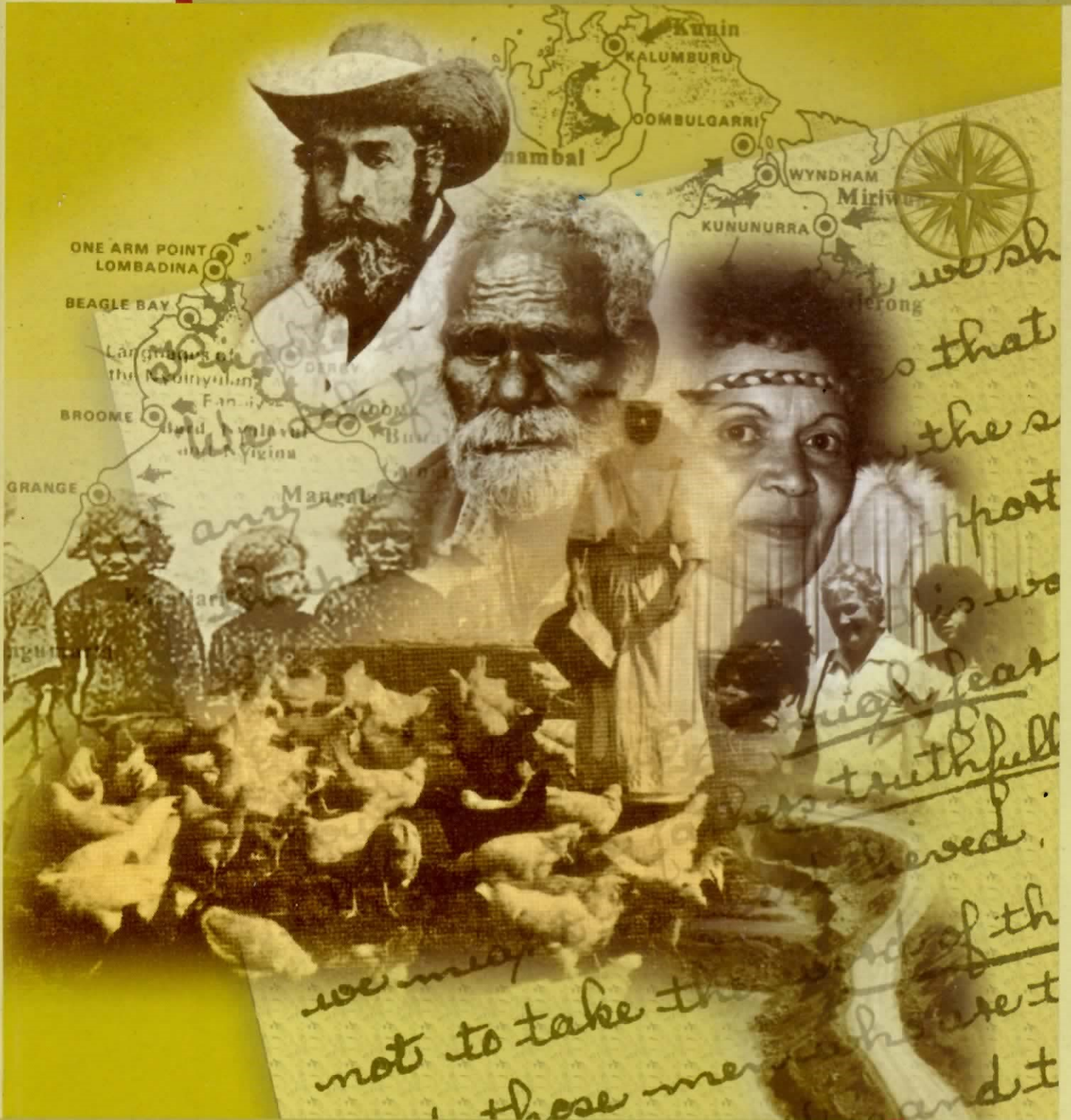


ENCOUNTER, THE PAST AND FUTURE OF REMOTE KIMBERLEY



BRIGIDA NAILON CSB

Encounter,

The Past and Future of Remote Kimberley

Brigida Nailon

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Note: This book contains photos and names of some Aborigines who have died. Since this could cause distress to Aborigines, care should be taken when distributing it.

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FOREWARD

This book came out of my experiences with Aboriginal Peoples in the 1980's. It is an attempt to give voice to stories of some in the Kimberley about their experiences in the past and hopes for the future.

After 1829, when Australia was considered part of the dominions of the Crown, all inhabitants, including indigenous ones, were regarded as British subjects. This privilege ended with the passing of the Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902 and the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act of 1900 determining that Indigenous people were not citizens of Australia and could not vote.

Many people devoted their lives to improve Aboriginal conditions in the Kimberley, at first they came from overseas and then from Australian volunteers. I recorded the names of 707 Catholic Missionaries during the hundred years 1884-1984 in the Kimberley. There were 253 women religious, 181 male religious and 273 male and female lay missionaries. These did not include the Aborigines who also worked in this field.

It is thanks to missionary endeavour that education for Aborigines was available to many for whom the State Education Department was not responsible until 1952.

Until the Referendum of 1967 many Aboriginal births and deaths were not registered and during this period the Australian Government operated a white Australia policy.

The Annual Report of 1972 recorded 29,000 persons of Aboriginal descent then living in Western Australia. For the first time since early European settlement Aborigines were eligible for direct assistance in matters of human social need, on exactly the same basis as all other Western

Australians. Payment of equal wages became dependent on changing State laws

Of its very nature, the Apology of the Prime Minister in 2008 set an agenda for future change. I write with hope in my heart for the future,

Sr Brigida Nailon, Echuca, 15 August 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first source for *Encounter* came from George Walter's book written in German, *Australia, Land People Mission* and I acknowledge the help of the translators, Inge Danaher, a lay missionary in Lombadina and of Bishop J Jobst. From the second part of this book, I gained a summary of the story of the founding of the Beagle Bay Mission.

My second major source was the collection of oral sources made by Fr F Huegel for Mary Durack, when she was researching the Broome Archives for *The Rock and the Sand*, published in 1969.

Knowledge of these sources, implemented by my own interviews with Kimberley residents was supplemented by access to the Archives of the Archdiocese of Perth, the Batty Library, the Broome Church Archives and those of the Pallottines.

When Bishop Jobst asked for copies of French documents from Sept Fons in France, I was enabled to rub shoulders with some of the early French Trappist missionaries by translating them from the early French.

Documents from Propaganda Fide in Rome were a great help and I acknowledge my indebtedness to Fr Aldo Rebeschini.

The gracious hospitality of many missionaries in the Kimberley and support of my Brigidine Sisters is another gift for which I am profoundly grateful.

I also wish to acknowledge the skills of Joseph Vendargon without which I would not have ventured to publish these thoughts.

Brigida Nailon
Brigidine Sisters, Echuca

Coincidences

This background is about incidents which led me to encounters with the Aboriginal world.

Because my father was a policeman, our large family seemed to be always on the move. I went to 12 schools before I entered the Brigidine convent in 1949 shortly after my 17th birthday. After training a teacher, I taught in Catholic Schools for thirty years. Usually I did part time study to upgrade my qualifications, Infant Teacher's Certificate, HSC, a BA, and BEd. In the 1960's Sisters who felt drawn to another ministry were permitted, and I began thinking of an Aboriginal ministry but I continued in the schools.

In 1972 I was teaching in Adelaide when I was offered a scholarship to do a Master of Education at Monash University. Sister Stephanie said, "You are a woman of 40, make up your own mind." I moved to Monash University from March to November, studying Comparative Religion at Melbourne University, with a component of Primitive Religion. My field work in the Northern Territory started me reading Anthropology. I presented a report entitled 'Christian Education and Aboriginal Culture in the Northern Territory'.

Before the end of the year I was employed as a consultant in Religious Education. I stayed there for three years four months. During this time I met a Yorta Yorta woman named Hyllus Maris. She asked me to start a school for Aboriginal children and persevered with the request for the next seven years. She began to educate me through invitations to Aboriginal Advancement League meetings at Northcote and to other Aboriginal experiences.

I resigned from the Catholic Education Office in March in 1976. It was a new experience to be unemployed. I went to Pallotti College in Millgrove. This was a beautiful monastery in the hills, established as a Pallottine training place for missionary priests and lay brothers. After a month, I

joined the team. Fr Wally Silvester had a team of lay people working with married couples, a group of young women involved in setting up a Secular Religious Institute, Fr Pat Jackson with a unique community in Youth Ministry, a group of Carmelite nuns, and a group of Buddhists. Nearly every weekend we had about 80 for a sit down dinner.

Almost unconsciously I began to absorb the charisma of 'The Catholic Apostolate' as outlined by Vincent Pallotti. In Rome in 1836 he had preached about unity in the diversity of religious rites found within the Catholic Church. The aim of Pallotti's Universal Apostolate was to bring the Gospel once more to modern society, to propagate the faith among non-believers by arousing all Catholics to their obligation of saving their brethren. It took nine months for the rebirth of my spirit on the mountain culminating in the Christmas liturgy.

Cyril Drew offered me a position at St Thomas More College in Forest Hill to co-ordinate the Religious Education programme. Three happy years were spent teaching at the college. I had become a member of the Brigidine community at Mentone.

Hyllus persevered in her attempts to get the Aboriginal School. At the beginning of 1980 we rented a house in Yarrambat and started the pilot project. I continued a B Theol I had started at Catholic College Clayton. I wrote a 10,000 word essay, 'The Pioneer priest of the Kimberley, Fr Duncan Mc Nab'.

Information came from Battye Library in Perth and Propaganda Fide in Rome. At the end of the 1980, the pilot project was finished.

The Kimberley

I sent the essay to Bishop Jobst in Broome and offered my services in the Kimberley to get some experience. The Brigidines paid my air fare to Derby via Perth. Bishop Jobst had suggested that I teach Grade 6 in Derby. My experiences there introduced me to another world. The Leprosarium there was still in operation. There were Aborigines who had moved from Sunday Island to Mowanjum on the outskirts of the Derby.

At the end of 1981, I was given a one way ticket to fly back to Victoria. I packed for my luggage to go by sea, left it at the wharf office and it got no further because the boat was stuck in the mud for weeks. I went to Broome to say goodbye to the Bishop. He suggested I stay and write the story of the Church in the Kimberley. I flew me up to Beagle Bay and went to Germany.

Over Christmas I went to Lombadina Mission for three months to get help from Inge Danaher, a Lay Missionary, to translate George Walter's book, *Australia Land People Mission*. It was a privilege to be present with the women for dancing and ceremony in preparation for the boys' initiation.

One day when we were at a beautiful deserted beach an Infant Jesus Sister said, "*Brigida, if we were tourists, we could not afford this!*" In Broome, the Bishop checked the translation. I read the English version and he followed it in the German text. Then he took it to Germany and had 5000 copies printed. He brought back French documents from the Trappist Abbey of Sept Fons in France. After I translated these I felt I had met those French Trappists personally, especially Father Alphonse Tachon who was buried in Israel after he left Beagle Bay. I visited the monastery there in 1997, but I was not allowed to visit his grave because I was a woman. In Perth at the Bishop's request I was given access to the archives of the Catholic Archdiocese that were officially closed. Two Mercy Sisters, Margaret Mary and Raphael helped me. At the Battye Library, because of privacy laws, Government archives were not accessible from 1930 onwards, but when I returned to Broome Church archives I found that

Bishop Otto Raible had used carbon paper to type his replies to official correspondence on the back of Departmental letters. These were invaluable for information about native administration.

Keeping in Touch

After two years I took a bus trip back to Melbourne and found that Worawa Aboriginal College was going well at Frankston at an Anglican Holiday Camp. (Picture in original hardback) It took four days on the bus to go back to Beagle Bay in 1984. I stayed with the Sisters of John of God at Beagle Bay Mission. The Bishop would fly up with files or I would work through his archives in Broome. I began to interview some of the people from Beagle Bay, Lombadina and the East Kimberley. I added the stories to I transcribed oral sources from the tape recordings. Father Francis had gathered from many local people for Mary Durack's book *The Rock and the Sand* published in 1969.

By September 1985, I had about 500 pages of typed research. Sr Madeleine called the Kimberley "A Land of Wait and Wonder", so that is what I called my ream of paper. A few years later I returned and typed an abridged version on to computer.

In 1990 on another visit to Broome, the Bishop asked, "What have you got for the 1990 Beagle Bay centenary celebrations?" I said, "I have the oral sources. The Bishop gave me his car and I drove to Beagle Bay and talked to Cyril Puertollano, secretary for the Council. The Sisters in Broome asked family members for permission to publish the stories. *This is your Place Beagle Bay Mission 1890 – 1990*. The book was published by the Mission and Magabala Books. Spectrum Press later republished it with additional photos.

At the beginning of 1991 I spent three months writing a book using my research. I travelled to Broome by bus and presented it to the Bishop but he was not interested. I left the manuscript with him and went to Bidadanga

Aboriginal Community, to the south of Broome. There were two Australian priests there. Father Kevin McKelson had been there for 30 years and spoke the languages. Father Matthew Digges had just been ordained. I became friends with Maria, the wife of Dodo, the Chairman of the Council. She worked in the school teaching language and culture to the children. There were two Sisters of St John of God. Veronica ran an Art and Crafts Group. Stella kept house. I stayed with the priests, did some cooking, some research, and went fishing with Pauline Deegan, the local nurse. I left in October.

From the convent in Kyabram, I drove to the Hyllus Maris Aboriginal Community School in Ardmona. It had been registered in the early 1980's. With Hyllus's Sister Frances, the finance books were audited so that funding could continue. Before Easter, my Provincial Superior asked me to go to the Darwin Community at Palmerston. After a few months I was employed there for five weeks on a consultancy about Aboriginal Learning Skills. Then I worked at Nungalinya Aboriginal College in Darwin from Easter 1992 – May 1993 writing their Theology Certificate and Associate Diploma in Behavioural Language so that it could be accredited with TAFE. While I was there, Bishop Jobst made my research available to Margaret Zucker who wrote his Church history, *From Patrons to Partners: A History of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley 1884-1984*.

From June 1993 – 1996 I was employed by Bachelor College as a Lecturer in Teacher Education in Maningrida Aboriginal Community in Arnhem Land. In 1995, I took unpaid leave to nurse my dying brother in Geelong and had the opportunity to go to China for the Women's Conference before I returned to Maningrida. At a restaurant where we had gone to have 'Peking Duck' I met an Aboriginal artist, Sadie Carrington from the East Kimberley. This chance encounter touched me. I had been reading the oral sources *This is your Place*, thinking of the PhD on which I was working part time. I showed her a picture I had found in the Broome Archives with the caption, Girls from Beagle Bay. In my mind I had placed it as about 1924. Sadie said, "*These are my relatives. Barney,*

Hector, Martin, Betty, Winnie and Julia.” I asked Sadie could we have a photo of her to record this event.

Years later, Sr Philomena in Broome told me that “A coincidence is a small miracle in which God prefers to remain anonymous.” There have been so many coincidences in this story of encounter. I returned to Maningrida in term 4, finished my thesis, and presented it for examination with Latrobe University before I left for Israel in 1997.

There I worked at Kyriat Yearim as a volunteer for nine months, had a month’s holiday in England and Ireland, and on the way back I went to Rome for three days to visit Propaganda Fide Archives.

Pallottine Stories

In 1999, Bishop Jobst rang me in Kyabram to ask if I would write Father John Luemmen’s memoirs. I went to Perth and together we wrote *Led by the Spirit: A Migrant Priest Tells His Story*.

While I was working with Father John, Father Michael McMahon and Fr Ray Hevern invited me to write the Mission History of the Pallottines for their centenary in Australia. Together we produced *Nothing is wasted in the Kingdom of God*/ When I visited Broome to have another look at the archives there, Bishop Chris Saunders asked me “Why don’t you write about McNab and Emo?” So when I returned to Victoria I began work on these two projects.

Links with the Past

In 2006 I read in the Age Newspaper that the government had withdrawn funding for students at Irrkerlantye Learning Centre in Alice Springs. I volunteered to go up and help them for a month.

It was 20 years since Pope John Paul 11 addressed all Aboriginal Peoples, telling them

The silence of the Bush taught you a quietness of soul that put you in touch with another world, the world of God's Spirit. Your careful attention to the details of kinship spoke of your reverence for birth, life, and human generation. You knew that children need to be loved, to be full of joy. They need a time to grow in laughter and to play, secure in the knowledge that they belong to their people."

On my return to Echuca I edited 'Aboriginal Culture and Christian Education', the report I made in 1972 because I found it still relevant in the current situation. In May 2008 I attended the Yapaneyepuk

Conference, convened by Lois Peeler to commemorate the 25th

Anniversary of Worawa College in Healesville and the 40th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. This whole experience incorporating Aboriginal Speakers was the greatest affirmation I could have received from my encounters with Aborigines in Victoria.

Chapter 1

Beagle Bay Mission Stories

‘The Cradle of the Church’ said Bishop Jobst and at the same time, “Write the story!”. But I wanted to hear it from them. Father Francis Huegel had collected 34 stories on tape for Mary Durack’s book, *The Rock and the Sand*, published in 1969. I was told 14 other stories in the 1980’s. Altogether I typed 48 of these. In 1990, to celebrate their centenary, The Beagle Bay Community published *This is Your Place: Beagle Bay Mission 1890 – 1990*.

Locals

Balthazzar, Remi, Fidelis, and Magdalen.

Remi told about Felix, the Keeper of the Songs. He was not among those in the first public Baptism at Beagle Bay, 15 August 1896. Fr Alphonse wrote:

"At an open meeting, 22 have asked to be instructed for Baptism." One man had said, "I have given my son to you. You have baptised him. I am happy about it. He will be happy, mind him. Me too, I want to be happy. In two months, I will turn away again all my wives and will keep only one of them, you will baptise me, for I say it to you, I want to be a Christian."

"Our hunter Felix, the master sorcerer of the country, at last goes to regulate his situation, he wishes absolutely to be a Christian but he has a broken heart, for he must send away one of his wives. For a long time, Felix struggled against grace because of this obstacle, it now appears that grace is going to triumph at last. Things are even a little more definitely arranged. Felix is going to give the youngest of his wives to his brother, one of our best sailors."

In 1897 Felix was baptised by Fr Alphonse Tachon. Thomas Puertollano,

Filipino and captain of the mission boat stood as Godfather for the group..

Through Remi's story and letters of Father Alphonse Tachon, I learnt about Felix, the 'Keeper of the Songs' and the corroborree maker. The influence of Felix in the foundation of the Christian Community of Beagle Bay needs to be recognised if the deep faith of the people of Beagle Bay is to be understood. He, himself, was convinced, and he told his tribal people to "Come and see!" He had taught Fr Alphonse the language and gave him and symbols to translate Christian spiritual concepts into Nyulnyul.

Remi's Story

There was nobody in my tribe who was Christian. We lived at Sandy Point fifteen miles west of the Mission. The language was Djabberdjaber, the name of the country Winnawel. We all grew up as pagans down in the camp Sandy Point. Many people die there, all round the country. There were none who were already Christians. We play. I was grown up when I go hunting with my father, fishing for turtles. All followed the same law. My father and mother followed the old law, so did my four brothers, the next died, then me, six altogether.

I am not sure when the first Trappists arrived. I was not a big boy. I might be three or four. We at Sandy Point, we see boat in Beagle Bay, but we not go up there. Some people come round. We don't take notice. I heard of the Mission from my own tribe people. Felix tell us "This is Priest coming from long way country." He old man, he tell us that. We all got to come. "Father wants us to get baptised, he say in Djabberdjaber. The old man come and say, "You all come and get baptised." We ask, "What them coming for?" Old Felix say, "No come for nothing, he come for people to make us good, don't come to fight or to make trouble so, with good heart we must listen.

My big brothers and sisters come here first. I come behind with my parents. I see Felix, my brother- in-law. Felix say, "Ibal not like other white man. They stay there - they don't go from place to place like other white people, but these Ibal stop, they never go out - they talk to people."

They got us all dressed.

At the mission, I meet Felix, all Felix brother, there big mob of them. Father Alphonse used to call everybody to come. He say, "I am a good Father, to do something with you, to learn you, to baptise, to come to school after. I was a big boy when I come. I came up here to see what kind of people here. I was eight or ten years. I used my brains, saying to myself that I would learn what was right or wrong. Fr Alphonse called him in to school. His father said, "My son, I will miss you, but I will be back. Be good boy."

I came to the mission to see the Fathers who came from over the land. My father was here all the time. My father and all his mob would come to the mission. We see them Fathers, we watch proper to see what kind of people there, we see, we watch proper, we frightened like, we watch, we know them.

We learned in French and were glad to be at school and make friends. We watched Father, who said, "I Ibal, come to teach you those things that belong to God, you've got to learn. If I tell you something, believe what I say." The girls slept with their father and mother in the camp. I did not learn stories from my father. My uncle was there, but he didn't tell me. In school Father Alphonse taught prayers in Nyulnyul. They learnt by heart, but Father explained to them.

My father said, "My son, I will miss you, but I will be back. I will not be long. Be god boy." I was the youngest, the last man, all the rest were married. My father come. He say, "How you feel? You better go back with me." He say, "I take this boy to feed him with turtle and fish." He took me for 2 weeks then he brought me back to the Mission. When I came the second time I settled down with the other boys.

Fr Alphonse give us dormitory. Some of us small boys, some of us big boys. I forget their names because all of them die. I was not among the first ones to go to the dormitory. I came after. The second time I stay a bit longer here. Of course the boys called me up to stay in the dormitory with them. There good many big boys, John, Bonaventure, Peter. It bush timber, paperbark. Fathers built it. Paperbark all round the sides and the roof. Beds. One boy there, one boy there, each side. Fr Alphonse was in charge of the boys. He pray, he come over after he prayed and wake up the

boys.

After school was over I worked with the stock. One day my father came and I knew that he wanted me for Malulu. Everybody told me, "You follow our Law. Proper we finish you Malulu, you can go back to the Mission. You must be man like first man and you will follow our law."

My father told Father Alphonse nothing. I came back by myself and when Father Alphonse asked me where I had been, I said, "I was Wanju." Father Alphonse preached in the Church "Stop that Malulu!" He talked outside to the men to stop. They said, "He can't do that but that is our Law, we old fellows we keep to our Law, we got to stick to that Law till we're dead, but all them boys can follow Christian."

It was before I was baptised. Fr Alphonse tell my Father, "Don't do that again! You're a head man on the Mission, you tell the others."

My father said, "I can't." That the last boy I've got."

I was happy. I didn't go against my father. I felt that everything was good.

Sometimes the men come out of the bush, and the boys go with them.

Father Alphonse watch those people coming from bush. They have the red paint and the white paint and all. Father was invited one time to the Malulu and he could see for himself it was nothing bad.

1896

It was more than a year after I left school that I was baptised. Father asked in Nyulnyul, "Do you believe?" and I answered in Djabberdjabber.

After I left the mission, I worked on a lugger for a year. MrTilly was my boss on the pearling lugger. 1901 When I came back Fr Walter, Brother Kasperek and Brother were here, then three come that year. Trappist brother was still in Mission to watch the garden.

Father said I could have only one woman. I loved a girl already in school but she died. The other girl promised to me I would leave, Lena. I gave up the girl promised to me. My parents agreed to my marriage to Mercedes. It was a straight marriage. Father Bischofs married us. The brides had veils. We had new suits and boots. We had to have a good dinner in the Monastery. The Brother wanted us to have good dinner. We sang Nyulnyul songs. We all got the house we built ourselves.

Fr Nicholas in Broome. Many people go to church, white, black, coloured, Manila people. Fr Nicholas got two places, one in the Point, where they

build the new jetty, this side a bit more. In town, he live in the Church.

1908

Fr Nicholas went from Broome in his boat the `Salvador' up to the North to open up Drysdale Mission. My sister, a Manilaman, my brother-in-law, Tollino, Andrew his friend, two men same name. We saw his boat coming. They take two Manilamen and my sister, the woman, they trust them. Stay there for a good while. Fr Nicholas stop for a year then they all come back from there. They tell me about the people and the country.

Elizabeth Fidelis Victor

In 1905 Fidelis was born in Beagle Bay. Her father was Victor Tieldiel, Nyulnyul brother of Felix. Her mother was Louisa, Nyulnyul sister of Remi, (Possibly one of Felix's wives?). "There were three tribes, Nyulnyul, Nyikina, Bardi. My Grandfather had a lot of sons.

