

1820 - 1896 The Writing on the Wall BRIGIDA NAILON CSB

The Writing on the Wall

Father Duncan McNab

1820 - 1896



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*I am
Yours truly
Duncan McNab*

The Writing on the Wall

I presume that he believes in the action of the
violence in human affairs. Whether he does
or not, I do. I believe in Mane, Thecel, Phares.
And therefore while he defends his action I
must redouble my endeavours for the benefit
of the Blacks. Again may I not ask, why
should the Government be so ready and lavish
of action and expenditure for their destruction,
and so cautious and parsimonious in their
efforts to civilize them? I am

Yours truly

Duncan McNab

"In conclusion you state that Mr Douglas is of opinion it would be better for the present to defer farther action in the settlement of the Aborigine. Does he mean at the same time to suspend the action of the Native Police against them?

Are they not everywhere perishing and requiring immediate succor?

I presume that he believes in the action of this violence in human affairs.

Whether he does or not, I do. I believe in Mane, Thecel, Phares.

And therefore while he defends his action I must redouble my endeavours for the benefit of the Blacks. Again may I not ask why should the Government be so ready and lavish of action and expenditure for their destruction and so cautious and parsimonious in their efforts to civilize them?"

McNab from Adelaide Street, Brisbane, 18 June 1877.

in reply to letter 6 June QSA, See pp 66-7

'Mene' God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end,
'Tekel' You have been weighed in the Balance and found wanting, and
'Phares' Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Editor's note: In the book of Daniel, 5: 25 - 28, Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall for Belshazzar,

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A copy of Father McNab's signature is reproduced in the frontpiece. Those letters not in his handwriting have been written by a person who copied an original.

Front Cover: *Father Duncan McNab 1820 - 1896*
"Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane" (7923)

Back Cover: *An Aborigine named Cumjan in Custody*
"Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane" (63494)

EDITOR'S NOTE

This book contains the names of some Aboriginal people who have died. This could cause some distress if read by relatives. For this reason care should be taken when distributing this book.

Because the words 'native', 'black or aborigine' used with lower case letters may offend some modern readers, we have used upper case letters throughout this text.

Marriage Law within the Catholic Church is still an issue with Aboriginal Cultural Patterns today.

The nitty gritty part of the problem is mentioned in a letter written by Father McNab to his Eminence from Victoria St Kilda Burnett Street, Wynwouled, 29 August 188?

An extract from this letter reads as follows:

"As it is part of the native Australian's system of marriage that, with the consent of the principal, either of the married couple may have connection with the nearest lateral relatives of the other, and without that consent, it is considered a light offence.

The faculty of dispensing from the impediment ad affinity should not be limited to a special number of cases.

In conclusion, trusting that some of these reflections may be useful to the missionaries I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Your Eminence'

Humble and grateful servant, D McNab"

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I am afraid I have trespassed too much upon
your valuable time by the length of this
communication. I hope however, you will
excuse me on account of the importance
of the subject in consideration.

I have the honor to remain your

humble servant.

D. M. S. Nash

❁

Dedicated to those
who have tried
to better conditions
for Australian Aborigines.

❁

Father Duncan McNab (7923)
1820 - 1896
"Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane"



Letter from Senator Aden Ridgeway



The letters of Father Duncan Mc Nab as assembled here provide a unique insight into this period of colonial Australia from 1820-1896.

Father McNab was an advocate for the rights of Aboriginal people within his own Roman Catholic Church and in his dealings with the fledgling bureaucracies across the country.

There will always be mixed interpretations and feelings about the role of missionaries in Australian history, but in this collection of correspondence we can clearly see the role played by many church missionaries as life saving buffers between Indigenous people and impatient Governments and a hostile and a dangerous frontier.

The letters also give us an invaluable first hand account of the micro and macro politics of the church and the nuts and bolts struggles of missionary life.

The language and concepts may read now as assimilationist and tinged with misguided missionary zeal but if seen in the context of the times, Father McNab dealt with Indigenous people as human beings and as independent agents. He advocated for their rights to land and culture and exposed the frontier massacres and killings.

“The Writing on the Wall” aids in our understanding of the complex and evolving relationships that comprise Australian history.

Aden Ridgeway

SENATOR FOR NSW

July 2004

Preface



This church history is told from white records, valuable, but different from ‘ethno-history’ and ‘oral history’. In 1979, while doing research on the mission of the Church in the modern world, as part of a course in theological studies at Catholic College Clayton, concern for the Aboriginal predicament led me to discover Father Duncan McNab. I came across the letters of Father McNab contained in documents such as *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council 1883, paper 16*, relative to the settlement and civilization of the Aborigines of Western Australia, and began to collect information about him.

At this time, Patrick O’Farrell, School of History, Sydney, sent me a copy of a letter forwarded to Rome through Archbishop Vaughan 10 July 1878. Accompanying it was a note as follows:

Duncan McNab (1820-1896) was a Scots priest who came to Australia (Melbourne) in 1867, intent on a mission to the Aborigines. He was refused permission to embark on this until 1875, when he went to Queensland, with the results reported in his letter 10 July 1878, to Archbishop Vaughan from Brisbane. Faced with opposition and indifference, he went to Rome in 1879 to appeal to the Pope for help for Aboriginal missions: the outcome was the Jesuit mission in Northern Australia. He commenced missions himself in Western Australia in 1883, but was dogged by lack of official interest and difficulties, which compelled him to retire to Melbourne in 1885, where he returned to parish work. A remarkable man, of great dedication and practicality in his work among the Aborigines, he is still remembered in the traditions of the tribes of Australia’s North-West.

In 1882, H J Summers, Editor of Publications, R H S Q wrote, “As you will appreciate, this is a subject of deep historical interest in Queensland.”²

Pope Paul VI made a hobby of collecting letters for seventy years. He called his collection ‘Testimonies of the Spirit’. Because this piece of research focuses on Duncan McNab’s correspondence, it is to be regarded as a testimony to his spirit. He arrived in Melbourne in 1867 at the age of 47. He died, a Golden Jubilarian in priestly ministry, in Richmond, Victoria in 1896. He worked in Australia for nearly 30 years,

eighteen of which were spent in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The rest were spent labouring for the betterment of the Aboriginal people. At the age of 57 he found himself caught up in communication with Aborigines who connected temporal time with eternal time by ritual, dreamtime mythology, and a corporate lifestyle radically different from that of westernised people. He loved them and was fascinated by their language and customs. The indiscriminate extermination of Aboriginal Peoples was well under way when he came into the picture and there was no leisure for him, impelled as he was by the urgency of the situation.

During the latter part of the 19th century, important documentation regarding Aboriginal need came from his pen and letters in both Church and State Archives show his commitment to civil rights for Aborigines.

Letters from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Rome encouraged the Australian hierarchy to do something specific and concrete for the Aborigines. They asked that the issue of Aboriginal Evangelisation be placed on the agenda for discussion at the 1869 Synod. The result was a Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Polding and the Bishops about Christian Duty to Aboriginal People:

We have dispossessed the Aborigines of the soil . . . in natural justice then we are held to compensation . . . Alas! It is shocking to think of what has, in fact been done. With very little, with short-lived exception, injustice, neglect, cruelty, and, a million times worse the actual teaching of vice have branded the annals of white men. The stain of blood is upon us- blood has been shed for otherwise than in self-defence – blood in needless and wanton cruelty.³

In 1885, at a later Synod, there were few Bishops experienced in working with Aborigines. Only Bishop Salvado from New Norcia spoke with authority and acceptance. Duncan McNab’s radically different recommendations from those of the ageing Bishop were not heard.

More than a century later his words are still here, some preserved in his handwriting, in English, Italian and Latin. They give a kaleidoscope of the Australian Church of his time and make a unique contribution to contemporary thought.

As his Australian story unfolds, the McNab philosophy in dealing with law, land, language and Aboriginal welfare is found in his writings in State and Church Archives in Australia and Rome.

According to Trudgeon, the aspect of language and its relationship to the learning process has not been truly understood by mainstream, monolingual Australian educationalists. McNab would have agreed with Trudgeon.

In his report to Archbishop Vaughan in 1878, Father McNab stated that imperfect knowledge of our language and the want of abstract terms in their own language were great impediments to Aboriginal improvement.

He wrote:

I also found that although the dialects are numerous and different they are intelligible over a great extent of country, and the languages comparatively few. Thus every little tribe between Brisbane and Rockhampton have what they call a language of their own, but which is only a dialect and intelligible to all, at any rate as far as Bundaberg seventy miles to the North of Maryborough, if not to Rockhampton and all over the Burnet district ... I still have a facility in detecting the philological relations of the words to those in European languages, and a couple of months after my return to Maryborough I expect to find out and arrange the grammatical inflections and construction of the language.

Though McNab's movements appear to be those of a 'freelance' missionary there are many indications that he worked only within the authority structure of the Catholic Church. Letters from Portland to the Melbourne Cathedral authorities are evidence of this attitude and in Queensland he saw himself within the jurisdiction of Bishop J Quinn. It was a reference from Archbishop Goold of Melbourne which recommended McNab to Cardinal Simeoni in Rome. In Western Australia, from Derby, Father McNab wrote to Bishop Griver in Perth giving him full powers of attorney over any monies or land given him by the Government.

Notes from Preface

¹ Enclosed with a letter from Patrick O'Farrell to Brigida Nailon, 30 October 1979.

² Summers to Nailon, 14 April 1982.

³ Reprinted in Patrick & Deirdre O'Farrell (eds) *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, vol 1, London, Chapman, 1969, pp 413-414.

Acknowledgements



Many people have helped me with this work.

Rev T J Linane helped with many of the original references, before the days of the Melbourne Historical Commission set up by Cardinal Knox.

The Sisters of St Brigid and the Pallottine Fathers have been supportive.

Father F Dennet SJ, a skilled archivist from Power Street Hawthorn gave invaluable help translating and interpreting.

Mark Cryle shared his insights through correspondence and sharing of documents.

A great deal of help came from librarians, among whom were Margaret Medcalf, Principal Librarian of Battye Library, Perth, M O'Keefe, Research Librarian, and the librarians from John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

In Perth, the acting archivists, Sisters Margaret Mary and Raphael RSM were most helpful.

Father J Silke who was working for the Victorian Bishops shared his research from Propaganda Fide, so that Bishop J Jobst, and Father Aldo Rebeschini were able to arrange for copies on microfilm from Propaganda Fide Archives.

There are many others to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, among them, P F Farrell, H G Summers, R Sneddon, Victor Feehan, Father Austin Cooper OMI, Frances O'Donoghue, ISMA, Gordan Reid, D F Bourke CM, Martin Wilson MSC, J Gibbney, F Byrne OSB, T P Boland CSSR, and M Dilworth OSB, from the Scottish Catholic Archives.

I was in Broome in 2000, when Bishop Christopher Saunders asked me to write about Father D McNab and Father N Emo, two of the early Catholic missionaries to the Kimberley. Joseph Vendargon, High-Tech Printing, offered to type-set the material for a publication and it was time to go through old files. After Carolyn Nunan, Max Trainor and Sister Ethna Mullock volunteered to proof read the text, we found Jenny Restarick to do the index. I am most grateful to all of them.

Brigida Nailon CSB, 2003

Ut Christiani ita et Romani sint

15 Jan 1980

PONTIFICIO COLLEGIO IRLANDESE
VIA DEI SS. QUATTRO, 1
00184 - ROMA
TEL. 731.66.97 - 73.72.95

Dear Sr. Brigida,

I send you some material from Archives of Propaganda Fide, Vols 13 and 16 (one item). What I give is a summary of the relevant material. I rather imagine from your letter that there is enough available in Australia, and this summary should be sufficient to corroborate or explain the story that you will be able to build up there.

I haven't been to the Scots College so far, as it is a bit out of the way. But if he had some doubt about his ordination (as appears), and if he was ordained in Scotland, the doubt is probably to be resolved there.

I hope to catch someone to-day who is due to fly out to Australia, and so am in a rush.

With best wishes for your work,

Yours sincerely,

John J. Silke
(Rev) John J. Silke

*If you can give me anything on why he fell
out of his Airdrie parishes, I'll
appreciate it.*

c/- Pontifical Council for the
Family,
Vatican City State,
I - 00120, Europe,
15th January, 1983.

Dear Sister Brigida,

If ever your faith in miracles faltered, this letter should reawaken and fortify it.

Believe it or not, I was able to spend two days searching things in the Prop. archives recently, and have come up with practically all the documents you mention in your paper on Fr. McNab, plus a few others of which you may or may not have known, and which could be of some interest.

The enclosed sheet gives a generic description of the microfilm which I am despatching with this letter, by registered airmail. There's a lot of work involved just in reading the documentation and transcribing it. You'll need to know Italian.. or find someone who knows it well, particularly because some of the people who wrote it did not know it too well at all, and one has to know what they MEANT TO SAY in order to work out the sense of their letters! So there'll be quite a few days labour in the film, I think.

One other request: Prop. would appreciate a copy of your study if it's available, for their records, since their archives are cited "in evidence"!

I think that it is clear enough from my attached list how the sources should be cited: e.g. Goold to Simeoni, 22/6/79, would be found in: SCRITTI RIFERITI AI CONGRESSI, OCEANIA, VOL.13, 1880-1881, fol.167 r. Seems a mouthful. SRC will do for the first three words after you have cited them in full once in your footnotes or references! Just for precision.

OK?

I am not too sure where to send the stuff, and think I had better address the lot care of the Bishop. Hope it gets to you in due course.

Tons of regards and prayerful good wishes,

F. Reb.
(Fr. Reb.)

from Reb.
P.S. THE ONLY DOCUMENT YOU CITE which I do not appear to have found is the memorial of D. McNab (to? from?) the Colonial Office Rome, 30/1/80. *I think!*

15 January 1980

A Rebeschini procured copies of the documents from Prop Fide

Note: The source (fonte) is noted in capital letters.
The volume number is cited from the source (fonte).
Each SHEET is numbered in the volumes.

"r" after the number means the front of the sheet, or "retto",
"v" after the number means the back of the sheet, or "verso".

SCRITTI RIFERITI AI CONGRESSI, OCEANIA, vol. 12, 1879:

1. (copied by mistake ignore it)
2. fol. 605-612: MacNab, 15/5/78, 1/7/78, 5/7/78, re Brisbane problems.
3. fol. 658 r: MacNab, 22/7/78 to Vaughan, re. Brisbane problems.
4. fol. 871: MacNab mentioned by Vaughan.

