old, blue painted fibro house shouting "Aunty Ethel". She said "Yes , boy". "Your daughter's here". "Come in out of the rain, boy", she said, "Don't stand out there with the rain". As we walked into the house and into the main room he announced "This is your daughter". A tiny, very dark, slight, elderly woman with no shoes on, sat on a little steel chair in front of the window close by the sink. She had a piece of old grey Government blanket across her knees. (I was later to find out she kept this piece of blanket as a constant reminder over the years of her lost children.) "Come over here, girlie, don't be shy!" I was over seventy years old and this old lady must have been well into her nineties. Then I asked "Are you sure we're mother and daughter?" "Yes, we're mother and daughter". Ethel was sure, but to satisfy herself even more she asked to look at my chest after the others had withdrawn to leave us alone. Sure enough there was the mark she and a friend had put on me when I was a baby, and the tiny scar still showed. She had done this because it was very common for Aboriginal children, especially those with lighter coloured skins to be taken away.



Pictured: 22-5-1993, Marjorie reunited with her mother Ethel Johnson; also pictured Dawn Johnson Health Worker from Queanbeyan. Note: the grey government mission issued blanket, her constant reminder of her lost children.

Search over for Marjorie

Queanbeyan resident, Marjorie Woodrow, will long-remember the events of May 22, 1993.

That was the day Marjorie met her mother, Ethel Wyman, for the first time.

• She met her mother at the Murrumbidgee Mission which is 16 kilometres from Lake Cargelligo, in NSW.

Finding her mother has ended a 25-year search. As a consequence, Marjorie who is 70-years-old, has also found an uncle (aged 100) and many nieces and nephews whom she has never seen.

This oversight will be rectified when she returns to the mission, later this month, to spend more time with her "new found" family.

Marjorie was separated from her mother, and two brothers and an older sister, when she was very young.

"We were taken from my mother in the early 1930's by the Aboriginal Protection Board."

Marjorie's mother was also taken from her family, in Darwin, when she was younger.

Herself a mother of eight children, Marjorie has been in search of not only her family roots, but her Aboriginal roots which she can pass on to future generations.

Her book "One of the Lost Generation" traces her family and tribal history. She has already started

work on her next book.

Her latest "find" will, no doubt, be the source of much more background and information.

Marjorie says that without the help of Dawn

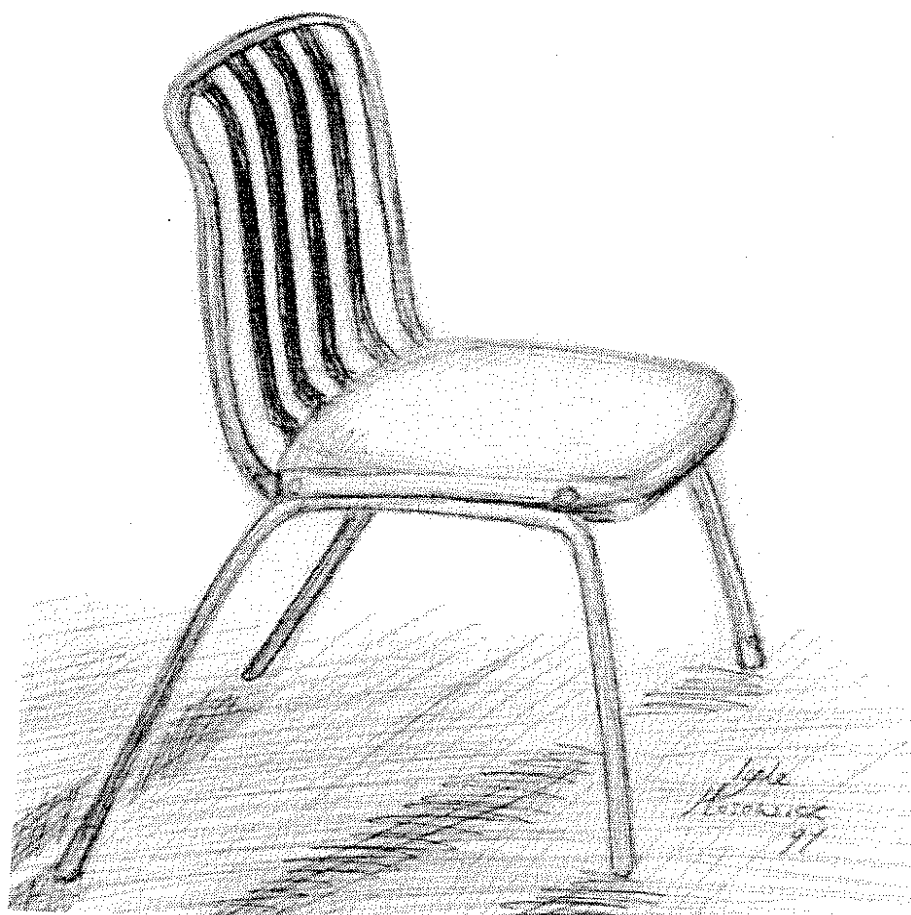
Johnson, director of Munjuwa Queanbeyan Aboriginal Corporation, the discovery of her mother would not have been possible.

—R.G.



PICTURED: Marjorie Woodrow with her mother, Ethel Wyman.

Ethel herself being "taken" as a child never trusted that the authorities would leave her children alone. Of my three brothers and one sister; also "taken"; I was destined only to meet my younger brother, Peter (known as the Gooly Man) again. The others – Frank "Bronco", buried at Murrin Bridge, Dennis, buried in Sydney, and my sister Maudie, buried on Snake Island, had died before I could find them. Ethel had, on many occasions tried to trace her children. Lack of money, education and knowledge of Government authorities and how they operated saw her turned away and threatened with punishment each time for creating a public nuisance. A desperate, distraught mother, with her husband locked away in an Institution, and her children dispersed all over the Nation she was considered to be little more than a "public nuisance". That surge of resentment could not be contained within me. The more I heard from that frail old figure in the old black dress, the more I raged inside myself and the more I cried with my Mother. In her own way she had communicated with me, although I did not realise it at the time. Years beforehand whilst I was at Narromine the sacred stone was brought to me by a stranger. His parting words were "This'll get you home, girlie". (He had tracked me down and it was not until I met my mother in 1993 did I realise that it was she who had sent it, confident that I would find my true people some day if the Elders wished it and the stones played their part). During my private conversation with my Mother I asked her about a special stone that I had been given by a strange black man many years before. I got my stone out of my bag to show her and she got up off her chair, went into the next room and returned with a small box in her hand - it contained another stone. She said as she gave it to me "they are back together again", she smiled and then explained that it had been one of her brothers who brought the womans' stone to me. My mother had held the mans' stone through all these painful years. My mother told me my Aboriginal Totem is the Bandicoot.



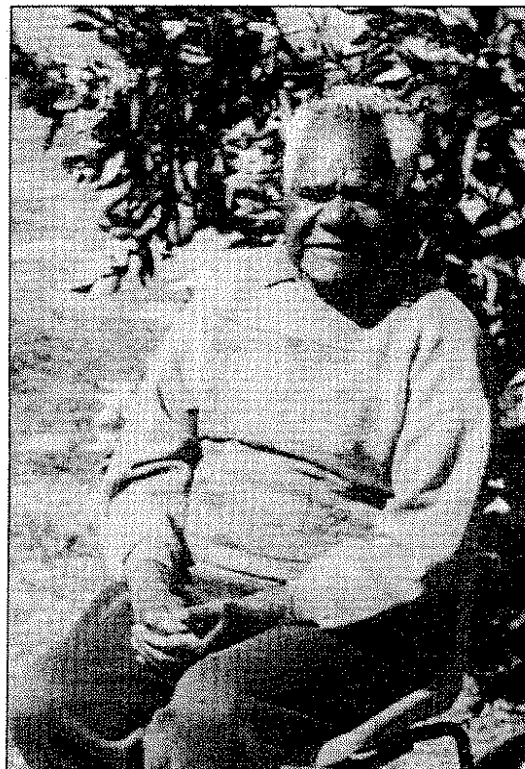
*Pictured: The little steel chair, my mother sat in by the window watching and waiting;
Sketch drawn by my great grand daughter Lyle Kosowioz 1997*

These stones were sacred initiation and healing stones that had been handed down in our family through many generations - as the 'Keeper of the Stones' I must now decide who I will hand these "stones" on to within the correct circle or if they must be buried with me. They are a significant part of our tribal culture, law and religion. Their future requires great thought and care; there is very little written or known about the importance and power of certain stones.