At Beagle Bay we had dormitories. St John of God nuns were mothers to us. Mother Margaret Alocoque taught me. In 1935 the first to get sick was Alice, then Mary and Aunty Cassie. Mathias and I went to the Leprosarium. At first the patients were in the bush at Beagle Bay and Sr Brigid used to look after them. We went 3 miles to school. Used to work for the Fathers, cooking, one from the community, Sr Aloysius. Sr Margaret used to give the orders. Some girls used to work from the Novitiate. We used to have our own garden. Mother Margaret did it.

Brother Labonte: my father used to cook with him, French cooking. I was in the kitchen when the trouble with Br Augustine Sixt. My brother and I used to work for him in his new place, on way to Norman Creek.

Casimo, Mr Dolby's stepfather, he could talk splendid English. He was travelling around, he told us the two points, Yalat and this side.

Br James Daly, Mother Alphonsus' brother was cooking. Then goats from our garden, our mothers used to work in the garden, get peanuts from Daly River. My uncle Remi planted the big Tamarind tree in the Trappist time.

Magdalen Williams

I was introduced to Magdalen at her home in Broome by Sister Angela, a Loreto nun. Magdalen told me her grandfather was Felix, his father: Muringber. Magdalen's father was called Isaac (his brother was Abel and his sister Leonie). On her father's side, her grandfather was Abraham and his wife Sara. Her mother was called Johanna. (Single name Kiely or Kelly, which means 'Boomerang come round').

I had one sister, Brigid, and one brother, Albert. My father Isaac married second time with Alice and brought up children there. I married Lawrence Williams. We, Vera Dan, Magdalen, and Teresa were colony girls.

1921

I was born 1921 and went into the dormitory when I was 6 or 7. Bella and Fidelis looked after me. 1928 Mum died 1928, don't know what, no doctors or anything. Teresa born 1918 (big flu 1919) - her mum died in the 1960's. My Grandfather Felix told us:
"I got nothing to give you but - I give you this land. This is your place."
 Felix said, *"Ibal Galbogjar (Heavenly Father) is there to look after you when I go."*

There were two groups of Nyulnyul tribe at Beagle Bay - one group was from the bush, one was from the coastal people, for example, Fidelis was from the bush people, Remi was from the coastal people. Carnot Bay was a place that the Nyulnyul tribe would meet together because Grandfather Felix was the one they would go to for Corroborees from all round, Nimambor people. When those people would come, that was before the Christians came, and Grandfather would lay his rules for them, then they

would come. Felix's corroborees always had a meaning the people would understand.

When the first missionaries came and went up there, Grandfather's home was where the Convent was. It is called `Nallengnor'. It was his camping place, that is `Gnarlen', or 'Changing of the weather' like the hot and warm ashes. `Gnarlen' was the native name for Beagle Bay. When the first missionaries came, they taught them about one God. Before that they knew there was a mighty spirit over them. They would sit on the beach and sing and pray for a catch. They had a trust in the `Galjobin Ibal' and they would chant as soon as the tide would go out, and they would find the fish and turtles.

So when Christianity came out it wasn't hard to believe. He said to the people,

"Finish now - end of old tribal law."

That was forgotten. My father didn't go through with it or Flora's. `Gunju place', sacred place, but our people didn't know to say. Along where those houses were built, they used to have camps.

When Christianity came out - Felix said to his people,

"We must have one law and not other law: tribal way of running away with woman (spearing in leg), we finish with that."

Uncle Stan Victor was in Leprosarium, and Antony Victor, and Fidelis was there for a little. They used to have their corroborees.

1940

My husband, Lawrence Williams and myself, Magdalen, and my five children, Johanna, Albert, Cecelia, Philomena, and David went to Balgo for six months with Fr Alphonse and two St John of God nuns, Sr Angela and Sr Winifride. We came back, then years later we went to La Grange. Fr Francis

was there already. I stayed there doing the cooking for Fr Francis and cleaning. Vera Dan was there helping too, she taught. We had four lay people who helped. Betty Prendegast, Margaret Elliot, Joan Newing and Joy Hopf (Joy left soon, she was first).

Bishop Raible would say,
*"Amongst you people a native woman and a white woman will not get on working together."*²⁰

Nuns - no cheek. Native Sisters, they volunteered. We always expected something good to turn out, working in the garden, in dormitory, jobs to do, go to Church, in Dining room, in school by 3 o'clock. Church bell rang for men to go to work.

Philippena Fraser

Philippena was of part descent. She told her story to Father Francis in Derby. I was born at Yeeda Station. My mother a full blood native woman, Muninga and my father was Jimmy Kassim, a native of India, born in India. He came here to work for himself. In Yeeda, when I was a little girl I went fishing with my mother and saw crocodiles. There were big corrobories. In the early days there were more than 50 Aborigines there. I was about seven years old when I was taken by the police. My name was Sarah then, my sister was Gypsy, she was only five. A native boy spoke in language to Gypsy and me to come with him for a ride in a cart. One boy named Albert saw us get into the cart and Albert ran away because he know we were going to be taken to the police station.

Gypsy and I were too young to know. My mother, named Lucy, started calling for her two children and did not get any answer. She was told the police took them for a ride. So Lucy called in language. Gypsy and I could hear Mum calling but we were locked in. The ship must have come in the night to Derby. You know, we had that tram early days. The tram pulled up in the morning and took us to the water.

We went past there to see my mother. She hit herself, bleeding all over. That was the last I saw of her.

The police hung on to me and Gypsy. It hurts like. They took us to the ship. We cried and cried and went off to sleep on the ship. We didn't know where we was, and that ship was 'Koombana'. We had one lady, she must have come from Queensland, and they told her to look after us, she look after us on the ship.

In Broome we went to the Convent. There is a little place the sisters had. The constable took us to the Convent, to the Sisters, for a while, waiting for the Beagle Bay lugger to come from Beagle Bay. The Captain was a Manila man.

At Beagle Bay, Gypsy's mother came to meet us. Her name was Bernadine Namingil. My mother and stepfather didn't go, they were here. They used to go back and forth to Beagle Bay. When they come to pick us up, it was in a sulky, cart and horse. Later on we met other girls, Kitty Clark, Suzannah Gentle, Suzannah Clark. It was a bit strange.

There were Mother John, Mother Margaret, Mother Patrick, and Sr Brigid. My teacher was Mother Margaret. Father Droste baptized me. He came to Beagle Bay in 1909. There was a `good big mob baptised. Katy Hutchinson, Mugadja, all that mob, all got baptized, all in line in the old Church.

For a start I didn't like school, then after I got used to it, the rest of the girls were very nice to us. After school the Sisters used to tell us what to do. On Sundays we went to picnics. I can't remember when I was confirmed but it is all in that `Beagle Bay Mission Book'. Our marriage should be there.

The Drysdale Fathers sent some of their young men to Beagle Bay to look for a wife. One of them was Fulgentius, my future husband. I was in Beagle Bay already when Fulgentius came from Drysdale. I was in the Convent for a long time. He went to Broome first. He was working at the point for the Sisters. He used to look after the goats, milk them and bring the milk to the Convent.

They were sent from the mission to look for wife. The lugger goes for stores. He come with that boat.

Fr Droste gave me the ring. My bridesmaids were Mary Underwood and Carmel Marshall. For her husband, it was Charlie. There was a spare house in the colony, a house in the first line. In 1919, I was in Beagle Bay till my husband got job in Streeter and Male, but still I was there. I had no place to stay. He was paying the mission for us. Little money, had to pay the mission for us while we stay there. Streeter and Male gave him place to look after. That's the time I went out and I had Jimmy small. Lena wasn't born yet.

I went up in 1924 in the lugger to Drysdale Mission. Aggie was born at Drysdale Mission. We went there to stay but Cecelia was sick and the Fathers had to send us back. We were there for a year. When we were coming back it was stormy and everybody was seasick. We turned at One Arm point and nearly got caught in a whirlpool. There was Captain Johnston. Gabriel from Lombadina was there too. It was not a mission boat, or a lugger, but a big boat. I had Katy, Agnes, Frances, Edna, Gerty, Dorothy, Timmy, Lena.

Children brought to Beagle Bay from East Kimberley

Charlie, Paddy, Nancy, Hedwig Rose and Lily, the mother of Petronella and Martha came from the East Kimberley. So did Winnie.

Charlie told his story to Father Francis Huegel in 1975.

Charlie Norman

My bush name was Gumarin and I was born where the people speak Gidjen

in Flora Valley. I did not know my father and cannot remember my mother's name.

I grew up on station in Flora Valley. My real father died there. My mother took me down to Halls Creek. My step father was there. Lots of people there. They dance, have corroborees, meetings. Mulaloo there. My mother came to Halls Creek in New Year, we little fellows had to have races. We stayed there because my mother had to get rations from station. We roam about. My eldest brothers would go hunting. My parents were not baptized, or my brothers. In those days there was nothing known like that.

A mailman by name of Bill Boyce brought me here. There were no Native Affairs then, or triple tractors. The police sent us. There were six boys, and three girls. Old Paddy, two native boys and Richard, Dick Smith, Daisy Fitzgerald, (Tony Ozies'mother), Bertie Esau, and myself. Overland by buggy to Wyndham, by boat, old `Koombana'(went down outside Fremantle?). Old Fr Bischofs met us in Broome. We stayed there until one of the mission boats came in. One was a cargo boat, one was a mission lugger. The mission pearling lugger came, Captain was old Manilaman.

We walked to the Mission. Fr Thomas was here. It was 1908. The Brothers were old Matthias Wollseifer, Bringmann, Anton, John Graf, Kasperek, Henry Krallmann, Brother Frank (old carpenter, hardly any boys in the dormitory.

Old Martin Sibosado was here, he was baker. Rudolph did not come till 1910. Rudolph became baker when he left school and kept the job for more than 30 years. School, Mother Margaret in charge, 8-11 a.m. Afternoon tea 3 p.m. Then go to work in garden, get weeds out.

Sundays we go for picnics. Br Anton or big boys take us fishing. We went hunting,, we used firearms loaned from Father.

Boys taught me how to throw boomerangs and spear. For fishing we used iron boomerangs to kill bait. Baptism by Fr Droste. I was straight from the bush. I was 7, 8, or 9. Bishop Torres came from New Norcia for Confirmation. We had good Christmas, Br Rudolph had the choir, played

the organ. We had presents, lollies, biscuits, and cakes. Boys used to go out in bush, get trees, nail them between boards in the dormitory, like bush.

We used to play football, rounders. Sometimes in the night we used to have a race in the moonlight. Once we went in a boat. With a bullock team we went to Bungadock. One time one of the boys shot a wild pig. We roasted it. Brothers, Sisters, we go for swim in that creek. Evenings, sitting round the fire, sing song. My trade was butcher's shop. Lawrence Clarke was in charge. We had a Brother there. Brother Albert was a butcher. We killed twice a week. After I worked on stock, mustering.

1924

I remember when Bishop Cattaneo came by boat. Skipper picked him up in Carnot Bay. Fr Creagh's schooner brought him. He stayed here for about a week. The children gave him a concert. The men gave him a corroboree. I wasn't in that one. I was in the bigger ones outside.

1938

I went with Bishop Raible to the Kimberley in 1938. The axle was broken at Fitzroy Crossing and the Bishop had to order from the South. It was a different kind of car, a Rhineland. Fr Droste came from there. My first wife, Alberta, had five children, Emily, Clara, Mary, Dominic and Aloysius. When I was in Derby, waiting,. Alberta was having a baby. She was dead when I came, she was a good woman, looking round for honey, going fishing. I had a feeling that something had happened. I went out for a wife after about a year. Mia Bella was my second wife from 1945 - Beagle Bay.

I worked on the road till one side was done to the old Government well further down. At Bon's well, some boys came from Broome. Willy Wright was in charge of the road making. We worked with mule team. The first road was more along the coast but we couldn't make it across the creek, so we were working further inland. Sometimes we came in for tucker, but otherwise we used to have Sundays out.

We had old people, old Jimmy, a tracker, for direction, but Brother John from the garden with the mule team was first. It took us a good few months. The old Jumbo Lee mob worked from Broome, Solon Boys too. Br Kasperek went by Broome and collected a Ford Truck, a T Model Ford. It was only chassis, no wheels on. Willie Wright was with him. When they arrived, they built the body up.

Paddy Merandjin

told his story to Fr Francis Huegel.

I was born in Shepherd Yard, West of Halls Creek.

My father was the stockman at Shepherd Yard. My mother died soon after I was born. My grandmother brought me up until a teamster brought me to Halls Creek to another uncle.

No tucker. No feed much at Shepherd Yard. When my father worked with the stock he got meat and flour, but the stock boys got meat in a special place. They were not allowed take things into camp. So we went into town to see if we could get tucker. The camp was outside the town in a place called Caroline - permanent water, plenty people, not children. We talked Jaru. Tumarin (Charlie Norman) was there Binja, my stepfather, taught me to use a spear and boomerang. We went prospecting for gold. We sell it to the storekeeper. The old people and the children got rations from the police each week. We bin get tobacco, tin jam, tin beef. I was not allowed go to corroborees, not initiated.

The police would come in our camp when someone gets troublesome, spearing cattle. Put them in lock up. A good lot of boys. Prisoners from there. We saw a good lot from Wyndham. Take 'em to Cossack. Some days they used to get those boys, might be from station, right ones, or might be wrong ones. They get 'em, put them in the prison, and take them away. Might be anyones get away too, might be other boys who never do anything , they get away too.

Then me and seven more, one girl, my sister and 6 boys were rounded up by the police to Wyndham to be sent to Drysdale. Because there was no room in Drysdale, brought to Broome and Beagle Bay. They were Paddy, Charlie, Daisy, who was afterwards the mother of Tony Ozies, Dominica, Gerard, Esau, Willy Wright, Andrew, Dick Smith.

It took three weeks to go from Halls Creek to Wyndham to the boat 'Koombana'. With us on the boat there were no other boys or girls, only the prisoners. In Broome we stayed in the presbytery waiting for this boat 'Pius' or 'Leo' the pearling boat. We came up on the pearling boat. Fr Bischofs was there and 10-20 boys in the dormitory. Big boys were there too, like Paddy, and Martin Sibosado, Harrison, old Selina's brother.

I went to school. Sr Xavier was my teacher. Br Sebastian, a Manila man was there too. After school we would go to the garden and help Brother John. All the boys would work. Morning prayers in the dormitory. Sister taught us Catechism. Another Sister in school was Mother Michael. On a Sunday, after Mass we went for picnic to Burragajok. Our Christmas tree was between our beds. We got gifts on Christmas Eve in the dormitory. On Christmas we would go out and meet the people in the camp. We would get new clothes. Old David would make them.

Corpus Christi there was a procession. There was a little altar where the spring is now. That old gate, where it used to be was the second one, and the third was when we came back near the Church. The fourth was in the Church. Brother Rudolph, then Brother Matthias, then Mr Ambrose played the organ.

We had no school holidays. We went out little time in the bush and come back. Fishing, look for bush fruit, look for wild figs, shooting wild ducks with rifle, look for horse. In 1914 I left school. Fr Thomas put me to Brother Henry with the stock. Sebastian was the cook. We finish the day with the Rosary. On Sundays one of the Priests would come on horseback or foot to say Mass, Fr Droste, Fr Thomas, F. Bischofs. During the war Fr Bischofs had to leave. All the people said goodbye and

went with him to the bay to see him off, even the girls and the women. A navy boat, 'The Pioneer' picked him up and brought him to the steamer. Before he left we sang 'Hail Queen of Heaven' and Father kissed the ground. Then the navy came again. They were friendly. One of them was the brother of Sister Alphonse. They had a meal here with the people. The children sang to them. It was like a little feast.

Also during the war Brother Henry met with an accident. The horse stumbled, Brother fell and broke his collar bone. He didn't come to lunch and the boys went out to look for him. They brought him in, took him to Beagle Bay where he was picked up by a battleship, the 'Jubilee' and brought to the Japanese doctor in Broome.

I was married to Bertha here in Beagle Bay in 1923. We had the second house. Bertha had seven children. They were Basil Martin (died as a baby), Stephen, Thecla, Francis Kevin (died as a baby), Otilia, Lydia, and Lawrence.

Nancy Leo

Nancy came of her own accord to tell me her story and brought her photo of 1911 with her.

My father was Peter Pianti (So she was told in 1970 when she went back to renew her kinship with living relatives in the East Kimberley. My mother was Alice (but we had lots of mothers there, all the women looked after us). I was born somewhere around the Ord River, might be Flora Valley. I was with my mother and half a dozen sisters around Turkey Creek playing with Zita and those. When the police came I must have been about 5. Like my little grandson when he was 5. I was clever, I could talk for the group. With me came Rosi Hedwig (now Mrs Marker), and Gracie Beasley (now Mrs Martin), and Mary Anne, whose Christian name is Zita (now Zita Murphy).

I remember the bullock cart they used from station to station. Mr Gale used to come to pick us up. Our mothers used to paint us with charcoal but

when we swam in the river our colour would come back and they would know we were half castes. When the police came unexpectedly we would run under our mothers' skirts to hide. We caught the boat at Wyndham. They brought us to Broome. We got off at the jetty. The 'Namban', the mission lugger, was waiting, but they took us to the Convent to wait for the trip back.

A bullock dray brought us from Beagle Bay to the Mission. They took us straight into a big trough to wash us. They gave us clean clothes and took the three young ones to the Church to be baptised. Not Rose, she was older and had to be instructed. She cried to be separated from us.

1929

I was still on the Mission when I got married 20 February 1929. I married a boy from Beagle Bay, Leo Francis, a full blood whose father was Nyulnyul (Francois), and whose mother was Bard (Cecelia). I stayed on the Mission. I used to go out bush, stock camp, to cook and help the men with their jobs. When they came back for lunch the women would get on the mules and look after the bullocks. In 1930 Francis was born. I had Joseph 11 October 1931. I had Gemma 30 August 1933.

1939

I worked in the Monastery. We took over during the war. It was hard work. Bertha Paddy was the cook. I was her offsider. I did all the other jobs. There was the guesthouse. The officer who was there all the time, the military Priests, one stayed in the guesthouse. He was Fr Herbert. One stayed near the boys' dormitory. He was Fr Flynn. Fr Hyland was in Broome and used to come to see them from time to time.

1951

I left the Mission in 1951 for a trip to Derby where a lady wanted a girl for a job. The Bishop said, "*All right.*" They were good to me, gave me a little house in the back yard. My husband had died a long time ago in the Leprosarium, in 1937. My children were big, in the Leprosarium. The first two were taken 1939, and Frankie in 1942. He was 12. He had no mark.

They let him go when he was 16. We were not allowed to visit, not until Gemma was 12 years old.

Dr Musso had picked up Jackie Sahanna round Wyndham way and brought him to the Mission. He was a small boy, must have been fretting for his mother.

One day Fr Benedict said *"I will give you a little boy to look after."*

He had his photo under an aeroplane and his story was there. Once when I was away from the Mission, the trunk I left the photo in was gone when I came back. Jack's father was an Afghan who was carried away crossing the river. He had an Aunty at the Forrest River Mission. Later on I had my grandchildren when their mother left them, they were Nelson Francis, Gregory Francis, David Francis, Leonie Francis, Syra Francis, and Joseph Francis. Fr Peile brought Nelson and Gregory here to the Mission where they became wards of the State.

They have all grown up now and I am living in Broome.

Hedwig Pedro-Shaw

In November 1975, in Derby, Hedwig Rose told her story to Fr Francis. Nancy Leo had included her in the list of girls who accompanied her to Beagle Bay. She was then known as **Hedwig Pedro-Shaw**. She was born in Turkey Creek, did not know the name of her father but her mother was Annie.

My Mum was full blood. I don't know how many brothers and sisters. I remember nothing at all of my early years. I was brought up on Beagle Bay Mission. In Turkey Creek, I only met the boss. I don't know their names. Little huts we lived in. I was taken from my Mum, police come up. We was crying. We didn't like to leave our homes. Still we came. Four other girls who grew up on the Mission came too, Gracie, Pinda Tilly, Zita, and Nancy Leo. I had company so I did not feel too lonely. We

caught the boat at Wyndham, and came to Broome.

We stayed in the Convent. There was Mother Antonia. We called her Mrs. We weren't frightened. We stayed there a night, and then we came away on the boat. Br Rudolph picked us up with a bullock cart. I wouldn't know the Sisters, It was a long time. Mother Bernardine. Fr Thomas, Fr Droste, I can't remember them. Fr Bischofs used to be up and down to Broome.

In Turkey Creek we speak native language. I don't think I learnt English there. In Beagle Bay we were not allowed to talk our language. I forget my lingo. There were boys and girls in school, but no so many in the dormitory, only a few. After school we would do jobs, watering, jobs for the Sisters. We said the evening Rosary in Church. We used to go to Benediction each evening. I think the Priest was Fr Thomas. He was the Superior.

Every morning we went to Mass. It was cold. We used to get up in the morning and wash our face, it was cold, like ice. We never refused to go to Church. We used to always go to Church. I like singing. The Sisters were teaching us Catechism, not the Priest. At Christmas we would go to the Sisters' convent and sing them Merry Christmas. We didn't have much sense.

When we got bigger we used to go to where the bricks were making. We had the bucket. We built the Church. Fr Droste baptized us. I don't know who was there. There were girls, no boys. I think Fr Droste gave me First Communion. We all got new dresses on Christmas Eve. We got presents from the Christmas tree.

When I left school I went to the Convent in Broome doing washing and ironing. Many Sisters there. On Sunday we would go out to Sisters' Point, that was the only change we had, there were no motor cars. We went on foot with the Sisters, walked. When I came back from Broome to Beagle Bay, I met my husband. He was a big boy here. His name was Charlie Maramo (Petro), a Filipino boy. My name was Hedwig Rose.

Second Generation Mission Children

Petronella Atwood and Martha Hughes

One day in 1984, Petronella cooked a roast dinner and invited Sr Madeleine and myself to join her. She told me her story.

My mother was Lily Mc Carthy who had been brought to Beagle Bay Mission about the same time as Nancy Leo. I am Nyulnyul. I was born here 3 June 1919. I was working for the Doctor Betz in 1937. Barbara Booty, Laura then, worked for Professor Nekes. She used to serve him. I worked for the Doctors for 5/- a week. They banked it for me. The £7 in the Commonwealth stood me in good stead later. When they went we cried. She gave me a present from both of them, a St Christopher medal, and material.

Mary Visitation was my eldest sister, and went to Phylis Elridge to work with the Presentation nuns at Carnarvon. She registered her name as Gregory instead of Munget when she was there, so we were all known as Gregory since. My brothers are Matthew, Peter, Christopher, and Pius. There were six girls, Mary Visitation, Martha, Petronella, Mercedes, and twin girls, Teresa and Frances. Mary and the twins have died.

1939

I did not leave the Mission until I was twenty years of age. It was 1939. There was a Catholic lady wanted a girl from Beagle Bay Mission. Fr Albert Scherzinger sent me to Port Hedland and I stayed there for a year. The lady was the Matron in the Native Hospital at Port Hedland (Lock Hospital). I did housework for her. I got sick. I had appendicitis, and I nearly died of double pneumonia. I asked to come back to the Mission.

1941

After 1941, another matron in Port Hedland wanted a girl to help and they sent me. The whites there were prejudiced. We had to live a mile outside

the town. We had to wear a tag around our neck to say who we were, like a dog tag. We were barred from the bars, and from the white hospital. There was a half caste ward down the end of the yard - our kids were born there. When Don McCloud came out with this citizenship thing, I had met my husband in Marble Bar. He was Ronald Thornton Attwood, a white man. I wasn't allowed to marry, him being a white person, and me being a half-caste. Don McCloud was there in Marble Bar. At the time he got the Citizenship Cards for the people and I applied for one. I had to go to the Police station with a photograph of myself to identify myself. We had to pay 10/- for the Citizenship card. The policeman pasted my photograph on it. I still have it.

After I got married to my husband he said,
"What do you want to get a Citizenship Card for? You married to a white man!" I said, *"Yes, it is all right for you to talk. If you die tomorrow I will be thrown back to the Government. I'm free now. I've got the card."*
 He shut up like a book. He understood what I meant. We were married in Marble Bar and went to live in Port Hedland. We had seven children, all born in Port Hedland Hospital. The two eldest sons were born in the half caste ward.

1946

After the war the prejudice was cleared and we were all mixed up in the white ward. My children are Ronald Gregory Attwood, Douglas William Attwood, Dorothy Lilian Attwood, Mary Carmel Attwood, Theresa Belinda Eileen Attwood, Paul Finbar Attwood, and Jennifer Ellen Attwood. When Douglas turned 20, he died of a rheumatic heart. Dorothy Coffin, she had Paula and Kirk.

Paula has a son Derrick John, who makes me a great grandmother.