SCRITTI RIFERITI AI CONGRESSI, OCEANIA, VOL. 13, 1880-1881:

5. fol. 166 r & v: START of letter of MacNab to Cardinal Simeoni. (cf. Fol. 187 below?)
6. fol. 167: GOULD, MELBOURNE, TO SIMEONI, 22/6/79, re. MacNab's desire to serve the aborigines. (167v seems to refer to a letter of 22/10/80... to MacNab? From him?)
7. fol. 168: BECKX, GENERAL S.J. TO SIMEONI, 29/9/79: returning memorandum.
8. fol. 169-172: MEMORIAL OR MEMORANDUM OF MacNab, 13/9/79 or 15/9/79.
9. 174-5: SECRETARY OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH, LYONS, TO CARDINAL SIMEONI, 17/10/79, re. MacNab's mission.
10. fol. 176: MacNab TO PROP, no date, re. Getting French priests.
11. fol. 177: BECKX, GENERAL S.J. from FIESOLE, to CARDINAL SIMEONI, 20/10/79.
12. fol. 178 & 180: MacNab, Glasgow, to CARDINAL SIMEONI, 11/12/79, relating also to validity of his ordination?
13. fol. 179: end of a MacNab note to Cardinal Simeoni?
14. fol. 181: MacNab, ALLOA, TO SER MGR MASOTTI, 15/12/79.
15. fol. 182-3: FR. HORGAN, CORK, TO SER MGR MASOTTI, PROPAGANDA 6/1/80: happy to join MacNab.
16. fol. 184: MacNab, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA TO SER. MGR MASOTTI, PROPAGANDA, 10/4/80.
17. fol. 185: MacNab, OHIO, TO MGR MASOTTI, PROPAGANDA, 16/3/80. (Going to Melrose, Lara, Victoria)
18. fol. 186: MEMO OF MacNab TO PROPAGANDA, 28/1/80, re faculties. (Sent on to Holy Office in February)
19. fol. 187: continues (I think) letter of fol. 166, dated 22/10/80, from Warraguri, Victoria.
20. fol. 204: NOTE OF MACNAB, SCOTCH COLLEGE, ROME, TO PROPAGANDA 30/1/80 (re. Division of funding for work among aborigines).
21. fol. 289: ignore it.
22. fol. 374: MacNab, SYDNEY, TO SER. MGR MASOTTI, PROPLK 3/8/80.
23. fol. 480: C.P. GENERAL TO MGR MASOTTI, PROPAGANDA 29/12/80.
24. fol. 915-6: GIOVANNI CANI, THURSDAY ISLAND, TO CARDINAL SIMEONI, 13/2/81.
25. fol. 954-5: MacNab, ADELAIDE, TO CARDINAL SIMEONI, 11/4/81.
26. fol. 1035-6: CANI, COOKTOWN, TO CARDINAL SIMEONI, 21/8/81.
27. fol. 1064: SECRETARY OF THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH, LYONS, TO CARDINAL SIMEONI, 1/10/81 (perhaps re. Jesuit mission to aborigines?)
28. fol. 1067: CANI, BRISBANE TO SIMEONI, 11/10/81.
29. fol. 1162: BECKX, S.J. GENERAL TO SIMEONI, Fiesole, 1/12/81. re Jesuit mission with Fr. Strehle.

SCRITTI RIFERITI AI CONGRESSI, OCEANIA, VOL. 15, 1885-1886:

30. fol. 27: GRIVER, PERTH, TO CARDINAL SIMEONI, 10/2/85, in Latin, re. MacNab.
- LETTERE, 1879, VOL. 275.
31. fol. 399, 18/9/79 to SJ General, transmitting memorandum.
 32. fol. 408v, 25/9/79 to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, re. MacNab.

LETTERE, 1880, VOL. 376:

33. fol. 7, 9/1/80 to the General of the Redemptorists re MacNab.
34. fol. 85, 29/2/1880 to the Holy Office, concerning MacNab's requests.
35. fol. 652, 20/12/80 to MacNab.

LETTERE, 1881, VOL. 377:

36. fol. 280v: 31/5/81 to MacNab.
37. fol. 523r7v: 7/10/81 to Cani.
38. fol. 525v-526r: 7/10/81 to GENERAL S.J.'S.
39. fol. 557r & v: 31/10/81 to GENERAL S.J.'S.

LETTERE, 1883, VOL. 379:

40. fol. 496v-497r: 7/8/83, to Armellini, S.J. re. faculties for Fr. Strehle.

DIocese OF BROOME

THE MOST REV. J. JOBST
P.O. BOX 76
BROOME, W.A. 6728
TELEPHONE (081) 82 1060

12 May 86

Dear Brigida,

Thank you for your letter which you wrote just one week ago.

I am sending you the microfilm which we received from Fr. Rebeschini, also the two missing pages of the history book, 3.195 and 4.96. Are the correct ones?

They should be if 3 and 4 stand for part three and part four.

The next few days will be eventful for the Catholic communities in the East Kimberley, most of the tribal groups will again meet in Violet Valley to celebrate the Vigil and the Feast of Pentecost. Some 20 people from Ringer's Soak will be confirmed, and that will be during Mass on Sunday. Father Pat McAtamney, Fr. Dan and Fr. Sebastian will join Fr. Kriener and myself in the celebrations, each of them bringing a mob from their missions.

There is no startling news, things have not changed since you left nearly one year ago.

Wishing you every blessing and sending you kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,



Bishop J Jobst to Brigida Nailon, 12 May 1986
An Acknowledgement.

Chapter 1

FATHER DUNCAN McNAB 1820-1896¹



“Were I free from all defects; had I abundant means; and all necessary faculties I should still be quite unequal to the work to be done; I should be but a grain of salt in the ocean. More missionaries are required. True it is the work of God, and he gives the grace!”²

Duncan McNab, son of Patrick McNab, was born 11 May 1820 at Acrinich, parish of Morven, Argyllshire, Scotland. His mother’s name was Cirsty.

In 1832 at the age of 12, he went to Blair College, a seminary near Aberdeen.

In June 1835 he went to Scots College in Rome. He left 8 August 1840 before taking his oath as a missionary.³ Duncan returned to Scotland to be admitted as priest 8 March 1845. There is evidence that he was ordained in Glasgow by Bishop Murdoch, 8 March 1845,⁵ but the validity of his status was later called into question⁶. After his ordination, he supplied at Hamilton, then 1845-1847 at Badenoch and during the latter part of 1847 at Greenock as an assistant priest.

In 1848, Father McNab was appointed missionary in charge at Airdrie, an industrial town in Lanarkshire. He took over this parish under very difficult circumstances and remained there for nearly 20 years. At this time in Scotland’s Western Vicariate, nearly all church property was controlled by the Scots although approximately 90% of the laity were Irish or of Irish descent. Half the priests were Irish and half Scottish. While he was parish priest in Scotland’s industrial lowlands, the numerically dominant Irish faction resented the monopoly exercised by the Scots over ecclesiastical property and senior appointments.⁷ *Glasgow Free Press*, later the *Free Press* was the chief organ of their protest. However, of 80,000 letters in the Church Archives of Scotland,⁸ only three are related to McNab. They are included here as an indication of McNab’s character, which did not flinch from conflict:

10 February 1851 Rev D McNab, Airdrie, to Mr Turnbull, (presumably a parishioner)

Sir,

I received your letter of the 8th February 1851 and will preserve it as a specimen of impertinence. Who are you that I should “take good heed” to follow your directions? Or what is your authority, that I should be ruled by it. I know Dr Murdoch and Dr Gillies the Cardinal. I honour and revere them I would take their advice in case of doubt to obey them within the limits of their jurisdiction.

I once thought that I had known enough of your character to justify me in thinking that you were not so imprudent as to write in such a style to me or to my fellow labourer.

But in this I was deceived. Yet never will I be compelled to adopt any course by usurped authority, or confess to become the base minister of a bribe to my own parishioners. The Catholic Electors in Airdrie are not as represented, or as you would make them, venal scoundrels, nor are their pastors the vile creatures you take them to be.

The electors as a body are intelligent, upright and good Catholics for whose direction no compulsory influence is required and their pastors have, like them a mind of their own, and in these matters discretion so your letter is well calculated to injure the cause which it advocated.

I am, sir, D McNab CC (Catholic Curate).⁹

11 February 1851 From Mr Turnbull to Rev P MacLachlan Falkirk, re Rev McNab’s letter:

25 Street,
Tuesday 2 pm

Est. and dear Sir,

The enclosed I have just received. Should you see this gentleman, who wrote it you can ask for a sight of my impertinent Epistle. If zeal for the real interests of Catholicity deserves such polite censure, it is better, methinks, to be lukewarm or indifferent.

I shall certainly ask and intend to reply, or explain to my elegant correspondent. Neither do I think it . . . to vindicate myself with you in refusal to any charge of arrogant gossip, lies, dictation or discourtesy towards my clergy or others.

I trust that for settling the of last night’s heat and; shall hope- Mr MacNab’s opinion of me that it will not be long before I have the pleasure of seeing you here again.

Mr Turnbull.¹⁰

D. McNab Esq
Airdrie

Airdrie 10th February 1851

Mr. Turnbull

Sir

I received your letter of the 5th

Feb. 1851 and will preserve it as a specimen of impertinence. Who are you that I should "take good heed" to follow your directions? Or what is your authority, that I should be ruled by it? I know Dr Murdoch & Dr Gillies the Cardinal. I honor & revere them, I would take their advice in case of doubt & obey them within the limits of their jurisdiction. I once thought that I had known enough of your character to justify me in thinking that you were not so far from being as to write in such a style to me or to my fellow labourer. But in this I was deceived. Yet never will be compelled to adopt any course by usurped authority, or consent to become the base minister of a bribe to my own parishioners. The Catholic Electors in Airdrie

not as representatives you would make them, vernal & condemned, nor are their pastors the vile creatures you take them to be. The Electors as a body are intelligent upright and good Catholics for whose direction all compulsory influence is required: and their ballots have, like them, a mind of their own, and in these matters will be guided by their own discretion. Your letter is well calculated to injure the cause which it advocates.

I am
Sir

D. McNab Esq.

20 August 1851 To a colleague from Rev Duncan McNab, from Airdrie (St Margarets) in support of a parishioner:

Revd Dear Sir,

I received a note this morning from John Molloy, stating that notwithstanding the note, which I wrote for him at Shotts on Sunday last, he has failed in his endeavours to convince you that he is an unmarried man. When I was there I made enquiries into the matter and learned from such as I could depend upon that he was not married.

He had been known there for at least the last six years and was but a boy when he first went there. He was at his Easter Duties this year with my companion Mr Buckley.

I had, myself, on a former occasion conversed with him at the Shotts where he is well known.

If your memory had not failed you, you might recollect that the Shotts Iron Works are attached to the mission of Airdrie, and not to that of Lanark: as I mentioned the matter to you when we dined with Mr McCarthy in Glasgow.

In conclusion I must say that if after that you fail to find out Molloy's supposed wife or the clergyman who married him and persist in maintaining that he is a married man and deny the truth of my statement, I hope that you may be sued by an action of libel for defaming both Molloy and me. Though it is not likely that such an action will be raised, I hope you may succeed in deciphering this letter.

If not, I cannot help it for the present, as I scarcely have the use of my fingers owing to a pain in my arm.

Yours sincerely,
D McNab Catholic Curate.¹¹

Between 1851-1868 Scottish clergymen, amongst them McNab, were consistently pilloried in the columns of the Free Press. In 1862 a contributor to the paper commented of McNab, "I know well how he hates everything Irish." Other letters followed. One heading about McNab in 1862 noted, "Correspondence in which Mr McNab has taken such a disedifying part has been in a manner forced upon us, step by step."¹² In 1866 he published a scholarly pamphlet, 'An Archaeological Dissertation on the Birthplace of Saint Patrick',¹³ trying to prove that the saint had been born in Scotland.¹⁴ This dabbling in Gaelic literature did not make him more popular with his Irish parishioners.

Nevertheless, his Scottish Bishop continued to be short of priests. When he was given permission to migrate, the Irish 'Free Press' wrote that he left with a troop of Highland friends for Australia, seeking a cure for tuberculosis and his

parish that had had an income of over £12,000 over the previous twenty years,¹⁵ was left in debt.¹⁵ The Free Press reported him guilty of financial improprieties¹⁶ and in 1866 of having absconded with thousands of pounds of parish money. The reportage was typical of a style for which the paper was later to receive papal censure and eventually closed down in 1868.¹⁷ The personality of Father McNab over the years seemed to generate turbulence.

Whether he did leave the parish in debt is uncertain.

29 July 1867 Father McNab travelled to Australia in the *Chariot of Fame* with other clergymen including the Bishop of Sydney, Bishop Polding, Rev E Athy OSB, Rev Bede Summer OSB, Rev P Corbett and Rev J McGillicuddy.¹⁸ They arrived in Melbourne 29 July 1867 and he joined the Diocese of Melbourne in August 1867. Three months later he was sent to Portland. For eight years he would work in Portland, Bendigo and Geelong.

In the years of his stay in Portland, there is no record of his having contact with Aborigines, although Lake Condah Aboriginal Mission (Anglican) was flourishing within 30 miles of Portland. In June 1867, Mary MacKillop and Rose Cunningham had arrived in Adelaide as the nucleus of a new teaching Institute of Sisters. The following January Father McNab wrote to Mary's father, Alexander MacKillop about his son's sudden death in New Zealand.

4 January 1868

My Dear Cousin,

I should have written to you ere this, were it not that I was in constant expectation of soon seeing you. Circumstances, however, now forbid my delaying to do so any longer, and I am sorry that my first letter must cause you grief instead of joy. I expect, nevertheless, that your natural firmness, your superior education, your sense of religion and the trials you have undergone since I last saw you, by which God designed to perfect your virtue and draw you to Himself, will enable you to receive with becoming resignation and fortitude the severest trial to which you have yet been exposed.

Your wife who, through grief, is not in a condition to write herself, requested me to intimate to you that she this morning received a letter from your son's employer in New Zealand stating that John, whilst riding had met with a serious accident, from which he was expected soon to recover, but which ultimately terminated in lockjaw. Having been attended by a Catholic priest, he died on the 16th December and was buried in the Catholic cemetery.

He is now free from the troubles of this life and from the danger of falling into sin and, I hope in heaven. But as the entrance into heaven is not always immediate, I will say mass for the repose of his soul tomorrow. I will not offend your sensibility by seeking to alleviate your grief by merely expressing my condolence, but I commend you earnestly to the protection and guidance of our heavenly Father and exhort you to say with due submission, "Thy will be done



North Sydney 4 January 1868

My Dear Cousin

I should have written to you ere this, were it not that I was in constant expectation of seeing you. Circumstances however now forbid my delaying to do so any longer, and I am sorry that my first letter must cause you grief instead of joy. I expect never the less that your natural firmness, your superior education, your sense of religion and the trials you have undergone, since I last saw you, by which God designed to perfect your virtues and draw you to himself, will enable you to receive with becoming resignation and fortitude the severest trial to which you have yet been exposed. Your wife who through grief is not in a condition to write herself, requested me to intimate to you, that she this

morning received a letter from your son's employer in New Zealand stating that John whilst riding had met with a serious accident, from which he was expected soon to recover; but which unfortunately terminated in death. Having been attended by a Catholic priest he died on the 16th December and was buried in the Catholic cemetery. He is now free from the troubles of this life and from the danger of falling into sin and going to heaven. But as the entrance into heaven is not always immediate I will say Mass for the repose of his soul tomorrow. I will not offend your benevolence by seeking to alleviate your grief by words, expressing my condolence, but I commend you earnestly to the protection and guidance of your heavenly Father and earnestly entreat you to say with due submission "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Believe me
Your affectionate cousin
D. MacKillop

Father McNab to Alexander McKillop from Portland, 4 January 1868, Mary MacKillop Archives, North Sydney.

on earth as it is in heaven’.

Believe me,

Your affectionate cousin D McNab¹⁹

Administration of Portland Parish

30 May 1868:

Very Reverend Dear Sir, (Probably to father Fitzpatrick, concerned with Administration of the Diocese)

I received for the Catholic Association in April 10/1, in May 12/7 and in June 17/4, that is for the quarter £2 and celebrated one marriage by license. The amount will be more easily deducted from my Government salary than transmitted.

I have no more forms of dispensation from Banns and should another couple present themselves for marriage, some inconvenience might likely arise, as few such are disposed to wait a week till I could write for one and get it.

I got the holy Oils from Father Peile when he came to assist me at the tridium. I am sorry that more of the congregation did not try to gain the Indulgence.

I have sent the form of application for Government assistance for the repairs of the church at Harrow to Mr Fitzgerald one of the Trustees for his signature but he has not yet returned it.

Your humble Servant

D McNab.