My stepfather, I discovered, had spent over fifty years in a mental hospital at Orange. This left my mother spending a lonely and bitter life, nursing her hatred of the whites, fighting alcoholism and running foul of the law, partly as a result of "making a nuisance of herself" in trying to locate her missing children.



Pictured: Ethel Johnson. Note: the grey woollen government blanket on her knees

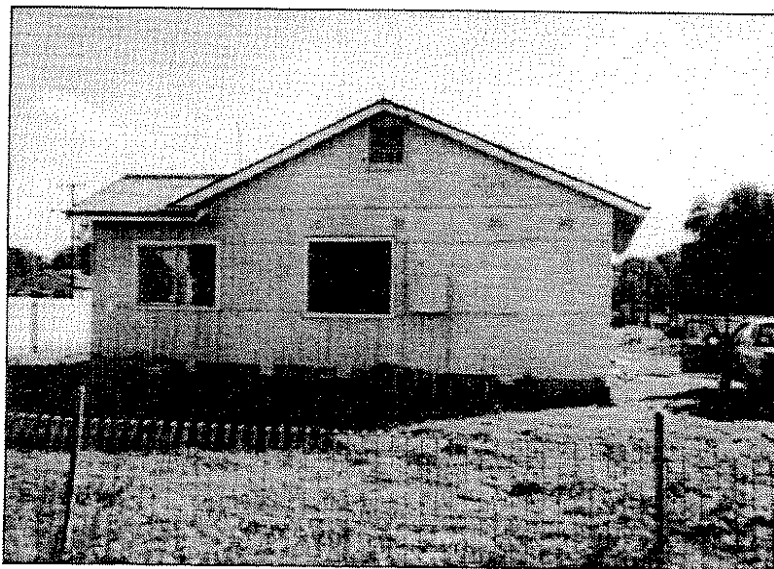


Pictured: Fred Johnson.

Ethel Johnson, my mum was a dignified old woman who never wore proper shoes. She did not leave her house for the last eight years of her life following her incarceration and rape. She had been held in the local lockup overnight with a number of male offenders. The individual cell doors were left unlocked and one of the other offenders entered her cell during the night and viciously raped her. Nobody came to her assistance; she was not offered medical assistance; no charges have ever been laid, and on the morning after the attack she was thrown out of the Police station like a mongrel dog. The incident "swept under the carpet". She sat in her special chair at the kitchen window near the sink and looked out on life on the mission at Murrin Bridge. There were no curtains on the window and she waved to some of the relatives and they waved back.

Occasionally she allowed some of her relatives to enter her house to bring her shopping, firewood and to help clean her floor. Her house was in a very poor state. When I first came home to her, there was no water to the bathroom, no refrigeration, the house was very dark and smokey. The house had three bedrooms in it but she lived solely in the kitchen, having put a little bed in near the fireplace.

She spent her time cleaning out the ashes from the fire, sweeping the floor and watching out the window. She only ventured to the pit toilet just outside the back door. No one had bothered to help this old lady. It took a very strong stand by myself to explain my mothers stubbornness, which was the result of just plain fear from her rape and her fear of being locked away as her husband was.



Pictured: the fibro cottage on Murrin Bridge where I found my mother in May 1993

To their shame the Health workers did not recognise the traumatic after effects of a frightening rape. No one was ever brought to justice - after all she was just an old black lady who probably drank too much (for reasons far too painful and complicated for any of us to ever comprehend, let alone understand). An old lady, who rarely bathed (afraid to undress) and never left her house, she wore the same black dress for many years. The local health workers didn't seem to take much interest and simply dismissed her as a "stubborn old fool" who lived across the road from the health centre where the Doctors visited every week. My mother died from breast cancer; undetected until it was far too late. I finally convinced the Doctors to walk across the road to her. Her death was not a peaceful experience. Imagine a very old terrified woman with a terminal illness (she had not left her house for many years) being forced into hospital amongst strangers. Then against my wishes the added terror of being flown to Sydney by air ambulance. She had never been in a plane before in her life. I believe she should have been allowed to die peacefully in her own home with her family caring for her. I was not permitted to travel with her. I shudder at the terror she must have experienced, let alone the pain of her illness. She died two days later. I believe they frightened her to death. After her death the cruel disrespectful behaviour of some from the city hospital (who must have thought they had a great find, having a very old traditional black woman) as they wanted right or wrong to remove her various organs. They rang not just once, but twice, seeking permission to remove various parts of her. There is no way I would ever give them permission to cut my mother up and experiment on her remains.

Then when they returned her Medical Cause of Death Certificate they stated her age to be a mere sixty six years, many years younger than myself and her only living son Peter. The insults did not end there. We brought my mother home to be buried in the Cemetery on Murrin Bridge. After many tears at her funeral and lots of drinking at her wake by members of the community, I was to discover to my horror the next morning that the men had "forgotten" to go back and fill in her grave.

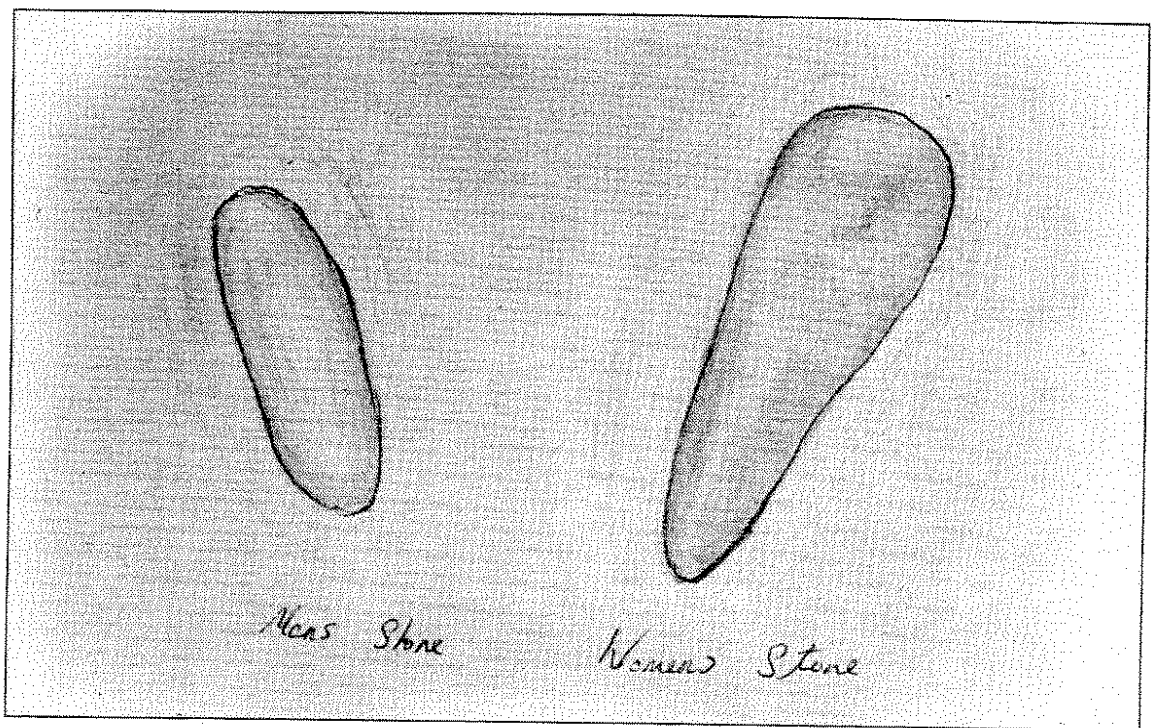
I stayed with my mother to look after her. The short time spent with her was very precious and when she died in 1994 I had known her for only eighteen months and deeply cherished every minute. She was able to teach me much about my people, myself and also the sacred stones.