1973

We celebrated our 29th wedding anniversary, 15 January 1973, and that month my husband died of a heart attack where we were living in Fremantle. He had become a Catholic.

1984

Now in 1984, I am back here as a widow in Beagle Bay. I have a house. I will be 65 years old, 3June 1984.

Martha Hughes

told me her story.

My mother was Lily Mc Carthy. My father was Willie Munget - son of Mary Munget, who was known as Jurud of Pender Bay. My mother, Lily, took the name of Martha after her Baptism. Her great grand children are Albert Cox's children. Nancy Leo is our aunty. When we grew up there used to be a big camp of paperbark huts, fire and dog inside. When the Church was built, the old people made the bricks. We used to cook the shells, make lime, whitewash the houses. There was the custom that if disease came the people would pull down the house, put it up in another place, they would burn that area and shift so that the sun would disinfect the area.

The ti-tree was their medicine, to stop dysentery, there was medicine in the mangroves, opening medicines, that worked like salts. I was a junior girl when Fidelis was a senior and Sr Matthew Greene was in charge of the dormitory girls. Little girls, middle girls, big girls, happiest days for the girls, good life. We would do it again. Our mothers were brought here. They lived in the colony in the married quarters. During the war they were getting married, the Clarkes. Two white houses, inside mud and stone and grass. Then after that there was another lot. We had school to Grade 7 standard. Bob also came from the East Kimberley.

Bob Hutchinson

asked me to write his story when I was at Beagle Bay in 1983. Bob told me his story:

“I was born on King Leopold Station. My father, Alec Hutchinson was a jockey and my mother was Maggie. I came to Fitzroy Crossing, and

Bantum's father, Alec, brought me up. Lizzie was Bantum's mother. I worked in Brooking Spring, seven miles out of Fitzroy. In the early days we never get nylon rope, spurs, or hats at shop. We used to make our own rope. From every killer we killed, we cut hide, dried it on a wagon wheel, scraped the hair out, dipped it and soaked it in the creek, brought it back next day and make either twisted rope with a machine, three hooks and wind in a machine for hobbles, or for a neck strap. There was no frig, or charcoal. We had milkers, nanny goats, pigs. We had mule teams and donkey teams.

From Derby we went river road through Yeeda, Lower Liveringa, Upper Liveringa, Noonkanbah, all the way to Quonbun, Jeff Rose was there, sheep station, Jubilee Downs, Bert Ore, cattle station, then Fitzroy Crossing. Dick Fallon with his Missus was running the Fitzroy store and Scottam Gardner, and old John Nickson. All the early days' people, all gone now, good people, give us a lolly sometimes.

From Fitzroy we pass police station seven mile to Brooking Spring to Station. Mr Andrews, Lindsay Napier, and Tom Simpson were the police. Alec Thompson was in the Spinifex Pub in Derby. It used to take the donkey cart one and a half months from Derby to Brooking Spring.

When we used to go bush for mustering, fifty miles out, two to three months branding, stockman would send note to station to get rations, flour, tea, sugar, treacle, honey, jam. Made flour, camper, net, blanket, shirt, trousers, boots, hat, never get money, we worked hard for keep. Later Boss said, "I pay you £1 a week and keep. We used to shift cattle, three to four hundred from bore to bore and save the cattle that way. We had kerosene power, easy to work, little Maggie behind, throw the spark into the spark plug, good engine. We had a two arm pump jack to pump water. All the boys used to smoke pipe or `muligan', the Aboriginal smoke, as long as we got tobacco, Aboriginal life style, and supply from the store.

Went to Christmas Creek, Victor Jones was manager, then went and

worked on Gogo station for a little while. Made one hundred mud bricks a day to build new store with other boys at Christmas Creek and Brooking Springs. mixed with shovel, had wheelbarrow, went through, made bricks for house at Christmas Creek. Made bricks for Jimmy Bell at Gogo, built another store in Brooking Springs.

Bishop Raible came with Willie Wright. He was first one we saw at Fitzroy. He went out on donkey from Brooking Spring. We walked beside him. Boys were mustering at the stock camp. He taught us about God, `Ngarburin', `Father', Fitzroy Crossing, `God' in Bunabi language, Nabo language. Bishop: we were O.K. with him. We listened to him in the bush, when he finished we were a little bit on the `munyam side'. Bishop Raible understood. When service finished we all say `Amen', and clap and thank.

He tells us,

"You think of God always, he loves you."

When I was working man, got a shock, Leprosarium, wasn't bad case from Brooking Spring, went through all Doctors, Dr Mitchell and Dr Musso. In 1944, Citizenship Rights, I was told to go and get them. I've got them here. Now with that I can go and drink in a pub, or go on a trip anywhere I want to go. No supplying liquor to my mates or I'll get six months. Only a few people were getting citizenship rights around the Kimberley. Mrs Fallon, Dick Fallon's wife took my photograph. Dick owned the Fitzroy Pub and store.

Everything was changing, coming up different ways. We'll be on the modern life soon. Lot of good boys on the main road there. Sergeant Bill Andrews at Fitzroy Crossing filled in the form. He went to Broome later. The police boy could arrest anyone. He had a medal. He worked for the police the way a stock boy worked for a stockman. They gave the police boy the old police station. He is there now. The policeman has new place. Early days' bridge, near Fitzroy Crossing Hospital. Mr Hayward put it up before 1950. Go down, steep, over bridge, and up. Lots of trucks got stuck. New bridge is like a harbour, like Willare Bridge in Derby, up real

high. Holiday, we used to meet crowd from other end, big corroboree, eat goanna, crocodile, barramundi, we had a hook on, not nylon line, like cotton, no sinker, little frog. We had a lot of fun, from Gogo, Fossil Downs, Jubilee Downs, Brooking Springs, Leopold. If people there, good luck. If people go their own way, all right. People dodgem fights with boomerangs.

We used to come from home in weekend, walk to store, in those days we had a footbridge when flood was up. Rope from side to side tied to tree. Then we put up a flying fox so that we could swing, walk along our hands, but we couldn't carry anything much. Boss man, and stockman, very hard people, we used to like work, we work all the time. These days young people can sleep till one o'clock. If they couldn't wake up in my time, bucket of water over them, wet blanket. I never get that myself.

Wax matches those days, blue head, waterproof. Never know bar soap. Red soap used to come to store good soap, not fat soap with caustic soda. Make a big boiler out in sun, keep stirring until stiff, let cool off for awhile. Get two big tubs, pour it into that, let it set, two days, two months, women cut, get easy one hundred blocks out of it. When we want soap we get it at store. Then we started droving down to Broome. There was a sort of bush road there and a telegraph line.

I came to Beagle Bay when Fr Butscher was here, because Dr Spargo in Derby said I might get a house here. Father said I was welcome. Mary, my wife, had been born in the old police station, Beagle Bay. Her father was Sebastian. We were married in Derby Leprosarium. Fr Kearney married us.

Father Butscher told me and Mary to give the thirty-six girls in the dormitory a holiday. Brother Gunther drove the big truck to Weedong with Sr Stella. There was a house there. Plenty tucker. Two weeks holiday. The girls enjoyed themselves.

Sometimes boys walked in. The boys were in Pender Bay. George Bennett and a young fellow were looking after boys in their camp. We went up

creek to fish. Mary and I took girls in my little ute. "How did you boys come?" "We come before tide came across the creek."

1982

While we were out there, old David Cox died in Perth. Holiday was finished. Mary was at Fitzroy Crossing, Christmas, 1982, when Bishop Jobst said Mass. They had more people than go here, kids with sticks, the way they pray with sticks. Three kids went up to read the Gospel."

Cassie Drummond

was born in Broome but was in Beagle Bay in 1982 when he told me his story.

My grandfather was a Scotchman, Gilpatrick, a sheep drover at Roebuck Station, and his grandmother was an Aborigine. My father, Charlie Nestrum was Portuguese, but my stepfather was Drummond, and my mother was Polly.

1926

I was baptised in 1926 or 1927 by Fr John, an Italian, and after Baptism at 12, or 13, I came to Beagle Bay Mission. Regina and Eddie Roe were my Godparents. I came to Beagle Bay to learn a trade. All materials were self made, leather, bricks, lime, bush timber, circle saw. I really appreciated the trade, blacksmith, tinsmith, plumbing, vegetable farming. Br Matthias, Br Henry, and Br Tony had the rice field. Br John, the carpenter had the garden farm and Br Kasperek drove the truck. Before the truck, there were two cargo boats which used to go to Broome to pick up the goods. Alois Dolby used to drive the donkey teams.

The Pallottine Fathers and Brothers did a great job. After school we went to learn a trade, and every three months we changed jobs. Brother Matthias taught in the blacksmith shop, Rudolph and Frank Dolby were in in carpenter's shop. Amy Dan who crippled his leg putting a guttering on the Church was my boss. There was a furnace and shells from Beagle Bay to

make lime. Rudolph Newman was the baker. The girls had jobs, sewing and cooking. Jerome Manado was a windmill man. Br Frank and Br Bernard Stracke came later. Br Frank put in an artesian bore. Br Stephen and Br Henry were on the stock.

In 1931 I left for Broome. I worked for the Police Inspector McInnes, then on luggers for two or three years. Then we took eight hundred of cattle each, five teams of drovers from Anna Plains Station and Roebuck Plains station to Meekathara for auction sales. The cattle were sent to Ida Valley. They loaded them on the train and after two weeks I came back.

1930

I spent eight years on windmills at La Grange. I was altar boy to Fr Worms every month or so. La Grange was a feeding station for Aborigines. I married Barbara who had a baby which died at birth. Aborigines or part Aborigines were not allowed to go to hospital to have babies. You needed exemption papers to go to hospital.

Bishop Gibney had asked the Governor of Western Australia to provide for the people of Beagle Bay to have 100 acres of land when they were married, that they be responsible. Now we got our land in Broome.

Fourteen people got five acres of land today, so advanced are Aboriginal people today. They are more able to manage on their own, more civilized. Here in Beagle Bay there are empty spaces and today the boys of Beagle Bay with a hundred acres stud farm, have better chances. In another twenty years time, the next generation. If we don't get the land people from other states will buy land. If we don't buy our land we be twenty miles out.

My Filipino father-in-law gave me a casting net. Tollino Torres taught me how to patch drag nets and how to make them. I became a windmill man expert, a plumber, a blacksmith, and a tinsmith. I make camp ovens, billy cans. I am a craftsman, working in cattle horns, the colour of the beast. I soak them in water and they come out soft as leather. If I had Carnot Bay !!! Mr Johnson, an expoliceman had it. Frankie Ozie could not meet the finance to build up a station.

By 1928 many of the original girls from Beagle Bay had married and a new generation had been born, like Martha and Petronnella. Some of the original girls who had not married were still living at the mission. Others were working in the wider community as domestic servants. A mission sub-culture evolved from relationships formed among the Nyul Nyul and those persons who were brought to the Beagle Bay Mission as children. They were educated by German lay brothers who taught their trades and trained many young stockmen. Some stayed as permanent residents, and others moved into the wider community for work. A remnant of Aboriginal people stayed.

**From Lombadina came:
Peter, Mercia, Lottie, Malady, Sandy, and Judy.**

Peter Angus

When I was in Lombadina in 1982, **Peter** told me his story.

I was born on Sunday Island - Dwal Tribe. My mother was Bardi from Swan Point. I was born in 1916, and am now in my 67th year, a pensioner in Lombadina. At present I am Chairman of the Lombadina Council and leader of the Tribal law. I learned the law from my youth on Sunday Island., I have been asked for the Law in Derby at Mowanjum. They want the law from our people. Our Law is clean Law. The Bard and the Nyulnyul have good Law. I have the Law at One Arm Point. I am doctor for the circumcision.

Before my time people from Sunday Island and Beagle Bay with leprosy were taken to Cossack. No one came back. Harry Hunter, Harry O'Grady and Sydney Hadley came about the same time. I was born in Hadley's time. In the 1920's, Mr David Drysdale, a single man, picked people up from Derby and went back to Sunday Island, when I was a little boy, schooling there. The Law was never stopped on Sunday Island, so Sandy and I know all the songs. When Fr Kriener was here in the 1960's we started the Law again with the boys.

I like the Lay Missionaries. They help the people along.

When I was 17 or 18, I worked at Boolgin with Harry Hunter's son, Robyn Hunter. When Robyn finished at the station I went with my parents to Cape Leveque. When I was 23, I was in Cape Leveque working with the Lighthouse keeper, and then at the Police Station during the war, in the stables with the horses, making beds. There were six men and a sergeant there. After the war I came back to Sunday Island. Then I came to Lombadina and married Mercia in Beagle Bay where she had gone to have her baby. I was received into the Church there. With Mercia, I went back to Sunday Island and worked with the Missionaries there, Mr Williams, Mr Power. Trevor Power is at One Arm point now. In 1980 he was carving Trochus shell, shop still there. There were also Mr Nash, Mr Lupton, Mr Reice, Mr Holmes, Mr and Mrs Douglas, Mr Walker, Mr Ron Pearson, a school teacher, Mr Lynch, Mr Daverness, and Mr Watt, a schoolteacher. After Sydney Hadley, Mr Juego came, then Mr and Mrs Whitney, Mr and Mrs Collier, Mr Drysdale and Mr Tom Streeter who had come as single men and then had come back with their wives. The lugger used to go to Derby for supplies.

Shells were collected, trochus shells, pearl shell. They were sold in Derby to be sent to America. Pine trees were used for building. They grow only on island. There was a garden, a banana plantation. In the early days it was working hard. Harry O'Grady looked after the people. Hadley was good too.

Lombadina was a pearling base, and so was Cygnet Bay. When Father John Herold was at Lombadina, a long time after the first war, I went and got my mother and father from Sunday Island and brought them to live at Cape Leveque first, and then at the mission. (Editor's Note: In their old age Veronica and Michael Angus were baptized Catholics and were buried in the Lombadina cemetery).

Earlier when I came, I brought Bernadette and Laurel, born at Sunday

Island. Janet had died as a baby. Peter and Werner were born at Lombadina.

Bishop Jobst had been approached by 'Welfare'. He discussed with Fr Kriener the possibility of bringing over the pensioners from Sunday Island. Fr Kriener passed through Beagle Bay with about twenty Sunday Island people going to Lombadina. He had gone across to Sunday Island in a 2 masted, 18 foot schooner. Its Captain was . Locky Bin Sali. There were 2 trips with 5 pensioners altogether, and luggage.

Mercia Angus

told her story to me in Lombadina in 1982.

I was born in Lombadina. My father, Martin was Bardi and my mother Lizzi, was also Bardi. When I was born here 12 October 1930, our Church was not built. There were many mothers who had many babies and it was hard for food and clothes.

We would go on a holiday for a couple of weeks just to help our parents gather plenty of paper bark for the Mission Church and some other buildings. The men would go down to the marsh to cut some mangrove wood. When all the bark had been cut, the women then would gather up all the bark and put them in one big pile. One elderly man and a boy would come in from the Mission with a donkey cart to get the load of bark.

Brother Joseph with his working boys started to clean up a bushy area in order to build the Church. It didn't take long to build. Bishop Otto Raible came with some of the Pallottine Priests and St John of God nuns for the blessing and opening and naming it the 'Church of Christ the King' Today it is the oldest building in the Mission. We still look after it till it will fall down by itself.

During the Second World War I was in the dormitory with the Sisters,

Mother Basil was there. There were air raid shelters. Fr Benedict and Brother Henry were there. We saw the 10 planes going over to bomb Broome. When I went to have my first baby in Beagle Bay, Sr Cecelia was in the convent. At the hospital was Nurse Bruinhilde (Bishop Raible's niece) and also Mary Howard.

Before the war in Lombadina we were very poor. The girls wore hessian dresses. The Bishop used to come with food. After the war, things were better.

I worked in the Convent, cooking, baking bread, doing laundry work and Church work and making altar breads. I worked with Peter in the garden with Fr John Herold. We helped Fr Chris Saunders plant his flowers and garden. The Blacksmith shop used to be near 'Chronicle Cottage.' Fr Francis had a little group in Lombadina for the Sodality of our Lady.

Lottie Daylight

told her story to Mercia because she did not speak English so then Mercia told me the story.

I was born at Gullen. My mother and father were both Bardi. I never went to school. My uncle, Harry O'Grady taught me. I worked in Gullen and did stock work with him, mustering cattle from Gullen to Pender Bay. We went looking for trochus and baler Shells. I came to Lombadina with Benedict Daylight. With him, I went in a donkey cart to put up windmills, I did Church work, gardening, kitchen, convent, dining hall, and bakery.

When the Mission was first built up, Rev Fr Nicholas Emo came by boat and anchored in the point at the mouth of Chilli Creek (Jilere).

The same day, Thomas Puertollano and his wife Agnes came overland. They found father here already. They had a son and a daughter whose names were Alphonse and Philomena. They went and put up their house at the back of the mission near Thomas Well at the little place called Lumbingoone, and they thought that they had come first, but Father came before them, saw the

big hills and went down to the bush to see and find a place to build the mission up. He came to the right spot, to which no other white person had come.

He walked from the Point and went back to sleep and looked after his little boat. He came to the Point and met Sampi and his wife Amy. They had two sons, Thomas and Tony. There were plenty of people staying with Sampi and his wife Amy. There were no children except the two little boys. They were mostly grown ups.

They were camping in the Point till one day they had a big storm out in the Point. They were looking for a place to find shelter. Father went to fix his boat up and put it in a safe place right in the middle of the creek, and called Sampi, Amy and the boys. He gave Sampi the Blessed Sacrament to carry while he told Amy to carry his Mass vestments. They walked back to the Mission (Thomas Puertollano's place). Just as they walked near the beach it was raining heavily. They passed the swamp as huge tidal waves came rolling out from the ocean. Father quickly got the two boys and carried them, each one on his shoulder, and walked quickly to the hill top. They made it in time and went down the hill.

It was all scrubby with lots of trees (next to Martin Sibosado's house near the Bakery next to the paper bark tree). They sat down, then they walked, and found the Blackwood trees, called Jungune trees. (This was after Beagle Bay Mission was put up. It was there that Martin Sibosado was a little boy going to school, then he came to Lombadina.)

When he left school and started working for Fr Nicholas, Father had four married couples working for him. They had a big garden at the foot of the hill. They planted many fruit trees, and people and the Sisters of St John of God came from Beagle Bay Mission.

Meanwhile Father had built a little Church right in front of the dining Hall. Between the two black trees he built his Church. Next day he went out to see his little boat, 'Salvador'. That must have been a Spanish name, and

then he went back to the Mission.

Malachy Sampi

was born in Lombadina and told his story to me 31 December 1982. Namagun is my land. My eldest brother, Alfred was to get it. It is Crown Land and the lease is not renewed. King Sound side is reserve. The lease lapsed. The land reverted to the Crown. All wells are on crown land.

The first mission in Lombadina was at Canary Creek. My mother was there and my dad. The tidal wave one night. Tony carried the chalice and the Mass case. The mission was washed away. They camped under a tree on the hill. Puertollano was here then.

Father didn't know what to do. They, Aborigines and Father stayed here. Lizzie Puertollano was born on the other side of Chilli Creek. Martin Sibosado used to carry water from the well near the hospital near the fruit tree. He carried it in a billy. Today an electric pump is used. When I left school I worked as stock boy with Br Richard at Beagle Bay. Br Frank was at Rockhole. I left during the Second World War to go, then worked on maintaining the road. I went to Ord River in '44 mustering. The cattle were gone when I came back. Fr Peile came. I started the cattle business for two or three years. In my day, the Sibosados, the Dougals, the Williams were here.

The Lombadina Church was built in the early 1930's. Br Joseph could not speak English. For timber, they used donkey wagons, iron wheels, and sledges. Br Joe, Malachy, Sandy Paddy, Vincent, Joseph Albert used gum for floors, cut with big cross cut saw, dug hole, big frame used saw to cut through from top to bottom. In those days in the garden they grew peanuts, beans, sweet potatoes, and water melons.

Nowadays, Tom Fitzgerald who lives at Geraldton, has a plantation there, comes each year to start the garden.

Louis died at Onslow. He had a big family.

Sandy Paddy

told me his story at Lombadina 9th March 1982.

My mother from Lombadina was Bardi, and my father, Isai Balagai was also Bardi. When I was born in Bulgin, Harry Hunter was already old. He had been at Pender Bay, Lumat and Lombadina point before he settled at Bulgin. My mother died when I was a baby, and her sister Scholastica looked after me.

For a little while I went to school in Lombadina. Fr Droste brought me in. Sisters Benedict, Antonia and Patrick taught me. After school I worked in the garden with Brother Celestine (Salesian). When I left school I went to work mustering with Martin Sibosado. Then in the 1930's I worked with Brother Joseph who was carpenter for the Church. The floor wood was all hand sawn. Mangrove bark was boiled to get the stain. The road from Beagle Bay to Lombadina was put in by Tony Faber with James. They had a Studebaker. Audiby's sister Dendy had a man from Sunday Island. The old Church in Broome was built by Thomas Puertollano and his friends. Billabong was at Swan Point where Harry O'Grady had his garden. Gullen was the station. Thomas was still here then, Fr Nicholas was at the Lombadina Point when there was a cyclone and a tidal wave in the middle of the night. They came and next day Thomas built him a house. I worked on the boats late in 1920. I worked Hunter's boats for Chris at Bulgin. Chris had a lugger going up and down to Broome, going to the reef, picking up shells. Chris was the younger brother.

During the war I was in Lombadina, and then went to Broome and worked for Kennedy's on a sailing boat for 12 months, carrying cargo. One day we were caught in a cyclone. It was terrible. I gave up shipping after that. Chris Hunter's boat was smashed at Billabong, six of them pulled it into the bay.

Before the war I was married to Esther by Fr Benedict. We had no children. Bulgin was on the West side of the Coast near Hunters Creek. Gullen is on the East side, sheltered. It has a windmill. I am used to the bush life. If you don't get something today, you get something tomorrow. Nowadays, the young boys, they work, they are doing something for the country.

Kennedy's had a cargo boat and a pearling boat, same as Streeters. They used to go out for 3 months and used to work in Kennedy's shed. They had the boys' camp. The sick boys were brought back and another would go out. The pay was 10/- a week. I worked with Kennedys. I was still under the Tribal Law so was not allowed to go out with girls. I have always been under the Law. The Law is a good thing, something God gives to us, put out into the world for the people. It is good. Except for this Law, the People wouldn't know who made the trees, how to catch fish...

In school here at Lombadina I have taught Bardi, the children here pick it up quickly. The Sisters have a book on the Bardi language. From Swan Point to Cunningham Bay, Bardi. From Cunningham Point to Derby, Nimambur. Sunday Island is Dwal.

Sunday Island couldn't get money, working Trochus shell, ran out of it. The mission owned the lugger, and when the mission closed there was no more lugger. I helped build six houses for the old people from Sunday Island. Bishop Jobst sent Fr Kriener to get them. Bishop Jobst asked the Government for the money for the houses. The people were glad to come. They were happy here. They died here.

I have two sisters, Rosie and Muriel, at One Arm Point. Alice is sister to Esther, and Audiby is sister to Rosie. Sydney Hadley came first, then maybe Hunter. O'Grady was a younger man.

Judy Anne Bandjer

told me her story at Lombadina 8th March, 1984.

I was born on the other side of Bulgin baptized by Fr Nicholas, and my godmother was Mary Puertollano. I was sister-in-law to Harry Hunter and an aunt to Liz Puertollano. My father and mother used to catch fish and get oysters for the lighthouse people at Cape Leveque. They would also go with me to get an axe to get wood. I wanted to go to school, so I went to Lombadina. I worked with the Sisters in Beagle Bay, Lombadina and Broome. When Mothers Antonia and Bernardine died, I was in Broome and at the big funerals.

Fr Alphonse came to ask me would I volunteer for the Mission in Balgo. I said, *"Yes, if no one wants to come, I'll go."* Bidy was a little girl and Fr Francis wanted her to stay at school at Beagle Bay, but Bishop Raible said she could go. Jimmy, Bidy and I went in a truck from Beagle Bay to Tjalowan, where we looked for water. From there we shifted to Balgo. The old people there had pitch black hair but no clothes. I did cooking and washing for the Priest. Jimmy did windmills and minded sheep.

Winnie (Barbaria) Texas

Winnie, whose story follows, was known as `Winnie Texas' at the leprosarium. She told me her story in Turkey Creek, 4th August 1984. My Christian name is Rose, and my godmother is Rosie Wylie, in Broome. Grandma, my mother's mother, came from Bungle Bungle. My mother was born in white country. Daddy was born in Springvale Station. After 3 days my grandma died. Mrs Rhatigan grew up my mother in the big house, over the other side at the big store.

