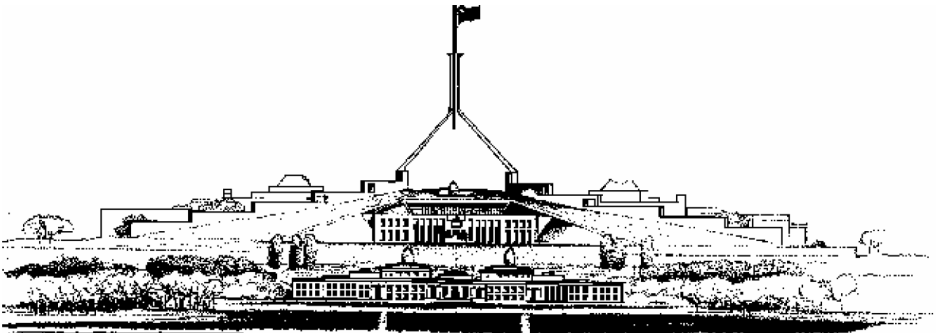




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 20, 1967
Thursday, 18 May 1967

TWENTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH

TWENTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION: FIRST PERIOD

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

His Excellency the Right Honourable Richard Gardiner, Baron Casey, a Member of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Member of the Order of Companions of Honour, Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, upon whom has been conferred the Decoration of the Military Cross, Knight of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Commonwealth of Australia from 22 September 1965.

ADMINISTRATOR

His Excellency Lieutenant-General Sir Edric Montague Bastyan, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Knight of the Most Venerable Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Administrator of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia from 24 April 1967 to 31 May 1967.

SECOND HOLT GOVERNMENT

(AS FROM 14 DECEMBER 1966)

Prime Minister .. .. .	..	..	..	The Right Honourable Harold Edward Holt
Minister for Trade and Industry .. .. .	..	..	..	The Right Honourable John McEwen
Treasurer .. .. .	..	..	..	The Right Honourable William McMahon
Minister for External Affairs .. .. .	..	..	..	The Right Honourable Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck
Minister for Defence .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Allen Fairhall
Minister for the Interior .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable John Douglas Anthony
Minister for Supply .. .. .	..	..	..	Senator the Honourable Norman Henry Denham Henty
Minister for Primary Industry .. .. .	..	..	..	The Right Honourable Charles Frederick Adermann
Postmaster-General; and Vice-President of the Executive Council				The Honourable Alan Shallcross Hulme
Minister for National Development .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable David Eric Fairbairn, D.F.C.
Minister for Education and Science .. .. .	..	..	..	Senator the Honourable John Grey Gorton
Minister for Labour and National Service .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Leslie Harry Ernest Bury
(The above Ministers constitute the Cabinet)				
Minister for Shipping and Transport .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Gordon Freeth
Minister for Territories .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Charles Edward Barnes
Minister for Civil Aviation .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Reginald William Colin Swartz, M.B.E., E.D.
Minister for Immigration .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Billy Mackie Snedden, Q.C.
Minister for Health .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Alexander James Forbes, M.C.
Minister for Air; and Minister assisting the Treasurer				The Honourable Peter Howson
Minister for Customs and Excise .. .. .	..	..	..	Senator the Honourable Kenneth McColl Anderson
Minister for Repatriation .. .. .	..	..	..	Senator the Honourable Gerald Colin McKellar
Minister for Social Services; and Minister assisting the Minister for Trade and Industry				The Honourable Ian McCahon Sinclair
Minister for Housing .. .. .	..	..	..	Senator the Honourable Dame Annabelle Jane Mary Rankin, D.B.E.
Minister for the Army .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable John Malcolm Fraser
Minister for Works .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Charles Robert Kelly
Attorney-General .. .. .	..	..	..	The Honourable Nigel Hubert Bowen, Q.C.
Minister for the Navy; and, under the Minister for Trade and Industry, Minister-in-Charge of Tourist Activities				The Honourable Donald Leslie Chipp

Repatriation General Hospitals

(Question No. 204)

Mr Stewart asked the Minister representing the Minister for Repatriation, upon notice:

1. How many beds are available in repatriation hospitals in each of the States?

—	N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld	S.A.	W.A.	Tas.	Aust.
Beds available	1,262	789	560	362	454	122	3,549
Beds occupied	1,206	726	452	252	412	108	3,156
daily average inpatient (twelve months to 15.2.67) ..	1,149	666	444	289	390	101	3,039

Note:

- In each State, except Tasmania, there is also an auxiliary hospital for specialised treatment.
- Recognised hospital practice is that approximately 10% of beds must be kept vacant to meet day-to-day emergencies, to cover any overlapping of daily admissions and discharges, and for necessary segregation of patients because of types of illness, sex, age, etc.

Aboriginals: Social Services Pensions

(Question No. 222)

Mr Bryant asked the Minister for Social Services, upon notice:

How many Aboriginals were receiving age, invalid and widows' pensions on (a) government settlements, (b) church missions and (c) pastoral properties as at 30th June 1965, 30th June 1966, and 31st March 1967, respectively.

Mr Sinclair—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The numbers of Aboriginals receiving age, invalid and widows' pensions on government settlements, church missions and pastoral properties—where benefits are not paid direct—at 30th June for the years 1964, 1965 and 1966 were:

—	30 June 1964	30 June 1965	30 June 1966
(a) Government Settlements	478	508	536
(b) Church Missions ..	1,103	1,079	1,006
(c) Pastoral Properties..	811	718	653

The numbers who were receiving pensions at 31st March 1967 are not readily available. These figures are obtained as part of a statistical review at the end of each financial year.