Pictured: After her mother, Ethel Johnson's funeral, is Marjorie Woodrow, and brother Peter (the Gooly Man), nursing Marjorie's great grandson Jai Benton. 13-9-1994

THE STONE

Only after meeting my mother was I able to use the stone to its full potential. My mother was able to give me the words to use to make it properly operational. It is very smooth and shaped like a bone. It can be used for healing and also for cursing. I have used it for healing purposes on a number of occasions, but I have not used it to curse people. Each time I have used it to cure people it has worked. I fully believe if I used it for negative purposes something bad would happen. It originates with the Barkindji People from New South Wales. The stone is a Women's Business stone and I fully believe in its effectiveness. If I am feeling "down" - I can hold it and it cheers me up. When working it can get hot and it can vibrate.



*Pictured: the sacred stones – part of my identity. Men's Stone on the left- Women's on the right.
Drawn by my great grand daughter Lyle Kosowioz 1997*



Pictured: My brother Peter Wyman known as the 'Gooly Man' with Tony Mundine Snr. and his son Mickie taken at Redfern, Sydney New South Wales. Peter regularly visited his mother on Murrin Bridge.



*Pictured: My deceased brother Dennis Johnson, with a nun at Redfern in 1982. We were told he drank himself to death because he believed his mother did not want him.
I never met this brother*

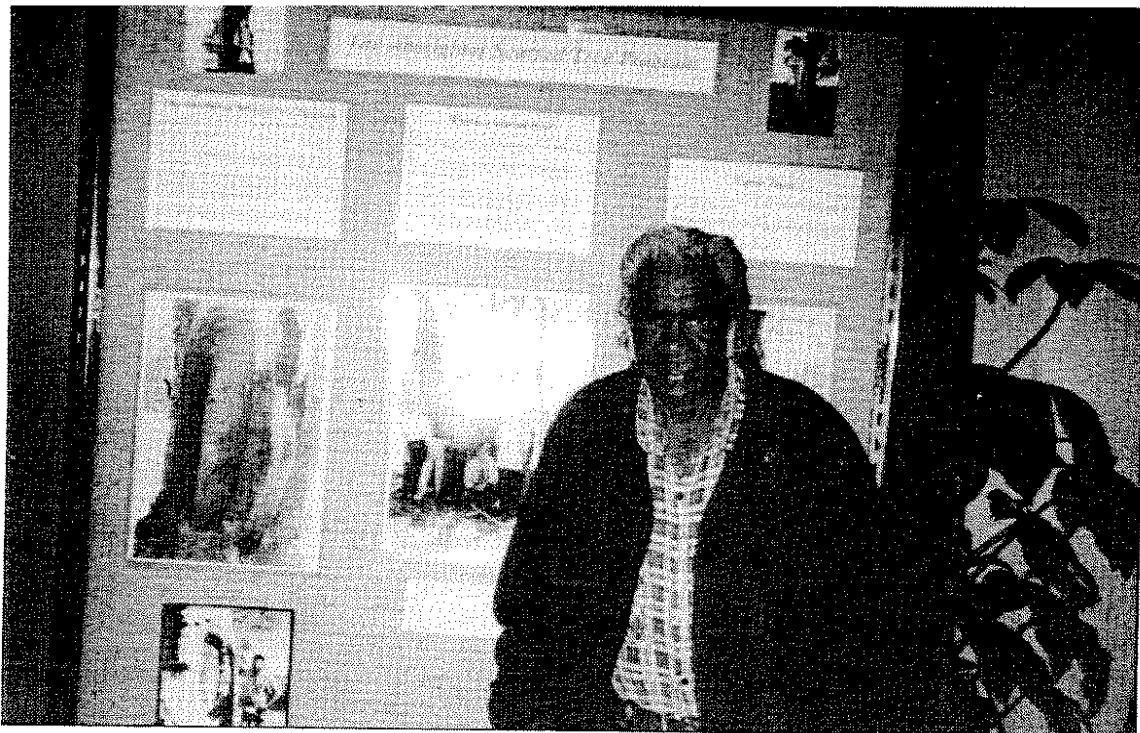
CHAPTER 8

MURRIN BRIDGE

I stayed at Murrin Bridge (Central New South Wales) for the eighteen months after I first met my mother. After she died I stayed on for some further time as I thought I could be of help to these people. There are about two hundred and fifty Aboriginals living in the village which is thirteen kilometres from the shops at Lake Cargelligo (where a further one hundred Aboriginals live). Carefully planned by the Government thirteen kilometres from town and two kilometres off the main road on the banks of the Lachlan River; deliberately planned to be out of sight and out of mind. Murrin Bridge is within the outer boundary of the Cobar Shire area. What do these people get, I asked myself? Sure there is the CDEP programme -- which is like working for the dole. They are receiving Government payments based on working sixteen hours a week and getting slightly more than the dole. The work is mainly maintenance around the place - painting, market gardening, wood cutting etc. But the reality is still a ninety eight percent unemployment rate amongst the men. Men not allowed the dignity of being proud men. Men not allowed to have dignified work to keep their families. Alcoholism is a key factor, mostly of destruction. There are no "shops" except a small fast food outlet open a few hours a day. The "shop" is a corrugated tin unlined shed. When Murrin Bridge was a mission this shed was used to house the food rations and blankets supplied by the Government. The manager doled these supplies out as he saw fit. A white woman from town now runs the shop. She pays no rent. The shop opens from four thirty in the afternoon until seven o'clock at night - just at tea time, seven days per week and NOT subject to any health regulations. There is no toilet; no water; no hand basins; no proper food storage and no flooring. Young children can buy cigarettes without consequences. We would have liked to blow the shop up; it rakes in huge amounts of money each week, but there are a number of very old residents without transport or the desire to leave the village who need and use the shop. It would be wonderful if the community could build a solid stone shop, teach some of the younger ones to run it as a successful business and keep the money within the community. It would also create a job or two and young ones would get good skills. On Murrin Bridge there is no Church, no theatre, no community hall, no school. There is a pre-school and also a good health centre. A large tin shed doubles as a youth shed and for a time the women also used it to practise their screen printing. We also used the Youth Shed for art classes which my friend Dianne Decker from Forbes organised. The young men of Murrin Bridge are good cricketers and are keen football players.

Pictured: Sisters Ailsa and Jenny Smith chat with reporters from Sydney Morning Herald in front of the Health Clinic at Murrin Bridge.





Pictured: My brother Peter Wyman 'Gooly Man' taken at an Art Exhibition by Murrin Bridge Artists for the Tenth International Life Line Conference held in Pitt Street, Sydney. He is standing in front of the Lachlan Valley Scar Tree Project display. This photographic display is now in the Forbes Museum.

The township of Murrin Bridge is remote, with very limited transport to Lake Cargelligo - and the shops. There is no public transport (there is a small community bus which sometimes goes to town during the day, but is often out of order, or there is nobody with a bus licence to drive it). It is common to see people walking to and from town and hitching rides where they can.