I grew up in the old police station. My father was a police tracker. I was born in Killarney at the windmill. My brother Hector, and I grew up in Turkey Creek.

When we were old enough to work, the policeman, Bill Bunn, sent us to Texas Station to Jimmy Klyme to learn how to do work. Mrs Rhatigan was gone. Jimmy Klyme was a good bloke. He taught us to sweep up,

carry water with buckets, fill up all the 44 gallon drums in the house. Hector was in cattle work. Sometime clean up the road to the stockyard, sometime we cut wood in the bush, load up the woodpiles. There a long time.

Welfare worker from Territory came, sent (not Bill Bunn, but second mob police) all the people for ration here to Turkey Creek, but I, my father, who was doing carrying job, and mother, got food at Texas. Only when on holiday they came here (Turkey Creek).

I bin living with Jim Taylor after I came from Derby Leprosarium, children, Doug and Jean. Jean married first husband, got 2; Gordon; Barry, got 3; Jimmy James, got 1. Doug got a job, no woman, stock yard with my little brother, Martin. My sister is Betty, and Julia, who lives in Pension house with Jimmy Klyne. My mother had six children, Martin, Barney, Betty, Julia, me (Winnie) and Hector. Barney died in the Leprosarium. Betty has Sadie, Gordon, Treacy, and Michael. I got pain all day. The Manager of the Leprosarium, took me to Derby Leprosarium in plane. I was there for 3 years. Teresa Puertollano, 'teacher'. Biddy Umber was a teacher too. I was baptised before 1 year. Fr Kearney was at the Leprosarium too. Sr Bernadette was there, Sr Angela Moroney was there, Sr Mechtilde, Mother Alphonsus was there. She used to put us with people who had been in school and sing hymns and songs. I made First Communion there. Bishop Raible confirmed me.

When I was a little girl Bishop Raible used to come and stay with Mrs Rhatigan and Julia, my sister, when my mother was at the police station. When I went back to Texas, Fr Kearney came from Derby and gave book to Bonita who came from Broome. Bonita was staying with Cotty Cox, her husband, who was on cattle job mustering. I saw Fr Kearney give her that, but Bonita didn't do much and I was worried about that.

Fr Nicholas(Dehe) came from Port Keats. He sold me that little book with Adam and Eve. Yes, I understand all this. I start from there teaching morning, night, rest time, my Mother, Father, all the girls, teachem, all the

boys, all the stock mob what bin working at Texas. Fr Nicholas tell me to do that. He live in Halls Creek and he came this way, Turkey Creek, Texas, Lissadell, Bow River, back to Mabel Downs and Halls Creek. Usually every month. I think he baptised mother and father, 1966, and Julia's got it in the photo in Wyndham. Every holiday, at the site, the other side of the creek, we keep teaching. Fr Nicholas(Dehe) brought the big hymn book ('To Jesus Heart all Burning', 'Sweet Sacrament Divine', 'Hail Queen of Heaven').

I made the Confessional for Fr Nicholas(Dehe). My mother bought the statue for the station building in Texas. The school (in Turkey Creek) is called 'Mother and Child School'. The little Church was in the building on Texas where Martin lives now. Saturday and Sunday I said the Rosary there with other people. When Fr Nicholas came we had Mass – Fr Lorenz, Fr Kriener. Fr Kearney had Mass in the kitchen in the big house.

Baldanic

came back to the mission when he was old and nearly blind. He came back to work in the garden, on light duties, but still working: The shelter of the Mission gave a chance to be satisfyingly human.

"I come home, I was born here. I was schooled up here. The old brothers taught me in this garden, too. And we built the church. I was only a boy on a bullock team. We got the shells, walking bare feet and picking them up. The tide went out and we could see them a proper long way. We carried them by sugar bag on our shoulders back to the donkey cart. My grandchildren settle on the mission now. This country belongs to us. Broome no good. They get into trouble there. That's why I got out and come home. My grandchildren know this is their home. The mission will get more bigger, I reckon, We'll get more land."

For Baldanic, baptizd 'Balthazzar', Beagle Bay Mission was a sanctuary. His daughter, Mary, married Keith Kitchener, who had come as a little boy of five, with others from Moola Bulla. The Beagle Bay Community elected him Chairman.

Chapter 2

Missionaries

In the 1870's displacement of Aborigines across Australia exacerbated Aboriginal need. Aboriginal displacement created situations of dependence on white people and institutions. Their labour became a necessity for the survival of the white pioneers in the Kimberley.

Queenie McKensie from Turkey Creek recalled her experiences of hard and often unrequited work on cattle stations in the early days:

When I went back to the station, after the muster I used to do all the cooking there too for the kartiya (whites) and sometimes I used to help other women checking and fixing fences, flood-gates and troughs. All this was real hard work. Nearly all my life on the station, my job was cooking breakfast, dinner supper and smoko and washing up the dishes afterwards.

It was the desperate need which had motivated Fr Duncan Mc Nab to write letters to authority figures in the Church and in the Government about basic human rights.¹ He sent Memoranda to Rome stressing the urgent need for missionaries. Bishop Griver invited him to Western Australia. In 1884, and after working as a chaplain to the Aboriginal prison on Rottnest Island, he established a Catholic mission on the Dampier Peninsula at Goodenough Bay. Others followed, 1890 Beagle Bay Mission, 1895, Broome Mission, 1898, Disaster Bay Mission, 1905, Cygnet Bay Mission, 1908, Drysdale River Mission and 1910. Lombadina Mission. These were sustained by Cistercians, Pallottines, Sisters of St John of God, and Benedictines. They attempted to be self sufficient, for example, Beagle Bay Mission owned a herd of cattle, extensive gardens and two boats, one of which was used for pearling.

Early Pallottines had financial difficulties because Father Walter offered to buy the Beagle Bay Mission assets for £3,740 from the Cistercians in

three instalments, 1901, 1903 and 1905. These consisted of two lots of land in Broome, the cattle, horses and the material of the monastery and of Beagle Bay and its dependencies.² This raised the issue of ownership and power, whether it was held by the Order, or by the Bishop in Geraldton, or by the mission itself? Where did Aborigines stand? Bishop Gibney held land as trust for the future and Bishop Kelly wrote that it was solely for the blacks.³

In 1908, two sisters went to Broome. Tom Clarke donated a shack and land near the Church.⁴ The mission supplied the Sisters with fowls, firewood and fence posts. Bro Frank Stuetting came to Broome and worked mainly for the Sisters as carpenter from the beginning of November 1908, till 20 February 1909.

The First World War became a threat to the German staff. Fr Bischofs was removed from the Mission and Fr Bachmair became his replacement with the German staff confined to the mission. In 1916, Fr Creagh, an Irish Redemptorist priest took charge of mission activities. Fr Bachmair organized mission workers to build Sacred Heart Church with mud bricks. He died two weeks after the opening of the Church.

In 1922 Italian Salesians took over the administration. Bishop Coppo had been working in America. There were 22 Sisters of St John of God on the Dampier Peninsula. The Sisters, with Bishop Coppo, discerned future directions and five of them went to Sydney. Here they took up residence in a small cottage in Manly as Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians.⁵ Bishop Coppo resigned in 1927.

Fr Droste organized decorating the church with pearl shells. When Archbishop Clunes told Droste about selecting land around Tardun, he got the Brothers to put their names in for farmland. He went home for a holiday in Germany and died. Rome appointed Father Raible, a Pallottine, as administrator. New German Missionaries had been allowed back after 1925. Four Priests and seven Brothers were sent.

In 1928 the Beagle Bay Farm was established at Tardun near Geraldton and became an important resource for the Kimberley Mission. Francis Byrne traced the history in *A Hard Road: Brother Frank Nissl, 1888-1980*.⁶ Brother Henry Krallman with other brothers and help from Aborigines from the North West produced wheat for mission bread.⁷ Kimberley staff members were interchanged by the Bishop as if Tardun was in the Vicariate.⁸ By April 1929 there were 400 acres sown, and 650 more were to be seeded. Four others besides the men from Beagle Bay were employed, 12 altogether. Brother Joseph Schuengel had come to Australia in 1930.⁹ During the war, in 1940 he was asked to go back to Tardun, because he was naturalized. He told me:

*“There were Aborigines from Beagle Bay, Jim Roe, Dick Smith, and Dora Smith. I worked on the farm. We had a tin shed. It was hot in summer and cold in winter. In Tardun ploughing, sowing and harvesting were the chief jobs. We had a team of horses. Bro F Nissl and I looked after the team. Only one of us went out into the paddock with the horses. It was Wartime. Dr Mannix was our greatest protector. There were only brothers helping there at that time. The next 5 years I worked in the kitchen. It was a nice house then. The parish priest and architect of the Church at Mullewa, Fr John Hawes, made the plan for the first Monastery at Tardun.”*¹⁰

Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia reported in 1929:

At Feeding Depots such as La Grange, only the old and infirm natives were fed twice daily and a small ration of tobacco allowed once a week. Quite a number of natives, starved out in the back country were forced in on to the coast for food. Some went back to the bush. They were a poor lot. Regarding their general health, cold sickness has been very bad amongst the natives since March and the early part of December. Ailments during the year included measles.

In the 1930's, Fr Ernest Worms, a linguist and anthropologist, recorded songs chanted by the people in camp before they went fishing. Aboriginal appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity among animals and plants indicated their belief in the autonomy of species, that each has its own "Law".

"It was not necessary for Aborigines to know brolga culture in detail; it was sufficient to know that brolgas had their own culture."

Lives of Aboriginal people were bound together, as were the soils, water systems and the lives of plants and animals.

Father Raible found stringent control being exercised over Aborigines into the 1930's. This included those of part-Aboriginal descent within special legislation by enforcement of the 1905 'Native Act'. From 1936, Aboriginal children became wards of the Commissioner of Native Affairs who could confine Aborigines in settlements without trial or appeal. The Act empowered protectors to demolish camps, prevented Aborigines entering prescribed areas or towns without permits, and required permits to be issued for employment.

Bishop Raible looked for opportunities to expand the Pallottine missionary enterprise. 12 February 1937, Bishop Raible notified the Pallottines that he had asked Archbishop Mannix to approve a new foundation for a missionary college in Victoria. His next step to found a mission in the East Kimberley was to buy a small station called Rockhole, near Halls Creek. He put Father John Herold in charge. He had arranged to bring two doctors from Germany to staff a hospital. Bro Joseph Schuengel told me in Millgrove, 1987,

"Later on Bishop Raible and Fr Worms went to the Gregory Salt Lakes more than 100 miles away. They went some way by car and the rest on horseback to found the Balgo Mission. Fr Worms was collecting Aboriginal artefacts in the caves around Rockhole. There were a few Aborigines who did not come from Beagle Bay, for example, a black lady who helped Fr Worms to study the Aboriginal languages. She said, "My whitefella name Dinah, blackfella name Lackay."

Part of Neville's overall plan was that Moola Bulla and Violet Valley would become subsidiary feeding depots in the east Kimberley. Neville intended to close the Lock Hospitals on Dorre and Bernier Islands and place a one on the reserve in Wyndham with a medical man experienced in bacteriology. The private transaction of the sale of Rockhole Station between Francis Castles and the Pious Society of Missions displeased him. Mary Durack pointed out:

Mr Neville clearly regarded this encouragement of his least favoured missionary body into the heart of the Kimberley as a further shock to his plans for greater control of the situation. He was "a thorn in the side of all missionaries except a few of the more amenable." Mission plans for expansion of influence also represented what Neville saw as a threat to the proper working out of the assimilation policy that had been given formal sanction in 1936 when a Department of Native Affairs was established with more power for control.

The plans of the Chief Protector of Aborigines were based on notions of blood and the breeding out of colour. He wrote:

It is because the success of our plan of assimilation is so allied with the question of who shall marry whom, and because colour plays so great a part in the scheme of things, that we must encourage approach towards the white rather than the black, through marriage.

The missionaries generally kept activities within parameters set by the government. At Beagle Bay there was permanent settlement of married couples secure enough to have large families that did not need to be assimilated into the wider community and had some measure of independence. The Pallottine ideal was not assimilation but separate development and independence of different self supporting stations.

Mission ministry at its best was described by Paul Hasluck who travelled with the Moseley Commission in 1934. He wrote about Beagle Bay,

Kunmunya (on the Glenelg River), and Drysdale River:

“Each was out of touch with any European settlement. There was the charm of simplicity and devotion in the daily life of these religious villages where the church, the school, the gardens, the farmyard buildings and a few houses clustered.

When the bell rang for service or for mealtimes the sight of the people, neatly clad, drifting towards the place of meeting and then the sound of the singing of a hymn, or ‘grace before meals’, or the murmured responses had a Sabbath calm.]

Each was a little world of its own, isolated, in harmony with the setting.

They seemed to sleep in meditation in the way Aboriginal men sat around a pattern in the ground.”

Hasluck, as a Member of Parliament, later argued that persons of mixed descent be given a chance to be classed other than Aborigines and to be allowed to ‘live like whites’.

When he was traveling with Moseley, Chairman of the Royal Commission, he probably read the letter from the middle aged, educated Aboriginal women, working for white people in Broome. They were half-castes and quadroons. To sum it up, they wrote:

We are educated half-castes who have been sent to the Missions. We have been taken from either our fathers or our mothers when we were children by the advice of the Department and by so doing that has been the end of father and mother to us.

Do you not realize the cruelty of this, would you white people like to think when you send your children to school that you would never see them again. That is one more reason why we want our freedom.

Another farce: we are told if we are good we could be granted a Certificate, under the recommendation of the police. Some of us have no hope of ever getting those papers because in past years we have refused favours to some of those police.

Finally many of us own our own houses and land and many more of us could do so. We, who do own our homes, pay the rates when the rate time

comes along. We can read, write, sew, crochet, and do laundry, also make our own clothes and for other people too, also other domestic work. So that Sir, on that qualification alone we think we should not be classed as natives and kept in bondage by the Act. Again Sir we the Half-caste-population of Broome ask you to give us our freedom and release us from the stigma of a native and make us happy subjects of this our country.

They also lobbied unsuccessfully for the employment of a ‘Lady Aboriginal Protector’. The experiences gave insights into their situation in Broome but their voices did not influence the 1936 legislation.

The Leprosarium

The Oxford Dictionary describes leprosy as a chronic infectious disease of the skin and nerves causing mutilations and deformities.

An East Kimberley Aborigine, Grant Ngabidj explained that *With leprosy, one man gets it in the body from the ground, and the spirit remains hidden in the one tin of tea or water for perhaps a month or a year. In this way a man who has leprosy gives it to another man.*¹¹

In 1898-1976, there were 1,348 notifications of cases of leprosy in the Kimberley. From 1929-1975, 400 cases of leprosy were admitted to the leprosarium from the Worora, Ngaringin, and Wanambal tribal group. Before 1975, Derby had 72 cases, Broome 72 and Beagle Bay 92.

The disease had spread up the Fitzroy Valley and down through the Ranges so that stations became infected along the Fitzroy and its tributaries and the number of cases from that area approached 300. It seemed to have come from Queensland and the northern Territory.

From 1931 – 1935, 161 cases of leprosy were reported in north Western Australia. In the Kimberley it was called ‘The Big Sick’. In 1933, 65 patients had been transferred to Darwin. In temporary leper camps, 30 – 40 patients waited in Derby, others waited in Beagle Bay Mission.

When the Leprosarium was opened in Derby, there was a 45% chance of

being discharged alive.¹² Many Kimberley families were broken up by leprosy. Captain Scott, responsible for the transport of several contingents of lepers in his boat, caught the disease and eventually died in the Derby Leprosarium.

In 1937 two Sisters of St John of God were employed as nurses, Sister Matthew Greene and Sister Brigid Greene. Sister Gabriel Greene joined them a short time later. Sr Alphonse Daly organized the patients into an orchestra. She described the Aboriginal reaction to pain, as 'deep silence'.¹³ Sister Bernadette O'Connor was sent there in 1942 and a month later took a new born baby to the Broome Orphanage.

Rita Patrick told Fr Francis Huegel at Beagle Bay Mission, 11 January 1973, how leprosy affected her life: Her father Patrick was Nyul Nyul from Beagle Bay but her mother was from Roebourne.

They came and took my mother from here for Darwin. She was living down in the old police station. She went with the first lot. I be in school then, I be in the dormitory. I cried when my mother left. I felt sorry. Two of my family left with my Mother and 15 - 20 people.

I was in my teens, just come out from school when I was told I had to go to Derby Leprosarium. Matthias Sebastian was just a little boy. We went together. Frank Dolby, Uncle Stanny, Victor and Olam. Alex, he ran away from Police station (father of Henry), he was afraid to go on the boat. There were two girls from Derby. They were sick too. Uncle Bernard Ning was on the boat. The trip was safe, it took only two nights.

There were two white people at the Leprosarium, the Manager, we didn't have Sisters yet (when I come). After, Mother Gertrude was there and Mother Angela and we had a tall doctor. I forget his name. My mother was still in Derby Leprosarium, my uncle. I was lonely for home. By and by I settled down. I went to school when I went to the Leprosarium. Theresa Puertollano taught us when she came from the Darwin Leprosarium. We started to go to school then. She was teaching us.

Fr Albert was in Derby when I was there, then Fr Hennessy, then Fr McGinley, then Fr Francis, and then Fr Kearney. Then the Brothers came,

Br Paul, and Br Frank. The Bishop gave me first communion before I left Beagle Bay. When I came to Derby the Church was just a bough shed, then Brother Frank built a new Church. Bishop Raible blessed the new Church. Fr Francis carried the Blessed Sacrament from the old to the new. I played the violin. Other visitors came by boat, the guests were dancing and we were singing.

There were sad days when people died. Some people didn't have Father. Frank Dolby died, his parents came out. His mother was heartbroken. We went out for picnics, fishing and holidays, every Saturday for fishing. I was in Leprosarium when the Japanese attacked Derby. I was there when we went to the bush, Sister Aloysius and Mother Alphonse. We had Mass on Sunday, Father Albert, that was hard time, we camped out for a week. I had one daughter, Rosemary. I tried to change my life, but I couldn't walk. Brian went away to station with another girl. I waited for him but he didn't wait for me. I couldn't go ahead no more, so I stayed with myself. My boy, he down in Lombadina, Johnny. He is related to Paddy, Bertha Paddy's husband. He doesn't come to my Church. I try my best to bring him to our Church. He goes to other Church. I find out when I go back.¹⁴

Sr Bernadette O'Connor wrote to me about this photograph 15 Jan 1996: Right left, Eileen Pan, BBM, Nancy Texas, Mary Dalali, Texas Station, Florrie, Margaret River, Vera, Rosewood Station and Topsy Lullaby Station "They were all inmates of the Leprosarium when I was there. They are nearly all gone to heaven. Eileen Pan is here and can remember when the photo was taken. The leprosarium is closed for years."

Bishop Raible had plans to create a new workforce for his new dream mission of Balgo Hills. An entry in the Beagle Bay Chronicle, January 1939 records:

From the 5th to the 14th Bishop Raible paid a visit to Beagle Bay. He made the first arrangements for a new religious society of Aboriginal girls. Up to this date seven had volunteered for this new Sisterhood.

His long letter to the Mother General, Sisters of St John of God, Wexford, Ireland 2 February 1939, described his hopes for training boys for a

native clergy as well as encouraging girls to enter religious life. He asked the Mother General to allow Sr Augustine to take charge until such time as the new Congregation would be able to have their own Superior. ... *It is the continuous prayers and the good example that your Sisters have given to the girls for the last 32 years, which will be mainly responsible for this new little plant in God's own garden.*¹⁵

He was careful to have each sister exempted from the authority of 'The Act'. He wrote to the Aboriginal Authorities:

"Re Sr M Agnes Fraser I wish to state that she has not received a certificate of exemption. She was, before entering the Convent, Miss Katie Fraser. It is her younger Sister, Agnes Fraser, now married to Mr Tom Puertollano who was exempted."

World War 11

3 September 1939, the world was in turmoil. England declared war on Germany. Discussions about Aboriginal issues between the Government, academic pressure groups, mission authorities and humanitarian bodies were brought an abrupt end. The German Missionaries were under suspicion as aliens.

The date chosen to leave Rockhole was 8 September.

"All was going well, nobody dreamed of what was to come, World War 11. Bro Tautz and I listened to the radio. The only station we could get on our set was Batavia. We heard it clearly, War in Europe is on! Next morning, when people in the street passed the presbytery in Broome, they raised their voices for the Bishop and us to hear about the outbreak of war. I cannot remember that the Bishop spoke to us even once about the war. He grew more silent."

Did he have a premonition of the hazardous times in store? Only two of his priests and brothers working in the mission were naturalised. Subsequent events proved to the full his fears had not been dreams.

Because of his experience in Broome he felt betrayed and remained in Beagle Bay when the war ended.¹⁶

Bishop Raible wrote about his feelings to A Coverley, M L A

*Having just returned from my annual trip through my Vicariate, I feel that I should write a few lines to you in connection with the peculiar situation created by the outbreak of the war. As you know, most of our missionary staff in the Kimberley are German, only a few being naturalised Australians. I wish to express on my own behalf and on behalf of my missionaries, priests and brothers, our loyalty to the cause of justice, for which England has taken up arms. We hope and pray that God in his own good time will turn the hearts of men to sentiments of peace and harmony. You know well that our work up here has a purely religious and charitable scope and does not enter politics in any shape or form.*¹⁷

The Minister for the Interior wrote to another member of parliament of two young German priests who were refused permission to come to Australia. They were Fr Augustine Soemer and Fr Wiilliam Weiske for whom Bishop Raible was waiting¹⁸ This stressed the need for Australian priests. Bishop Raible began to tour Melbourne secondary schools for vocations. He successfully recruited several young Australians to join his congregation.

Bishop Raible moved to Beagle Bay Mission which he made the seat of his Diocese, the base camp for all activities further afield. He was surrounded by his staff, the students, and a group of Native Sisters. 12 September 1939, Bishop Raible wrote about this to Father Worms, the parish priest in Broome,

Br Nissl left with Philip (Cox), Richard and Paddy have started already with the sheep and the horses. Camels and donkey team will follow shortly.

19

Two Germans, Bro Stephen Contemprée and Bro Frank Nissl accompanied Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz as he set off into the Australian desert to found the

mission at Balgo Hills. Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz *sac* worked at the Balgo Mission for nineteen years and later reflected:

*Failure of the Rockhole hospital project had cut a deep wound in the heart of the Bishop. Occasional remarks revealed this in the years to come. The whole new scheme of the Bishop for medical and educational care of the Aborigines in the East Kimberley had totally collapsed, as his new ideas had done in the West Kimberley. His saying "In the household of God nothing is wasted!" was his anchor. This gave him strength in all the years of mission work.*²⁰

Other Aborigines had also joined the missionary teams in Balgo and La Grange Missions. Barbara Cox, went as a Novice Native Sister about 1947. She had the supporting presence of her brother, Ambrose, her sister-in-law, Nancy, and their family. The native sisterhood was a daring experiment and lasted for some years after the young women were trained and sent into the desert mission at Balgo Hills. It was hard with camp living. In 1951 Bishop Raible closed this venture.

Born in Beagle Bay, Ambrose Cox was a son of David Cox from Noonkanbah Station and Lena Manado from Disaster Bay. He told his story:

One of my grandfathers was Willie Manado, a Filipino who died during the Second World War. The other was Billy Cox, a Scotchman who died in Louisa Downs and left the station to his Sister. I was 9 years on the Balgo Mission. I went with Bishop Raible to look over the place. I started my work in Rockhole with Fr John Herold. There was trouble with Welfare, too close to Moola Bulla. We shifted. I was on my own with Fr Alphonse. I came back and married Nancy O'Grady who was brought up in Lombadina Mission, and went back for a couple of years. I worked for myself in Broome, at the meatworks, at the powerhouse with Bernard Strake, with the Shire.

Magdalen Williams worked with her husband at both Balgo and La Grange Missions:

My husband, Lawrence Williams and myself, Magdalen and my five

children, Johanna, Albert, Cecilia, Philomena and David, went to Balgo for six months with Fr Alphonse and two St. John of God nuns, Sr Angela and Sr Winifride.

We came back, then years later we went to La Grange.

Imprisonment of Missionaries

Four months after the Jubilee Celebrations, 21 October 1940, Fr George Vill and Bro Joseph Schuengel were arrested and jailed in Broome.²¹ The following day police arrested five priests and seven brothers at the mission. They were taken straight to the jail in Broome where they were locked in, three to a cell, with no furniture. Bro Matthias Wollseifer took command for the time being until the Bishop returned from Port Hedland. Bishop Raible wrote to Military Headquarters in Perth to Coverley. He also wrote to Archbishop Mannix who brought the matter to the attention of the Prime Minister. The latter negotiated parole for the missionaries. Fathers Herold, Hornung, Vill and Bros Belderman and Mueller were sent to Melbourne. The others were on parole in Beagle Bay.

