

**CENTRAL OFFICE**

Disposal Action

T 76  
RP

SUBJECT

*Victorian River Downs Station,  
N.T. - Walk-out of Aboriginal  
Stockmen re Wages & Conditions, 1972*

Related Files

Each Officer to enter initials and date in ink when clearing his action folio.  
Sending Officer must NOT initial or date his reference to another officer.

(1) Folio No.	(2) Referred to	Date	(3) Cleared		(4) Remarks	(1) Folio No.	(2) Referred to	Date	(3) Cleared		(4) Remarks
			Initials	Date					Initials	Date	
	Mr G Bourke	28/4	B	8/5							
10/11	Mr Bourke	18/5	B	9/5	R/S 19/5						
-13	Mr Copeland	9/5	B	9/5							
14/15	Mr Bourke	11/5	B	2/6							
10/11	Mr Bourke	19/5	B	2/6							
16	Mr Bourke	22/5	B	2/6							
17	Mr Bourke	1/6	B	2/6	R/S 30/6						
18	Mr Bourke	8/6/72	B	27/6							
19/27	Mr Bourke	27/6	B	27/6							
28	Mr Watchorn	27/6	BW	28/6							
	<del>Mr Bourke</del>										
17	Mr Bourke	30/6	B	28/6							
29	Mr Bourke	29/6	B	28/6							
	Mr Watchorn	30/6	B	27/72							
F	Mr Phoebe	29/6	FS	15/5							
F	D.O.	15/5	J	16/5	16/5/73						

INSTRUCTIONS

- (1) In column (1) above, the folio on which action is required will be indicated, column (2) will indicate to whom the file is to be referred and the date forwarded by Registry.
- (2) When a folio is cleared the officer dealing with the file will place his initials and the date in column (3) and indicate on next vacant line to whom the file is to be referred. Registry will then date the next marking.
- (3) All entries should be entered in ink.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE  
MINUTE

FILE NO.

72 / 1881

FC

3

Unemployment - V.R.D. Wattie Creek.

IN REPLY QUOTE:

REFERENCE: My telephone report Monday 19/6/72.



Regional Director,  
ADELAIDE.

During his visit to Darwin last Friday 16/6/72, the Minister for Social Services arranged a meeting to discuss the Unemployment problems at Wattie Creek. The meeting took place in the office of the Asst. Administrator (Welfare) commencing at 4 p.m., and was attended by Mr. Giese (Asst. Administrator) Mr. Wentworth (Minister) Mr. Wraith (Registrar Social Services) and myself.

Mr. Wentworth first asked for confirmation that the applicants had satisfied the works test and also if their reasons for leaving V.R.D. and Humbert River were justified. This was confirmed in respect of accommodation situation on both Stations. He then went on to say that he acknowledged their eligibility but was reluctant to pay the 50+ year olds as they would become permanent U.B. recipients.

Mr. Giese volunteered the suggestion that Training Allowance portions might be made available for this age group. To verify this he called in the Director of Welfare Mr. Ray McHenry and Mr. Jack Shurmer of the Vocational Training section to estimate the number of vacant Training positions available.

When it was ascertained that our vocational officer positions were vacant and that this Department would have some difficulty in maintaining full time representation in the area Mr. Giese offered the Services of his Branch. He added that if a Welfare officer in the field could be authorised to administer the works test it would reduce the communications problems that arise.

I agreed that this suggestion would be a practical short term measure pointing out at the same time that the 50+ year olds might well refuse training positions. At this point Mr. Wraith or the Minister added that they could extend their Policy i.e. Interior and Social Services policy which automatically rejected U.B. claimants who would not accept a Training vacancy.

.... /2

The Minister finally said that he would discuss the results of this meeting with the Director General of Social Services and telex a draft copy of his press statement to Darwin before release.

To-day at 1 p.m. Welfare advised me that the telex had arrived (copies attached). Unfortunately Welfare had already replied in respect of para. 3 and this could suggest that the matter had already been discussed with this Department and further that our agreement had been given to all parts of the Draft.

Although it will be some help to have a Welfare Officer administer the works he will still encounter communication difficulties etc. Therefore in conjunction with his efforts I would recommend a further visit by this Department of at least 1 week in duration to make a concentrated effort to place as many applicants as possible in suitable employment.