The people who live on Murrin Bridge (which was established in 1947 as a mission by the Government) were forcibly brought there by the Government; many were from Carowra Tank. There was a mix of Wiradjuri, Barkindji, Kamilaroi and Wanburra (Ngiyampaa) Clans. They were simply rounded up in cattle trucks and by rail and shipped out in the middle of the night - there was no choice, there was no explanation. Sometimes families were split up and not found again. When the land was required for other 'more important purposes' the Aboriginals living there were seen as an obvious inconvenience. When they arrived at Menindee they were all forced to camp on the local cemetery. They did not find this out until the next morning. For those who know about our culture, this is taboo - and in those very traditional times would have proven even more stressful to the Elders of the day - burial sites are sacred areas to be shown respect. They believed the dust blowing up from the dead would make them sick. Would you be happy if the Authorities forced a group of people to set up camp in your local cemetery? A couple of years later Aboriginal people were again rounded up from Menindee and forced to move on to Murrin Bridge. People were also brought in from Condobolin and the Wilcannia areas. Again there was no choice and many of the clans living together were traditionally not clans that live or marry together. This did and still does cause many fights. They were also moved off their own homelands and in some cases, into the wrong clan territories without permission from or proper notification to the owners of that territory. At this time Murrin Bridge was a group of tin humpies, with dirt floors etc; on the banks of the white mans "Lachlan" river; our people originally called it Kalarie. The Mission was first administered by a white manager and his wife who used to dole out the flour, sugar, meat and grey woollen blankets, etc. The manager and his wife also invaded the privacy of everyone's house. Every week they entered every home and even inspected the beds to see if they were clean and properly made. How many of you would tolerate this sort of invasion of your privacy? Aboriginals always felt intimidated and powerless. There was no choice - the Aboriginal people were just rounded up and taken there and forced to live amongst different traditional clan groups.

Many families were separated and for many years Aboriginal people were not permitted to visit their families in other areas, without special permission from the Mission Manager. People living on Murrin Bridge were not allowed to be off the mission at night unless they had permission. The Mission Manager also had the power to decide who could and who could not live on Murrin Bridge, who and when people could go to town. The Mission Manager could decide who people could marry. For a time there were even dormitories for the children. All the children lived and slept and ate in these dormitories. There were community showers. Their parents were forced to live elsewhere on the Mission. Everyone was completely controlled. Murrin is still often referred to as "the Mission" - but the description is no longer true. It is now run with the Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP) (like a work for the dole programme) and the Local Aboriginal Land Council (which embraces the Aboriginals in Lake Cargelligo and district as well). The positions in both these organisations are filled by yearly elections. Cudjalogong Aboriginal Corporation looks after some of the interests of the Lake Cargelligo Aboriginals. It is clear to me that co-operation between these three bodies would be helpful to all the local Aboriginals.



Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow discussing business at Murrin Bridge Pre-School with Aboriginal Land Council Chairperson Peter Harris and then Federal Member for Parkes Michael Cobb MP

During the last twelve months a number of new houses have been built and over ten thousand grape vines have been planted; the youth shed has been upgraded and excellent extensions have been added to the Community Health Centre. Last year Murrin Bridge won the Premiers prestigious Award for Enterprise for their grape growing project.

We formed a fourth group the Elders Council to facilitate co-operation between all the groups. With the help of my friend Dianne Decker we formed the Elders Council of Murrin Bridge. I believe it was the only legally incorporated Elders Council in New South Wales at the time. It is designed to help the older residents of Murrin Bridge and also all the Aboriginals in the region. It is closely associated with the Local Aboriginal Land Council and although I have since moved on from Murrin Bridge, I hope and expect it to continue to provide a useful service to all Aboriginals wherever I am. The problems caused by unemployment, alcohol, drugs, domestic violence, low self-esteem, truancy and factionalism are not confined to Murrin Bridge. They spread over the whole of New South Wales in many communities. One major idea of the Elders Council at Murrin Bridge was to encourage different groups and factions to meet and get together. Government money shows signs of being more difficult to obtain for funding certain projects. I believe Authorities are more likely to consider funding applications from amalgamated bodies rather than lots of splinter groups.

It was important that all clans were represented on the Elder Council. Soon people were coming to me as an Elder and seeking advice. I knew that my services were wanted by many of the people, but not everyone wanted me there. This was partly because of my views on alcoholism, domestic violence, drug abuse and school truancy. I also believed it was important to involve the local police in meetings with the community members. The local Court officers, social workers and the schools, were all included in an endeavour to keep as many people as possible out of the justice system, making the area more attractive to live in. The school authorities admitted that they could no longer deal adequately with truancy, the police could no longer lock up drunken Aboriginal people overnight and there were annoying problems emerging between the black and white communities locally. On our side we offered to provide carers for any drunken Aboriginals who were kept overnight in a cell "to sleep it off". The police were bringing the drunks home late at night and dropping them off on the Murrin Bridge oval. We felt caring for them in gaol would be better for everyone. The police can no longer treat drunken Aboriginals in the same manner as they can white drunks, since the release of the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody findings. It is not acceptable to dump the drunken Aboriginals together on the oval, in the small hours of the morning. Don't think from this that I'm saying that the town is full of drunks. It is not. It is surprising how much noise and disruption even a few dedicated drinkers can make in a peaceful community. *Mind you the problems excessive drinking is now causing, without Government intervention, in some communities is almost like a new form of genocide.* I felt the large majority of people did not deserve to be messed about like that. In any case the police had to refuse our offer as they said that once a person is in police custody no one else can take responsibility. We have made certain headway with the idea. I put forward that petty offenders be given the chance of putting something back into the community by voluntary community service. If the victim and the offender both agreed, then the offender had the chance to avoid getting a court record by working "off" his misdemeanour. The Elders Council would liaise with the Probation Service and the court to supervise this idea. At the time of writing I can say there has been a start on this idea but it is too early to say whether it will succeed or not. An Aboriginal Police Community Liaison Officer has been appointed and I believe this will go a long way towards better relationships between Police and the Aboriginal communities - it is a long hard road. Again I should mention Dianne Decker, who has worked through Forbes Skillshare at Murrin Bridge for a number of years. She works hard to try and get the community in the area moving in a positive way, organising art classes and art exhibitions in Forbes, Orange, Canberra and Sydney - personally taking bus loads of our artists and their works around the countryside. We have also had home repair and landscaping programs, RTA driving licence tests. She has been a great help to me since we met at Murrin Bridge. We have become firm friends and Dianne often stayed in my house whilst working within Murrin Bridge. Dianne is assisting me to tell my story and to have it published so it can be shared with Australia. There is so much depression, so many fine people, especially our young are committing suicide; that we now have to rely on our own efforts. We must rely on our own culture more than relying on bureaucrats in far off cities. The place to unite I feel is at the grass roots. We have to care for our own. How we can achieve this unity of purpose I am not sure, but I do know that we can get help from our origins, from our culture and therefore I am pleased to see that Elders Councils can and in some communities are taking their real place again.

TIDY TOWNS

To my mind a lot of people were moving around with little apparent purpose. Nothing was happening. Then I wondered if a little pride in our township might work a minor miracle. So again with Dianne's encouragement to enter, I organised some willing workers and got the community involved with the New South Wales Keep Australia Beautiful Councils Tidy Towns Competition. It involved a lot of hard work. We tidied up the town, planted many trees, tidied up the cemetery, painted the large oil drum waste bins scattered around the town in the Aboriginal colours of red, black and yellow. Many of the school children helped us, as did the community members.



Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow visiting with the late Albert Johnson (believed to be close to 100 when he died) He is surrounded by some of his grandchildren.



Pictured: chatting to Marjorie is Jennifer McGregor Keep Australia Beautiful Programme Manager



Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow and Iris Johnson (School Liaison Officer) painting the bins on Murrin Bridge.

In 1994 we became the first Aboriginal community in New South Wales to enter this competition and the great judging day arrived and I could not be there as on that day my mother, Ethel, died in hospital, so I was on my way to Sydney. Ethel had taken a great interest in this project. She thought it was wonderful to see the young children being included. We received a Highly Commended Award in Category A. I was hoping that this would inspire other New South Wales Aboriginal communities to enter the annual Tidy Towns competition run every year by the Keep Australia Beautiful Council.