1. A Control Officer was sent to the mission in March 1941.

In 1942 the foundation of a new mission at La Grange seemed to be moving ahead. It was arranged Dr Herman Nekes and Bro Henry Krallmann to go as staff.²² Bishop Raible had made all preparations to shift cargo and the two missionaries to La Grange.²³ Bray, the Commissioner of Native Affairs, had written to Bishop Raible 2 January 1942 noting that the Depot would be taken over in a couple of weeks.

The appointment of Dr Hermann Nekes as Priest in Charge is satisfactory and so also is that of Bro Henry Krallmann as Assistant. Inspector O'Neill will visit the Depot to check off and revise the subsidy list.

Bishop Raible replied 10 January 1942:

...we have made all preparation to shift cargo and two missionaries to La Grange, when heavy rains lasting for over a week made the roads impassable for heavy traffic. We shall try about the middle of next wee,

2. The Military Department who cancelled all arrangements for the new mission.²⁴

3. Two military chaplains, Fr William Flynn and Fr Gregory Abbot were appointed to take some control of Beagle Bay with the senior chaplain in Broome acting as the link between the military authorities and the mission. They were replaced in 1944 by Fr Cyril Stinson.

4. When Broome became a military defence station within the war zone, Beagle Bay became the refuge for two hundred Aboriginal people from Broome. The population of Beagle Bay doubled.

5. The staff had been halved by the removal of the German Brothers.

6. Overcrowded conditions led to unsatisfactory health and sanitary arrangements. Hookworm infection was so widespread that closure of the mission was threatened. Later in the year five children tested positive for leprosy.

7. The Broome evacuees were supported by the government and spent their time gossiping and gambling. The local community became unwilling to work when the visitors did not have to.

8. The mission herd was decimated as the Broome authorities expected to be supplied with meat at a reduced price.

It was a relief for the mission when the evacuee colony was officially dissolved in 1946.

In 1953, Bishop Raible wrote to the Minister to advise that he was still interested in La Grange. The Reserve of 450 acres on Thangoo cattle station had 85 Aborigines, 28 of whom were children and another being rationed at Wallal would be transferred. The Hon J Rhatigan, MLA pledged his support. The Bishop would put sheep on the land to give employment and enable the mission to pay its own way, with a yearly grant and a

subsidy for children and infirm Aborigines.

29 December 1954 (Chronicle)

Fr F Huegel with Albert Dan and Paul Howard, left Broome in a new Ford V 8 truck which Fr Worms, Fr Regional with Bro Besenfelder from Tardun had driven over land from Perth. In 1955 the La Grange Feeding Depot was handed over to the missionaries. The Sisters of St John of God had replaced Alice at Balgo. She came to La Grange at Easter.

March 1955 (Chronicle)

At the initiative of Sr Alice Evans we opened the children's kitchen and dining room, using the hut and bough shed put up before we took over. There is a big new stove. Melba and Bennet are the cooks under the supervision of Sister. The 26 who are fed include the cooks. No need to call the children, they turn up visibly interested. For the first time they receive every day 3 meals with fresh milk, eggs, vegetables and bread. During the same week the Nissan-hut hospital was painted inside.

25 May 1955 (Chronicle)

We opened the New Mission School with 20 children, including the infants on the feast of Our Lady. Measles in La Grange became an epidemic with complications of colds, pneumonia, and sore ears. The old people in the Karajarri camp were not infected, they had the measles before, but every one in the Udialla camp went down with them, including the babies, likewise the dormitory boys and girls, so far, two fatal cases.

7 August 1955 Father Francis Huegel wrote to Bishop Raible:

This is a matter of urgency. When the hot season and the rain sets in I am completely at a loss where to put our children, leave along our Sister. One could argue, why start at all and not wait. I can only say that I felt that something should be done, and that as soon as possible. And I also hoped (and still hope) that the dormitories at least will be up before the rain. Re a builder: I don't know whom you are going to send.

As to accommodation for Sr Evans. She offered herself to stay in the Nissan hut which is partly dispensary, partly workshop. It has no windows on the eastern or Western side, also on lining which makes this building unbearably hot, unfit to stay in. At present it serves at the same time also as dormitory for the girls. So we badly need accommodation for all of them. I think, if we could build a girls' dormitory with two rooms, one room could be allotted.

14 May 1956 Bishop Raible wrote to Father Francis Huegel:
Regarding the lay helper ... you say that you gave Fr Hennessy all the particulars that you could give regarding the work the lady was expected to do. It will be necessary to point out the loneliness of the place, where the girl will have no congenial company and no entertainment except wireless. Also, only rarely an opportunity to go to town. Even for a Catholic girl who has had no experience of the life of a religious it will not be easy to make life at La Grange bearable. Elizabeth Dann will be ready any time you want her. I think we should pay her £3, if she looks after the girls, does the necessary sewing and conducts the kitchen. She is also capable of teaching elementary things.

St Mary's School continued in Broome. This photo (in original hard copy) was taken in 1956 of Sr Giovanni Williams and Mother Margaret Carmody with children.

Lay Missionaries

Three young women who had contacted Bishop Raible in January 1957 had begun work at La Grange in April, nursing, teaching and looking after the kitchen and dormitory.

In 1959 the shortage of Pallottine Brothers to work at Beagle Bay and Balgo forced Bishop Raible to ask Fr George Vill, who was the Regional Superior to try to find suitable lay missionaries who would be prepared to come to the Kimberley missions for a year. A few lay volunteers were already working in the area. Early in 1959 the Bishop found a married

couple, Mr and Mrs James Jordan. They had travelled from England in order to look after the new St. Joseph's hostel in Derby. This would cater for youngsters who were coming to school from outlying stations.

1951-1959 Building and Maintenance of Missions

J Rhatigan MLA spoke about Aboriginal Welfare in the Legislative Assembly:

*The pearling boats being constructed in Broome today (1954) are being built with the assistance of native labour. These fellows learnt their trade at the Beagle Bay Mission from the German Brothers. They are capable of adding to buildings as families increase.*²⁵

The Chronicles of Derby, La Grange, Balgo, Lombadina, Broome, La Grange, and Beagle Bay Missions describe the constant need for cartage of goods when buildings were being erected. The co-operation of Lay Missionaries and Aborigines in the building and maintenance of the missions is signification in the mission chronicles.

Derby Chronicle

August 1951

At the leprosarium Bro Hanke and Aboriginal patients built a Church. Another Church was built in Derby and other work was finished.

In January 1959 four men from Beagle Bay Mission were working in Derby at the Presbytery till the rain cleared, then they left for Alice Springs to work for a year on a station. Brother William and his team brought four loads of stones from Liveringa Station for the foundations in Derby.

26 August 1953

Brother Joseph Tautz had made eight stained glass windows which were brought from Beagle Bay by Richard Cox and Jack Sahanna

6 September 1953, Richard Cox, Jack Sahanna and Vincent Victor worked

for a week to finish half the roof;

13 September 1953

Frank Rodriguez came into town to build the new foundation wall with stones.

29 December 1954

Fr F Huegel, with Albert Dann and Paul Howard left Broome in a new Ford B8 truck. Fr Worms, Fr Regional, and Bro Besenfelder from Tardun had driven it overland from Perth.

La Grange Chronicle

At La Grange Mission, food was provided, buildings were erected, school was conducted and medical attention was provided.

March Albert Dan with his team enlarged the garage. Paul Howard with others began to build three more houses, two in the Udialla camp and one in the Garady camp. At the initiative of Sr Evans the children's kitchen with a big new stove was opened. Melba and Bennet were the cooks under her supervision. During the same week the Nissan-hut hospital was painted inside. Albert Dann's truck was broken down on his way out from Broome.

July Albert came with Nellie, his bride and his Sister, Vera Dann...October Jimmy Howard from B.B.M. supplied for Albert by driving the big load of building material.

9 September 1955 Albert Dann, the driver of the La Grange truck arrived from Beagle Bay Mission with two elderly natives who would guard the bulls on Four Mile Plain.

Lombadina Chronicle

Constant cyclones caused much damage and consequent rebuilding was

needed.

19 February 1955 Cyclone: 3 windmills blown down and damaged beyond repair, others partly damaged. Workshop demolished. Paperbark roofs were partly blown off. Native huts blown away.

April 1955 All the men were busy erecting windmills, opening mud blocked wells, and making a cemented stone path around the windmill troughs.

August/ September - A workshop, saddle shop and Sister's kitchen were built.

December 1955 Bro Joseph Tautz put up the generator and brought 2 tons flour and groceries. The generator did not work, taken to Beagle Bay Mission., then to Broome by Paul Cox. Percy Shadforth and Joe Roche brought it back. At Lombadina and other missions, missionaries worked to keep a constant supply of power for electricity.

Balgo Chronicle

Transport of goods required constant work. A team of Aboriginal persons gave constant support. Lawrence Williams was sent by Bishop Raible to Balgo. He arrived with his whole family by car. Paul Cox and Sahanna left for Beagle Bay.

21 June 1956 Lawrence Williams with family back to Beagle Bay. September Lawrence Williams took over from Albert Dann the job of driving the Ford. He brought his wife and two youngest children. The Dann Family was among them. Ovens were built and bread was cooked daily. Richard and Paul Cox arrived to do odd jobs here. Richard built a bakery - a dough mixer was installed.

May 1956, Vera Dann, Sister of Albert, arrived as a lay helper.

14 May 1956 Bishop Raible wrote to Fr Francis

“Elizabeth Dann will be ready any time you want her. I think we should pay her £3, if she looks after the girls, does the necessary sewing and conducts the kitchen. She is also capable of teaching elementary things.”

The Chronicles show a Church dependent on Aboriginal workers alongside lay brothers. The only wages mentioned was £3 to be paid to Elizabeth Dann whose job description would make the stoutest heart quail. Buildings continued to be erected when Bishop Jobst replaced Bishop Raible. The work was done for the advantage of the communities. Much voluntary work was also done by lay missionary staff who worked for pocket money and keep.

Lay Missionaries built up the material buildings or administered local stores. The women helped in the stores but worked mainly in the area of teaching, nursing, caring for children, or cooking and doing the laundry. They could give witness by their own faith and by cooperating with different liturgies.

Before leaving the Kimberley in 1959, Bishop Raible invested four local Aboriginal people, Teresa Puertollano, Frank Rodriguez, Philip Cox and Rosa Mamud with a papal decoration, ‘Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice’, in recognition of their services to the Church.

Bishop Raible’s resignation from the Episcopate was accepted by Rome in 1959 and Bishop Jobst was appointed.

Chapter 3

Post War

End of the War - Conscripts return to Limburg Seminary

After the war, the Pallottines collected bits and pieces in Limburg and reopened the house of novices which had been occupied by the army. Of the thirty-three novices in 1939, ten returned to continue their theological studies. $\frac{1}{3}$ had been killed. $\frac{1}{3}$ were wounded or were unwilling to continue. Four young priests were needed for Australia. Fathers Luemmen, Jobst, Silvester and Muenz volunteered. At Rome's Railway Station they were met by a young Australian Pallottine, Fr Kevin McKelson. Then after an audience with Pope Pius XII The four priests, two returning missionaries Fr John Herold, Fr Scherzinger, Brother Birker and the first German lay missionary, Lorenz Liedel set off. In Genoa four Schoenstatt sisters joined them.

Fr Jobst was appointed Bishop in 1959. His goal for the Church was expressed in his motto 'ut omnes unum sint', that 'all may be one'. He assumed that the people should now feel responsible for the proclamation of the gospel and the growth of the Church in the Region. This would mean training the people to run and control their own affairs. The official policy laid down 25 August 1959 and at subsequent clergy meetings such as 9 February 1960 involved establishing a training school for catechists and apostolic ministries to be established in Beagle Bay. Missions were to become independent parish communities with responsibilities for administration, government, health, education, pastoral care and industries being gradually transferred to the communities. But the ideas proposed by the new bishop were not fully embraced or implemented by the priests, or by the Aboriginal communities.

Lay Missionaries

Immediately after his consecration in Sydney, Bishop Jobst, Fr Silvester, and Fr Muenz met Victoria, to discuss lay missionary involvement.

Three women, Kathie Curtain, Joy Trantor, and Carmel Hodgkinson accompanied Bishop Jobst to the Kimberley in April 1959. At La Grange mission, four young women were already working among the elderly Aborigines, caring for them, and helping them to know the faith. Carmel Hodgkinson, after her service at La Grange went south to Rossmoyne to help at the Aboriginal hostel. She said:

I was impressed by the idea of service and I wanted to do something more with my life than add up figures. In this way I'm helping to raise the standards of less-privileged people, and show them the Christian way of life."

Another group of Lay Missionaries had a completed a three month spiritual formation course at the Pallottine Centre in Melbourne arrived in Perth, 2 May 1962. Mons. McKeon and Fr John Luemmen welcomed them and Mary Blackshaw went on to the Kimberley. Although a skilled trade was desirable for the ministry but applicants of any age from 18 years onwards could be accepted.

Bishop Jobst told a reporter,

"Without lay people the missions would collapse! I thought, if we could interest lay people in doing missionary work, they could do exactly the same work as dedicated priests and brothers and nuns were doing."

There continued to be a problem with insufficient Church personnel. Bishop Jobst had been asked by a reporter,

"Why do missionaries stick it, out in the outback?"

He answered:

"We aren't dreamers, we regard our work as only a link in a long chain, and a link which must be forged before that chain can be made any longer."

Eileen Nihill, a nurse from Cooktown, told of experiences when she was nursing in Cooktown where there was a colour bar, and again when she was employed as a nurse at the hospital in Pingelly in Western Australia

1957-1960. At Pingelly most of the children from the reserve had chest infections and in summer they had dehydration and diarrhea, but, even when she was on call, she was not allowed to visit the reserves. At Robinvale, at the Health Centre, one day a week was allocated for Aborigines and another for the white community. Then she read of Bishop Jobst's call for lay missionaries. She began training in 1961 in Millgrove.

As one of the second group of lay missionaries trained by Fr Silvester and Barbara Shea, Mariana Institute, Eileen joined the team at La Grange with Denise Wilson, Heather Milne and Laurel McNerney. In Derby, Fr. Joe Butcher was in charge of the Hostel and Clare Bowler, Marg Touhey and a third person went to work with him. Bill Keene came to La Grange to manage the station. His wife came later. Bob Doyle and Paul Van Zust and others trained with them. Another group had gone to Tardun.

When Sr Gertrude was killed in an accident, Eileen returned to the Kimberley. Sr Regina came out from Ireland to work with her.²⁶ When a new native hospital moved to a new Government hospital the sisters were the only staff with Eileen apart from the domestic staff.

Missionary volunteers replaced the native sisters and staffed five other places:

1. St Joseph's Hostel in Derby (In 1960, a married couple from West Australia, Mr and Mrs Rykens had gone to manage St Joseph's Hostel in Derby;
2. The new Balgo Mission (five were at Balgo Mission where Mrs Kersh helped the Sisters to maintain the clothing for the 330 residents. Mr Kersh was in charge of the newly commenced beef cattle and horse breeding industries which provided additional employment and training. The other three were Mr Carrol, Mr Frank McNamara, and Mr Tesselir;
3. A new nursery and kindergarten for destitute children in Broome It had been customary for babies born in the leprosarium at Derby to be removed from their mothers within six days. When the orphanage in

Broome closed in 1961, because of lack of staff, four of Stan Costello's staff came from Perth to remodel and rebuild the old buildings. On its site, a new Nursery and Kindergarten for destitute babies and children was opened by lay missionaries. The matron, Mrs C. Barker, a double-certificated nurse was in charge. Joining her was Christina Harding, Joan Gabbedy, Anne Woods, Nita Vinci, Carol Jones, Deborah Jones, Rose Denehey, Carol Mahy, Kerry Guilfoyle and Jeannine Bamford, some of whom were trained mother craft nurses;

4. The stores at Lombadina and Kulumburu missions.
5. La Grange Mission.

In 1969, thirty-five Lay Missionaries formed an association to coordinate activities and to look after their welfare. Elected at the meeting were Mrs C Barker, Miss M Tuohey, Miss H Prentiss and Mr W Keen. Mrs Barker said:

I was so sad at the plight of the people, so ashamed to think so little had been done for them that my conscience would not let me walk away from them.

In 1970, Mrs Barker opened her residence in NSW for training. Mission Crosses were given to the new Kimberley Missionaries.

In 1975 there were 40 people present at the Annual Meeting from different parts of the Diocese. Though the commitment was for two years, for some, it became a permanent way of life. Lay Missionaries worked with the girls in Nulungu College in Broome.

The Church – A sign of Hope

In earlier years, the Church saw itself as a sanctuary in which the world had no place. The Second Vatican Council (1962-5) presented the Church as 'a sign of hope'. One of the documents, 'Perfectae Caritatis' instructed religious to assess their relevance to the modern world, to re-awaken the spirit of their founders, and to respond to the signs of the times. The message revitalised missionary attitudes.

Aborigines, to qualify occupants to receive grants. Excised areas were called a town area which qualified for grants. Title to the Church, school, hospital, dormitories, power house, workshop and Mission staff quarters could remain as the mission site. The Commonwealth Government then loaned money to extend the pastoral industry at Beagle Bay and the market gardening industry at La Grange.

The deepening of Church communion between groups baptised into the Catholic Church was celebrated by pilgrimages, assemblies, establishment of spirituality centres and educational facilities established by church workers in collaboration with Aboriginal communities. Song cycles and ceremonies attached to land and kinship groups throughout the changing seasons were personally owned by the people belonging to that land.

Dislocation from land affected individuals. In an indigenous community people ask, who are you? where you come from? who your mother was? who your father was? what country you belonged to? Loss of opportunities to fulfil cultural entitlements, to grow up speaking a particular language that belonged to a certain customary law tradition with responsibilities for certain tracts of lands and obligations for the care of people is a personal loss of identity.

Liberal Approach to Mission Policy

An anthropologist, Helmut Petri, a Professor from the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, Cologne University, Germany, and his wife had carried out anthropological field work at La Grange Mission in 1963.

They reviewed the effects of this more liberal approach to mission policy. In Petri's opinion, the new approach had created an atmosphere of mutual understanding between the Church and the Aborigines. He assessed the new mission policy followed by the Bishop and Fr K. McKelson as enabling an "inner" and deep encounter between the

mentality and culture of missionaries and Aborigines.

Several 'jona' (circumcision ceremonies) were held and supported by the mission which provided supplies. Contrary to previous mission policy, boys were now circumcised and put through all stages of tribal initiation ceremonies. This removed the stigma of 'school boys' or 'mission boys', who could not acquire full status in tribal society. Formerly they were put in the same category as women and non-initiated adolescents. LaGrange became regarded as a 'big place' where the Aborigines felt that the missionaries understood and respected their ancient traditions and customs and treated them as human beings unlike their employer bosses.²⁷

Bishop Raible appealed for young Australian men to take up the challenge of working with the Aboriginal people. Fr McKelson answered this appeal and joined the Pallottine seminary in 1943. In 1954 he began his association with the Broome Community. Then he worked at Balgo, Halls Creek, Wyndham and Derby. In 1961 he moved to La Grange Mission. In *We Nyangumarta in the country of the Karajarri* ²⁸ he wrote of the language, the law and ceremonial life. He spent more than 50 years in the Kimberley region, including 32 years at Bidyadanga.

Bishop Jobst assumed that local parishioners should feel responsible for the proclamation of the gospel. This would mean training the people to run and control their own affairs. The official policy laid down 25 August 1959 and at subsequent clergy meetings such as 9 February 1960 involved establishing a training school for catechists and apostolic ministries to be established in Beagle Bay.

Missions were to become independent parish communities with responsibilities for administration, government, health, education, pastoral care and industries being gradually transferred to the communities. But the ideas proposed by the new bishop were not fully embraced or implemented by the priests, or by the Aboriginal communities.

East Kimberley Aborigines accepted Catholic Church presence. In 1959 the first Catholic Church foundation at Wyndham had been made by Bishop J. Jobst. Fr Leo Hornung, became the first resident priest, then Fr J

Kearney took up residence June 1960 - April 1961. During this time a new multi-purpose church building erected at Wyndham East was named 'Queen of the Apostles'. Its site was on the eastern side of the Great Northern Highway, within view of the hills. By 1962, Wyndham was 80% Catholic and the Church could hardly hold the congregation. A State School had provided education in the early sixties. The Josephite Sisters came in 1963 when the new social changes were in process and in 1964, St Joseph's School commenced.

'ius mandati'

In 1966 the Vicariate was upgraded to a Diocese.

In 1970 the 'ius commissionis' became the 'ius mandati'. This meant that a religious society hitherto committed to staffing missions entrusted to them under the old law must come to new arrangements with the bishop. The Bishops' Conference approached the Pallottines in the Broome Diocese and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in the Darwin diocese regarding their commitment to the missions. The Pallottines remained working in the diocese but they declined the 'ius mandati'. In Darwin it was accepted by the MSC's.

In the East Kimberley Sisters of St Joseph, Mercy Sisters, Canossian Sisters, Franciscan Missionary Sisters and Lay Missionaries contributed much to the welfare of Aborigines. Sisters welcomed Aboriginal Elders to teach Aboriginal Culture in the schools. Healing was reciprocal on both sides of the encounter. Some Sisters found inner values changed by the innate spirituality of the people they had come to serve. Sr Clare Ahern wrote in thanksgiving for the life of a leader of the Warmun Community, *We may have been missioned to bring the good news to the poor but we received it many times from the poor with compassion, love, freedom, and simplicity...It was too incredible to believe that ... the Lawman, head teacher, Christian leader, well-known artist, great entertainer and good friend to all was dead. No one said his name, so that his Spirit could rest in peace.*

*...We recalled that even though we had come as teachers or pastoral workers to minister in this community, the reverse had also happened. We had been ministered to as well. Daily we had entered into the mysteries of another culture and felt privileged for that opportunity.*²⁹

True ministry - a reciprocal process

The Sisters of St Joseph had come to the East Kimberley in 1963. They outlined aims and parameters for their ministry aligned with the Papal encyclical 'Ad Gentes'. Employing Aborigines in the schools as teaching assistants, in training to become teachers, became an effective means of giving eventual control of the schools to the Community.³⁰

Knowledge of both cultures is essential for the contextualisation of the gospel.³¹ The Aboriginal way of life is spiritual, and needed to be supported by song cycles, dancing and ceremonies. In the East Kimberley, Aborigines had input into liturgical celebration: A baptism rite for a ceremony at Doon Doon included a fire blessing, the liberal use of bush oils on the baby, the *bundawela* for the baby's forehead, and the mother baptizing the baby. The traditional leader recognized that this is a mother's domain.³²

In Halls Creek, Cannossian Sisters used welfare work to make way for the social wellbeing of the town, before they began the Catholic Primary School. It took about seven years for the situation to improve between the Catholics, the Baptists and members of the United Aboriginal Mission. The Sisters helped Aborigines to participate in decision-making processes so that local needs could be articulated and met.³³

Economic and Political Context of the Shire of Halls Creek

The majority of Aboriginal people occupied reserves which were non-rateable crown land so Aboriginal participation in local government was minimal. Local ratepayers controlled the Shire Councils in Halls Creek and Wyndham. This was challenged in the 1980's since locally derived rates generated only 12.8% of total revenue for the period 1982-6. By far the greatest percentage of its revenue was derived externally in the form of Government grants. These were attracted to the Shire by the nature of local infrastructure and population composition. Once Aborigines had representation on the Council, Communities were no longer ignored, neglected, segregated, excluded or restricted, and municipal services became available to them.³⁴

Aborigines were in the forefront of training to be teachers in the schools. The position of women on both sides of the contact situation became different with women in administrative positions. For the religious, this was formerly only a possibility in the hospitals with matrons, but in recent years women have had more influence in the Catholic Education Offices, becoming mentors for Aboriginal Principals and thus leading to redundancy for themselves. Usually because women were not working in an administrative capacity but closer to the grass roots of the Church it was easier to make lifelong friends and form close relationships with Aboriginal women who worked in close contact with Church educational facilities

Nulungu College 1971

Parents in Broome worried that they had to send their children south for education. Representatives for the Christian Brothers Bro Loftus and Bro Lavander came for a meeting in 1969 and planned that a College could

be expanded to include facilities for the education of girls. The College was established in 1971, ostensibly for the secondary education of young Aboriginal men. The name 'Nulungu' incorporated the idea of gaining new knowledge and recreation while relaxing before setting out as a group on a journey. It also meant 'traditional groups gathering in the shade of the watering hole'. The students came from different backgrounds, but their shared experiences, fishing, hunting and camping adventures and their living communally soon established a common base. Its curriculum encouraged the expression of cultural characteristics and students from a non-literary culture were respected. The first Principal was Bro Roberts and he was assisted by Brothers Billich and Hardiman

The early mission spirit had established a communion of peoples within the social fabric of the Kimberley Through two world wars, and post war times, the plight of displaced Aborigines continued to arouse compassion in male and female missionaries who volunteered to maintain an infrastructure for services and pastoral care centres in the Kimberley But the time came when the indigenous communities, each true to its own culture, with its own leadership and ministry, claim the Gospel for itself³⁵

Pilgrimages to places of spiritual birth –

By the 80's in the West Kimberley there was an older church with several generations of Catholics, in the East, is a younger church.