8 July 1868:

Very Rev Dear Sir,

I have got the enclosed papers filled up as far as I can here. Messrs Finn and Fitzgerald being the only trustees we know of except the Bishop or yourself. I have also to thank you for remitting to me a cheque for £33.10 being last quarter’s salary less £4 which was due for the Catholic Association and 1 license. As you said nothing of the requisite forms for Dispensations from Banns in your last, I apprehend that you had forgotten or overlooked my reference to them in mine.

If you recollect well you gave me two when I came down here. I used both and paid one to Father Neville who paid the account for it to you. The other is now paid.

I am told, though not officially that I will be asked to marry a couple either this week, or next, and have no form of dispensation from banns nor power to dispense.

Your humble servant, D McNab.²⁰

8 October 1868:

Very Rev Dear Sir,

I was in a distant part of this mission when your letter of the 28th of September was brought hither. I have requested the signature of the trustees to the subscription list required and I hope to obtain it more expeditiously than before. If the Bishop returns soon there can be no harm in delaying the completion of the forms till his arrival. But if he remains long away such delay would like be attended by very considerable loss, as the estimates for the work would then probably be much higher. Because there are here at present twelve or fourteen masons mostly who would keenly compete for the job; after a short time it is expected that they will be employed either on the Breakwater or on the Railway, and then their estimates for the work would of course be a good deal higher.

There are several account books here belonging to the mission but, none of them contain the accounts for 1863. In the bank-book however I see an entry to the credit of £300 on the 4th of May 1863. Whence the money came or how it was got is not specified but I suppose it is the grant you mentioned.

On the 26th September, I sent you as you may recollect, a telegram requesting a dispensation for a mixed marriage. Lest you should think me importunate I must now mention to you that I had read over the ordinary Faculties and could find in them no power to grant such a dispensation; that I was not aware I had any extraordinary faculties except of absolving from the reserved cases, and also that I recollect your having admitted when we looked over the Bishop’s Faculties from the Pope that the special application should be made for each case of a mixed marriage, as the Bishop seemed not to have the power of a general delegation of that faculty but that in the meantime, as the priests were acting bona fide in this matter, you didn’t think it expedient to disturb them in their practice till the Bishop’s return. Now it was precisely because it was an exception and not in bona fide on that subject that I thought it necessary to apply in each such case for power to dispense with their impediment. In the circumstance I formed a judicium reflexum and married the couple. Yet the impression of the accuracy of my view remains and my difficulty will again recur on the next occasion unless you should have the goodness of again examining the Bishop’s Faculties, or at any rate, pointing out to me where my conclusions are erroneous. I shall feel greatly indebted to you for doing so, or if such is not the case, for sending me detailed and explicit instructions as to how to act. I have also to ask the power of giving a dispensation to hotelkeepers and Boarding-House Keepers of supplying flesh meat to Protestants or non Catholics and also in some cases to wives who are required to give flesh or such to their Protestant husbands. I do not recollect whether the bishop has power to give this faculty generally or if I must apply to him in each particular case.

I have just now received your note of the 1st October with reference to my accounts, which are modified by the last marriage, and stand thus for the quarter ending 30 September 1865.

College Collection	17/4
Magdalen Asylum	7/7
Catholic Association	£2/ 5/6

Rev. D. McNab - PORTLAND 53

Portland 30th May 1868

Very Res Dear Sir,

I received for the Catholic Association in April 10/11 in May 12/7 and in June 17/4 12. for the quarter £2 and celebrated one marriage by license. The amount will be more easily deducted from my Government Salary than transmitted.

I have no more forms of dispensation from Banns and should another couple present themselves for marriage, some in convenience might likely arise, as few such are disposed to wait a week till I could write for one and get it.

I got the H. Oils from Father Park when he came to assist me at the wedding. I am sorry that more of the congregation did not try to gain the Indulgence.

I have sent the form of application for Government assistance for the repairs of the Church to Harrow to Mr. Fitzgerald one of the Trustees for his signature but he has not yet returned it.

Your humble servant
D. McNab.

carb. Mass	£2
license	£2
	£4
doque	33.10
	£ 37.10

3/1/68

Licences 6/ - / -
£9/10/5

to be deducted from my Government salary for the quarter.

I remain
Your humble servant
D McNab
(Fitzpatrick has noted, sent cheque for £27/19/7 makes £37/10.)²¹

17 October 1870 Rev D McNab, from Portland :

Very Rev Dear Sir,

Enclosed application form for a Government Grant.

Notes: Has got Mr Nicholson's estimate for the tower and spire and encloses it. Has in hand £287, 186 and a promise of more from Mr Owen O'Reilly. Called for tenders to be in by Saturday.

"But as by the second of the Decreta Provincialia I am forbidden to 'contract any debt in connection with the mission without written sanction from the bishop' I apply to you for such sanction."

"Again by the fourth article of the same Decreta

'It is prohibited to enter into any contract for the erection of a Church School, or Presbytery, to commence to build, or to make alteration in, or addition to those already built, without the written sanction of the Bishop',

Notes: Asks Fitzpatrick to send him a written sanction to complete the tower of All Saints Church in Portland²²

25 October 1870 Rev D McNab, from Portland, to Father Fitzpatrick:

Acknowledges his salary £28.14.3. Sent on 18-30 Sept.

Tenders for the tower are £624, £545 and £450. Architect's estimate is £384. Would like advice as to whether the lowest tender should be accepted. He gets on to the Decreta Provincialia again. He does not see his way clear to act in the face of "such prohibitions." ... cannot assume any formal responsibility.²³

26 October 1870 Father Fitzpatrick drafted a reply:

"It is absurd to suppose that I could or would commission you to sign a contract as the bishop's Agent. I have no such power – If you think the risk, which you would personally incur by signing the contract too great, by all means decline to sign it. Most of the priests get the principal Catholics of their missions to join them in signing contracts.

31 October 1870 A knotty matrimonial puzzle. McNab appeals to Fitzpatrick. Some doubt as to whether the lady's husband is still alive or not. "Will be guided by your instructions."

2 November 1870 Fitzpatrick's reply:

"I decline the responsibility of advising you to marry the parties. You must act according to the best of your judgement in the case. Unless you are satisfied in your own mind that Clark is dead I don't see how you can marry the woman."²⁴

During his stay in Portland, Father McNab's missionary calling again became evident when in 1870 he wrote to Bishop Salvado asking permission to enter the New Norcia Monastery:

1870 Father McNab wrote to Bishop Salvado asking permission to enter the New Norcia monastery:

Most Reverend Father,

I earnestly desire to enter Religion under the Rule of St Benedict, and with the help of God's grace to labour for the salvation of the souls of the Aborigines; and therefore I most humbly beg to be received into your Monastery; and I send you this letter so that you may inform me as soon as possible whether you will consent to my design. At present I am in charge of the mission or quasi-parish of the city of Portland in the Diocese of Melbourne, Victoria.

I am your most humble servant in Christ – Duncan McNab, M Ap of Victoria, Portland, on the feast of St Benedict, A D 1870.

PS Address your letter as follows – Rev Duncan McNab, Catholic Presbytery, Portland, Victoria.²⁵

Easter Monday 1870 Father V Garrido, Prior OSB at the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity New Norcia, WA wrote to Father McNab:

PAX Revd Sir,

By the last mail I have received your welcome letter written on the feast of the Holy Patriarch St Benedict, AD 1870, inquiring whether we will admit you in this Monastery, where you intend to become one of our religious Institute, and labour for the salvation of the Aborigines. In reply I beg to state, that it would surely afford us the greatest joy to comply at once with your praiseworthy intention. But as the Right Reverend Dr Salvado, Abbot and Prefect Apostolic of this Benedictine Mission, is actually in Rome, I deem it my duty to inform first His Lordship about your good vocation, and he will give me instructions concerning your petition, which I will communicate to you as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, it shall be our delight to pray Almighty God to be pleased in granting you the happy gift of holy perseverance; and you will be so good as to remember us in your fervent

COPY. (from another copy)

recd. 30.11.1962

Reverendissime Pater,

Vehementer exopto Religionem ingredi sub Regula Sancti Benedicti, et Dei opitulanti gratia, in salutem animarum Aboriginum incumbere; ideoque humillime deprecor me in tuum Monasterium recipi: et has tibi mitto litteras, ut quamprimum me certiore facias utrum voti meo assentire digneris? Modo presum Missioni vel quasi parochiae civitatis Portland Diocesis Melbournensis in Victoria.

Tuus sum humillimus in Christo Servus - Duncanus MacNab, M. Ap. Victoriae, Portland, Die festo S. Benedicti, A. D. 1870.

P.S. Inscribe mihi litteras sic - Rev. Duncan Mac Nab, Catholic Presbytery, Portland, Victoria.

Father MacNab to the Abbot, Monastery of New Norcia, Western Australia, Feast of St Benedict, 1870.

Fr. MacNab's Letter

Most Reverend Father,

I earnestly desire to enter Religion under the Rule of St. Benedict, and with the help of God's grace to labour for the salvation of the souls of the Aborigines; and therefore I most humbly beg to be received into your Monastery; and I send you this letter so that you may inform me as soon as possible whether you will consent to my design. At present I am in charge of the Mission or quasi-parish of the city of Portland in the Diocese of Melbourne, Victoria.

I am your most humble servant in Christ - Duncan MacNab, M. Ap. of Victoria, Portland, on the feast of St. Benedict, A. D. 1870.

P.S. Address your letter as follows - Rev. Duncan MacNab, Catholic Presbytery, Portland, Victoria.

(Note:- I can't say what "M. Ap." stands for. "Missionarius Apostolicus"? But why MacNab should describe himself as an Apostolic Missioner (or Minister?) I don't know. Perhaps he means to imply that he has a commission from the Bishop and is therefore a priest in good standing.)

Translated by Fr J Dennett SJ

Translation from the Latin, by F J Dennett, SJ, of Father Mac Nab's letter to the Abbot, New Norcia Monastery, Western Australia, Feast of St Benedict, 1870.

Dilecte in Christo - Pater Duncan MacNab-

Non post multos dies ab hinc accepi tuam laudabilem et acceptabilem litteram die 21a. Martii hujus anni, hoc est, in festo Ssmi. Patriarchae Nostri Benedicti scriptam, in qua manifestas tuum vehemens desiderium Ordinem nostrum Benedictinum ingrediendi et in salutem animarum Aboriginum incumbendi, idcirco postulas, te recipi in istud Monasterium. Juxta a te scripta tibi respondeo, me libentissime modo absque dilatione te in istud Monasterium esse accepturum, videns tuum laudabile desiderium Ordinem nostrum ingrediendi; sed com modo sit Romae Rmus. et Illmus. Episcopus D. D. Rudesindus Salvado Abbas/hujus Benedictinae Missionis Praefectus Apostolicus, ideo mihi videtur, me debere prius Rmum. Superiorem hujus Missionis circa tuam bonam et laudabilem covationem informare: et, habito suo responso, quamprimum libenter ego illud tibi communicabo. Interim tibi desidero salutem, gratiam et perseverantiam in tua incepta vocatione.

Tuus in Christo dilectus, V. Garrido, Prior.

SSmae Trinitatis Monasterii Novae Nursiae,
Australia Occidentali.

P.S. -Si vis potes mihi scribere lingua Anglica, ista enim Missio tali potitur.

Father V Garrido, Prior OSB at the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity New Norcia, WA wrote to Father McNab in Portland, Easter Monday 1870.

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P A X. Revd. Sir -

By the last mail I have received your welcome letter written on the Feast of the Holy Patriarch St. Benedict, A. D. 1870, inquiring whether we will admit you in this Monastery, where you intend to become one of Our religious Institute, and labour for the salvation of the Aborigines. In reply I beg to state, that it would surely afford us the greatest joy to comply at once with your praiseworthy intention. But as the Right Reverend Dr. Salvado, Abbot and Prefect Apostolic of this Benedictine Mission, is actually in Rome, I deem it my duty to inform ~~you~~ first His Lordship about your good vocation, and he will give me instructions concerning your petition, which I will communicate to you as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, it shall be our delight to pray Almighty God to be pleased in granting you the happy gift of holy perseverance; and you will be so good as to remember us in your fervent prayers.

Yours Faithfully in Christ, V. Garrido, Prior, O.S.B.
Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity, New Norcia, W.A.
Easter Monday, 1870.

Father V Garrido, Prior OSB at the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity New Norcia, WA wrote to Father McNab in Portland, Easter Monday 1870.

prayers.

Yours faithfully in Christ, V Garrido, Prior, OSB.²⁶

In 1869, Bishop Rosendo Salvado had gone to Rome to attend the Vatican Council. Months later he reported having received the correspondence from New Norcia. He was surprised it had taken so long to get from Australia to Rome. He also received the sad news that Father Garrido was seriously ill, and obtained leave from the Holy Father to return to Australia. In Colombo he learned that Father Garrido had already died. (According to Father McNab's correspondence he died in August 1870) Bishop Salvado landed in Albany the day the Vatican Council was suspended, in September 1870.

7 October 1870 Father McNab wrote from 'All Saints' Presbytery, Portland to the Administrator, New Norcia:

Very Rev Dear Sir,

I have to thank you for your letter of the 20th of August, which I received by the last Mail.

Whilst I freely admit that I have no claim on your community for several reasons. I exceedingly regret the conclusion, to which the Most Rev Bishop Salvado has come with reference to my application for admission into your Monastery.

My age is fifty years, and nearly five months, yet having suffered from various epidemic and other diseases on the mission I am in perfect health, and my constitution is quite sound. My father and my ancestors generally, to the best of my knowledge, lived till over eighty years of age. I had thought of and desired the instruction of the Aborigines of Australia when I was about sixteen, or seventeen, but being then in the course of education and attached to another mission, I could not carry any design into effect. I had resolved to enter religion at the age of twenty-three, but was hindered by my bishop the late Right Reverend Dr Murdoch Bishop in Glasgow who ordained me with the mutual understanding that if my desire of becoming a religious continued for two or three years he would let me go. I repeatedly renewed my application unsuccessfully as he continually withheld his consent, on various pleas. First the scarcity of the priests, then a lawsuit that commenced for the church and subsequently the secularisation of the St James Benedictine monastery at Ratisbond, which I had intended to enter. Finally . . . I was burdened with . . . debt, which with his consent, I had contracted to enable my parents to emigrate to Australia. I remained on the Scotch Mission till the number of Priests had greatly increased till after twelve years of litigation I gained the law plea and repaired the Church. Then St James was secularised.

To liquidate the debt I left my home and my country and have laboured on this mission till enabled to discharge it. Then I applied for admission into your monastery with the hope of sanctifying myself in Religion and aiding to convert the Aborigines. Yet I find myself doomed

to a double disappointment.

I say double, because on the eve of my departure for Australia the Ex –superior of St James' monastery at Ratisbon had requested me to join the Benedictines here and after passing through the noviciate to return to Scotland in order with his co-operation to establish a branch of the order in that kingdom. Having heard by general report that rule and discipline were well observed in your Convent, while they were said to be lax in the rest of the Australian monasteries I preferred yours. First by reason of this strict discipline, and secondly, because I understood that you devoted yourselves especially to the conversion of the Aborigines.

Had I been admitted into your Institute, and been successful in the conversion of the blacks, I should have been content to remain in Australia, if not, and the superiors deemed the other project advisable, I should have been prepared for it. Now that both alternatives are denied me, as I deem it better not to enter Religion than to join a lax community, the only course left me in furtherance of my original design is to ask you whether or not the Most Rev Bishop Salvado (although he will not admit me to his religious Institute) would be pleased to give me faculties as a secular priest to labour under his jurisdiction for the conversion of the Blacks. If so, I should be disposed to labour for their benefit!²⁷

An early reply will much oblige,

Your humble servant, Duncan McNab M Ap.