To this end a separate recommendation and itinerary will be forwarded shortly. A schedule showing the current situations is attached for your information.

// Grimwade  
going to Wattle  
Creek 29/6.

DARWIN N.T.  
23rd June, 1972.



R.C. TWIGG  
A/g Officer in Charge.

As at 22/6 -

22 SU 19's rec'd.

12 known to have been placed

2 SU 19's not returned

Regs:

22 by mail 3/5 from VRS

9 in person 25/5 " "

5 " " " " Humber River.

## MINUTE

Subject: Wattie Creek : Note for the record.

Reference:

In Reply Quote:

72/2633.

1. The Minister spoke to Mr. Wentworth (Minister of Social Services) about the amendments the Department would like made to the proposed Press Statement at folio 30. As yet there has been no Press Release from Mr. Wentworth on the matter.
2. The question of payment of unemployment benefit to Aborigines from VRD is still under review by Social Services. Miss Stephen intends to discuss this matter, and the question of more regular representation from DHNS at Wattie Creek (see folio 33), with officers from Social Services at the Australian Aboriginal Affairs Council Conference in Darwin on 25 and 26 July, 1972.

Employment Branch.

Priddy - 12/7/72

## MINUTE

37

*Subject:* "Walk-off" of Aborigines at Victoria River Downs  
- Enquiry from Senator Cameron

*In Reply Quote:*

72/2633

*Reference:*

MR FOGARTY

Mr Cribb telephoned from Canberra late yesterday afternoon to say that he had been approached by Senator Cameron about the situation at Wattie Creek. The Senator asked whether there are Aborigines from Victoria River Downs at Wattie Creek who are still without unemployment benefit, and what action the Department is taking for them.

There were 36 Aborigines involved in the alleged "walk-off" at Victoria River Downs on 15th to 16th April (including 5 from a "walk-off" at a neighbouring station, Humbert River). Our Vocational Officers last went to Wattie Creek at the beginning of July, when 21 of the Aborigines were still without work. Of those 21, 5 did not satisfy the "work test" for unemployment benefit; and 5 of the 21 were due to start employment at Wave Hill on 24th July. There was a report in the Northern Territory News on 10th July that the Minister for Social Services had announced that unemployment benefit was to be paid to some Aborigines living at Wattie Creek. As far as we know, benefit has not yet been paid.

Mr Cribb asked for a "form of words" in reply to Senator Cameron's enquiry. I would suggest a response on the following lines :-

A Vocational Officer from the Department was last at Wattie Creek at the beginning of the month to assist those Aborigines who are still unemployed to obtain suitable employment. Of the 36 Aborigines who were involved in the alleged "walk-off" at Victoria River Downs, there are now 15 back at work and 21 without employment, 5 of whom are due to start work at Wave Hill on 24th July.

As far as unemployment benefit is concerned, this Department is responsible for applying the "work test" to those claiming benefit to establish that they are genuinely seeking work. Of the 21 without employment at Wattie Creek, 16 satisfy the "work test". However, it is the Department of Social Services which is responsible for determining whether unemployment benefit should be paid and for making the arrangements, where appropriate, for payment.

21st July, 1972

*Kirby.*  
(P. E. F. KIRBY)

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE  
MINUTE

72/2633 (38)  
SERVICE  
IN REPLY QUOTE:  
2/15/1

SUBJECT: Aboriginal Registrants - Wattie Creek

REFERENCE:

Assistant Director (Emp)  
ADELAIDE

... Attached is a list showing the current situation regarding registrants living at Wattie Creek after "walk-offs" from VRD and Humbert River Stations earlier this year.

It is anticipated that claims for unemployment benefits will increase from next month as the wet season sets in.

R.G. TWIGG  
Officer In Charge

DARWIN  
4th October, 1972

*J. H. O.*  
c.c. Principal Executive Officer (Aboriginal Employment)  
MELBOURNE

Copy for your information



*R.G. Twigg*  
R.G. TWIGG  
Officer In Charge

NOTE - Report by Darwin P.E.O. on visit to Wattie Creek during July 1972, held in the Employment Section