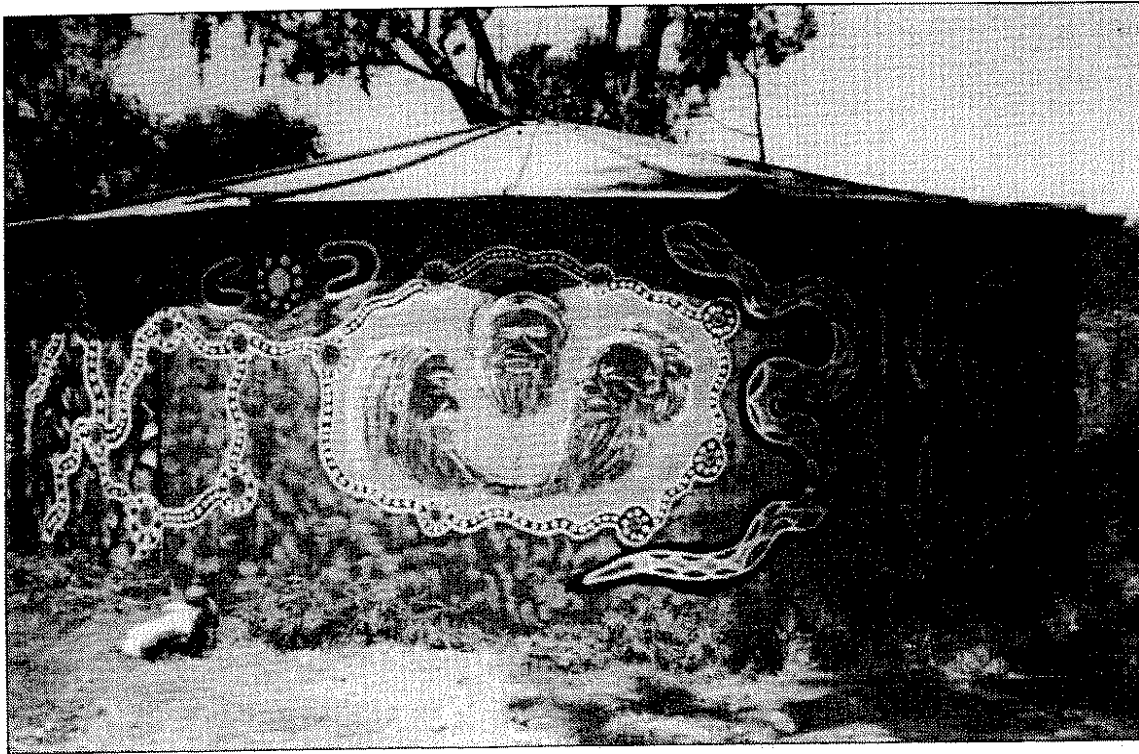


Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow, Mayoress Mrs Peter Yench, Mayor of Cobar Peter Yench, young Alfred Thomas, Peter Harris (Chairperson Murrin Bridge Land Council) and Josephine Harris. at Kurri Kurri in December 1994. The first Aboriginal community in NSW to win a Keep Australia Beautiful Council Tidy Towns award.

The incentive to beautify the surrounds will help people keep up the community spirit and bring an element of pride to people living in the despair of hopelessness that occurs when they are faced with a huge change in culture. People are restricted by Government laws that are not particularly well thought out for us. There are few work incentives and opportunities sometimes in isolated communities. Peter Harris, Chairperson of the Local Aboriginal Land Council and Craig Cromlin, coordinator of the Murrin Bridge CDEP are both well aware of this and give what co-operation they are able. I appreciate their help even though I am no longer officially involved. Pride in your living environment can be a big help to your spirits. Peter and Craig have got very hard tasks looking after the people and I wish them well.



Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow being interviewed by reporters from the Sydney Morning Herald.



Pictured: The water tanks at Murrin Bridge with art work by Lindsay Kirby and Lewis Burns.



Pictured: Dianne Decker with one of the art groups at Murrin Bridge 1994

CHAPTER 9

STOLEN CHILDREN

Of all the things which occupied my mind about helping my people, the most insistent was the issue of the "stolen children". I was one myself, and I could never lose sight of this. It was always there, and always will be there until my final hours. Maybe some of these children benefited in some ways with better education and better living standards BUT many did not. You always felt incomplete as a person. Most of us need to discover our roots to fill this void. The authorities with their lies about our mothers being dead, or not wanting us, giving us new names made it more difficult to trace our origins, especially as many of the official records were poorly kept. What did they think we were?

"THEY TOOK EVERYTHING FROM US. TOOK OUR PRIDE, OUR DIGNITY, OUR LANGUAGE, OUR FAMILY; THEY WIPED US CLEAN OF EVERYTHING AND LEFT US WITH ENGLISH WAYS OF LIFE AND THOUGHT WE SHOULD FORGET THE PAST. LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THEY RIPPED OUR SOULS TO PIECES AND THEY WONDER TODAY WHY SOME HAVE LIVED WITH HATE IN OUR HEARTS FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES."

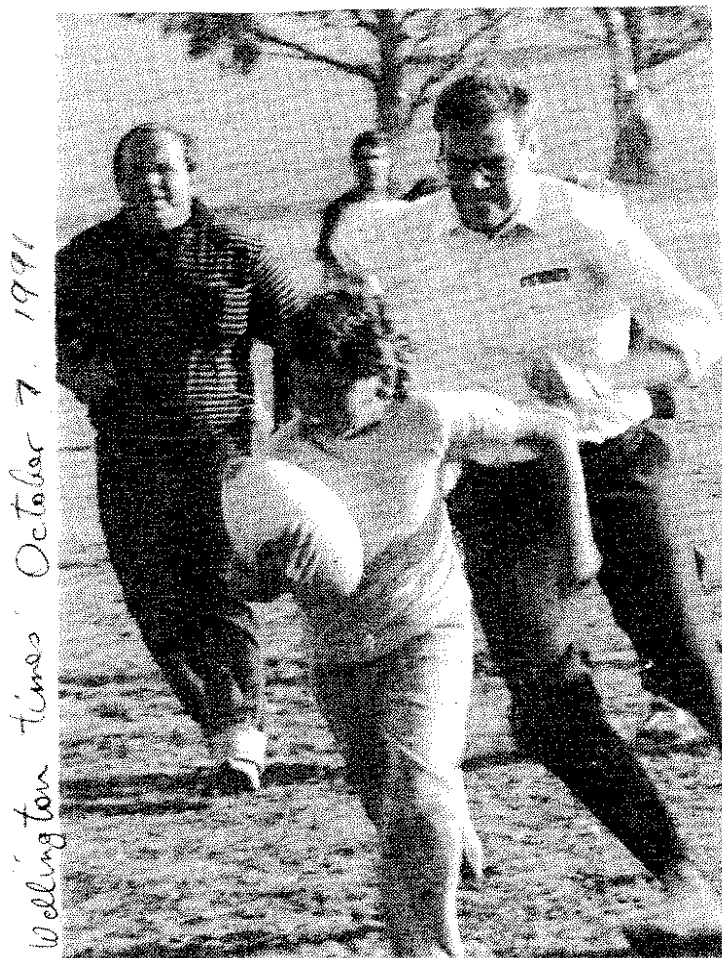
An Aboriginal organisation call Link-Up has spent many years helping "stolen children" find their families. At first their major task was seen as tracking down the leads so that families could be reunited. All the caseworkers were Aboriginals who had suffered in this same way. After a while it became evident that the research was only part of the job. For people to abruptly appear in the midst of a long lost family often needed very special skills by the caseworkers to settle both sides in together. Even then it did not always work. Although this practice supposedly was stopped nearly thirty years ago the effects still reach into succeeding generations. I am a passionate believer that an apology is not enough. Compensation is called for as well as more practical help in tidying up this emotional mess.



Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow at the Nanima reunion (her daughter Lesley is obscured in the background).

NANIMA

Nanima, an Aboriginal township near Wellington, in central New South Wales lies on the Macquarie River. It is reputed over a period, more than two hundred and fifty children were taken by the authorities from this area. I selected this spot to organise a re-union in 1991 for "stolen children". The Dream Elder had constantly urged me to show a way which might be copied by other people in New South Wales where families could be re-united. Or at least get people with the same problem talking with each other. It might help. Some people would have found the experience too painful and over the years built a protection over their thoughts and not wished to re-open old wounds. Many people who had been "taken away" feel a deep void which can only be filled when they meet up with their lost families again. So September 1991 saw the weekend festival at Nanima.