PS Please accept my condolence for the loss your community has sustained by the death of the venerable Father Garrido. I doubt not that he has gone to reap the fruit of his apostolic labours. I pray that our end may be like to his so that we may be joined with him in glory. D M N.

As a Scottish Catholic Duncan McNab was likely to have inclined his sympathies to Aborigines as a persecuted minority. Of scholarly bent and the devoted son of pious parents he had entered the seminary at an early age. There is no conclusive evidence as to when McNab was first exposed to reliable information about the condition of the Australian Aborigines. According to his letter 7 October 1870 he had wanted to be involved in the instruction of Aborigines when he was 16 or 17 years of age. Gibbney's²⁸ entry on McNab in *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* suggests that he may have been inspired by his kinship/friendship with Mary MacKillop.²⁹ She was in Queensland in 1870 founding convents.

Mary Durack, in *The Rock and the Sand*, wrote that by the time he left Scotland:

He was forty-seven years old, his parents were too old to leave behind and the debt incurred in bringing them with him to Victoria in 1867 obliged him to remain as parish priest in Portland until 1871³⁰



Sandhurst
St. Kilian's
11th December 1872

My Dear Cousin ^(Mary MacKillop)

Some time ago I wrote to you in reply to your last letter. It is not very long ago and need not be deciphered at your not answering me yet. But my letter contained a cheque for a small donation to your institute and I do not only expect an earlier reply

in case of any thing going wrong of the cheque by the same post, to which I received an answer. One of them to be, which is partly the reason of my ~~contribution~~ contribution to your institute being so small. I hope it has reached you. If as please to let me know.

Your affectionate
cousin

D. M. Nab



Father McNab to Mary MacKillop, St Kilian's Church, Sandhurst, 11 December 1872, Mary MacKillop Archives, North Sydney.

There continued to be a close relationship between him and the MacKillops.

11 December 1872 Father McNab wrote to his cousin Mary MacKillop from St Kilian's Church in the Sandhurst Diocese:

My Dear Cousin,

Some time ago I wrote to you in reply to your last letter. It is not very long ago and I need not be surprised at your not answering me yet. But my letter contained a cheque as a small donation to your institute and ordinarily I expect an earlier reply in case of anything going wrong as I sent other cheques by the same post, to which I received an answer. One of them to Lexie; which is partly the reason of my contribution to your institute being so small. I hope it has reached you. If so please to let me know.

Your affectionate cousin, D McNab.³¹

Meantime, a field of mission was opening up for Father McNab in Queensland. The situation had not been helpful to missionaries up to this time. K Rayner³² wrote about the opposition that missionaries from other Churches endured from white traders, who greedily exploited natives. When missionaries opposed this, traders raised a cry against them.³³ One was forced to leave Fraser Island, and planned to move the station to Noosa on the mainland, but it was transferred to Hinchinbrook Island. In 1873, the group requested that London adopt the mission.³⁴ But in September 1873 Arthur Palmer's government in Queensland appointed a Commission for Aborigines, saying it was:

In relation to the amelioration of the condition of the Aborigines, and the possibility of rendering their services available to settlers and beneficial to themselves.³⁵

In 1874 the Commission sent out a call for:

services of persons earnest and zealous in the cause, and especially qualified to inaugurate and carry out a scheme of moral and intellectual training.³⁶

Notes from Chapter 1

¹Brigida Nailon, CSB, 'Champion of the Aborigines', Father Duncan McNab – 1820-1896, Footprints, Quarterly Journal of the Melbourne Historical Commission, Vol 4, Nos 6, 7, 8, 9, February, 1982.

²Report to Archbishop Vaughan from Brisbane, 10 July 1878', SAA.

³Patrick had been a Presbyterian, Melbourne Historical Commission.

⁴R Sneddon, 'The Life and Work of Father Duncan McNab' Unpublished Thesis Teachers' Higher Certificate, WA, claimed that he did take the 'Juramentum' or oath, sworn by Scottish seminary students, to undertake to return to the Scottish missions when ordained priests. This could be clarified by reference to the students' roll book at the Scots College.

⁵Extract from a letter from Mgr Phillip Flanagan, Collegio Scozzese, Marino, Prov di Roma, Italy.

⁶D McNab to Cardinal Simeoni from 552 St Vincent Place, Glasgow, 11 December 1879, Archives Propaganda Fide, Rome.

⁷Peter F Anson, *Underground Catholicism in Scotland*, 1622-1878, Montrose Scotland, Standard Press, 1970, pp 249, 292.

⁸In 1851 McNab wrote two letters now in the archives, and that about him is probably written to his parish priest. There is an entry on him in the Scots College (Rome) 1835 register. The Catholic Directory list him after his ordination in 1846, and in subsequent years. e.g., Badenoch 1845-67. These entries also contain notes on the chapels, schools, fellow priests, and so on. Being from Morven he was a Gaelic speaker and so could minister in Badenoch...

Mark Dilworth, OSB, Scottish Catholic Archives, 16 Drummond Place, Edinburgh, to Brigida Nailon, 2 June 1980.

⁹D McNab, Airdrie, to Mr Turnbull, 10 February 1851. Scottish Archives.

¹⁰Turnbull to P MacLachlan Falkirk, 11 February 1851. Scottish Archives.

¹¹Duncan McNab, from St Margarets, Airdrie, 20 August 1851, Scottish Archives.

¹²Quoted in J E Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland*, Cork, University Press, 1947, p 65.

¹³Information from the Archives Catholic Archdiocese of Perth from a publisher, called Duffy of Dublin.

¹⁴Letter from Father Tiernay, Archivist of St Peter's College, Scotland to R Sneddon

¹⁵William James Anderson, Archivist, Edinburgh, Scotland to R Sneddon 17 August 1964

¹⁶*Free Press*, 15 October 1864, quoted in Handley p 70.

¹⁷*Free Press*, 22 June 1867, quoted in Handley p 85.

¹⁸Passenger list of 'S S Chariot of Fame' in July 1867, Public Record Office.

¹⁹Father McNab to Alexander McKillop from Portland, 4 January 1868, Mary MacKillop Archives, North Sydney.

²⁰Rev D McNab, Portland re administration, 8th July 1868, MHC.

²¹Rev D McNab, from Portland re administration, 8 October 1868, MHC.

²²Rev D McNab, from Portland re administration, 17 October 1868, MHC.

²³Rev D McNab, from Portland re administration, 25 October 1868, MHC.

²⁴26 October 1870-Fitzpatrick's draft reply, 31 October 1870-A knotty matrimonial puzzle. McNab appeals to Fitzpatrick, 2 November 1870-Fitzpatrick's reply. MHC.

²⁵D McNab from Portland, Victoria to Bishop Salvado's Assistant, 7 October 1870. ACAP.

Father J Dennett, SJ, Hawthorn translated this letter from the Latin. He wrote a note. I can't say what 'M Ap stands for. 'Missionarius Apostolicus'? But why McNab should describe himself as an Apostolic Missioner (or Minister?) I don't know. Perhaps he means to imply that he has a commission from the bishop and is therefore a priest in good standing.

²⁶Father V Garrido, Prior OSB at the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity New Norcia, WA wrote to Father McNab in Portland, Easter Monday 1870, (Translated from the Latin by Father J Dennett, SJ), ACAP.

²⁷Father McNab from 'All Saints' Presbytery, Portland, to Administrator, New Norcia. 7 October 1870. NNA.

²⁸H J Gibbney, 'Duncan McNab' in Bede Nairn et al (eds) Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol 5, 1881-1890 Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1974, p 192.

²⁹*"Father McNab may have been a distant cousin of the MacKillops, Mother Mary of the Cross and her brother Father Donald MacKillop SJ, who joined the South Australian mission of the Austrian Province in 1872. If he and Duncan were first cousins, his mother should have been either a MacKillop or a McDonald. Mary would have known him, both because her mother was living in Portland until 1871, and because from there Mrs MacKillop moved to Duck Ponds – Lara- near Geelong, where Father McNab also spent some time. I think he is mentioned in one of Mother Mary's letters in early 1871 (she came back to Adelaide from Queensland through Portland – travelling overland, apparently, from Melbourne). Interestingly she wrote to him during the time of her excommunication early in 1872 (26 February 1872 to her mother, she mentions that she wrote to Father McNab 'last week' with details of the circumstances surrounding her excommunication) in an effort to allay somewhat her mother's concern. I have an idea too that she expresses gratitude to Father McNab for his help to Lexie, who entered the Good Shepherd sisters at Abbotsford from Portland in 1871. Mr Alexander MacKillop's mother was a McNab. He was Mary's dad."*

Mgr Aldo Rebeschini to Brigida Nailon from Vatican City State, 4 July 1981.

³⁰Mary Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, London, Corgi Edition published 1971, p 35.

³¹Father McNab to Mary MacKillop, St Kilian's Church, Sandhurst, 11 December 1872, Mary MacKillop Archives, North Sydney, 8 July 1868, MHC.

³²K Rayner, The attitude and influence of the Churches in Queensland on matters of social and political importance (1859-1914) a thesis submitted to the University of Queensland for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, 1951. This quotes some criticisms of Father McNab.

³³This was to happen later in the Torres Strait area. A private letter was written to The Courier

20 June 1972 complaining of the behaviour of the whites, and the paper, while not publishing the letter, urged the Colonial Secretary to take action to protect the missionary and the natives under his care.

³⁴Pugh's Almanac, 1874, Diary of events 2 June 1873.

³⁵Queensland Government Gazette, 1873, p 1582.

³⁶Aborigines of Queensland: Report of the Commissioners' reprinted in *V & P of QLA, 1874*, vol 2, p 441.

Chapter 2

TO QUEENSLAND 1875 - 1876



Any attempt to probe the mind and spirit of this Scottish priest who dedicated himself to the Aboriginal Peoples of Australia has to be done on three fronts. First of all there is the effect of his work with Aboriginal Peoples, secondly, the relationships he built up with Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of the Catholic Church and thirdly, his dealings with the governments in Australia and London.

Role of Church Hierarchy

Prior to 1835, Catholics were canonically part of the Church of Southern Africa and adjacent islands. Then Bishop Polding was appointed as Vicar Apostolic of New Holland and Van Dieman's Land.¹ By the late 1850's, the Catholic Church in Australia had been dominated by an Irish presence, that is, more than 75% of Australian clergy were Irish. With a few exceptions, it was non-Irish, non-English-speaking clergy who undertook Aboriginal evangelisation. Primary concerns of the clergy were, first, their own social survival, and second, attempts at a colonial respectability. McNab was an obvious exception.

As early as 1861, Aboriginal evangelisation was on the agenda of Propaganda Fide in Rome. Eventually, Church policy became founded on a belief that



Bishop Quinn

Aborigines initially required a large degree of isolation if the less wholesome aspects of European society were not to weaken the impact of missionary instruction but few priests were available. On 16 December 1873, Archbishop Roger Bede Vaughan became Coadjutor to the then ageing Polding. Vaughan, aged 41, assumed full control when Archbishop Polding died 16 March 1877.

Before Bishop Quinn of Brisbane came to Australia, he had presented a paper to the Society of the Propagation of the

Faith, referring to the condition of the Aborigines and their ill treatment by white settlers.² But his priorities were changed in Australia by a sense of the enormity of his task in attending to the Queensland Catholics. After his arrival in Australia he showed little inclination to address the challenge of Aboriginal evangelisation. For example, in 1863 he had chosen not to undertake a mission with the Sisters of Mercy in Marlborough, stating that he "did not have sufficient priests or religious for the work already begun with the whites."³

As bishop of Brisbane, Quinn proposed that a vicariate in northern Queensland would be ideal for Aboriginal evangelisation. Catholics in the area could simultaneously receive priestly attention. This two-fold ministry was an expediency based on the premise that it was better to begin an Aboriginal apostolate at risk rather than not to begin it at all.⁴

Father McNab's Involvement

In 1873, because of the Government's appeal for workers, it does seem that McNab saw an opening and he may have written to Bishop Quinn offering his services. In 1874, when £3,040 was budgeted for a new training establishment for the Native Police. Father McNab protested:

"Why should the Government be so ready and lavish of action and expenditure for their (the Aborigines') destruction and so cautious and parsimonious in their efforts to civilise them?"⁵

26 July 1875 From the address of Melrose by Lara, Father McNab sent out a Circular Letter to the Benevolent on behalf of the Australian Aborigines. At the time as far as we know, he had not yet met Bishop Quinn:

Dear Sir,

Permit me to remind you of the miserable condition of the Australian Aborigines, and to inform you that I wish to devote my energies and my life to their conversion to Christianity and their civilization.

For the attainment of these objects I must in the first place rely upon the grace of God, and in the second acquire their language and live amongst them. This can be done with effect only where they are numerous as in Queensland and the Northern Territory. The method I purpose to follow is at one of the remotest Squatting Stations to learn the language and become familiar with one tribe, and then if successful with that one, to pass on to another, etc.

I hope I am fairly qualified for the purpose, as from my youth I have been trained as an Ecclesiastic and moreover I have some skill in Philology and Mechanics.

It would be of no benefit to the Aborigines that I should live with them as a savage, whilst my object is to raise them to a civilized condition.

*Circular Letter
to the Benevolent, on behalf of the
Australian Aborigines.*

Dear Sir,

Permit me to remind you of the
miserable condition of the Australian Aborigines,
and to inform you that I wish to devote my
energies and my life to their conversion to Chris-
tianity and their civilization.

For the attainment of these objects
I must in the first place rely upon the grace of
God, and in the second acquire their language
and laws amongst them. This can be done with
safety only where they are numerous as in Queensland
and the Northern Territory. The method I propose to
follow is at one of the remotest Squatting Stations to learn
the language and become familiar with one tribe and
then if successful with that one; to pass on to another.

I hope I am fully qualified for the purpose, as from
my youth I have been trained as an Ecclesiast and
moreover I have some skill in Philology and Mechanics.

It would be of no benefit to the Aborigines
that I should live with them as a savage, whilst
my object is to raise them to a civilized condition.

I am assured that the Australian Government is pre-
pared to give them encouragement by providing for them.
To maintain myself in a civilized condition in the
midst of them I have no resources beyond the offering
of the Benevolent. I do not wish to consume
but to invest so that by the interest the necessities of life
might be supplied to the missionaries. For although I
mean to commence this work, possibly it may not be
accomplished or perfected by me, but rather by my
associates or successors.

If you approve of my enterprise, I expect that
with wanted liberality and munificence you will aid
me in its fulfilment. With regard to my moral
character and integrity I refer you to any gentle-
man of your acquaintance in Portland or in
Sandhurst, where I have publicly officiated for
the last seven years.

As I am now preparing to move to the field
of my future labours, an early or rather, an im-
mediate reply will serve the cause I advocate
and greatly oblige,

Your humble servant,

Duncan Mc Nab

Address: Rev

7 Price, Sub Hill

Melrose
By Lara

26th July 1875

Father McNab sent out a Circular Letter to the Benevolent on behalf of the Australian Aborigines, from the address of Melrose by Lara, 26 July 1875. Mary MacKillop Archives, North Sydney

I understand that the Queensland Government is prepared to give them encouragement by providing for them. To maintain myself in a civilized condition in the midst of them, I have no resources beyond the offerings of the Benevolent. These I should like not to consume but to invest, so that by the Interest the necessaries of life might be supplied to the missionaries. For although I mean to commence the work, possibly it may not be accomplished or perfected by me, but rather by my associates or successors.

If you approve of my enterprise, I expect that with wonted liberality and munificence you will aid me in its fulfilment. With regard to my moral character and integrity, I refer you to any gentleman of your acquaintance in Portland or in Sandhurst, where I have publicly officiated for the last seven years.