Pilgrimage to Beagle Bay Mission

For the pilgrimage in 1983, the Beagle Bay Council appointed families linked by birth and kinship to welcome and care for incoming groups. Philip Cox had been asked to coordinate of the pilgrimage. Different cultural backgrounds were evident when from the East Kimberley came a vibrant young church and from the West Kimberley an older church with

evidence of stability brought by several generations of Catholics

Pilgrimage to Tjalawan

Fr Ray Hevern and staff members at Balgo Mission led the Aboriginal communities of Billiluna, Lake Gregory and Balgo on a pilgrimage to Tjalawan in the desert where the first Mass was celebrated:

“All that is left of the beginning is very little, next to nothing, a small heap of stones which had served as a fireplace for cooking, a few square feet of mud floor where the chapel had been, and some marks on an old tree For the rest no change whatsoever from what we found when we arrived there just a day or two before Christmas 1939 The land was still the same, a desert, dry, arid, dusty, the flies, the burning sun, the clear starry sky in the night And yet, there was a remarkable change Here it was no longer arid and dry ‘Dew’ or ‘rain’ had come down from heaven and given new life People had changed and Tjalawan now had a sacred meaning for them They expressed this in a few words in their own tongue with rhythmic singing during the Eucharistic celebration It was a great reward to witness this pilgrimage Despite the many years of hardship and grave difficulties during World War II and at times extreme poverty and deprivations, failures, discouragement and droughts, nothing had been in vain What were but dreams and hopes at the start had become realities God was, and is, at work.” ³⁶

Pilgrimage to Disaster Bay

A weekend of camping at the Disaster site in 1984 commemorated the early mission there and that of Fr Duncan McNab at Goodenough Bay. It was organized and funded by the Beagle Bay Community. At the Mass of celebration Jerome Manado recalled that as a child he saw Fr Nicholas Emo’s boat, the ‘San Salvador’ anchored out in the bay.

Memories were shared at the Diocesan Assembly in 1984

Parish groups came from Broome, Derby, Wyndham, Kununurra, and Halls Creek. Mission groups came from Beagle Bay, Lombadina, La

Grange and Kulumburu.

Shared memories enable people to use principles derived from the past as guides to action in the present, to produce a certain kind of future. These stories offered displaced people an emotional control as they determined their collective future³⁷

Broome

‘Mallingbar’, also known as ‘Kennedy Hill’, is a town community in Broome on Aboriginal Reserve land. It is occupied by Yawuru, Bardi, and Nyul Nyul tribal people. The majority of Broome parishioners, as Aborigines, had been placed at an economic disadvantage because when it was cheap, Aborigines were state wards and not allowed to buy it.³⁸

The Ngarlen community at Beagle Bay

Because of equal pay provisions, the Missions were in a similar situation to the stations they could employ fewer people at a time when more were looking for work In 1974 the Ngarlen community at Beagle Bay became the first independent Catholic community

The Djarindjin Community at Lombadina

The Djarindjin Community at Lombadina is surrounded by extensive bush on one side with a great expanse of sand dunes on the other and situated on the marsh of Chilli Creek. In the 1960s, the beef cattle herd was built up again, but when an Agricultural adviser from the Commonwealth Government, went with Mr Weber, who was rebuilding the stock in Beagle Bay to inspect the cattle in Lombadina, he decided that the cattle project was not worthwhile. Base Intelligence had asked the community for a message notifying them when foreign boats came offshore³⁹

Derby Parish

In 1984, 40% of Derby’s 3300 population was Aboriginal. English, Kriol, Nyikina, Walmajarri, Bardi and Bunuba were spoken

in the flat barren marsh environment. Catholic presence was maintained in Fitzroy Crossing, Looma, Pandanus Park, Imintji, Mowanjum, Gibb River, Koolan and Cockatoo Islands and outlying cattle stations

Fitzroy Crossing

Three Franciscan Sisters lived at Fitzroy Crossing. Aboriginal Languages spoken were English, Kriol, Walmajarri, Bunaba, Gooniyandi and Wangkatjunga. Within a 100 km radius was a population of 2039, of which 1534 were of full descent and 100 were of part descent. Other residents totalled about 400. La Grange.

people were related to people from the United Aboriginal Mission in Fitzroy Crossing.

men. Since then, many more are employed with new Government schemes.

Much Scripture translation had been done in Walmajarri, the lingua-franca of the area. The Walmajarri were around Balgo area when it was established as a Catholic Mission. The Kukatja took their place and the Walmajarri migrated to the Fitzroy area. Political power was with white Australians and Government workers.

Looma

Early Catholic presence in Looma was nurtured by Fulgentius Frazer and his wife. Fulgentius had been sent to Drysdale River Mission about 1909. He had married and lived with his wife at Beagle Bay, for eight to nine years. When they moved to Liveringa, he taught the Catholic faith to the people. His daughter, Agnes Puertollano, said,

“When Dad was away mustering cattle, Mum used to call the people together for Rosary”

Among the 300 Aborigines at Looma, Mangala, Walmajarri, Nyikina, Wangkajunga, and Bunaba were spoken, and there was a language barrier. The community was situated on Aboriginal Reserve land excised from Liveringa Station. A mountain range formed the background, and it was an isolated and barren settlement where political power was with the Aboriginal men.

Pandanus Park

There were about 20 Catholics living among other denominations in Pandanus Park. The small community on an Aboriginal Reserve near Willare Bridge was close to the river. As a bush community it was flat and isolated but with lush gardens of mangoes. The all Aboriginal population spoke Yakima, Man gala, and Calamari but there was no language barrier Employment was provided by the garden and maintenance work

Imintji is an outstation where people spoke Kija, Nyikina, Ngarinyin, Gooniyandi and Jaru was also linked to Derby parish.

North Eastern Kimberley

In the small but vibrant Aboriginal towns of the North Eastern Kimberley the people retained their own unique Aboriginal character with their own languages, Miriwun, Djamanjun, Moornbata, Djaaru, and Kija, are still used for ceremonial life.

Political Unrest among Aborigines

In June 1943 Don McLeod had gone to Perth to have a discussion with the Commissioner for Native Affairs about Aboriginal employment. Aborigines were still being paid wages which fell well below unemployment or sickness benefits. Unemployment benefits could not be paid to an Aboriginal who refused to work for a wage well below the award wage, or to an Aboriginal who moved into a town to a settled area and needed the benefit while seeking employment.

McLeod applied for a pastoral lease not far out of Port Hedland, but it was not granted. Rather, Dooley, Clancy and McLeod all served goal terms for enticing Aborigines from their place of employment. Just after

the war, in the Pilbara, Don McLeod led a strike in the pastoral industry. The day of the Aboriginal Strike in the Pilbara was 1 April 1946. It was well into its third year when Middleton took office as Commissioner of Native Affairs. The strike affected Aboriginal attitudes. Early in 1948 there were rumours of a planned strike at Derby and further inland, Aboriginal station hands wanted to know exactly what wages they were getting.

The 1967 Referendum

The referendum of 1967 was a landmark because it was an attempt to heal the dysfunction of an integral part of the Australian population. It marked a healing of the relations between Aboriginal and white Australians at end of one epoch – and the beginning of another.

The detrimental effects of protective legislation had removed Aboriginal peoples from the mainstream. This disempowerment continued until self determination policies were implemented to enable Aborigines to take initiative for their own destiny.

The Federal Pastoral Award

From 9 October 1967, the Award applied to a native who was less than full descent (or to a full descent if he or she had a Certificate of Citizenship) and was a member of the Australian Workers' Union. The classification involving Aborigines of full descent was covered by the Award on and after 1 December 1968, subject to the native being a member of the Australian Workers' Union.

Aborigines found themselves in a period of rapid transition and under stress in adjusting to the changes. Many were uprooted from life on a cattle station when wages were raised. Either State or Federal and Industrial unions policed appropriate industrial awards on behalf of their members.

1968

Forrest River population transferred to Wyndham.

In 1968 the Minister of Native Welfare rejected a proposed station skills training program at Forrest River Mission but had its population transferred to Wyndham. Wyndham's Aboriginal Reserve was a rock-strewn compound with a series of corrugated iron buildings with poor ventilation and few amenities. It had been built for 96 people. When the Forest River mission closed, it housed up to 200 people.

Public expectation that Aborigines would find adequate accommodation at the Wyndham Reserve moved Mr Ridge, MLA for the Kimberley, to publicly denounce the unfair decision to house the Aborigines on the reserve:

"It is totally unfair to dump Aborigines on a reserve and demand that from those conditions they drag themselves towards a style of life they either don't understand or don't want. It may be true that it works for some people, but it is obvious that its failure rate is immense and its injustice huge."

When Kimberley Aborigines were granted drinking rights in 1970, some of the Forrest River Mission refugees slipped into chronic alcoholism.

1973 'Self-determination'

Gordon Bryant, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, implemented the 'Self-determination' policy which took shape in 1973. It sought to transfer major decisions into the hands of the Aboriginal communities. This unwritten policy remained in the Perth Regional Office and field offices of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, unlike the Northern Territory where Mission administrations were seen as the basis for policy and programme delivery.

'Self Determination' in practice after the Referendum in 1967

Following government legislation which granted Aboriginal workers a just wage, the majority of Aboriginal families were no longer welcome on the stations. No were they eligible for manual or other jobs requiring membership with the Unions until the State and Union Laws were changed. Fortunately for the Kija people, their common language influenced families to settle along the banks of Turkey Creek.⁴⁰

Anawim' is a biblical concept meaning 'God's poor', a term which encapsulates the beatitude, "Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God". Cletus Read, A Marist Brother who is buried at Santa Teresa Mission near Alice Springs, explored this concept in his writing about 'equality of persons'. He argued that Australians had inherited a mindset from Europe that Church was a community which worshipped God in a particular building; which sent its children to a particular school and which entrusted the health care of its sick to a particular hospital.

Cletus saw the most disadvantaged families of Aborigines were the dispossessed of the agricultural region whose country had been taken over by pastoralists for cattle stations. They lived in fringe camps bordering towns or in communities associated with cattle stations, or in isolated camps scattered through the outback.

Mabo offered no hope for these families because the law had cancelled all native rights to their land. Their forebears were semi-nomadic and travelled a wide range to survive in the dry interior. Many of them still move from settlement to fringe camp, from fringe camp to pastoral excision, and from pastoral excision to visit distant relatives and so on in a never-ending cycle.

Cletus wrote about neglect of the Aboriginal Anawim:

*"Church resource people seem to turn up information relating to the well adjusted families. Diocese and parish councils have programs tailored to meet the needs of the more advantaged Aboriginal families. Training centres such as Nungalinya seem to me to have the same focus."*⁴¹

The 'anawim' were often women who had no representative on the local Aboriginal Council and were ignored by the Land Council, both of which were usually completely male or had a majority of males. Aboriginal Anawim needed power to make decisions about ways of improving the quality of their own lives and those of their children.

1980/81

Government programming guidelines 1980/81 constituted a description of the means to deliver funds to Aboriginal communities. The bulk of these were bureaucratic procedures and expectations. They also indicated the level of dependence and accountability required of Aboriginal communities.

Short History of Wyndham Missions in East Kimberley 1886 - 1986

In 1886 the first white settlers landed on the shores of Cambridge Gulf with many horses and 2000 sheep. After two years, the company decided to abandon its holding and it was offered to the Church of England in 1896 for a mission. After a few months, the Church of England also abandoned it.

In 1913, the Rev E B Gribble, a missionary from Queensland took charge. He had been helping to establish the Mitchell River and Yarrabah Missions. When he left in 1928 there were 24 buildings, fifty seven pupils in the school and a permanent population of one hundred and seventy. Oombulgurri had been weakened by the Government practice of transferring unrelated Aborigines of part descent and full descent from other parts of the Kimberley to it. Local white settlers had usually found these socially disruptive. The mission had continued until 1966 when it was recommended that the church close it and transfer the people to Wyndham and Kununurra.

In 1968 the mission Aborigines from Oombulgurri found themselves

suddenly transferred from the security and orderliness of Forrest River Mission to the barren unregulated environment of Wyndham Reserve. When the Aborigines settled in town, many sent their children to the Catholic school run by the Sisters of St Joseph. The men had the power to make decisions, but were confused by the white bureaucracies.

By 1984, the population of Wyndham was 2000, consisting of about 600 Aborigines and the rest were Filipinos, Spaniards, Italians, French, Maltese, Malaysians, and Europeans. In Wyndham the number of baptized Aboriginal Catholics in the area had grown from a handful in 1959 to between two and three hundred by 1990. English, Kija, and Kriol were spoken. The Catholic religious life both in doctrine, personal piety and ritual was expressed in largely Irish/Australian forms.

Kununurra

With the completion of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme, Kununurra began to expand as it replaced Wyndham for Government administration. Kununurra was close to the river and surrounded by hilly mountains.

In 1962, the Church of St Vincent Pallotti was built in 1962. As resident priest, Fr Lorenz travelled around visiting the pastoral stations. Sr Maureen and Sr Angela travelled with him to the Catholics from Ivanhoe Station. For three weeks every month Fr Lorenz did station trips to Auverne, Nicholson, Gordon Downs and Jubilee Creek. The people did his garden and minded his house when he was away. Where the pastoralists were active Catholics, a 'station Mass' was celebrated, attended by virtually the entire station population.

Fr Lorenz remembered that at his first Sunday Mass, the congregation was all European, but after three years, there were two Masses filled with European and Aboriginal people. Although the Catholic School was a Parish School, gradually the majority of white children left to go to the State school and Catechist volunteers taught religion there.

The Parish Priest of Kununurra in 1968 was Fr P Willis. He visited and said Mass for the Miriwung, who lived out of town on cattle stations. With the down turn of the cattle industry in the late 1960's and early 1970's and the

introduction of award wages for Aboriginal stockmen, an increasing number of unemployed Miriwung people came to live on the 'Native Reserve' in Kununurra..

Several significant social changes took place over the years.

First was the forming of the Mirama Council in 1971 under the joint leadership of Yilngali-Miriwung elders. This was a new and less protected environment for the Miriwung and they availed themselves of the support offered by the Catholic priest and nuns. They were some of the few people familiar to them from when they lived on cattle stations. The Sisters supported the parents with clothing, food and transport. With support from the Kununurra Community and an honorary builder, in 1971, a new Catholic Church was completed and blessed by Bishop J Jobst.

Patronage

'Patronage' is a type of permanent and reciprocal exchange relationship between two parties. By accepting gifts, the recipient was placed in a permanent state of indebtedness. 'Paternalism' was the name used for this state of affairs.⁴² The bestowal of the favours might express a benevolent possessiveness, for example using terms such as, "Our Aborigines!"

Fr Willis showed concern about patronage. He initiated camp fire discussions to inhibit paternalistic relationships developing between Aborigines and the Catholic Church in Kununurra.

The people had been promised baptism when they were ready and when they knew more about the Catholic Faith, Both men and women of the Miriwung leaders, continued to ask if, 'their mob' could be baptized. They were considerably influenced in this by the two Aboriginal elders, Watti and Joe, who had been baptized while confined to the Leprosarium. They were the only ones able to take Holy Communion during Mass. The Christian focus on one transcendent God roused no problems and there were no polygamous marriages.

Fr Willis judged that the Aboriginal ceremonies to which the Mirriwung catechumens had invited him were compatible with Christianity. The baptized elders were the most active evangelizing Christians and were frequently in the group organizing the Aboriginal ceremonies.

St Martin's Hostel

The Sisters of St Joseph felt obliged to offer some form of assistance to neglected Aboriginal children in the form of child care and set up St Martin's Hostel. It was to become part of the 'Moongoong Darwing Settlement' by putting old caravans in the Kununurra schoolyard. Sr Angela Morrison lived there in charge.

The hostel side of St Martins provided an impetus for Aborigines to move. Anxious to safeguard the interests of the Aboriginal community, Fr Willis encouraged the camp-fire discussions as a central function of St Martin's establishment.⁴³ The Sisters and Fr Willis were concerned that the authority and influence of the parents and relations of the children be safeguarded and that the children did not become permanently disabled through delinquency and consequent admission to some remote corrective institution.

In the light of changed thinking about paternalism, it was seen as a danger that St Martin's, as the caravans for accommodation had come to be called, would become yet another place where white people looked after Aboriginal children.

To avoid this, attempts were made to initiate Aboriginal involvement in management leading to the formation of St Martin's Aboriginal Council. Increased access to St Martin's by Aborigines through round table discussions and a shared pre-occupation in issues concerning the Aboriginal community led directly to an Aboriginal elder, Bulla Billinking, becoming involved in talks and excursions with the Aboriginal children. He took them to tribal sites when he taught Miriwung and spoke

of the old legends and place names

In 1973, numbers dropped and it became difficult to judge the value of St Martin's in the eyes of the Aboriginal community. By the end of 1973 the Ngaringman people at Newry Station had shown themselves reluctant to continue sending their children to school at Beagle Bay. Children were withdrawn from Beagle Bay School because of an undercurrent of feeling against education of people from East Kimberley and Northern Territory at Beagle Bay. They were spending long periods away from their families.⁴⁴

At the beginning of 1974 eighteen children were enrolled at St Martins. The Ngaringman people at Auvergne Station were anxious to use the same services in 1975. The 'Mabel Downs People' moved in at 'Nine Mile' when the children came back from Beagle Bay in 1973-1974 so that the children could go to school in Kununurra. The idea was to establish a new Aboriginal community settlement. Grants were applied for in 1974. By 1975 the settlement was established. The land granted was next to the Kununurra Convent and was set up like a hostel adjacent to the school for the Aboriginal children who had to travel long distances to school.

A special circular outdoor Mass centre was built. This was not a Church project. It was Church personnel working with an Aboriginal group to enable them to take responsibility for their own children. The movement was in response to the potential of the 'self determination policy'. The Bishop was interested in the movement towards 'Moongoong Darwing', but no Church money went into it.

Aboriginal personnel were drawn from Mirima Village and some of the fringe camps. People of Miriwung, Jaminjung and Kajirrawung background were included. A few were members of the Mirima Council. When the Aboriginal Community got their land, St Martin's became known as 'Moongoong Darwing'. It became a well established and dynamic community, run predominantly by the Aborigines themselves. It had a European book keeper and occasionally a European adviser. Some

of the middle-aged men were employed by the community as drivers and work organizers for the elders who retained considerable power.

As other adults gradually moved on to the land, the original plan changed. It became a settlement something like the Reserve. Two Sisters worked full time in the school and one in the community where Aboriginal and white people were involved in various programmes

Aboriginal involvement grew when Lizzie Ward became matron with Sr Angela as her assistant. Adults from Newry Station and Auvergne came in that year, so it was no longer a dormitory system but functioned as family units.

'Bethel Incorporated', a mission oriented group headed by a husband and wife team became a viable Aboriginal community forming independently at the same time. After a period of almost seven years of effort, one elder and several family clusters supporting him succeeded in acquiring a tract of land which they called 'Yardungarll' or 'Dingo Springs'. This Miriwung group had comprised the core of the former Mirima Council and acquired the land lease-hold vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust in Perth for 18 years. But the setting up of this modest outstation north of Lake Argyle as a leasehold was not secure for the land could be alienated at virtually any time.

Kununurra Parish

By 1984, Kununurra had a population of approximately 3000 non Aborigines. Among these a few Italians, Yugoslavs, Filipinos. About 600 - 700 of the population were Aboriginal with approximately 400 Catholic Aborigines speaking their own languages, which included Miriwung and Murrinh-patha. There was sometimes a language barrier.

The Miriwung spoke their own language, sang their own songs and had an active ceremonial life to which the Sisters and the Priest were frequently invited. At the same time, they attended Mass and prayers. Political power

was with the Aboriginal men, the young white Australians, the Government workers and the CRA mining company.

The Warmun community at Turkey Creek

Originally Turkey Creek was like a holiday place, for when the people went on walkabout in the wet season; they met there and had initiation ceremonies. Some people at Turkey Creek had come from Violet Valley. Stories from the past linked them together:

'Daylight' wanted to get to his woman in Violet Valley. He was caught, tied up, belted with pick handles. His friends came. They left Violet Valley as a group Old Jacko Tinmaria was the leader of the group. Some of the people died on the way. They killed cattle to eat, as they went Jimmy Klyne, the manager of Texas Station, let them stay. He said to the police and to the Violet Valley people that they would not touch these people. He protected them.

This was one of the many stories told at the 1984 Diocesan Assembly.

Ruby, the Chairman's wife, was a little girl when this happened: By 1984 there were five camp areas of people from different stations, Texas, Bedford, Mabel Downs, Lissadell and Springvale.

The employment wage award

When the employment wage award came, the old age pensioners came back and Ruby Yalanger was housekeeping at the Post Office. It was now the Community Adviser's house. Top Camp people were a mid group. Middle Camp people were from Bedford and Springvale Stations. Bottom Camp people were from Lissadell station.

There were 250 - 300 people. The young people were on stations working. Some had gone to Bow River Station. Some, like Jacko, who was the first to become a Catholic, originally belonged to a United Aboriginal Mission Church.

The Warmun Community at Turkey Creek was a quite large community on Aboriginal Reserve land where the natural beauty of the surrounding mountains was close to a creek which was dry most of the year but subject to floods in the wet. At a distance of 200 km from town, roads were cut off. The languages were Kija, Mirwung, Jaru, Kriol and English languages. Among the population of about 250 Aborigines and 10 others comprising 2 Sisters, a community adviser, his wife and children, there could be a language barrier at times. It was the Texas Station Catholics who started the development of faith in Turkey Creek. Fr Nicholas Dehe encouraged Queenie and her mother Dinah to lead the rosary.

The church had made contact with Aboriginal people who were patients at the Leprosarium. Queenie, an elder, told the people at the 1984 Diocesan Assembly.

When my mother and Winnie came back from Leprosarium, they get ready for priest, we just sit there, they feel sorry for us, they take us out to teach us

Winnie of Turkey Creek worked as a Catechist for some of the people. Both Winnie and Queenie were from Texas Station. Winnie was influential in Turkey Creek. She gave lessons in language, in Kija. Her brother Hector often acted as the lay minister and presided at the Communion Services. The Sisters in the school and a pastoral associate made up the Catholic Church personnel. It was part of the Halls Creek Parish. Approximately 60 people had short term employment: building houses, as shop assistants, at station work, office work and teaching.

The Kundat Djaru community of Ringers' Soak

With the changing attitude of the Government to Aboriginal communities, it became easier for a tribal group to gain a small area of land. The lease gave the Kundat Djaru community of Ringers Soak (Yarumen), 168 kilometres southeast of Halls Creek, a chance to exercise self determination. It was partly on land excised from Gordon Downs

Station and partly on vacant crown land. Languages spoken were Jaru, Ngarti, Nyuininy.

The little community of about eighty had experienced the trauma of being evicted from Gordon Downs Station. After living a precarious existence in Hall's Creek for some time, they returned to Yaruman where they experienced more trouble from the manager of Gordon Downs. Because of a media campaign, the Government gave them land, a lease of 3500 hectares of Crown Land south of Gordon Downs.

During their time in Hall's Creek, the community had made contact with the Church through the kindness, concern and service of Fr Kriener and the Cannossian Sisters, who continued to visit the community and instruct them in the faith when they returned to Yaruman.

Three kilometres from Gordon Downs, the forty square kilometres, had good bores, material for five houses and three toilets. Fr Kriener went there every fortnight. At the end of 1984 it was planned to have a Baptism of 35 adults, because the community had started to settle. They began to talk of the possibility of a school, *"Maybe the year after, Sisters, maybe a school in 1986."*

Previous requests had been made to the Bishop by the Chairman of the Community, but a written letter was presented requesting him to provide a Catholic School for their children, when he visited the Community 12 October 1983. The children had been lined up to meet the Bishop, and members of the community promised to be involved in the education of their children. The Bishop asked the Sisters of St Joseph to send two Sisters. These arrived 8 May 1985, accompanied by the Bishop and a Lay Missionary team to build generator sheds and shelters.