Senator keeps in touch

One person who enjoyed the recent Nanima reunion was Senator John Faulkner, who was special guest and stayed on till late on Saturday night, joining in the sing-song around a campfire. Here the Senator, bare-foot, joins in a game of touch football with the local youngsters. He was "just like a big kid," said Fay Barwick - and loved every minute of it.

Special guest Senator John Faulkner (Federal Minister) came up from Canberra to officially open the proceedings. After he had proved his skill at touch football the Senator stayed until late on Saturday evening joining in the singsong around the campfire. This was the first attempt at a mass re-union of "lost" Aboriginal children and some hundreds of people turned up to enjoy two days of traditional food, dancing, stall and entertainment. No alcohol was allowed. This press clipping was taken from the Wellington Times 7-10-91

Sadly we do not think that this attempt has been repeated anywhere else in the State and we have never learned how many people were re-united. Perhaps none.

Do not despair at lack of feedback in work like this. You organise a happening like this without looking for credit. If only one person has found their family it is well worth it. Or if some people have been able to feel easier in their minds by meeting others in the same plight, then your efforts have not been in vain. Again don't expect too much of other people otherwise they will disappoint. Wellington Council offered to help, but finished up giving none. On the other hand the RAAF were very helpful in lending tents. The Wellington community was very helpful in cleaning up the site afterwards. But was it a success - I do not know? Perhaps my Dream Elder knows the answer.

HISTORIC REUNION IS ON HERE!

Tears and laughter can be expected in abundance - but not alcohol - when Aborigines from all over Australia gather at Nanima next weekend.

The gathering will be a reunion - but not just an ordinary reunion.

It will be the first reunion in NSW of "lost Aboriginal children" - children separated from their homes and families under Government policies which were in effect as late as the 1950s.

According to local Aborigines, 250 children were taken from the Nanima Reserve alone.

Local Aboriginal Liaison Officer Bill Riley says he could have been one, but instead was

brought up "the hard way" by his grandparents.

But hard as that might have been, Bill wouldn't swap places with any of those who were separated from their people.

One of those - though not from Nanima - is reunion organiser Marjorie Woodrow, born in Griffith in 1922 and author of "The Lost Generation".

The book, which took her 25 years to research and write, reveals details of a childhood of suffering, indignities and yearning, first in her employment at a boarding house, then in Cootamundra Girls' Home and finally at Parramatta

Girls' Home.

"They took everything from us. Took our pride, our dignity, our language, our family; they wiped us clean of everything and left us with English ways of life and thought that we should forget the past," Mrs Woodrow wrote.

"Little did they know they ripped our souls to pieces and they wonder today why we have lived with hate in our hearts for the rest of our lives."

She also recorded how, at Parramatta Girls' Home, "when we went to bed we were made to pray that one day we would turn white, maybe our soul would be clean."



NEWSPAPER CUTTING WELLINGTON TIMES 23-9-1991

● Marjorie Woodrow with Bill Riley and Neville Barwick at Nanima, where the big reunion will be held.

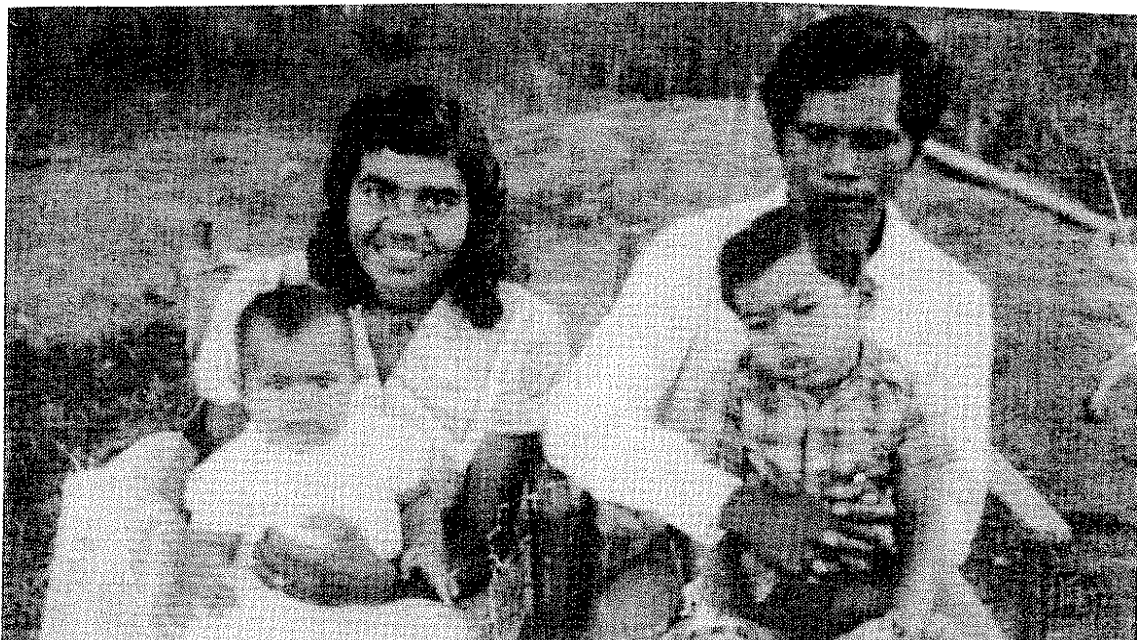
STORY TELLING

Everyone knows that Aboriginal people traditionally have not relied too much on the written word. This is changing and more of us are bringing our message to the world in print. We have to use white mans methods in a white mans world. The art of storytelling is still very important to us, as in Aboriginal culture the word is not passed down in writing, but more likely carefully preserved by the story teller. The word is no less strong for being by word of mouth instead of the word of the printing presses. So storytelling is still a powerful force in Aboriginal culture and gives a lot of strength to our pride and independence. These stories come down to us from our ancestors, some from the dawn of time, some far more recent. The stories all have a message from our past. It is important that story telling should never die, and that is the reason that we have always revered the storyteller. These stories are not just entertaining to us, but from the core of our beliefs and from our hearts. For many years I have been telling Aboriginal stories to my people. I also wished to involve the white people and have of recent years, given my talks to children in schools as well as other organisations. Recent engagements include schools at Warren, Trangie, Narromine, Dubbo, Mudgee, Parramatta, Sydney, Condobolin, Lake Cargelligo, Brisbane and Queanbeyan. I was also invited to speak at a Youth Forum at Munjiwa Queanbeyan Aboriginal Corporation. The list goes on; I do enjoy talking to young people about our past, and it gives me great pleasure to see the interest these young people show in the storytelling. Also there is satisfaction in knowing it is helping the mutual understanding between the two cultures. This can only help, ultimately, in the process of reconciliation, which will have to occur one day. Since moving to Brisbane I have been free to speak at many venues including Reconciliation gatherings, RSL, Legacy Women, Cultural Awareness Training courses, many TAFE classes and most recently, I have become once more involved with Link-Up. I was previously on the Board of Directors for the Brisbane branch of Link-Up and have been heavily involved with the "Stolen Children" inquiry. I was interviewed at length by Colleen Hattersley on 29-9-1999 for the National Library of Australia for the "Bringing Them Home" inquiry document. I was also part of the Brisbane City Council's "Bringing Them Home" celebration on 7-2-1998. Brisbane City Lord Mayor Jim Sorley and the Brisbane Church Leaders all offered us their apologies for past atrocities. Five plaques have been laid in parks throughout Brisbane - each inscribed with "OUR SOULS WILL CRY NO MORE". The ceremonies have been very moving and were attended by over four thousand people; the last of the plaques was laid in Brisbane on Sunday 22-3-1998 and a special "Sorry Day" took place on 26-5-1998. I feel it is vital that storytellers continue and along with all the other storytellers I feel that we are doing our part in keeping our Aboriginal culture alive.