As I am now preparing to move to the field of my future labours, an early, or rather an immediate reply will serve the cause I advocate and greatly oblige,

Your humble servant, Duncan McNab.

When Father McNab came to Brisbane in September he brought a letter of introduction to the Queensland clergy. He was welcomed by the Bishop of Brisbane, James Quinn, to work with Aborigines and spent the first three months of his stay in Queensland reading literature about Aborigines. He also went through evidence given to the *1861 Select committee on Native Policies* and studied a history of New Norcia.

Father McNab found at first that Bishop Quinn was prepared to accommodate him and even support his roving commission for Aborigines, insofar as it did not make demands on other clergy under the bishop's authority.

The behaviour of Bishop Quinn typified that of a colonial bishop preoccupied with the more temporal aspects of religion, with expectations that his clergy would deal with the practical concerns of running a parish, demonstrating tangible rewards for their efforts in the form of churches, schools, seminaries and orphanages.

Seeds of Unrest in the Brisbane Diocese

Bishop Quinn was overtly Irish, to the extent, that to honour his heritage in 'the oldest, noblest and most chivalrous race in the world', he changed his name to O'Quinn during the O'Connell celebrations of 1875. In various ways he demonstrated his intolerance of freelance clergy or non-diocesan religious orders operating in his area of jurisdiction. He had decisively suppressed clerical revolt in 1862 and 1867 and was also engaged in a protracted power struggle with McNab's cousin, Mother Mary MacKillop, over control of the Josephite Sisters stationed in his diocese. The feud culminated in the withdrawal of the Sisters in 1880.

Anne McClay, his biographer, wrote:

The bishop ruled as an absolute Episcopal monarch, in a manner, which met all challenges to his authority with further assertions of that authority.

So when McNab met Quinn in 1875, many of the preconditions for non-co-operation were already in place. He later wrote to Archbishop Vaughan that he had told Bishop Quinn:

I should render to him reasonable obedience while I remained in his diocese: that if I were not allowed to devote myself exclusively to the Blacks I should return whence I came.

It would not be long before the relationship between McNab and his bishop degenerated into open hostility.

McNab had asked for the services of Pierre Bucas who had gone to Queensland expressly for the Natives. Quinn promised Bucas' release from parish duties on the arrival of a replacement priest in the diocese. According to McNab, another and another and another came and yet he was still withheld from Aboriginal mission work.

Bishop Quinn encouraged McNab to take up land on behalf of the Church and try to settle the Aborigines on it. Bucas prepared a permanent mission near Mackay and arranged to buy land. In 1876 Quinn opened a bank account in his, Bucas' and McNab's names. Without the latter's consent, he borrowed money to pay for the first instalment of the purchase. McNab objected. He believed that from that time he lost the confidence of his bishop. Quinn, in fact had a reputation for indiscreet land dealings⁸ and generally chaotic financial management.⁹ McNab disliked the notion of a permanent mission on the grounds that the Aborigines would not leave their own country to come to it, and it would only benefit perhaps one or two hundred whereas he desired to secure civil rights for all. He was reluctant to move from his base in Brisbane because he wanted to lobby the government and the commissioners. For McNab the Aborigines' plight was less a church problem than a political one, and he sought political solutions. His ambition to secure civil rights for all transcended the parameters of missionary work. When the bishop accused him of being a mere tool or agent of the Government, McNab denied the accusation but he had noted in an earlier letter to John Douglas at the Lands Department:

I desire to be recognized as an agent of the Government in the civilization and settlement of the Aborigines; and, as such to be countenanced,¹⁰ aided and protected by the central and local authorities in the accomplishment of the work.

Despite Quinn's Irish nationalist leanings and the authoritarianism of his diocesan administration he pursued a policy of tolerance and cooperation in his dealings with the wider protestant community. Patrick O'Farrell concedes that his tolerance sprang from conviction. It was:

A tactical conviction rather than one of principle: good relations with his colonial world seemed to him necessary to the work of his Church.¹¹

The Brisbane Church was preoccupied with problems of stewardship, how to use men and money for the best results, but usually missionaries like Father McNab had to survive as best as they could. By his writing he attempted to make the populace conscious of the Aboriginal situation. Throughout 1875 and part of 1876 Father McNab would keep himself on money saved from his parish work. After this expired he relied on funds solicited from within the diocese.¹²

Bishop Quinn charged McNab with having a horror of getting land for the Church, though McNab regarded land as the best species of endowment for the church, he did not see his way to taking it up at sixpence an acre, with consequent obligations when he had not that sixpence. He regarded land as the first step to the Aborigines' conversion, but on the other hand he saw land as useless insofar as the Blacks would not leave their country to settle on a Reserve and McNab could not take up land in the country of every tribe. He argued that when the Bishop, at the Nudgee, had offered them land, employment and food, they did not settle, or remain with him. Mc Nab argued that if each family was given a homestead area, grazing a cow for the Church could eventually support the clergy. He also knew that the bishop was not free because of the aid which he accepted from the government and was obliged to exclude prayers and catechetical instruction in school time from his Catholic and Convent schools.

Sick Leave

March 1876 Father McNab became ill and went south to recuperate.

While recuperating he had written to the then Colonial Secretary, Arthur Macalister urging government initiatives on the Aborigines' behalf saying he would return, "to co-operate with those who strive to satisfy these claims of humanity and justice." He had suggested that Aborigines in the settled districts should be settled onto the land.¹³

Campaign for Land rights

9 May 1876 While his applications for homesteads were under

consideration by the Lands Department, McNab, during the second half of 1876 became associated with an initiative between Brisbane and Gympie, which originated as an extension of the homestead applications from 'Durundur'. He vainly anticipated "abundant, prompt and energetic assistance from the Commissioners"¹⁴

End of May 1876 After spending some weeks in the south recovering with the MacKillops, he returned to Brisbane.

July 1876 A legal loophole had been found for Bridgman's reserve at Mackay. The requirements of the 1875 selection criteria were that applicants:

Did not arrive in this colony after the first of March 1868, at the public expense, either wholly or in part, within three years.¹⁵

24 July 1876 and 31 July 1876 McNab lodged with John Douglas, the Minister for Lands, a series of applications for homestead selections from three individual Aborigines in the Logan district. Douglas considered the area of land applied for, (640 acres) too large and beyond the capacity of any ordinary native to improve.¹⁶

24 July 1876 Extract from a letter from Rev D McNab, Gympie:

I am convinced that the Aborigines have a perfect right, both in equity and law, to what they ask.

To comply with the conditions required in the forms supplied would be a renunciation of that right.

They conceive and maintain that because they and their ancestors, from time immemorial, have occupied and possessed those lands and their appurtenances for their use and benefit, especially of residence, hunting, fishing, and of otherwise providing for the necessities of life, and also had always the right of tillage and pasturage, they ought to be acknowledged, without expense, the rightful owners of the specified homestead.

This free right to land is recognised, at any rate with the consent of the Governor, by "the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868", No 21, and the least amount that can with decency, not to say with justice be allowed them, and be of much service to them, is the extent of a Homestead Area allowed by the Act of 1875.

They desire now to be supplied by the present existing Government of Queensland with valid and legitimate title deeds of the homesteads described.

The three petitions for Homesteads for three Aborigines, William Watiman Nilapi, James Dipper and Charles Dipper Ghepara were accompanied with letters supporting the applications. Each homestead application was for 640 acres of land, which was valued at sixpence an

acre. The official application read as follows:

I, Charles Diper Ghepara, do hereby state my desire to become the lessee of the Crown lands described in the schedule annexed, which are now open to selection without competition, as a Homestead, under the provisions of *The Crown lands Alienation Act of 1868* and I, Charles Diper Ghepara, hereby tend the sum of ... pounds ... shillings and ... pence, as the first year's rent, together with the survey fee. And I do solemnly declare that I apply for such portion on my own behalf and for my own exclusive use and benefit, and not as agent or trustee for any other person whatever; that I have not on any former occasion exercised my right to select a Homestead under the Act, and that I apply for the purpose of actual settlement or cultivation; that I did not arrive in this colony after the first of March, 1868, at the public expense, either wholly or in part, within three years; and I further declare, that I have not entered into any agreement to sell, demise, or mortgage the said portion,

Sir, By instructions received from the Aborigines, James Diper, William Watiman Nilepi, and Charles Diper Ghepara, I presented to the Land Agent here, the enclosed applications for the selection of homesteads for them, which were refused for the reasons assigned.

If the form of Application is inappropriate, I hope that the Lands Department can provide one suitable.

The memo read,

I decline to receive this application, not being accompanied by deposit of first year's rent and s. fee. T H Persse, Land Agent, 24 July 1876.

2 August 1876 Under-Secretary for Lands to Rev D McNab -Reply to his letter of 24 July:

Department of Public Lands,
Brisbane,

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th ultimo, on behalf of three aboriginals who desire to make homestead selection, together with the applications for same, and to inform you by direction that apart from non-payment of rent and survey fees noted by Land Agent, there are the following informalities in the applications, viz: -no attestations to signatures, and no declarations.

It is therefore manifest that the applications are not made in accordance with law.

The Minister for lands understands, however, that you, as their friend, seek to justify a special claim for consideration, if so, you will be good enough to state your views more fully, and explain how you propose to act on them, upon receipt of which he will undertake to draw the attention of the Aboriginal Commissioners to the applications, and invite their opinion.

The Minister also considers the area of the land applied for, to be too large, and would be beyond the capacity of any ordinary native aboriginal to improve, but the claim advanced by you on their behalf is founded on justice.

The Government certainly possesses the power of making reserves on behalf of the aborigines, and if any practical suggestions can be made so as to secure the permanent settlement of any aborigines on land vested for their benefit, the Minister will be happy to give them consideration.

W Alcock Tully,
Undersecretary.

Application for land

Declared before me at		(Signature)	CHARLES x DIPER GHEPARA.
this		day of	mark. 187 .
Pastoral land	...	Aores.	640 at 6d.
SCHEDULE TO APPLICATION.			
County or District.	Description.		
Parish of Perry; 640 acres			
I decline to receive this application, not being accompanied by deposit of first year's rent and s. fee.—T. H. PERSSE, Land Agent. 24-7-76.			

Father McNab's letter from Brisbane to the Minister for Lands enclosing the applications with the memo on same, 24 July 1876 reads,

16 August 1876
Gympie:

McNab wrote to the Minister for Lands from

Sir,

Your reply, dated 2nd August, 1876, to my letter is such that I sincerely hope the Undersecretary, who wrote it, has not understood your instructions. In the first paragraph, by direction, he informed me "that apart from non-payment of rent and survey fees noted by the Land Agent, there are the following informalities in the applications, viz., no attestation to signatures, and no declarations." And he concludes it thus: - "It is therefore manifest that the applications are not made in accordance with law." Unless I miserably failed in conveying to you my idea of what the aborigines want, you must know as well as I do that this conclusion is not legitimate.

I did and do expect that the Honourable Secretary for Lands will not be trammelled by the mere formalities of law, or the formalism of a Department, on such an important question, and that if he does not find a proper form for the application, he will frame one and cause it to be adopted, sanctioned, and enforced by the proper authority.

Supposing the case to stand as the Under Secretary views it, apparently the most that could fairly be said is, that the applications are not in accordance with certain formalities of law. But in the case of aborigines, law prescribes no formalities. The Governor is simply empowered to make reserves for the use and benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants. Where no particular form of application is required, any fitting one may be used, or it lies with the Public Lands Department to construct one. Such being the case, and as you admit that the Government certainly possesses the power to make reserves on behalf of the aborigines, I humbly submit that it can make a reserve of the 640 acres applied for by each of the petitioning aborigines, and give them legitimate titles to the same.

The use of the term "Homestead" and of the schedule seem to have raised the objections of the Department to grant a just request. What is there to prevent its being changed into "Reserve", if that appellation is deemed preferable? I recommended the word "Homestead" because it was intended that the land applied for should be made the home of the petitioners, and because its area corresponded with the least quantity of land, which would be of much benefit to any one; and you recommended the use of the Homestead schedule as the simplest way of bringing the application before the Lands Department. But that did not bind the aboriginals to the conditions of the schedule, which evidently were never intended by the Legislature for them. If we have erred in the selection of the form, let us adopt another; but, in any case, secure their rights to the petitioners. In my former letter, I mentioned that the law did not contemplate any payment from the aborigines, and a reason for their not submitting to the charge. I must now farther remark that the affidavit required on application for a homestead could not have been intended for them; as they know nothing of the nature of an oath, and are, in many cases, ignorant of the very first thing required to be declared- viz., their own age. Another part of the declaration runs thus: - "that I did not arrive in this colony after the first of March, 1868, at the public expense, either wholly or in part, within three

years." Is it not evident that these declarations are not required of them? I need say nothing of the attestation of signatures, as it follows the declarations; except that, if they got what they ask, they will if necessary, present themselves at the Lands Office- as they cannot write- to verify the power they gave to attach their mark or signature.

You are said to consider the area of land applied for to be too large, and beyond the capacity of an ordinary native aboriginal to improve. In this instance, I may remark that it is not what is classed as agricultural land. There is no special limit prescribed by law for the extent of a reserve made for the benefit of the aborigines. The governor is left free to make it for all, or for a number, or for one, as he may deem best. It is but just that the original possessor of the soil should have as much as is allowed to the worst immigrant. The less their skill, the more land do they need. I may add, that grazing admits of a gradual increase of stock, requires less improvement, and is usefully combined with agriculture even by Europeans; that what is deemed useful for immigrants, may be necessary for natives, who can be got to attend to pasturage and partial labour, but not to continual toil; that they are willing to be directed by Europeans in the management of their land, that they will thus all the sooner do without assistance from Government, be in a condition to improve their state, to pay their managers or do without them, and contribute to the wealth of the colony. As far as I know, not even one European has as yet made a fortune by agriculture in Australia. The aborigines, as British subjects, should be left, not only in a condition to subsist, but to improve, and have like faculties for doing so as the whites. Lastly, the three aborigines in question, not only are capable of improving the extent of land sought, but contemplate also the conditional purchase of more, and mentioned the means of procuring funds for doing so. You ask me as the friend of the aborigines, to justify the claim advanced by them. I think the justness of their claim to the land applied for, is sufficiently shown by their immemorial prescription, and the 21st article of "the Crown lands Alienation Act of 1868: mentioned in my last letter. As you admit their claim is founded on justice, why not at once grant it, and put them in possession of the land? I believe you are prepared to do so; but I apprehend that other members of Ministry may have raised objections, which must account for the argumentative style of this my letter.