The main thrust that year was a feasibility study to ascertain what type of school met the needs of these people and to prepare the majority of the community for Baptism. It was a very happy occasion when many people came to Yaruman, 9 November 1985, to join the community members in

celebrating their Baptism.

In the five years since the Sisters arrived, the community had shown their strength as a small Christian community, which had taken an active part in providing teachers for the children and continued instructions in their faith. The School was the 'Bilir Ngawiwu Catholic School'.

Lunja community or Red Hill

Lunja community or Red Hill was a town community on Aboriginal Reserve land in Halls Creek where the Jaru language was spoken.

*The houses were up by 1980. At Christmas, Fr Kriener baptized 14 Aborigines in Red Hill, only three km away from Halls Creek, but unlike Halls Creek, the Church was always full on Sundays.*⁴⁵

The Catholic School was called the 'Warlawurru School' and was founded in 1988. The communities took a 'no change' position in 1993, when the Sisters came together with Aborigines from various communities with which they worked, Warmum, Yaruman, Kununurra, Halls Creek and Mirrilingki. The Aboriginal people spoke about the sister's ministry and the Sisters shared their vision of ministry.

Comments recorded from Yaruman people:

We teach in school - the Sisters keep on helping us to be teachers We want to keep on doing Ngawi stories We want the Sisters to learn the language so we can write it down We want the Sisters to do what we tell them Everything good.

Comments recorded from Warrmarn people:

Teach our children-religion and education To train the people to set up for Mass, funeral services etc helping to solve community problems eg grog. (Mirrilingki), good to communicate with open mind, encourage us in what we do, young and old Sisters must listen to the people and what they want.

Comments recorded from Wyndham people:

Sister a happy person, welcomes us to her home, good listener, available Pentecost - good time to meet others, mass and prayer leadership, funerals, sale of clothes, we have learned to order, do banking, do the books, write the cheques, car available for lifts Give more time for jail visitation.

Comments recorded from Kununurra people:

Worried about drunks who do not look after their kids Dreaming story, pray for everyone - drunks, school, teaching language and kardija way, Sisters with us praying - one way road to Ngapuny.

Comments recorded from Halls Creek people:

What is good? If there were no Sisters we would look for a good principal -look for a good sister who will teach us about Ngawi, school, language workers.

It is too easy for a white person to assume control and to make decisions because those who provide the financial support do not have confidence in the Aboriginal appointees to administer.⁴⁶ Negative reports have been made about this across Australia to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council The fact that this was done in good faith by Church people for many years was now seen as an aspect of paternalism.⁴⁷

Conclusion

By 1984, there were records of 352 baptisms recorded in the Halls Creek baptismal register . In the west Kimberley, in Broome, in 1989, some of the Catholic Church personnel in Broome were Bishop J Jobst, Fr C Saunders, PP, Christian Brothers, Sisters, and Lay Missionaries Loreto Sisters were in

charge of the Primary School, and Our Lady of Mission Sisters were at Nulungu College, with lay missionaries and the Christian Brothers Fr McMahon Sr Stella Bryant and lay people occupied the Spirituality Centre in the old convent. The Faithful Companions of Jesus Sisters were working with Sr Pat Rhatigan at the new Catholic Education Office. A secondary school, and a spirituality centre was established, the Kalam-Warijaj Layibaboor.

During 1984, Fr M McMahon and Sr Stella Bryant began a consultation process in the Diocese regarding the advisability of a training centre for ministry. In 1985 it was suggested that part of the St John of God convent in Broome could house the 'college'. The Broome project was to concentrate on adult faith education and parish renewal starting in the Broome parish with the idea of working towards basic Christian communities. The name means, 'Come and See - good place'.

In the east Kimberley, in Turkey Creek, another spirituality centre 'Merrilinki' was established. Two Jesuits in Balgo Hills began further training programs. Catholic Church presence at Wyndham, Kununurra, Halls Creek and regions nearby enabled basic indigenous kinship groups to provide local leadership because of a greater acceptance of Aboriginal languages, symbols and dances in the liturgy.

For the Aborigines, there was an increase of educational opportunities at local Catholic community schools and a Catholic Education Office established in the region.

The Role of Missions

In academic circles missions are sometimes seen as an external factor which plays havoc with traditional society. Others regard Christianity as a living factor inside the social structure but few anthropologists have troubled to analyse Christianity as it has evolved in Australia.

In 1989, the *East Kimberley Impact Assessment Project*, a joint project

of four Institutes, (1. the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies ANU, 2. the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 3. the Anthropology Department of the University of Western Australia and 4. the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia) did not produce a study on Christianity as an aspect for research.⁴⁸ There were twenty-five Project Working Papers, 1985-1988 listed in Appendix B of the book, and at least nine others were compiled afterwards. None of these attempted to assess the impact of encounter with missionaries.⁴⁹

Henry Reynolds wrote:

*“Missionaries have played an extremely important role in the development of White-Aboriginal relations. Their activities have been subject to both uncritical praise and ill-informed aversion, yet balanced historical assessment has scarcely begun.”*⁵⁰

Reynolds described missionaries as philanthropic individuals, often lonely figures, attracting derision as they stood out against colonial opinion, and concluded that humanitarian opposition to the destruction of Aboriginal society has yet to receive the attention that it deserves.⁵¹

Kenelm Burridge wrote that the impulse to mission did not spring from the intellect but that it was only by dedication and love, and by ignoring the given in reasonable possibility, that "mission" could be effected. He probed the motivation of the missionary with the following words:

*“Pioneers in the potentials of human being, move today as they have moved in the past into those realms of endeavor that experience born of the purely socio-cultural tells them are futile, dangerous, impolitic, or even impossible. That is why they are missionaries.”*⁵²

He saw that their lives of sacrifice bore fruit both in projects of social justice, and in the realm of meaning brought about by Christian belief. Christians pioneered all or most of the social services now in secular hands and missionaries have been and to some extent remain founders of development.

Education, health services and pastoral care were means by which both Government and Church could be supportive of self management and self reliance in a community. Efforts were made to train and educate young people to take their future into their own hands.

Bain Attwood has noted the lack of scholars who examined patterns of acculturation and accommodation between Aborigines and Europeans. He saw that in some cases, bonds of loyalty and affection developed and kinship reciprocity uncovered a dual consciousness. In the same way, for some Aborigines, their appropriation of Catholicism was a way of expressing their own agency and power Fr Seamus, General of the Order, 5 October 1997 told 350 people at Rossmoyne:

“I really have a conviction that our future depends on this, our future as an institute and how we react to what we call the Pallottine family, the UAC, and the whole concept of collaboration,”

At the time of writing no Pallottines are ministering in the Kimberley. Their former missions have become Aboriginal Communities where Catholic Church presence is maintained if the Aborigines so request.

Chapter 4

Aboriginal Legislation in Western Australia

1829

After 1829 when Western Australia was considered part of the dominions of the British Crown, all inhabitants – including Aborigines – were regarded as British subjects.

1880

In 1880, when the Kimberley was colonized, colonial policy legitimized white pastoralists as taking up Aboriginal homelands. Springs and water holes were controlled by them. Their sheep and cattle destroyed native vegetation.

Aborigines now worked on the stations for keep, or on the roads in chain gangs. They were fringe dwellers, given ‘rations’. The diseased were set aside in remote hospitals.

1884

When Fr Duncan McNab travelled north on horseback from Perth he found no Aborigines on the waterless stony reserves set aside for them by the Government.

1897

1901

Western Australia was given its independence from the Colonial Government. Bishop Gibney of Perth from 1887, urged Sir John Forrest to fix an equal capitulation grant for all children born of Aboriginal women kept at any mission before he left for Canberra.⁵³ Forrest did nothing.

1901 - 1902

This 'privilege' of citizenship for Aboriginal Peoples ended with the passing of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act of 1900 which determined that Aborigines were not to be counted in the population of Australia and the passing of the Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902 which determined that they were not allowed to vote.

1905

The 1905 Aboriginal Act of WA had two precepts:

1. Tutored assimilation to uplift them to the level of our civilisation.
2. Assimilation by breeding out colour 'black blood breeds out in three generations'.⁵⁴

1926

Elkin, an anthropologist and an Anglican priest, accepted an Australian National Research Fellowship to make a survey of the Aborigines of the Kimberley Division. His work exposed the weaknesses of government policies. He wrote:

*A protector of Aborigines contributed to the costs of a punitive expedition in 1926, justifying his actions by saying that Aborigines had to be given a lesson from time to time. At least 20 Aborigines had been killed and their bodies burned in 'revenge' for a speared white man. The punitive party consisted of two police constables, four other whites, and seven 'blacks', with 400 to 500 rounds of ammunition and 42 horses and mules. Two constables were charged with murder but freed of the charge and transferred south.*⁵⁵

1930

By 1930 Australia had been through a First World War, been swept by deadly post war flu and was in the throes of world depression. The Chief Protector of Aborigines reported:

The physical wellbeing of Aborigines was deteriorating, particularly that of the children. The ration foodstuffs supplied did not provide for the special

*requirements needed by children. In most cases Aborigines were eking out an existence on Government rations, designed some years previously to be an aid when bush foods had been available. The inadequate ration had become practically the sole diet of the Aboriginal people. An increasing number of escapees from the Moore River native settlement were of concern. Also, deaths due to influenza and pulmonary causes were steadily on the increase. Clothing was insufficient. Garments were issued once a year only, at the beginning of winter. Hospital accommodation was urgently needed at Wyndham.*⁵⁶

In the Kimberley most of the 2000 whites lived in Broome, Derby and Wyndham. Only about 100 white people living inland. Fewer than a dozen white women were resident between Wyndham and Derby.

In the outback two or three white men or a single white man, lived alone on a cattle station, in a settlement, a police station or an out camp. Hall's Creek had a white population of 14, and Fitzroy Crossing six white people, the pub-keeper, the policeman, the postmaster and staff. Nearly 15,000 Aborigines, which included 2000 workers, lived tribally on stations or in bush camps.⁵⁷

1933

There were 666 Aboriginal children of mixed descent of whom 327 were under 14 years of age. About $\frac{1}{3}$ lived in Broome, $\frac{1}{3}$ at Beagle Bay and Lombadina, $\frac{1}{3}$ at stations or in bush camps. In Derby the only outsiders were the Aborigines with 72 children of mixed descent.⁵⁸ Wyndham had 124 children of mixed descent with $\frac{1}{3}$ of these in the Forrest River Mission; Halls Creek had a total of 34, nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of whom were at Moola Bulla; Fitzroy Crossing had 42, and Turkey Creek had six.⁵⁹

1934

In an article 'The Aborigines, Our National Responsibility' Elkin described the Aboriginal principle of reciprocity, the decision making role of elders, and the religious sanction for their authority.

In a second article, the same year, ‘Anthropology and the future of the Australian Aborigine’, he wrote:

*“It was obvious that in this time of transition we should pay due respect to their secret religious life and take care not to undermine the authority of the elders.”*⁶⁰

Elkin argued for Aboriginal leadership so that the traditional society could make adjustments to rapidly changing conditions. Aborigines had the same inherent capacity to adjust to change as other people if decisions were arrived at in ways which they recognised as valid. This required a degree of autonomy and in tribal areas could cushion the impact of the new economy:

*Since the old men were custodians of native law and custom, all problems of racial and cultural contact should be settled through them so that social cohesion of the tribe could be maintained.*⁶¹

With a view to legislation, the Moseley Royal Commission interviewed deprived and victimized Aboriginal women in the Broome area. Educated at Beagle Bay Mission, they claimed discrimination and united to better their conditions. The idea of eventual assimilation of the Aborigines into the white mainstream was debated publicly. Elkin, Moseley⁶², Neville and Paul Hasluck became leading figures in controversies about policies to bring about change. Elkin later claimed that anthropology encouraged the humanitarian societies.⁶³

1938

Elkin published *The Australian Aborigines*⁶⁴ hoping that with new understandings of Aborigines, administrative officers and missionaries would formulate ways of helping Aborigines to adjust to changes. He stressed the importance of Aboriginal languages and warned that ‘*Winning the Children*’ caused a dichotomy in Aboriginal social life.

The biggest issue facing Australia was the status of Aborigines of mixed descent. Each was now expected to conform to the dominant

community's demands though formerly forced to be fringe-dwellers.⁶⁵

1944

The Citizenship Rights Act of 1944 was an attempt to soften the divide through the Natives. A magistrate could provide a certificate of citizenship to a successful Aboriginal applicant who was then 'deemed to be no longer an Aborigine for the purpose of the Native Administration Act, or any other Act' and forbidden to associate with his own people. The overwhelming fact remained; one could be an Aboriginal or a citizen, but not both. Without a certificate, an Aboriginal person could not vote in state and federal elections.

1946-47

The proposal to use the Australian desert to test British nuclear weapons became public. The media articles made clear the existence of two worlds in Australia. The vast majority of its people lived in a world of houses serviced with water and power. The other world was inhabited by Indigenous Australians. Most had lost their lands and lived in poverty on the fringes. Many were not eligible for the done. State laws controlled where many of them could live, where could or couldn't move and whom they could marry. Many were not legal guardians of their own children and were not allowed to manage their earnings.

Some, who were aware in Indigenous disadvantage, saw the possibilities of a grass-roots reform movement to bring the rights and protections of Australian citizenship to all Australians.

In 1947, Charles Duguid, the founder of Ernabella Mission, opposed the Woomera Rocket testing range. He predicted that its establishment would have a devastating effect on the lives of desert-dwelling Aboriginal people. His 1947 pamphlet, 'The Aborigines and the Rocket Range; set out his opposition.

1947-48

During the post war period there were marked changes in Australian

attitudes to Aborigines. Servicemen had made friends in the army and in Aboriginal Communities. In 1947 the first increase in subsidy for approved missions since 1917 was made. It rose from 26 cents a week to 30 cents in addition to free drugs, clothing, and blankets.

More progress in the advancement of Aboriginal Welfare was made in the 13½ years of administration by Middleton, Commissioner of Native Affairs 1948 - 1962, than in the preceding 120 years of the existence of Western Australia.

In 1948, Middleton, the new Commissioner of Native Affairs, reduced more than 70 restrictions on personal freedom. Government departments were unenthusiastic except for Health and Education. Some police were openly hostile. Middleton decided to work initially through missions catering for Aboriginal children.⁶⁶ Public servants continued to stereotype Aborigines no matter what legislation was passed. The Registrar General's Department wanted the actual caste of the parents on forms for registration of native births and deaths. Missionaries were told to record the caste of the deceased with the letters, FB or HC.⁶⁷

1950

Hasluck advocated that the Commonwealth pay attention to State administration of Native Affairs and cooperate with Christian Missions and outlined the context:

*When we enter into international discussions, and raise our voice, as we should raise it, in defence of human rights and the protection of human welfare, our very words are mocked by the thousands of degraded and depressed people who crouch on rubbish heaps throughout the whole of this continent. Let us cleanse this stain from our forehead. A total of approximately 72,000 Aborigines living in an expanding community of approximately 8,000,000 whites is so small it is manageable. We have on our hands a serious, but not a frightening problem the total number of Aborigines constitutes a social group within but not of the white community.*⁶⁸

1951

Hasluck made the statement:

*"I regard Missions as being valuable and important administrative adjuncts of the Department and missionaries as being vitally essential to the welfare of the Native race."*⁶⁹

Middleton's recognition was appreciated by the missionaries but it implicated them in administering the policy of assimilation. Middleton endeavoured to use the Catholic Church against Don McLeod by encouraging founding a Catholic Mission at White Springs.

Rowley in *Outcasts in White Australia* observed that missions, settlements, and pastoral properties were still treated as pensioners' institutions for these payments, and for child endowment. He claimed that one effect was to maintain and even increase the administrative intervention between the Aboriginal and his pension and create a vested interest in managing it. Controlled welfare prevented making mistakes but also prevented learning to manage one's own resources.⁷⁰

The 1905-1947 Native Administration Acts were amended in 1951, 1958, and 1964. An annual review of subsidies based on the variation in the cost of living was promised.⁷¹ By 1954 the bulk of restrictive legislation had been amended. Equality with Child Welfare payments in subsidised institutions for Native Children was achieved.⁷² These increases in subsidies removed money worries another step away from mission administration.

1957-58

In 1957 Gare's commission found that the majority of natives did not work under awards. Wages in the Kimberley ranged from 2/6 to £3 per week. Some part-Aborigines received the basic wage in the towns and the award wage on stations, but only a small portion. Nothing was altered in the pastoral industry.⁷³

In 1957, Duguid again spoke publicly of the responsibility that rested with the British, Australian, South Australian and Western Australian

governments towards desert nomads whose territory they had invaded. All that the Federal Government had done was to appoint two welfare officers to inform nomadic peoples about the nuclear tests. Only one of these men spoke an Aboriginal language, the vast distances (thousands of square kilometres from Woomera, northwest of Adelaide, to the north-western coast of Australia), and few roads, it's hard to imagine how they could have achieved this.

According to the Graydon Report of 1957, malnutrition, blindness and disease were commonplace among Aboriginal peoples living traditionally in the central Australian desert. The extreme conditions were made worse because of their lands being used by the Australian-British desert. The extreme conditions were made worse because of their lands being used by the Australian-British atomic testing program.

In addition, a natural oasis at Sladen Waters was chosen as the place for a weather station to support the rocket-launching program, upsetting the natural rhythm of hunter and hunted. The Commonwealth program was having a negative impact on the people living difficult lives on the reserve. When the Western Australian Government voiced concern about the nomads in the vicinity, the Commonwealth Government reminded it that Aboriginal affairs were a state responsibility – in this case, that of the Western Australian Government.

The Warburton Ranges controversy horrified the Australian public which rejected that it was a matter for the states. Activists were able to build support for their campaigns as a result of community conscience. Pressure on politicians and effective use of the media slowly built the case for social and legislative change. It reached its zenith ten years later in the 1967 result.

In 1958, in the Annual Report, the Commissioner of Native Welfare wrote about assimilation:

The policy and the term assimilation postulates a state of mind, our mind, in regard to natives being a people apart - it appears therefore to be

aligned with the policy referred to elsewhere as 'apartheid'. The words 'assimilation' and 'apartheid' do not have a similar meaning. The first meant to absorb or take up into the current population whereas the second means to keep apart from the ordinary population.

It has caused legislation to be passed which specifically denies them citizenship rights. The whole concept therefore is wrong; legislation which is based on false assumption should not be permitted to remain on the statutes, and it should not be necessary for us to wait until the victims of such legislation have to put it to the test of a court of Appeal, that is, if they had the right to appeal. As it happens, at the moment, they have not, because of the power entrusted to the State in respect to Aborigines by the Commonwealth constitution of 1901.⁷⁴

1959

The amendments to the *Social Services Act* made it possible for Aboriginal Australians to apply for the old age pension, but Norman Bilson had no proof of age. He had been born into his traditional, tribal world and thus his birth was not registered in the white man's records. When he came to Mary Bennett for assistance in 1960 Norman Bilson was an old man, his eyesight affected by cataracts. He claimed that he had worked as a stockman since the end of the First World War and dictated a letter to Mary Bennett to be sent to the District Officer for Native Welfare applying for the old age pension. The letter ended: *"I am not up to work now. My age is seventy. I believe I am seventy because I was a man when the First War started"*.

In response to this application the District Officer asserted dogmatically: *"Norman Bilson is not seventy years of age as stated by Mrs Bennett and is not yet old enough for the Age Pension."*

Over the next year, as Norman's sight continued to deteriorate and he was unable to work, Mary Bennett and Norman Bilson gathered evidence of his eligibility for a pension. A white pastoralist supported his age claim and a medical doctor confirmed that Norman did indeed have trouble with his eyesight due to cataracts.

Bennett wrote to the Native Welfare officer on his behalf. Finally, after numerous letters and the gathering of medical testimony, Norman was granted an invalid pension. This would not have been possible without the support of Mary.⁷⁵ Eventually, the appeal had been given recognition.⁷⁶

1960

In 1960, Government subsidies for missions had been placed on the same basis as those of Government assisted institutions for white children under the Child Welfare Department where there was provision of free medical and health service, transport, and other incidental expenditure.

1964

Strehlow wrote *Assimilation Problems: The Aboriginal Viewpoint*. In this he stated that he would not advocate an “assimilation” concept which involved the complete cultural and physical annihilation of the original inhabitants of Australia. Just as the koala, the possum, the platypus, the kangaroo, and the emu deserve to be protected so that they can continue to exist in their own original habitat, so too the Australian Aboriginal deserved to be given a chance to work out a destiny within the general framework of Australian society without being forced to give up completely every element of cultural and racial identity.⁷⁷

Tatz in *Race Politics in Australia: Aborigines, Politics and Law*, pointed that the Western Australian Electoral Act could be manipulated to allow exclusion. Aborigines were excluded from social service benefits, and when they were included they found their monies paid to government, mission societies and pastoralists as an alleged offset against their maintenance.

Parity of esteem in paid employment and membership of Labour unions had to wait until after 1967 when the Government assimilation policy was replaced by a self-determination policy.

The 1967 Referendum

The referendum of 1967 was a landmark because it was an attempt to heal the dysfunction of an integral part of the Australian population. It marked a healing of the relations between Aboriginal and white Australians at end of one epoch – and the beginning of another.⁷⁸

Dysfunction means a disturbance or abnormality in the function of an organ or part. A body relies on its organs functioning normally. The Dysfunction of Government Policies stopped the Australian population from acting normally.

The detrimental effects of protective legislation had removed Aboriginal peoples from the mainstream. This disempowerment continued through an assimilation policy until 1967 when self determination policies enabled them to take initiative for their own destiny.

The ‘Yes Vote’ wiped out two sections of the Australian constitution concerning Aborigines, one had excluded Aborigines from the census, and the other prevented the Federal Government from making laws especially for Aborigines.⁷⁹

Aboriginal agency and political power for Aborigines were actually not recognised in 1967. The referendum empowered (but did not require) the Commonwealth to enact ‘special laws’ for members of ‘the Aboriginal race’ and provided for Aboriginal people to be counted in the national census.

The right to vote was determined not by the Constitution but by legislation enacted by the state and federal parliaments. Prior to the Reformation, the Church had assumed responsibility in response to Christian teaching and care for the under privileged. It not only trained people for the field but slowly established a strong administrative structure at each Mission and throughout the region.

After the Referendum, this structure remained, but in Western Australia, there developed an unwritten policy of side-stepping mission administrations with new direct funding for community administration. Major changes in traditional roles led to complex issues for people, Church and government to struggle through. Until the Referendum there had been little interest at either State or Federal levels of Government in Aboriginal Affairs. There was little money available to fund programs for development. When the statement is made that Aboriginal people ‘got the vote’ or ‘citizenship’ as a result of the referendum, the words ‘vote’ and ‘citizenship’ need to be understood in terms of a code which has both literal and symbolic meaning.

For the lawyer the issue is a question of law; for an Aboriginal person, it may be a statement about lived experience, about when he or she was allowed (by, for example, local officials) to enrol, or felt disposed to enrol, or was encouraged to enrol to vote.⁸⁰

After the Referendum, the Liberal Government formed the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, a small unit that was part of three different departments in less than five years. Its main role was to offer the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs advice and it also liaised with the states.

Major changes in traditional roles led to a maze of complex issues for people, church and government to struggle through. The perennial problems which had accompanied the spread of the Church’s mission in the Kimberley, distance, harsh conditions, financial worries, shortage of personnel, would prove straightforward compared with new developments after the 1967 Referendum.

As from 9 October 1967, the Award applied to a native who was less than full descent (or to a full descent if he or she had a Certificate of Citizenship) and was a member of the Australian Workers’ Union.

1968

The classification involving Aborigines of full descent was covered by

the Award on and after 1 December 1968, subject to the native being a member of the Australian Workers' Union.⁸¹

After the Referendum more legislation was needed to make Aborigines eligible for wages. The Federal Pastoral Award applied only to an employee who was a member of the Australian Workers' Union from which Aborigines had been excluded.

Aborigines found themselves in a period of rapid transition and under stress in adjusting to the changes. Many were uprooted from life on a cattle station when wages were raised.⁸² Either State or Federal and Industrial unions policed appropriate industrial awards on behalf of their members. Confusion and consequent apathy led to indifference to the future of their children and as in the past, missionary organizations accepted this as inevitable and took over the education of the children. Interest did not appear to be shown in the welfare of Aboriginal communities. There was even less money to fund programmes for development. In 1968 the Minister of Native Welfare rejected a proposed station skills training program at Forrest River Mission but had its population transferred to Wyndham.