2. What is the daily average of in-patients in these hospitals in each State?

Mr Swartz—The Minister for Repatriation has supplied the following information:

The following table sets out statistics relating to bed availability and occupancy at Repatriation General Hospitals at 26th April 1967:

—	N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld	S.A.	W.A.	Tas.	Aust.
Beds available	1,262	789	560	362	454	122	3,549
Beds occupied	1,206	726	452	252	412	108	3,156
daily average inpatient (twelve months to 15.2.67) ..	1,149	666	444	289	390	101	3,039

Aboriginals : Social Services

(Question No. 223)

Mr Bryant asked the Minister for Social Services, upon notice:

1. Is his Department paying social service benefits on behalf of Aboriginals to non-governmental trustees in any areas of Australia?

2. If so, in what areas are the payments being made, and to which categories of persons are these sums being paid?

3. What amounts were involved in the years 1961 to 1966?

4. What supervision does his department exercise over the disbursement of these funds by the trustees?

Mr Sinclair—The answers to the honourable member's questions are as follows:

1 and 2. At the request of the person to whom a social service benefit is granted, or where the Director-General is satisfied it is desirable to do so, a benefit may be paid on behalf of the beneficiary to some other person or authority. The main areas in which payments for Aboriginals are affected in these ways are the central and northern parts of Western Australia, the northern parts of Queensland and South Australia, and Northern Territory. The persons or authorities to whom payments are made on behalf of Aboriginals are in the main church missions and pastoral managements.

3. No record is available of the numbers of Aboriginal pensioners at whose request payment is made to some other person on their behalf. Thus the information requested cannot be supplied.

4. Where payment is made to church missions and pastoral managements officers of the Department of Social Services and officers of State Departments concerned with Aboriginal welfare carry out inspections from time to time with the purpose of ensuring that the person to whom the benefit is granted receives value for it.

Aboriginals: Social Services

(Question No. 224)

Mr Bryant asked the Minister for Social Services, upon notice:

1. Are social service benefits being paid to Departments of Native or Aboriginal Affairs in any State rather than direct to Aboriginals?

2. If so, under what conditions, in what amounts and on behalf of what number of recipients has the payment been made in each of the last three financial years, and is the system still continuing?

3. What steps are taken to make it possible to make the payment direct to the recipient?

Mr Sinclair—The answers to the honourable member's questions are as follows:

1. Yes on behalf of certain Aboriginals in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory.

2. For persons unable competently to manage their own financial affairs the benefit is paid to the State authority which makes an approved cash payment to the beneficiary and applies the balance for his maintenance and welfare. The Department of Social Services obtains an acquittance to the effect that the money has been disbursed in this manner. The minimum cash payment for pensioners at present is \$4.50 a week—which is equivalent to the amount specified in Section 50 of the Social Services Act for inmates of benevolent homes.

Estimated numbers and annual liability at 30th June for the last three financial years are as under for age and invalid pensions, wives' and children's allowances, and widows' pensions.

	30 June 1964		30 June 1965		30 June 1966	
	No.	Liability	No.	Liability	No.	Liability
		\$		\$		\$
(a) For pensioners on Government Settlements	508	301,765	539	331,567	585	360,932
(b) For pensioners not on Government Settlements	280	151,570	267	162,482	274	165,950
	788	453,335	806	494,049	859	526,882

3. The question whether Aboriginals might be transferred from the indirect to the direct payment system is regularly examined. It is the Government's policy to achieve direct payments for all Aboriginal beneficiaries as early as possible. From July 1967 Aboriginal pensioners on Government Settlements in Northern Territory will be paid their pensions direct and negotiations are in course to attain a similar position in Queensland.

5. What are the terms of the administrative instructions which his Department has issued on this subject?

Mr Sinclair—The answers to the honourable members' questions are as follows:

1 to 4. So far as the determination of eligibility is concerned, the position is that claims for unemployment benefit received from Aboriginals are investigated and dealt with on their merits in the same manner as claims made by other persons. Applicants are not required to state their nationality or race and the Department of Social Services is not necessarily aware that a claimant is an Aboriginal.

To qualify for an unemployment benefit under the Social Services Act a claimant must satisfy the Director-General that he is unemployed; is capable of undertaking, and is willing to undertake, work which, in the opinion of the Director-General, is suitable to be undertaken by him; and has taken reasonable steps to obtain such work.

If a person refuses to accept work which is available at ruling rates of pay for that occupation which are not in conflict with wages awards, the view might be taken that the work so refused was suitable to be undertaken and the claimant had not taken reasonable steps to obtain work.

5. No specific administrative instructions have been issued directed towards Aboriginals in the situation envisaged in the question.

Aboriginals: Unemployment Benefits

(Question No. 225)

Mr Bryant asked the Minister for Social Services, upon notice:

1. Is an Aboriginal who has not previously been employed required to accept work at less than award rates in certain areas of Australia if the lesser rate is that prevailing for Aboriginals in the area?

2. Is the Aboriginal also excluded from unemployment benefits if he or she fails to comply with this requirement?

3. In what areas of Australia does this rule ordinarily apply?

4. If this system does not still apply, on what date did it cease?