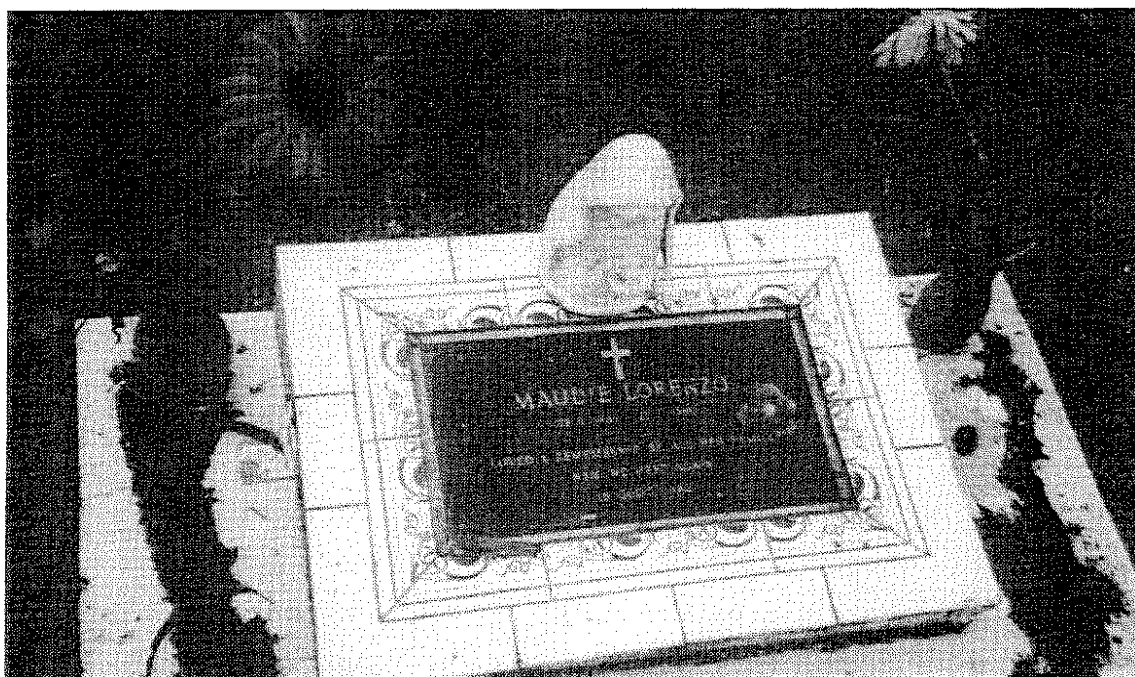
CHAPTER 10

MY FAMILY

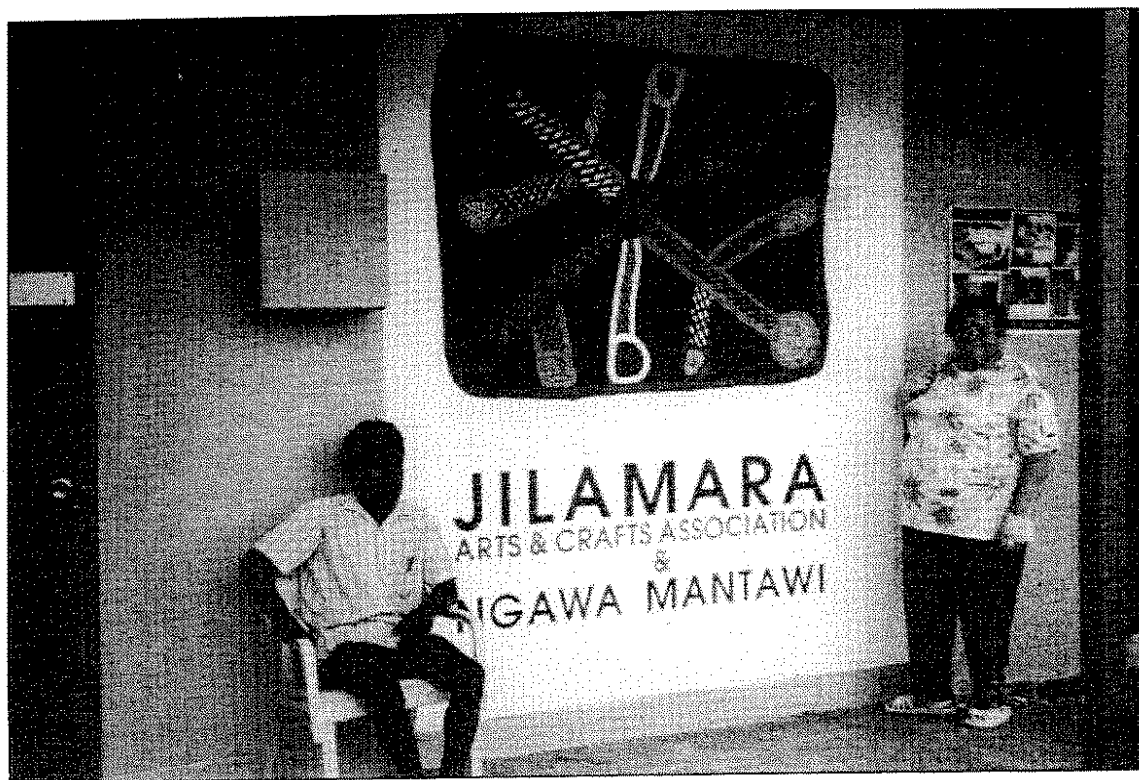
In 1998, after great work again from Link Up, I was finally able to visit my sister's family on Snake Island, off Melville Island near Darwin. Unfortunately it was too late for me to meet my sister, Maudie. She had died from cancer without my mother or myself ever seeing her again. My sister married into the Lorenzo family and I now have a new family up there.



Pictured: My late sister Maudie Lorenzo, her husband Robert and children Jacinta and Angus.



Pictured: My sister Maudies' grave which I visited on Snake Island.



Pictured: Marjorie Woodrow visiting the art centre near Melville Island

I was given a wonderful warm cultural welcome by this part of my family. The family accepted me instantly. A wondrous experience for an older lady.

My mother told me my proper name given to me was Margaret Rose Johnson but I was given the name Marjorie and also known as Wyman, and Steadson. Many Aboriginal children had their name indiscriminately changed by the white authorities when they were taken from their families - together with the lies that their families did not want the child or that the parents were dead. This has just added to the confusion and difficulties that so many of us have faced when trying to trace our real families.

I was very pleased to finally meet some of my sisters' family; sadness will always be in my heart because I was too late to meet my sister.

My children born include:-

Lesley Jean Benton - born at Narromine. She has four children, nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

William Charles Benton - born at Crown Street Sydney. He has four children and one grandson

Desmond Benton - born at Narromine. He has nine children and seven grandchildren.

Ian John Benton - born at Narromine. He has four children and seven grandchildren.

Clare Diane Benton - born at Narromine. She has three children and six grandchildren.

Janice Lorraine Benton - born at Narromine. She has three children and two grandchildren.

Kathleen Fay Benton - born at Dubbo. She has seven children and twelve grandchildren.

Brian David Benton - born at Narromine. He had two children and two grandchildren.

Brian, his wife Patricia and daughter Chantelle "Telli" were killed in a car accident near Lithgow on 17-3-1978. Their daughter Patrina and her two children survive them.

I now have thirty-six grandchildren and forty-five great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren. You can see that the children that have flowed from my Mother Ethel Johnson shall continue to spread within Australia's society for many years to come - Aborigines are not and will not "die out" as was planned by the Australian Government Authorities. I am sad to say, still wished by some people who live in Australia today - they are not true Australians. True Australians are those who take the time to learn our history, take the time to actually get to know some Aborigines, and then take the time to learn to live together in our land.

My first marriage broke up I later married Robert Walter Woodrow. He was a wonderful husband and supportive father to my children.



Pictured: grand daughter Patrina, Son Desmond Benton, daughter Kathleen Clinson, Son William Benton, my oldest daughter Lesley Clark, son Ian Benton and daughter Janice Playle.