I beg leave, however to remind you, that the subject in question falls immediately under the control of your own department and as you are satisfied that the Government has the power of making such reserves, you are entitled to act, and not merely to give the matter consideration or to refer to the aboriginal commissioners. That much I can do myself, but to what purpose? Several such commissions have been appointed, and while the commissioners have been considering and recommending measures, years have elapsed but little or nothing has been done for the aborigines, while multitudes of them have perished. Left to commissioners their fate is like to be the same for the future. As for the past, by immediate action the government can save them. Without it, in a short time, there will be few to be saved. Who can tell how many natives are massacred in a year, or in a quarter, where settlements of Europeans are just commenced? I have recently written to the Governor some suggestions for the pacification of the North. It is in the power of the Minister of Lands, where the blacks are not hostile, in a great measure to preserve them from destruction by making timely provision

for their settlement and civilisation. As you desire it, I will in my next letter endeavor to give a more detailed account of what I think should be done for the benefit of the aborigines,

I am, Duncan McNab

P.S. – Could you grant the applications if divested of technicalities, and put somewhat in this form: -

I, James Diper, an aboriginal of Queensland, do hereby humbly request the governor in Council to reserve for my use and benefit the 640 acres herein described; and I desire to be acknowledged the rightful owner of said land, and to be supplied by the existing Government of Queensland with legitimate title deeds to that effect, as I and my ancestors from time immemorial have used these lands and their appurtenances for hunting and fishing, and I now desire to use them for grazing and agriculture. James Diper.¹⁷

2 September 1876 Father McNab wrote again from Gympie, to John Douglas, the Minister for Lands, trying to cut through colonial rationalizations for the white invasion, that is, that Aborigines had forfeited their entitlement by virtue of failure to exploit agricultural and pastoral potential:

Sir,

I must repeat to you what I wrote in May last to the late Colonial Secretary the Honourable A Macalister, i.e., First that the carrying out the recommendations of the Aboriginal Protection Commissioners, published in 1874, would greatly benefit both the blacks and the colony; secondly, that to me the proper mode of dealing with the aborigines seems to be the placing them at once in distinct family homesteads, under European superintendence, on contiguous selections in the districts that their ancestors had occupied.

Before describing, however, the measures best suited for settling and civilizing them, I deem it expedient to premise that I am not a theorist, because I have found too generally prevailing a certain disposition to regard and treat as a fanatic, anyone who shows an inclination to advocate the cause of the aborigines or to benefit them. I came hither to help them, but without preconceived notions, and I have nothing to propose beyond what common sense and experience have suggested in my intercourse with them, and with Europeans long settled in the colony, and well acquainted with the dispositions and habits of the blacks; and in the perusal of the different reports made at various periods by parliamentary ‘commissioners, and of some descriptive and historical accounts given of them by missionaries. For the sake of brevity and perspicuity, I have arranged my remarks and suggestions under the following heads: - I. Preservation; II. Provision; III. Protection, Training, and Assistance; IV. Education; V. Laws.

1. PRESERVATION.

The first and all important question that presents itself to me, when considering the

condition of the blacks with a view to their benefit, is how to preserve them from extermination. The solution of the difficulty depends in a great measure on the relation in which they stand to the colonists being peaceable, friendly, and independent in the possession and use of their mutual rights; and on the attitude and action of the government, especially where they are in considerable numbers, being beneficent, general, prompt, and efficacious in the prevention and repression of mutual aggression, in the protection of lives, liberty, property, and rights, and in providing for the well-being and good guidance of all. According to the correspondents of the above-mentioned Commissioners – “ Although their means of living are not more precarious now than formerly, yet the aborigines in almost, if not in all the districts of the colony, are fast decreasing in numbers. This decrease is owing to (1) violence, (2) precarious or inferior diet, (3) intoxication, (4) exposure to the inclemency of the weather, (5) polyandry among themselves, and to the promiscuous intercourse of their women with Europeans, (6) diseases introduced by Europeans, as measles, etc.

(1.) The first and chief cause of their disappearance is their being killed, in districts newly occupied by Europeans. Sometimes this is styled “war,” although the mere disparity of forces, especially of weapons, and the helplessness of the blacks in such a contest, suggest, “massacre” as a more appropriate term. It is easy to find a good name for a bad deed, but it is an error to use it, as it tends to remove from men’s minds the horror they have of crime, and therefore the word “war,” and the phrase “dispersing the blacks” are inappropriate when, as is often the case, the violence used is unnecessary, cruel, and unjust, either in its occasion or in the inhuman manner of its execution by an indiscriminate slaughter of the guilty and the innocent. It matters not whether the aborigines be destroyed as formerly, by poisoned flour, by the resentment of settlers, or, as now, by the ferocity of native troopers, for whenever the force employed exceeds what is justifiable in necessary self defence, and results in death, a horrid murder is committed – a crime crying to heaven for vengeance.

To stop the present hostilities in the North, I should advise that the aborigines be treated as men, and not merely shot down as vermin; that terms of peace and protection be proposed to them through an interpreter from a friendly tribe, who should declare to them the benevolent disposition of the Government, and its ability and intention to protect them, and to chastise them should they assail the colonists. Let a certain amount of provisions be supplied to them, avowedly as compensation for the preserved fish that was stolen from them by Europeans. Let them and the colonists and the native police plainly understand that murder by any party will be treated as a capital offence, and that minor faults will be punished in proportion to the gravity of the crime; and then, as far as practicable rigorously and impartially enforce the law. Chastise alike, the blacks for killing or maiming the cattle of the colonists, and the latter for destroying the game of the former till they are otherwise provided for. Finally, let their right to live, and to land for their maintenance, be acknowledged; and, in reparation for the damage they have sustained by the advent of the whites into their country, let assistance be rendered them (as I shall presently describe) to be civilized and settled, and I doubt not that peace can be secured. If it be true (as I have heard), that European officers of police keep rather aloof from their men when sent to “disperse the blacks,” lest afterwards

they should, perchance be cited to give evidence in Court, and so have to testify to ugly facts, they should, on the contrary be made to look sharply after their men, and see that they do not exceed their instructions in the execution of their duty.

To prevent hostilities is generally easier than to make peace. Therefore, it would be well that the government should now send with the native police, to the Diamantina and other districts about to be occupied by colonists, instructions to the nearest magistrates to make provision for the Aborigines, and, by interpreters, let them know its designs, and as far as possible come to terms with them, and by a stringent law and severe penalty, regularly and impartially enforced, restrain the whites from the too common crime of seducing the gins, and so giving provocation to the blacks to commit outrages in retaliation. Were these measures adopted, unquestionably fewer colonists, as well as blacks, would perish by violence.

(2.) By some letters lately published in the *Queenslander*, it evidently appears that the best portion of the game on which the blacks subsisted has become comparatively very scarce, or so shy that it is very difficult of capture without some new means of destruction; and, therefore, their decrease may, perhaps, partly be ascribed to precarious or inferior diet. The remedy is to make provision for them, and to supply them with implements for fishing and tillage.

(3.) That they suffer from the abuse of intoxicating liquors, they themselves and all others admit; and the Commissioners suggest their partial exclusion from towns and places where intoxicating liquors are sold, and more stringent legislation to suppress the sale of them to aborigines. The first suggestion if carried into effect, would be beneficial on more pleas than one, and I think the second might be answered by enforcing the observance of the existing law, and extending its action to others than publicans supplying or procuring intoxicating drink for aborigines. I would add, as a preservative, the suggestion to the blacks of using their surplus cash for the acquisition of property, and the inculcation of abstinence by the force of moral principle. I have known a black who had kept the pledge for two years.

(4.) Exposure to the inclemency of the weather, either after drink or after residence for a time with civilized people, often subjects the aborigines to disease of the lungs, of which very many die. Of course the natural preventative of such a result is proper house accommodation and sufficient clothing, which they must be taught to use, and be supplied with mainly, I hope, by their own industry.

(5.) Their polygamy and polyandry, with their pernicious effects, should be stopped by their conversion to Christianity. Even without that they might, to some extent, be prevented by granting them land, which they would transmit to their posterity, only on condition of their contracting a regular marriage and having legitimate offspring. To this they readily consent. The profligacy of Europeans should be checked by subjecting such as seduce gins to the same penalties as are decreed against those who violate girls under age.

(6.) To prevent or cure infectious diseases they should be kept as far from infection as possible and medical aid should be rendered when needful, according to the advice of the

commissioners. Moral instruction should also be beneficial for the prevention of some of those diseases.

11. PROVISION.

Next to the preservation of the aborigines, the provision that should be made for their maintenance presents itself for consideration. For this the essential requisite is land; happily there is plenty of it., and they have the first and best right to it, anterior and superior to that of Chinese, Germans, or Britons. It is their own country, which they have always occupied and used, and never renounced or alienated. Some fancy that the occupation of the country by the blacks for fishing and hunting does not amount to the exercise of a right of property in the soil; but their opinion must be erroneous, as such occupation has been deemed sufficient in other barbarous countries, and even in those that are civilized. In Scotland I have seen waste tracts of land inherited, or bought at a great price, and possessed by gentlemen for no other purpose, and such use of them is acknowledged as an exercise of the right of property; and only he who possesses such a right can lawfully use or let the shootings and fishing. Now some of the blacks wish to change the mode of their occupation of the soil. When they are so minded, why should they not be free to do so? The law contemplates such provision to be made for them; and therefore, it empowers the governor to grant in trust, or by proclamation, to reserve Crown lands for their use and benefit. I should like to see them amply supplied with land, and their right to it acknowledged and secured to them by the Government, because it is their own; because their being well settled on it is a necessary condition for their preservation, and because the more they have and the better it is, the less assistance they require from the government in the commencement, and the sooner they will be able to maintain themselves, and then become a credit and a benefit to the country. They require but little of agricultural and therefore a larger pastoral area. But how can and ought they to be settled on particular plots of land?

That they should be so has been rendered necessary by the advent hither of Europeans, and like them, they should be domiciled upon it in distinct families, on separate allotments. This arrangement must greatly accelerate their civilization. In justice, their settlement should be in every respect free of charge, and also in policy, for they must see that by the change they better their condition, otherwise they will not accept of it. They should be left as far as possible to their own selection (though guided) within the former boundary of their own territory, as they will not willingly stay beyond it.

The land secured to individuals should be assigned to them in their own right, the same as to minors and under guardians. Thus they will be placed at once in a position of responsibility, and protected; they will see an interest in their property, have a motive of action supplied to them, and a subject on which to invest their earnings.

The owners, and especially their families, should be bound to a certain amount of residence. Should they absent themselves for lengthened periods, otherwise than on business (which, for aborigines, for a time, must include hunting and fishing for the support of themselves and families), the ordinary laws against vagrancy should be enforced, substituting

only a certain amount of compulsory labour for solitary confinement when imprisoned.

They should also be bound to make certain improvements, according to the nature and condition of the subject.

They should have the right of transmitting their land and all their real property to their posterity by hereditary succession, only on condition of their contracting a lawful marriage, and leaving legitimate offspring, on whom it should be entailed for one hundred years, otherwise it should appertain to the nearest relative, according to colonial law (by aboriginal kinship, maternal uncles are called fathers, and in the same degree, not to mention other anomalies), and in default thereof revert to the Crown.

Before describing how I think the land should be apportioned among them, I must call your attention to the present position and condition of the aborigines. In the settled districts of the colony, some of them are along the coast, and on the adjacent islands, and others inland. Some are dispersed and almost stationary, commonly employed by farmers and squatters, and well skilled in certain kinds of work, and earning wages. Others go about in groups, occasionally doing light work for settlers, and begging and jobbing about the towns. More of them, especially in the islands and in the unsettled districts in the interior, must, I suppose (for I have not seen them), live entirely on fish and game, and such nourishing fruit or roots as they can find.

My object being to help to civilise the blacks, I should like as soon as possible to abolish, without violence, their barbarous customs, superstitions, and certain usages, which, with them, have the force of law, and are incompatible with our civilisation; and I conceive that where they are few, their farther isolation from each other, and distinct settlement among the whites, would tend much to hasten their adoption of our civilisation. Therefore, homestead areas, or an equivalent reserve among the lands occupied by colonists, should be given to such as desire it, and are found capable of managing it, even with European direction. The skill and capacity needed is not great, for only a small portion of the area would be cultivated, the rest being set apart for grazing. The reason is simply that men who have lived by the chase will not submit to constant toil, such as is required by extensive cultivation. This arrangement in many cases would dispense with the necessity of separate schools and teachers for the blacks. In localities where they are but few, any other arrangement is scarcely practical either for occupation or superintendency.

To each adult of those who live in groups together, and are not singly fit to manage a regular homestead, there should be allotted in juxtaposition small portions of arable land (say 20 to 40 acres), to which there should be attached a commonage sufficient in extent to be at least equivalent, taking into account the position and nature of the soil, to the remaining portion of a homestead of 640 acres, as granted to whites, for each adult; which, in course of time, if deemed expedient, might be divided between the families like the arable ground; and in the meantime should gradually be stocked with cattle or sheep belonging to the aboriginal settlers, and marked by the distinctive brand of the owner. Those in squatting stations, or in the islands, or in the unsettled districts of the interior, I think, should be made owners of a

competent run, and for whom it would be just and politic to stock it. Of course, in the unsettled districts, a local magistrate, or a district protector of the aborigines, should choose the land for them, as they have no skill in such selection, and gradually, as they become civilised or hemmed in by squatters, it would be occupied and divided. It would be to the interest of the squatters to help the blacks to settle down in this manner, that they might not be under the necessity of importing Kanakas into the interior for their station work.

The chief advantages to be derived from this distribution of lands among the aborigines would be, first, their preservation; next the opportunity it would afford of altering their marriage system and the communism that flows from it; the keeping of their families distant, and yet in such juxtaposition as to have them within easy reach of any place that might be provided for their religious and secular education; then, to some extent, it removes them from temptation, hastens their civilization, and supplies them with a powerful stimulus to acquire property, and to labor. What an impetus would not this give to progress of the colony in this and in the succeeding generations! Many say the blacks will never settle down or be civilized. They have done so elsewhere. They will do so here, if you assist them. They know not their rights nor that they can possess property, nor how to acquire it, any more than how to use it; but they are willing to learn, and when informed that they can become owners of property, they are anxious to acquire it, and profess their readiness to labor for its acquisition. But they need

111. PROTECTION, TRAINING, AND ASSISTANCE.

They want protection by law, and, in fact, from aggression on life, limbs, morality, liberty, rights, and property; and especially they require to be protected as described by the commissioners in 1874, under their first article on the duties assigned to the protectors of the aborigines, viz. :-

- (a) To inquire into all cases of alleged cruelty or ill-treatment of aborigines.
- (b) To see that all contracts and agreements entered into, or about to be entered into, by Aborigines with Europeans are fair and equitable, and faithfully fulfilled.
- (c) To watch over the interest and welfare of the aborigines, with power to sue for wages and to enforce agreements on their behalf.
- (d) To reside on the reserves, and to take charge of the same, devoting their whole time and energies to the special duty entrusted to them.

The training I mean is instruction and guidance in ordinary farming and dairy management, and in cooperage, and the curing of fish along the coasts and on the islands, and also in station work, shepherding, in grazing, and the management of stock in the interior. To secure this necessary training the government should supply a suitable salary to lay managers, Europeans, or their descendants; men of undoubted probity, temperance, chastity, and sufficiently skilled in the duties required for them, who might also fulfil the duties assigned by the commissioners to what they call protectors of aborigines, to be appointed or dismissed by the missionaries, with the approbation of the government. It might

seem to you, at first thought, that the appointment and dismissal of such officials should lie absolutely with the Government; but I feel sure that you will admit the contrary, if you reflect that the Missionary and lay manager, to succeed, must act in concert; that the highest and most means of civilization are in the hands of the Missionary, since it is not Pagan civilization, such as the Chinese, that we wish to impart, but our own, which is Christian; that you cannot get Missionaries to be directed by a layman any more than a doctor by an apothecary; that the Missionaries have a better opportunity of knowing more intimately the character of individuals; and that an intemperate or immoral manager would soon frustrate all the labours of the Missionary and all the expenditure of the government for the benefit of the aborigines. In the settled districts, where the blacks are few, some of the neighbouring settlers might be induced to instruct and direct them; and the squatters might do the same for those on their stations. There, also, the districts of lay managers might be farther extended, so that they could superintend several settlements, and thus their number and expense would be diminished. This, however, ought not to be done with the risk of destroying their perfect efficiency.

As further assistance from the Government, I should expect that plans, surveys, and title deeds, should be given free of cost.