Wyndham's Aboriginal Reserve was a rock-strewn compound with a series of corrugated iron buildings with poor ventilation and few amenities. It had been built for 96 people. When the Forest River mission closed, it housed up to 200 people.

Public expectation that Aborigines would find adequate accommodation at the Wyndham Reserve moved Mr Ridge, MLA for the Kimberley, to publicly denounce the unfair decision to house the Aborigines on the reserve:

"It is totally unfair to dump Aborigines on a reserve and demand that from those conditions they drag themselves towards a style of life they either don't understand or don't want. It may be true that it works for some people, but it is obvious that its failure rate is immense and its injustice

huge.”⁸³

1970

When Kimberley Aborigines were granted drinking rights in 1970, some of the Forrest River Mission refugees slipped into chronic alcoholism. Notions of integration and cultural plurality replaced the one way process of assimilation which had formerly been the official policy for social change. Assimilation had implied a two-way interaction of minority groups with the dominant society. Cultural plurality regarded Australia as a mosaic of cultural groups forming a modern Australian society.

1971 Census

In 1971 the Census recorded the Kimberley population as 14,602 persons, of whom 6,305 were Aborigines.

1972

In December, Whitlam came to power and the change in Federal Government brought changes in National and State policies for Aboriginal education and welfare. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs was created.

The Annual report was the last to be submitted in the name of the Department of Native Welfare.

The 29000 persons of Aboriginal descent, now living in Western Australia would, for the first time since early European settlement will be eligible for direct assistance in matters of human social need on exactly the same basis as all other Western Australians.

1973 ‘Self-determination’

Gordon Bryant, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, implemented the ‘Self-determination’ policy which took shape in 1973. It sought to transfer major decisions into the hands of the Aboriginal communities

and included the decision to select their own advisers.⁸⁴ In 1973, the first developmental funds were made available through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, conditional upon the legal incorporation of Aboriginals into separate all-Aboriginal organisations.

Funding was directed to these bodies. Skills required to function as incorporated bodies were not available within the Aboriginal community. Rather than using the existing skills in Mission administrations the appointment of European accountants and community advisers was encouraged, and a skeleton field operation of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established to liaise with the Aborigines through the employed white staff. In this manner Mission administrations in the Kimberley were effectively side-stepped.

This unwritten policy remained in the Perth Regional Office and field offices of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, unlike the Northern Territory where Mission administrations were seen as the basis for policy and programme delivery.⁸⁵

In those communities which took over from Church administration, Church personnel were powerless. The Aborigines called in white administrators, store keepers, book keepers, accountants, health workers and state school teachers while they allowed themselves to be subjected to paternalism of all kinds. Laziness, cards and alcohol began to destroy the moral fibre of the people.⁸⁶ Extensive grants to encourage community development among Aboriginal communities gave them opportunities to determine their futures if they chose to do so. Money for the administration of missions began to pass through community advisers employed by the communities.

1980/81

Programming guidelines 1980/81 constituted a description of the means to deliver funds to Aboriginal communities, the bulk of which were bureaucratic procedures and expectations. They also indicated the level

of dependence and accountability required of Aboriginal communities.

The relationship between the Church and the Aborigines revealed conflict between search for a Catholic identity and the persistence of regional loyalties and prejudices. Like the Government, the administration of the Church and ministry within in the Church became heavily reliant on the services of professional white people.

In the 1980's, a consultancy was provided to review the Catholic Church situation. The Review Team was struck by the Aborigines' creative method of adapting to European authority, its standards and institutions, to solve problems. Instead of a dying culture, it was not only surviving, but thriving. The consultants therefore revised their basic assumptions to write their report.

The camp-ethic had its basis in the semi-nomadic lifestyle, one which gave little value to material things and great value to social contracts and relationships. A process of 'Aboriginalisation' took place in the new environment. Being dynamic, Aboriginal culture was actively and continuously able to absorb, modify and interpret European cultural influences and expressions so that they could be absorbed and encompassed as integral parts of it. This made self-management for Aboriginal communities far more demanding of the individuals and the Councils than is expected for other Australians. This was because the means and processes being demanded for the achievement of the objectives of self management were European and foreign to Aboriginal culture. Communities became accountable to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in a performance manner - reward and punishment - to become eligible for more or less funds

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs introduced an implied policy of integrative development, with a stated policy of self-management, self-sufficiency, or separate development, which it delivered in a manner reflecting a policy of paternalism and protectionism, or dependent and conditional development.

The consultants recommended that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs make its policy toward individual Aborigines and communities

*unambiguous in the context of self-management, and that it develop program delivery guidelines that were consistent with the policy.*⁸⁷

The Federal Government began to demonstrate its new responsibility for Aboriginal people through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. This department no longer exists, but was encompassed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC), which has since been abolished. The function of both was to fund programmes for Aboriginal benefit.

In Western Australia, there developed an unwritten policy of side-stepping mission administrations with new direct funding for community administration.

While the Church had some freehold titled land, most was conditionally leased for the use and benefit of Aboriginal people. The nature of use and expenditure of the income derived from enterprises operated by missionaries (usually with full cooperation and employment of Aboriginal people) had been the decision of each superintendent. Expenditure included Aboriginal housing, water systems, power generators, roads, plant, clothing and food, education in addition to accommodation and other domestic facilities for the missionaries. Since its inception in Western Australia the Department of Aboriginal Affairs appeared to have regarded the Church's continued involvement with the Aboriginal communities with suspicion and concern, possibly seeing it as a competitor rather than as a colleague or partner. The Church exacerbated this mistrust by remaining aloof from politics and consequent bureaucratic changes. Governments found it difficult to accept.

There was a problem with delineation of Mission land/Community land, Mission buildings/Community buildings. Prior to this a Mission settlement was seen to be a total entity, not divided between Mission and Community. Ownership of services and facilities were among issues identified by Community Councils which agreed to the separation of their settlements into two entities in response to Departmental definition

and criteria for eligibility for funds. An extension of this conflict lay in the issue of ownership of services and infrastructure like power, water and sewerage, and of facilities such as the store, bakery and butchery.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs initiated a process involving the acquisition of land and improvements, services, facilities and infrastructure from the Church in Mission settlements. The Bishop of Broome stated that the Church only used land and improvements for the benefit of Aboriginal people. It could not sell or exchange or use land and improvements for any other purpose than those stated in the conditions of tenure.

If the Church decided to withdraw from the Missions, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' policy on compensation denied the Church any rights to a cash settlement resulting from the transfer of land or capital improvements made on behalf of the Aboriginal people. The Church was in a 'no-win' situation if it continued as an active participant in the development of Aboriginal communities it did so at its own expense, paying for services, staff and, use of infrastructure, (charged at commercial rates) as the government financed the transfer of land and improvements to Aboriginal community incorporation.

If the Church was not in a financial position to support its continued involvement in the Missions, it must withdraw without financial acknowledgment or compensation for the significant contribution it would leave in the Missions.

New national federal legislation that defined and protected the rights of indigenous children and their families could ensure that practices which take away the rights of individuals never occur again. The Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNACK), has called for national public enquires into past government policies of removing Aboriginal and Islander children from their families.

Women and their dependents constituted most of the refugees who came to missions for protection but they should never have had to stay there in

a situation of trauma. It seemed to be the best option at the time. But literally thousands of Aboriginal adults lived with the trauma caused by removal policies. Many of the mothers and fathers who had their children taken away were guilt and grief stricken while their children were traumatised by the thought that they were unwanted. Identity conflicts occurred in these children, now adults, who had lived their lives as non-Aboriginal people.⁸⁸ Senior women of the Warmun Community asked Sister Veronica to help them record their stories. Their accounts focus on traditional life, contact with non-Aboriginal settlers, survival, the challenge of station life, the formation of the Warmun Community and the establishment of Ngalangangpum School.⁸⁹

Following government legislation which granted Aboriginal workers a just wage, the majority of Aboriginal families were no longer welcome on the stations. Their dismissal came as another sickening blow to those who had struggled to maintain their identity. People were now forced to leave behind the landscapes with which they had become so familiar. Many Kija-speaking people opted to settle with relatives at the former Turkey Creek holiday camp and others drifted to the town scene where a whole set of new problems awaited them. Fortunately for the Kija people, their common language influenced families to settle along the banks of Turkey Creek.

Chapter 5

The Past, the Present and the Future

A Split in Australian Experience

David J Tacey argued in *Edge of the Sacred Transformation in Australia*,⁹⁰ that a split between the spiritual and the secular in Australian experience along racial lines is apparent where black Aboriginal Australians are frequently depicted as possessing sacred values, truths, and visions, and as inhabiting sacred space. Because of this split, the majority of Australians do not have access to the stories about the sacredness of the land. On the other hand, for generations, “dispossession, unemployment, discrimination and loss of status have prevented equality of person for Aborigines.”⁹¹ It has taken years for mutually recognised agreements with regard to human rights to evolve.:⁹²

In the 1940’s, Bishop Raible was negotiating with the Archbishop of Perth about places and scholarships to educate potential indigenous leaders.

From the late 1950’s, the Pallottines established hostels in Perth to help Aboriginal students from the Kimberley and elsewhere in WA to be educated in mainstream schools in Perth to get employment, own their own homes and hold their heads high in the community.

Fr John Lümmer told his part in the story:

In 1951, as a young priest, I was appointed to look after 40 aboriginal boys at the Pallottine Mission School in Tardun. I found that, after primary school, nothing further was available for them.

In 1955, Fr Girke built the Pallottine Mission Centre – in the Riverton area, now called Rossmoyne – with a small wing where ‘smart’ boys from

Tardun could board.

I was transferred to Riverton to help Fr Omasmeier in the parish and look after the boys. The first boy was Harold Little who made a success of his studies and later became a well known footballer of the Perth Football Club. About this time also, Bishop Raible began to send boys from the Kimberley to Rossmoyne.

In 1961, a large house, Villa Maria Lodge, was built so that promising aboriginal girls would have a place to board while attending secondary schools.

From the humble start of one boy, we finished up with more than 100 students, boys and girls, attending secondary schools.⁹³

1965

Balgo Mission had been re-established on the new 3,000 acre freehold location within the Balwina native reserve. A large number of the Kukatja tribe, which had walked in to the old mission from the Great Sandy Desert in 1948, had been followed by numbers of the Walmadjeri tribe and others. The community then totalled about 400 people.

In 1970 – 1974 Fr Ray Hevern, the new superintendent of the mission set up the infrastructure to change from a Mission to an Aboriginal Community.

In 1972, Fr Anthony Peile was appointed to Balgo. His dedication to the people was complete and constant and he has made their insights and understanding of the human condition available to a wide audience in a book, *Body and Soul: An Aboriginal View* that was published posthumously by the Pallottines in 1997, as a special tribute to the Kukatja people who live in the far south east of the Kimberley Region..

By 1973 Assimilation had been discarded as an official policy of social change and been replaced by a more benign but a less clearly defined notion of self determination and cultural plurality. Assimilation had implied a two-way interaction of minority groups with the dominant society whereas Multiculturalism regarded Australia as a mosaic of cultural groups forming a

modern Australian society.

Father Kriener told about some his experiences at this time:

I came to Halls Creek in April 1973. There was a big white wedding for Sean Murphy, an Irishman who lived out of town and was a helicopter mechanic.

I had to find my way. I made regular visits to all stations. Fr Peter Willis introduced me to the Eastern Stations, Gordon Downs and Nicholson.

November to December, I concentrated on Halls Creek. I baptized twelve Red Hill people of No 4 Reserve who had contact with Bishop Raible and Fr Nicholas Dehe. Some of them spoke Jaru and came from Balgo.

In the three Aboriginal Communities of Turkey Creek, Red Hill and Ringers Soak, there was readiness for Baptism and development of Aboriginal Rites in each place. For example, the 'Spirit Dance', the 'Offertory Dance' with a new development of Junbas, Songs in Jaru and so on.⁹⁴

1976 – 1977

The Federal Government purchased a number of station leases. Some groups of Aborigines began to move from missions to newly established outstations. A list of 14 Major Native Reserve Areas is found in *Aboriginal Land Rights: A Handbook*, which gives the location, area and information.⁹⁵ Two of the pastoral leases were those of Mindigungu Community (Billiluna 162, 889 ha) and Mulan Community (Lake Gregory 271,796 ha).⁹⁶

By 1984, European and Australian Catholic Missionaries to the Kimberley totalled 707 Persons. Women Religious 253; Male Religious 181; Male and Female Lay Missionaries 273.⁹⁷ Since that time numbers have continued to increase by many other volunteers. The communal spirit of missions enabled a universal faith communion to come into being within the social fabric of the wider community and the support and agency of some Aborigines helped create a strong positive social force in the

Kimberley.

The Present

Today Broome has outgrown itself. Houses are expensive and many are either owned or rented by mining workers. The town is dependent on backpackers to provide small essential services. Around Broome the price of land is pushing out the middle man. The airport, desperate to expand, is locked in by land title. But Broome is too close to Singapore and Bali, much closer than Perth, so there will be a fight. Land will be resumed to extend it.

The Kimberley is a land full of mystery and beauty and also bountiful natural resources. It's those resources that include gas and minerals which are now being eyed off by the world's miners. Queenie recalled the destruction of the women's sacred site of the Barramundi Dreaming, by the Argyle Diamond Mine.

She said, *“Right back from the Ngarrangkarni all those old women looked after that place and kept it safe. Now it was our turn and we failed. It makes me strange and sad inside.”*(pp 134-143 *From Digging Sticks to Writing Sticks: Stories of Kija Women*)

The Way Ahead

The Northern East Kimberley has a serious economic development problem: around one half of its resident adult population representing the majority of its Aboriginal population, remains overly dependent on welfare, structurally detached from the labour market, and ill-equipped to engage it. More disconcerting, perhaps, is a prognosis that these indicators will worsen as a consequence of rapid population growth if recent trends in the rate of Aboriginal job acquisition continue, even assuming that the Argyle Diamond Mine targets for local employment are met. From a policy perspective,

‘business as usual’ is simply insufficient to meet the expanding needs of the regional population.

Clearly mines such as ADM can play an important part in regional development by providing a local employment base, by developing local skills, by stimulating local Indigenous business activity, by adding to the stock of regional infrastructure, and more generally by generating regional economic multipliers. However, the net impact of these inputs will be insufficient in themselves to redress the legacy of past neglect and they will not alter regional social indicators. Deficits in labour force status, income share, educational status, housing, and health among Aboriginal people in the region are of a scale that only a partnership approach to regional development involving both industry and government could hope to redress.

Furthermore, the need for wider investment in regional human capital is immediate as the impost on government of sustaining the status quo in terms of welfare spending, lost tax revenue, foregone education outcomes, maintaining the criminal justice system (to say nothing of the actual cost of crime), public housing provision, and health care are high, and can only increase given the growing weight of population numbers.

There are agreements, treaties and negotiated settlements (atns) between other Mining Companies and Indigenous Communities:

Midwest Gas Pipeline Agreement

Model Low Impact Exploration Access Agreement

Kimberley Land Council Argyle Diamond Mine

Memorandum of Understanding BHP Area C

Agreement

Tanami Mining Agreements

Western Mining Corporation (WMC) Olympic Dam Agreements⁹⁸

Natural gas has been found on the Kimberley North West Coast. Some

argue it is a cheaper, greener solution than oil. The biggest prize is the offshore Browse Basin, which holds huge gas reserves. The *remote Maret Islands off the far north-west coast* are the desired site of a \$40 billion liquefied natural gas plant for a Japanese company, Inpex.

Traditional Aborigines believe they're entitled to financial rewards. The Kimberley Land Council is agitating for money from resources development to flow to Aboriginal communities. Wayne Bergmann, Kimberley Land Council is saying,

"These are multi billion dollar projects and traditional owners should expect no less than a multi- billion dollar deal. Our people are living in absolute poverty and crisis. We can't turn our back on that. We've got a responsibility."

Frank Davey, a Bardi Elder said,

"Money is not really important to us, our culture is more important. It's a very hard thing for us to sell. We never ever sold any of our culture. And we are there to protect."

Albert Wiggan a Bardi man comments,

*"The only way you can really truly grasp the Kimberley is through your heart. It is the environment, it is the country and it's a land that makes us who we are. Without the land, and without the country, we belong to nothing and we end up nothing."*⁹⁹

Like it or not, without strong leadership the mineral boom will swallow most of the Kimberley driven by the insatiable appetite for minerals. A *Four Corners Program* on the mineral boom demonstrates how the recent changes in the Western Australian Government in September 2008 gives a new dimension to the situation but there is no doubt that the future of the Kimberley is reliant on Mineral Companies that have years of exploration behind them by criss-crossing the outback with exploratory grids. The past is accessible, the future guess work, but many will put their money on Asia.

Current Examples of Secondary and Tertiary Education for Aborigines

Individuals have lit a candle of hope to change things for the better. In Victoria, a Jewish woman, Sandra Bardas was among those who provided support and friendship to an Aboriginal family that dreamed of having a secondary school for their students in 1980.

Lois Peeler is currently President of Worawa Aboriginal College, an Independent Aboriginal College in Victoria. She organized coming together for the Yapaneyepuk Conference held at the Melbourne Casino to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Referendum and 25 years of existence for Worawa Aboriginal College. Highly qualified Indigenous speakers delivered the main lectures during the Conference.

- Elmer Ghostkeeper – Order of the Métis Nations Canada, *Valuing Indigenous Perspectives Spirit Gifting: A Concept of Spiritual Exchange*
- Dr Chris Sarra – Director, Institute of Indigenous Leadership, Queensland
- Lois Peeler, Yorta Yorta Woman, Vice President Worawa Aboriginal College.
- Dr Mark Rose, Director Centre for Indigenous Education, The University of Melbourne

A dinner was held for about 500. The Aboriginal Guest Speaker, Paul Briggs came from Shepparton.

Elmer came from Canada where it is accepted that indigenous people have an inherent right to self- government stemming from their prior occupation of the continent and current developments.¹⁰⁰ When he wanted to go to University, he needed a language for entry to an Arts Course and his indigenous language was accepted as his qualification. Among other speakers was Waverley Stanley who conducts Yalari Scholarship Programs.

Yalari is giving Indigenous children from remote communities around Australia a first class education through full boarding scholarships at the highest achieving secondary schools. Yalari has a target to raise over \$20 million to support Indigenous students over the next ten years. They seek funding from corporate, government and individual benefactors to support their initiatives. They are providing programs which break the cycles of poverty, abuse of other misfortune by educating Aboriginal children. They believe that by educating a child you ultimately make the world a better place for all. Yalari is a not-for-profit organisation founded through a partnership Indigenous educationalist Mr Waverley Stanley and investment banker Mr Philip Latham.

1990

By the 1990's the Pallottines could no longer staff the hostels and the need for them was no longer pressing. Some of the land and the buildings were therefore sold to the Knights of the Southern Cross who have put them to good use in caring for aged members of the community.

The substantial amount of money that resulted has become the basis of the Aboriginal Scholarship scheme, a realistic way of continuing to offer educational opportunities to members of the aboriginal community. **101**

2000

A consultation was held with the members of the Region about the possibility of using half the money obtained from the sale of land at Rossmoyne to fund a scholarship for Aboriginal students. The members gave a decisive affirmation to the idea. The great benefits of the structure we adopted were twofold:

The monies were paid directly to the Universities or TAFE College where the students undertake their studies. The Trust was set up in such a manner that all donations to the trust were fully tax deductible.

To review applications, a committee of 6 people represent metro Perth, the Midwest (round Geraldton') and the Kimberley. There were 3 Pallottines, Bryan Tiernan, Ray Hevern and Michael McMahon, with 3 Aboriginal

people, Robert Isaacs, Donella Brown and Colleen Drage. Candidates nominated two referees. A member of the committee interviewed the referees.

The first scholarships were awarded for the 2001 scholastic year. The maximum length of the scholarship was for four years. It was awarded for one year and renewed for the following year on satisfactory completion of studies. In 2006 the scholarship was restricted to people studying in Western Australian institutes. Initially about \$60,000 was allocated; in 2008 about \$140,000 will be distributed. Already in 6 or 7 short years there have been: 2 doctor graduates, with four more entering the home straight in medicine; 5 teacher graduates; 2 social workers graduates; 2 scientist graduates; 1 modern music graduate; 2 lawyer graduates; and 1 media studies graduate.

The late Brs Eddie Wishart and Barry Hall had taken care of the financial side of the trust. They had been highly competent and cooperative. The operating cost of the trust was minimal as it spent only just over \$6000 in 7 years and distributed \$535,000 in fee payment over the same period. Close to \$160,000 fully tax deductible donations had been made.

2007

In 2007, Wirrumanu Adult Education came under the umbrella of the Luurnpa Catholic School in Balgo. Br Bernie Cooper was Principal and Sr Nola Goodwin was the administrator and dealt with the general running of the Centre. Br Cal Cusack continued with the Kukatja language lessons, some administrative tasks and later on in the year he also managed the data base computer for the St John of God Sisters.

Eva Nagomara worked as the liaison community person and Miriam Baadjo was the arts Co-ordinator. TAFE also employed two people, David and Tammie Madden, who resided and provided courses at Balgo at the Adult Education Centre.

Classes in basic Kukatja (the most common of the local languages spoken

in Balgo) continued this year in a slightly different form. The purpose was to help those non indigenous people who were interested in learning Kukatja, and separate classes were still planned for both the beginners and those who had already learned something of the language. However the weekly session of an hour was to be divided in two sections. Fr Matt Digges, assisted by some of the local people, was to focus on the speaking of the language, and its cultural settings; Bro. Cal was to teach the reading and writing of the language; with the teachers alternating between the “beginners” and the “advanced”.¹⁰²

2008

On the 13th February we all witnessed the extraordinary events around the Government’s apology to our indigenous people. It touched an emotional chord rarely felt so strongly in this country. Father Ray Hevern, the Australian Regional Leader of the Pallottines in Australia wrote about the sorry declaration:

“Standing alone in the crowd on the Perth Esplanade lawn at 7.00 am that morning, with the city skyline as a backdrop, and with the sun rising... the honest admission and sorrow for past wrongs seemed to be sincerely ‘owned’ by the Prime Minister, the expression of deep regret and request for forgiveness, the very strong resolve to make this moment one of stepping forward, the commitment that it must never happen again, and the release which that brought in terms of the palpable joy of a long, standing ovation. His words seemed to carry the crowd, certainly those near me, many of whose quiet tears suggested they were probably victims directly or indirectly.

I actually came away feeling more of a Christian! And glad that I belonged to a country that was no longer in denial but whose populace as a whole and not just a minority could, through its leaders, at last own its own history, admit the immeasurable harm that had been done, and respectfully and graciously apologise to the aboriginal people sitting in front of them. Perhaps the only point made that morning that is open to challenge is the speed with which the government hopes to make ‘close the gap’. Those

who have been confronted for a lifetime by the dysfunction that past policies brought about cannot imagine how a few years can really be sufficient to reverse them. Just the same we have to applaud the intention.”

Jon Sobrino wrote a book called *The eye of the Needle*. In it he mentioned his friend, Father Ignacio Ellacuria who was murdered in 1989. Two weeks before he died he said in a speech in Barcelona:

“The people who suffer so much in our world still want to live, still want to survive. They haven’t committed collective suicide. I hope we will continue working and trying to find solutions. That way the path to salvation may become clearer to us and our energy to walk along that path greater. It is love, in the final analysis that can purify the air. We need a culture of being human.”¹⁰³

Pat Heywood, former Executive Secretary of the UAC, wrote ‘Kimberley Connections’ in a recent Pallottine Newsletter:¹⁰⁴

“We saw Aboriginal representation in the welcomes to country, in ‘escorting’ the Holy Father across the harbour to Barangaroo, to the carrying of the Cross, and in the chanting of the Balgo women in the background of the way of the Cross.

And what a pleasure to see Bishop Saunders and his pilgrim group documented on SBS from the time they left Broome airport till the final Eucharist.

“No pain, no gain”, said Bishop Chris, to his shivering flock. “You’re not tourists, you’re pilgrims” was another of his rejoinders, as together they endured all the discomfort that pilgrims for centuries have taken on. Despite the cold and the four kilometre walk to Randwick, they laughed and chatted to passers-by and the camera men as well. Congratulations to all the pilgrims, all sisters and brothers in the one Lord of all. We pray that the Spirit of WYD remains strong in our minds and hearts.”

The Future lies with Education - It is in our hands to make it happen.

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