*Pictured: L/R my son Ian Benton
and friend Joe Frankenuch in the
Army Reserve at Parkes 1969*



*Pictured: my daughter
Clare Diane Benton
At her home in
Ettalong.*

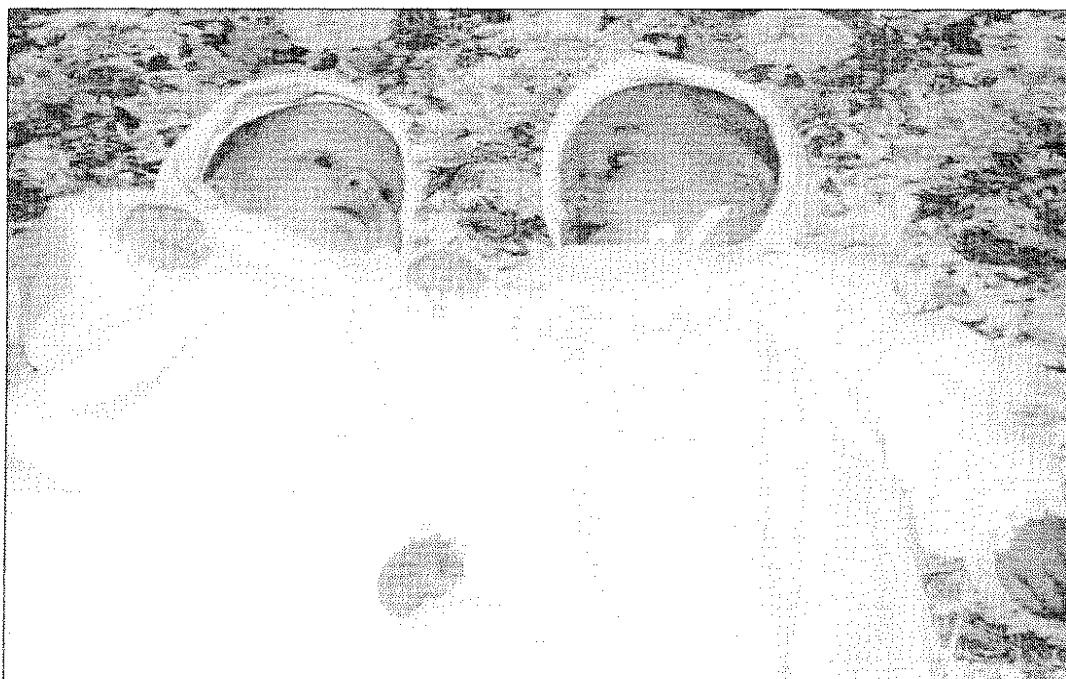
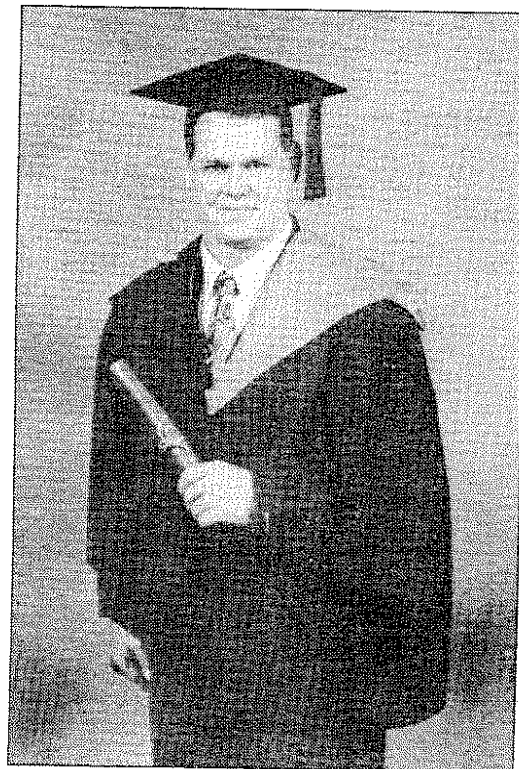


Pictured: My grandson Mark Hawker visiting Murrin Bridge



Pictured: L to R My great grand daughter Lyle Kowszic, my son in law Bert Clark, my daughter Lesley, and great grand daughter Leona Kowszic. all dressed up at old Sydney town.

*Pictured: My grandson Mark Lutschini at his graduation - Bachelor of Science 1997
He now works as a Dietician in Melbourne*



*Pictured: two of my great grandchildren at their christening 11-6-2000
Jordon Noel Playle and Ryan Maurice Playle*

FROM EUABALONG – MEETING MARJORIE

When Marjorie Woodrow invited me to help with parts of her story I felt very honoured, but also a little daunted. As a white man (born in England) helping with parts of this story has taught me a lot about recent history, reconciliation and forgiveness. For several years I wrote a regular column in the National Aboriginal owned "Koori Mail" newspaper, based in Lismore. I wrote about rural Aboriginal Community life as well as contributing items for the Local Newspaper on neighbourhood Aboriginal News. I first met Marjorie and her mother Mrs Ethel Johnson at Murrin Bridge. Ethel sat in the main room on a little steel chair near the sink. This, I learned, was where she habitually sat. Her back was turned to me and she neither spoke nor looked at me throughout that first meeting. I was there purely to interview Marjorie for an article I was writing for the "Koori Mail". As time went by I visited these ladies a few times and I learned that Ethel had a real dislike and deep suspicion of white men. I made no attempts to win her over but I did feel pleased when, after I had been visiting for awhile, she began to face me and also to speak. I was interested to learn that the Parramatta Girls Industrial Training School was investigated by the State Government in the early 1940's due to allegations of mismanagement. This must have been shortly after Marjorie completed her two-year stay there. As a result of the findings changes were made to child welfare in New South Wales. It remained a home for girls until 1980 when it was handed over to the Department of Corrective Services and is now the Norma Parker Correctional Centre which manages low risk female inmates. When my late daughter, Lesley, had a serious illness, Marjorie came to visit us at our home in the bush township of Euabalong West. She had the sacred stones with her and got Lesley to hold it while she talked with her. My daughter, a young woman with two children, told us afterwards how she felt the energy from it and how abnormally hot it became in her hand. Unfortunately my daughter has since passed away. I cannot comment on how much modern medicine saved the day, but I was certain that mixing the modern and the ancient was not a mistake. But then as a white man, should I believe in these things? Reconciliation may easily help us understand a lot more than we do at present.

Charles Johnson, Euabalong 1996

THE LAST WORD FROM MARJORIE

I am very proud of each member of my family, my children, grandchildren, great children and tiny great great grandchildren- each one has something special.

Many have taken on trades, raised beautiful families of their own and some have ventured to travel overseas. My family have done my mother Ethel Johnson and myself proud.

It will be a very special moment when the Premier of New South Wales The Honourable Bob Carr MP, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Citizenship officially launches this book in the New South Wales Parliament House in the year 2001.



*Pictured: talented artist Lewis Burns with Dianne Decker.
They are holding some of the pictures painted onto corrugated iron from the 'Mission'
We called them the "Tin Hands of Murrin Bridge" paintings.
Lewis painted the cover for this book.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR-

Dianne Decker was born in Forbes in the Central West of New South Wales. She is a descendent of the Pout, Coombs, and Facey Pioneering/Goldmining families.

She served 16 years as an active Councillor. Two years as the first woman Deputy Shire President on Forbes Shire Council and two years as National President of the Australian Local Government Women's Association. She initiated the town street beautification winning the National Keep Australia Beautiful Council Award. Her efforts have been instrumental in the drive to preserve and protect the history and heritage of Forbes.

Last year Dianne was chosen as a community Torch Bearer for the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

She was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the 2001 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Dianne has long recognised the importance of the Aboriginal community and their unique history as a natural part of Australia.

Dianne is the author of a number of publications:

- 1981 *A Family Record (family history)*
- 1981 *History of Women in Local Government in NSW*
 (reference book)
- 1989 *History of Forbes and District (1915 reproduction)*
- 1991 *History of Women in Local Government and Parliament in Australia*
 (reference book)
- 1997 *Forbes History Book (combined effort with friend Jeanette Hildred)*