Moreover, some help would be required from it to provide them in the beginning with clothing, and with boats, and material for nets, and with tools and implements for husbandry and building, in some cases also with provisions. Of course, when men are engaged in work, food must be procured for them; but I would not have the aborigines imagine that they are to get it, and all other things, for nothing and that they are to be kept like gentlemen. Their having to earn their position will make them esteem and value it the more, and take better care of what belongs to them. Generally they should be able to do more than support themselves by the wages they can earn from settlers, provided that they be fairly paid for their labor, or by the profit of their fishing; or, where neither of these sources of income are to be found, one party of them should be engaged in hunting and foraging for all while the other is at work, and it would be proper that they should attend to each employment alternately. If they were prevented from begging in the towns, they would work more. With a little help in the beginning they should be able to provide themselves with requisite food and implements, and gradually to stock their land by their earnings, and the natural increase of their flocks. They might also to some extent be assisted by their neighbours. If they had land sufficient, they should, after a time, be fit to pay their managers til they could do without them.

The commissioners humanely recommend that medical aid be afforded in needful cases.

1V. EDUCATION

As education is secured for the youth of the colony, so it ought likewise to be for the children of the aborigines.

To make it generally effectual, the attendance at school should be made compulsory in settled districts. In my opinion, or rather, to my certain knowledge, if their education be purely

secular and not religious, it will prove worse than useless. I should not deem it religious merely for including Scripture lessons. To be such, it should impart a knowledge of the attributes of God as the foundation of morality; and, in forming a conscience, impress upon their minds a sense of their responsibility for their actions.

Their conversion to Christianity and their instruction in religion must be mainly the work of God and of missionaries and catechists, with their own concurrence.

V. LAWS.

Now, I have little more to write beyond the enumeration of the special laws, which I have already indicated as desirable to be made or enforced for the benefit of the blacks. They are mostly those suggested by the commissioners in 1874-5.

- (1.) A modification of the law of evidence so as to admit that of aborigines, especially when supported by concomitant circumstances and plainly reliable, not only against one another, but also against colonists who injure or oppress them.
- (2.) A law prohibiting colonists from killing game where no sufficient provision is made for the aborigines.

Such a law seems specially required in unsettled and newly settled districts, where, if the colonists wish to use or destroy game, they ought at times to come to an understanding with the natives, who would, I doubt not, exchange their game for sheep and cattle, and so prevent the ill-feeling and conflicts that often occur between them. Could not runs be let with this condition?

- (3.) An alteration of the land laws where requisite – *ergo*, to bind the blacks to residence, and to make improvements on their allotment.
- (4.) Application to them of the law requiring legitimacy of birth for succession to real property.
- (5.) Enactment of a law of entail for a specified period.
- (6.) A modified law of vagrancy in settled districts.
- (7.) Enforcement of compulsory education in settled districts.
- (8.) Alteration of the law prohibiting the sale of supply of intoxicating drink to aborigines, and a new enactment, partially excluding them from towns and places where intoxicating liquors are sold.
- (9.) A law for punishing the seducers of aboriginal women.
- (10.) The blacks, especially in the settled districts, should be punished for thefts and breaches of contract, and gradually, as they become civilized, be subjected to the other laws of the colony.
- (11.) The most suitable punishment for aborigines guilty of minor offences, to me,

appears to be their being condemned to forced labor on public works, such as railway making. They might be kept in stockades apart from white prisoners, and prevented from escaping into scrub while at work, not only by armed sentinels, but also by being chained singly or together, as is the practice with some criminals on the Continent of Europe.

In their report published in 1874, the commissioners state that “Hitherto the aborigines have been almost exempt from both the protection and penalties of our laws, and, except in cases of personal violence towards Europeans, the records of our courts of law show but a very small proportion of aboriginal offenders.”

This means, simply, that they were then without a Government. Is not their case the same to this hour? Are they not robbed of their country and left without a legal title to a foot of land in Queensland, and continually wronged and killed by Europeans and native troopers with impunity, and without the hope or prospect of protection or redress? How long is this disgraceful state of things to continue? Perhaps, as elsewhere, till the blacks are nearly exterminated! I pray it may not be so for their sake, and, also, for that of our rulers, who must otherwise appear inhuman and incapable. Of late, much has been written in the press about extending the blessings of civilization to New Guinea. Let our government show how they can civilize and make happy the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia and Fiji, before they enter on such a task.

I have now given you, agreeably to your request, a fuller explanation of my views and of how I propose to act upon them. I am still open to conviction and prepared to alter these should expediency suggest it, or to adopt any others that reason or experience may show to be preferable. I have told you what I want for the blacks; but to attain the desired result, I need abundant, prompt, and energetic assistance and co-operation from the aboriginal Protection Commissioners, and from all good colonists, and particularly from my superiors in church and state. Now let the aborigines at least occupy the land while you are adjusting the terms and legislating for their benefit. Please let me know what you can do at present.

I desire to be recognised as an agent of the Government in the civilization and settlement of the aborigines; and, as such, to be countenanced, aided, and protected, by the central and local authorities in the accomplishment of the work.

Duncan McNab

P.S. – Please address your reply to me, at Kenilworth Station, by Gympie.

Honourable J Douglas.¹⁸

In the above writings McNab geared his arguments to the recognition of Aboriginal rights to land. This was being steamrolled by growing Australian capitalism preoccupied as it was with exploitation of agricultural and mineral potential. Later generations have continued to overlook land issues by using the ‘doomed race’ theory of Darwinist

reasoning to support the inevitability of Aboriginal extinction.

McNab also geared his efforts to the provocation of public indignation at the treatment of the Aborigines. Other members of the Aboriginal commission acted to realize limited and expedient goals, as part-time agents of an administration, not fully committed to Aboriginal rights. The Scottish priest was trying to bring public attention to the horrors of Native Police activity and at the same time to make the public aware of the dominant role that whites played in such atrocities while the colonial press tended to divert attention away from white complicity in the slaughter. He did not mince his words:

“It matters not whether the Aborigines be destroyed as formerly, by poisoned flour, by the resentment of settlers, or, as now, by the ferocity of Native Troopers.”¹⁹

Durundur Reserve - October 1876

Shortly after McNab’s arrival in Queensland, Bishop Quinn had introduced him to Governor Cairns. The nature of McNab’s proposal for Durundur Run was more consistent with the character of the reserves movement as endorsed in the parliamentary resolutions of November 1876. McNab met with Aborigines around Durundur near the present site of Woodford.

Support for McNab’s scheme by two major landholders in the district, John McConnel and Henry Wood, together with the support of the Governor may have tipped the balance.

By the mid 1860’s the Durundur Run had been considerably reduced from the sixty square miles originally purchased from the Archers in 1848. In 1868 an *Act for Closer Settlement* was passed which saw the beginning of resumptions on the property.

A J McConnel’s detailed description of the practice of dummying²⁰ suggests that his father’s partnership with his ex-manager Wood (1873) may have been an attempt to forestall further resumptions from the Homestead Act of the previous year.

1876 Queensland Legislative Assembly - The Revd Duncan McNab and the Aborigines:

10 October 1876 Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be Printed

Return to an Order made by the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, that there be laid upon the Table of this House, -

Copy of all correspondence that passed between the Rev Duncan M and the government, respecting the Aborigines, and the proper mode of providing for them.

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1. 9 May 1876, *Rev D McNab to Colonial Secretary – Suggestions to ameliorate Conditions of the Aborigines of Queensland.*
2. 24 July 1876, *Rev D McNab to Minister for Lands – Letter covering Applications for Homesteads by Three Aborigines, and Minister’s Memo. Theron.*
3. 2 August 1876, *Under-Secretary for Lands to Rev D McNab –Reply to Rev D McNab’s letter of 24 July.*
4. 16 August 1876, *Rev D McNab to Minister for Lands – Advancing grounds why the applications should be granted.*
5. 2 September 1876, *Rev D McNab to Minister for Lands – Submitting further suggestions to ameliorate the condition of the Aborigines.*
6. 11 September 1876, *Minister for Lands to Rev D McNab – Reply to Rev D McNab’s Letters of 16 August and 2nd September 1876.*
7. 11 September 1876, *Minister for Lands to Bishop Hale – Submitting Rev D McNab’s Letters, and inviting his advice.*
8. 15 September 1876, *Bishop Hale to Minister for Lands – Report on Rev D McNab’s letters.*
9. 22 September 1876, *Rev D McNab to Minister for Lands – That he will petition His Excellency the governor; also calling attention to the condition of the Aborigines.*
10. 10 October 1876, *Acting Private Secretary to Minister for Lands –Forwarding a Letter addressed by Rev D McNab to his Excellency the Governor accompanied by a petition from certain Aboriginal Natives.²¹*

11 September 1876, Minister for Lands to Rev D McNab – Reply to Rev D McNab’s Letters of 16 August and 2nd September 1876:

Department of Public Lands,
Brisbane,

Sir,

I have received your letters of the 16th of August and the 2nd of September; the first specially referring to the rejection by the Land Agent at Brisbane of applications made by certain aboriginal natives for homestead selections in the Logan district. You are in error in supposing that I am not myself responsible for the terms in which your letter, calling my attention to the facts of the case, was answered from this office. The applications were not in accordance with law, and, therefore they could not be entertained by the Land agent.

As to the many important questions connected with the aboriginal natives, to which you have made reference in your letter of the 2nd September, I beg to assure you that they shall receive my attention.

I have asked Bishop Hale, who has had much experience of the aboriginal natives in both South and Western Australia, to bring your letter under the notice of the Aboriginal Protection commissioners,

John Douglas

11 September 1876 Minister for Lands to Bishop Hale – Submitting Rev D McNab’s Letters, and inviting his Advice.

Lands Office

My Dear Bishop,

I forward to you two letters which I have lately received from the Reverend Duncan McNab, a Roman Catholic clergyman, who appears to take a good deal of interest in the Aboriginal natives. Knowing that you have had great experience in dealing with the aboriginal natives of both South Australia and Western Australia, I would be happy to have your advice on the proposal made by Mr McNab. I should be glad, also, if you could see your way to bring Mr McNab’s letter to the 2nd September under the notice of the Aboriginal commissioners. Mr McNab’s idea evidently is to base his reformation of the blacks on the principle of the family rather than of the communistic or tribal compact.

I invite your advice, in the hope that it may lead to some further efforts being made to civilize and utilise the blacks in our northern and western territories.

At Mackay, Mr Bridgman appears to have met with some success.

John Douglas.

15 September 1876 Bishop Hale to Minister for Lands – Report on Rev D McNab’s letters:

In quite a long letter, Bishop Hale reported on the first meeting as Commissioners upon the affairs of the aboriginal natives. He pointed out

that Mr McNab failed to apply his ideas to the actual condition of the people, that is, his desire to put a number of natives in possession of a number of family properties, under the idea that those properties could descend from father to son through succeeding generations.

I understand from Mr Drew that Mr McNab objects to the Reserve System, according to which a number of natives live together as a large co-operative society.

22 September 1876 Rev D McNab to Minister for Lands – That he will petition His Excellency the Governor; also calling attention to the condition of the Aborigines:

North Kenilworth

Sir,

As you have not sent me any particular form of application for land for the aborigines, I conclude that a petition must be sent directly to the Governor in Council, and, till otherwise directed, I will advise the blacks to do so. Not having a copy of the applications made by the Diper and Wattiman, I shall feel obliged to you for directing a copy of the description of the land applied for by them to be sent to me. For the purpose of urging you to accelerate as much as possible the measure I desire for the benefit of the aborigines, I wish to remind you of their present miserable condition, which I cannot more briefly describe than I have done in the first part of my letter to the editor of the *Gympie Times*, and contained in his issue of the 9th of August, whereof I send you a copy.

The description would have been more graphic had it contained an account of the well-known cruelties not long ago inflicted on the blacks in the North, and the flogging of a poor naked savage with a stockwhip by a trooper, as related in the columns of the *Gympie Times* of last Saturday, (by a spectator who signs himself 'Humanity'). It is to be hoped that the proper authorities will look after the case, and, with more discretion than the editor of the *Gympie Times*, make enquiries from others besides the accused.

Duncan McNab.

10 October 1876 Acting Private Secretary to Minister for Lands –Forwarding a Letter addressed by Rev D McNab to his Excellency the Governor accompanied by a petition from certain Aboriginal Natives:

Sir,

I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to forward to you the enclosed memorials (2) from the Rev Duncan McNab, for the consideration of Ministers.

A V Drury, Acting Private Secretary.

10 October 1876 Father McNab to His Excellency the Governor in Council, Brisbane:

Sir,

I have been requested by a number of aborigines, including Tidy, Aboriginal King of Durundur and Samson Vale and Prince William, of Bribie Island, to apply to your Excellency for a reserve for their respective tribes. That for the aborigines of Bribie Island to be situated on the main land, between the mouth of the Caboolture, on the northern end of Bribie Island; and that those of Durundur, higher up the Caboolture. They promised to settle down upon the land, if the Government would assist them. Accordingly, I hereby petition your Excellency to grant their request, in the manner I have proposed to the Minister of Lands.

Having made inquiry as to the extent of land that should be assigned to each family, I have been told that for grazing, on ordinary land, not less than 2,300 acres would be requisite. Along the Pumice Stone Channel the land is bad, and, therefore, more is needed.

They could not tell me exactly the number of the tribes; but they thought about sixty.

I think Mr Thomas Petrie, of the North Pine River, would be a fit lay-manager for those tribes.

Duncan McNab

10 October 1876 James Diper, Charles Diper Ghepara, William Watiman Nilapi to His Excellency the Governor in Council, Brisbane:

Sir,

We, James Diper, Charles Diper Ghepara, William Watiman Nilapi, being aborigines of Queensland, hereby humbly request Your Excellency to reserve for the use and benefit of each of us one thousand acres of land, being original portion No 368, and adjoining land in the parishes of Perry and Mitchell, County Stanly; and we desire to be acknowledged the lawful owners of said land, and to be supplied by the existing Government of Queensland with legitimate title deeds to that effect; as we and our ancestors from time immemorial have possessed and used these lands and their appurtenances for hunting and fishing, and now we desire to use them for grazing and agriculture.

We are Your Excellency's loyal subjects,

James Diper, Charles Diper Ghepara, William Watiman Nilapi

10 October 1876 Father McNab to His Excellency the Governor in Council, Brisbane:

Brisbane,

I have been authorised by the above mentioned aborigines to make the preceding application to the Government on their behalf, and to attach their signatures thereto, or sign it for them. They are satisfied that the title deeds be given to them as to minors, and that guardians be assigned to them.

Rev Duncan McNab

28 October 1876 The *Brisbane Courier* noted, “The Rev Duncan McNab sends us the following letter for publication, in the hope that it may tend to solve the problem of the civilization and settlement of the blacks”:

Dara, Brisbane, October 28, 1876

My Dear Father McNab,

I give you with very great pleasure the information you seek regarding the aboriginal tribes of Burrururang, in the district of Camden, New South Wales.

When appointed to the pastoral charge of that mission, a little over seven years ago, I found the aboriginals, numbering about sixty, in about the same condition, physically and morally, as the poor people of the same race I have observed wandering through the settled districts in this colony. A few mothers, led I suppose by the custom, or perhaps by the advice of the whites, had had their children baptised, but this was nearly all that could be found in them of Christianity.

The necessities of the white population in Burrururang forced me to establish, as soon as I possibly could a great number of small schools, for many of which I received aid from the State, and when these schools were in working order it struck me that they could be utilized for the aboriginals.

By the assistance of kind-hearted persons and the teachers I managed to gain sufficient influence over the tribe to induce them to send all their children to the schools. The children turned out very apt scholars, and the parents were so pleased at their being able to sing simple hymns, to say prayers, and to read, that they moderated to a surprising extent their wandering habits, and after a little time, by means of Sunday school teachers and their own children, the whole tribe, with one exception, were sufficiently instructed for baptism, and after a while for the other sacraments. They are now, and have been for some time, fairly instructed Christians. They are remarkably honest and considering their past history, wonderfully moral. It is difficult to keep the men completely away from drink, but this vice is, as you are probably aware, not exclusively confined to black Christians. The women, however, never drink at present. They are excellent mothers, and willingly labour among the white settlers for the support of their families. Three of them have lately married respectable labouring white men, and several of the children trained in the schools are in situations, with little disposition to return to camp life.

For a length of time I endeavoured to settle them on the land. The Government offered bush land, but this, because it was not fit for cultivation, would not suit. A few weeks before starting for Queensland, however, I procured by such means as I could afford, and as some generous friends placed at my disposal, a small but excellent farm adjoining the school, at Cox River, and I placed some of the blacks (purely aboriginals) in charge. With this they are delighted and are all about to settle upon it. I am paying some of the men to erect their own church and school under the direction of a white, married to a pure aboriginal of the tribe. In

a little while they will all have houses, such as the poorer class of whites use in the bush, and though this farm may not be sufficient to support all the tribe, it will form a home for the women and children, and the men can seek employment as stockmen or bush labourers as heretofore.

Since I left on this visit to Queensland, the clergyman in my place informs me that two – a young man aged twenty-two, and an aged woman – died fortified with the consolations of religion, and in the most edifying sentiments of faith and devotion. He also informs me that they are cultivating their farm admirably. They number there but fifty-nine souls in all, the majority of the adults being pure aboriginals and in nothing inferior to the half-castes.

I may mention that one of your Queensland aboriginals from Cooper’s Creek made his way to Burrururang with cattle. He now lives with the tribe, and he is an excellent farm labourer and much sought for by our young white men as a cricketer. Any information you desire I shall be happy to afford you.

Yours, George F Dillon.²²

1 November 1876 The *Brisbane Courier* Leading Article – Rev D McNab:

We have before us some correspondence printed by order of Parliament which has lately taken place between the Rev Duncan McNab and the Secretary for Lands on the subject of the protection of the aborigines in Queensland. Mr McNab is a Roman Catholic priest who has lately come to this colony from Victoria with the intention, as it appears from this correspondence of devoting himself to the conversion of the blacks. How long he may have been in the colony of Victoria before coming here there is nothing in the correspondence to show, but, judging from the ideas which he expresses in his letters, we should infer that he has very little knowledge of the aboriginal nature, character, or customs, and that his colonial experience has been a very short one.

It may be admitted that the spectacle of a whole race of men perishing before the advance of a people superior to them in every appliance of war or civilization is one well calculated to excite the sympathy of the looker on, yet history and science have taught us that by the inscrutable decree of providence certain races are doomed to perish as soon as their successors are at hand to take their places. There are few countries in the world where any living relics of the aboriginal inhabitants can now be found. Those of Europe perished long before the commencement of the Christian era; those of Asia exist only in small degraded tribes, living in inaccessible fastnesses of hill and jungle; whilst the predecessors of the Red Indians of America have disappeared so completely that their existence is only proved by the mounds they raised

on the prairies of the north and by the buried cities of the south, and it is clearly evident that no human means can save the Australian aboriginal from a like decrease.

It will be doing Mr McNab no injustice to say that since the colonization of Australia we have had many men amongst us, belonging to all the different Christian churches, as zealous in the cause of humanity as himself, and perhaps with greater experience. During the last sixty years many attempts at the conversion and protection of our aborigines have been made in each of the different colonies, and if those efforts have not been sustained up to the present time it must be acknowledged that they were not discontinued until the promoters were convinced of their absolute inutility. In fact, Mr McNab's scheme for the civilization of the blacks, as set forth in these papers is a most complete vindication of the colony from any charge of having neglected its duty in this respect, since he declares that the only effectual way to ameliorate their condition is by alterations in our laws, which could not possibly be carried into effect. Mr McNab's proposals may be condensed into the following:

1. Aboriginal evidence to be received in our courts.
2. Aborigines to be entitled to receive grants of land, the area, as stated by Mr McNab in a letter to the Governor, to be 2500 acres for each family; the chiefs of tribes to receive runs stocked for them, and the others to receive implements, clothing, and provisions until they were able to provide for themselves. These lands to be entailed for 100 years, but only to descend to such of the children of the original grantees as should be in lawful wedlock.
3. Colonists to be prohibited from killing game, except in those districts where the blacks were provided for as above, or where they had bought the game from them by exchange of sheep and cattle for native game.
4. Enforcement of compulsory education of black children.
5. Exclusion of blacks from towns and all other places where intoxicating liquors are sold.
6. A law to be phased punishing the seducers of aboriginal women.
7. The blacks to be punished for theft and breaches of contract, and gradually, as they become civilized to be subjected to the laws of the colony.

8. Aborigines guilty of minor breaches of the law to be punished by being kept to hard labour on our railway works, being kept in stockades and worked in irons.
9. Aborigines absenting themselves from their homes for any lengthened periods to be dealt with as vagrants.
10. Hostilities in the northern districts to be put a stop to by a treaty of peace with the Palmer Blacks, who should be compensated for the loss of some fish said to have been stolen from them by whites.
11. The Blacks settled upon the land to be assisted in the management of their farms by lay-managers appointed and paid by Government, but who are to be liable to dismissal by the missionaries, who are to have paramount authority over the Blacks.

Although Mr McNab has expressly declared in his letter to the Secretary for Lands that he is not a theorist, yet we find ourselves compelled to come to the conclusion that he is one, a theorist of very little conception of what the practical working out of his theories would result in. Setting apart all consideration of the white population of the colony, who would be considerably affected by the measures he proposes, and would have to find the money for them, the Blacks themselves would probably perish with far greater rapidity under his well-meaning experiment than they are doing at present. He is shocked to hear of a trooper driving blacks out of a town with a stock whip, but he would keep them out by law and punish breaches of the law by hard labor in irons on railway works. The mistake that Mr McNab makes is in thinking that it is possible to civilize a people by Act of Parliament. This cannot be done even though the whites were ready to sacrifice their own interests in the attempt; they can only be redeemed from barbarism by their own adoption of certain ideas and fundamental principles of morality. It is not possible to conclude a treaty of peace with a people who have no law or authority established amongst themselves, and it certainly seems the height of absurdity to introduce the law of entail amongst a race who have the vaguest idea of property; whilst the treatment of Aborigines as vagrants would appear an act of cruelty to anyone except an enthusiast who was carrying out a pet system.

The Australian people have now had an experience of many schemes for aboriginal civilization, and the result has been that the best men amongst us have come to the conclusion that the Government can do nothing more than provide that the aborigines shall be interfered with or

molested as little as is possible, and protected against all outrage, whilst restrained from committing any. Though anxious as any to do our duty to the blacks, we cannot agree to the proposals of Mr McNab, but we trust that a longer residence in the colony will enable the reverend gentleman to discover some more practicable method of benefiting them than the one he has now brought forward.²⁵

6 November 1876 *The Brisbane Courier*, Monday:

The Rev Duncan McNab favors us with a long letter, which will be found in another portion of this issue. For the present we shall only notice the third paragraph of the Rev Gentleman's letter, and that one because it contains an unjust and unwarrantable imputation. (Several paragraphs explore Father McNab's statement, "Your second sentence commences with the statement that I am a Roman Catholic priest". There follows several paragraphs about the role of a priest.) We have, however what we consider good reason to believe that, though written by the reverend gentleman, the affected humility, the ponderous satire, and the unwarrantable insinuations of this letter are not his. These portions, at least resemble more the laboured inspiration of another mind, vain and shallow, crafty and unscrupulous and whose missionary zeal has never yet found scope in work of a character so unprofitable – in a financial sense – as the "conversion and civilisation of our aborigines."

6 November 1876 To the Editor of *The Brisbane Courier*, 'The Treatment of our Aborigines', from Duncan McNab:

Sir,

Now that the religious solemnities of the week are past I have had more leisure to think of other things. You have made me and my correspondence with the honourable Secretary for Lands the subject of your leading article in your issue of November 1, 1876, and have candidly and openly expressed your judgement on both. I feel obliged to you for having done so, and so I have great respect and deference for your judgement, I bow my head in submission to your decision and accept it as a verdict announcing that I am a theorist, and that my scheme for the amelioration and settlement of the blacks is, in its integrity, impracticable in the existing state of feeling of the colonists of Queensland. In return I expect that you will allow me a similar liberty of thought and speech.

Then about to undertake the mission to the blacks, considering the dangers to which I should be exposed, I subjected myself to a test of pain, in order to try whether or not I was made of stuff sufficiently stern to bear the thrust of a spear. Then I thought only of physical pain; I did not reflect on what might be occasioned by a pen. Like some others, physically brave and morally cowards, now that I feel the point of a moral lance, I wish, if I must die

morally, to do so gently; and, therefore with your permission, I will say a few words, if not in defence, at any rate in extenuation of what you designate my absurdity.

Your second sentence commences with the statement that I am a Roman Catholic priest. Quite true! But is it not strange that this fact should be the head of my offending, and that from the very beginning of my enterprise I should have been told, "your religion is against you." I felt I could not cast it off like old habiliments to suit other people's policy; and in my simplicity I fancied that instead of being an impediment to my success, it should be a recommendation and entitle me to a hearing and support, since Catholic priests have done more than any other class, than the ministers of any other denomination, for the conversion of infidels and the civilisation of barbarians. But it seems I must take people's dispositions as I find them – not always, as they ought to be. Thus, you see, I am not too old to learn.

Next, my colonial experience is inferred to be short and my knowledge of aboriginal nature, character, and customs very little. Here, again, you are not far wrong. After nine years' residence in the colonies, I may still be called a new chum. I am not much more than a year in Queensland. My knowledge, such as it is, of aboriginal nature, character, and customs, is not derived so much from my own experience as from that of the oldest, the most intelligent, and respectable bushmen of the colony as detailed in the minutes of their evidence before a Select parliamentary Committee in 1861, and other ampler sources of information, including the history of the mission of New Norcia, in Western Australia, for the conversion and settlement of the blacks by Bishop Salvado, who has successfully laboured amongst them over thirty years. With these sources of information at command, a novice in the colony has more than the advantage of a lengthened intercourse with wild blacks. Thus, now I seldom meet with one who can tell me more about them, than I have already learned.

Although I am not a politician, I am a theologian, and therefore I cannot admit the accuracy of your statement, "that by an inscrutable decree of Providence certain races are doomed to perish as soon as their successors are at hand to take their places." Allow me, then, in preference, to follow the teachings of theology, and to believe that, when by the malice of men, which God only suffers to act, certain races perish, sometimes by a decree of Providence others take their place. Neither history nor science advances anything contrary to this doctrine. You say that no human means can save the Australian from a like doom. That is true; if the Government annually vote thousands of pounds to maintain a police force for the protection of the colonists – by the extermination of the aborigines – and does nothing to preserve them. I do not balance my predecessors in the field of humanity attempting the amelioration of the blacks. They did their best; but their failure proves their system to have been defective. Precisely where they failed I begin. They offered the blacks dogmatic teaching and knowledge of letters, overlooking the fact that the first necessity of the savage is his material existence and provision for the means of maintaining it. They blaspheme God, who say that he created a race of men incapable of improvement and civilisation. It does not yet appear that all are convinced of the absolute inutility of all attempts at the conversion and protection of the aborigines, for very recently the Government appointed a commission for that very purpose.

I do not think you have succeeded in making a fair or accurate summary of my proposals. For on the main point you have evidently mistaken my meaning. I have not declared that the only effectual way of ameliorating the condition of the blacks is the alteration of our laws. I said the essential requisite for it is land. The alteration of laws, I suggested merely as desirable, and about one-half of the alterations were proposed, not by me in the first instance, but by the Aboriginal Protection Commissioners.

Again, it is an error to represent as part of my system that the missionaries should have paramount authority over the blacks. I neither wrote nor thought that; I proposed their gradual subjection only to the laws of the land; I said not a word of their subjection to the missionaries. Even now that you have suggested the idea, I cannot approve of such submission any further than their own convictions would induce them spontaneously to render. As you will have it so, I begin to consider myself a theorist, and to think that possibly my theory may be too practical for sentimental humanitarianism, too strict for the now generally prevailing ideas of morality, too disinterested for the notions of some people bent only on the accumulation of wealth, and possibly tending to exact more compensation for the original owners of the soil, than those who by violence have become possessed of it are willing to render. I may have erred quite as much in over-estimating the just and good dispositions of the whites as in devising means to relieve the wants of the blacks.

I never thought that a people could be civilised by Act of Parliament, but I did believe that such an Act might help to provide them with temporal support. I have also some reason to think that the semi-civilised blacks, of which I mostly treat, know more of the principles of morality than you seem aware of, and some of them are willing to be instructed in the rest.

Although you say they have no laws, the Rev William Ridley, at the end of his treatise on the Kamilaroi and other Australian languages, devotes ten quarto pages to the laws and institutions of the blacks. If we cannot make a formal treaty with them, we may deal with them as with men, and not merely kill them like vermin.

Perhaps the introduction of the law of entail among them would not appear such an absurdity to you if you knew that their ideas of certain kinds of property are not so vague as you imagine. Each individual claims and holds an absolute right of property in his arms. In Queensland, at Bellai Creek, near Kenilworth station, the blacks point out individual bunya trees, which individually they claim by hereditary right transmitted to them from generation to generation.

In conclusion, I beg of you to observe that in the enunciation of my views I have not absolutely determined anything definitely (with one exception), believing that the Government had at its disposal men more capable than I of deciding the special measures to be adopted, and of specifying the extent and form of their application. I professed my willingness to alter those suggestions, or adopt such others as reason or experience should commend. I cannot see how you can reconcile this my disposition with that of an enthusiast carrying out a pet scheme. Let us thus compare notes, and then possibly we may understand each other better, and work harmoniously for the improvement and civilisation of the aborigines.

Yours, Duncan McNab,

The Brisbane Courier quoted from *The Queenslander*:

Missionary enterprise as a primary means of elevating or civilizing the race has proved a failure and this fact has been set down and accepted as owing to the incapable and intractable nature of the black race.

McNab held that the failure of the early missionaries proved that their system was at fault. "They offered the Blacks dogmatic teaching and knowledge of letters, overlooking the fact that the first necessity of the savage is his material existence and provision of the means of maintaining it." It is doubtful if this was the key to success but McNab adhered to this principle throughout his ministry. In the same article McNab had expressed sensitivity to his role as a Catholic Priest in a largely Protestant society and accused the Brisbane Courier of sectarian bias.²⁴ This attitude might well have been misplaced. A resistance dogged his career, not to Catholic missionary activity in particular, but to missionary activity in general.²⁵

8 November 1876 *The Brisbane Courier*, Explanation to the Editor from Duncan McNab:

Sir,

The phrase 'your religion is against you' was applied to me much nearer the commencement of my enterprise than the publication of your criticism of my scheme for the settlement of the blacks. Those who used it will, I doubt not, recognise it. If no prejudice against the Catholic Priesthood exists, they must have been mistaken in their estimate of public opinion. Although your opening your criticism with the statement that I am a Catholic Priest reminded me of the phrase, I did not quote it as yours. Had I believed you enslaved to the above –mentioned prejudice, I do not think that I would have written my reply, for then I could not well expect its publication. Your concluding observations on the subject today seem to blame a third party for a portion of my reply. For your better information, and that of the public I wish it to be distinctly understood that for the whole of its contents I am alone responsible, and that it was written without dictation or inspiration from any other. I hope to be better understood through time; but I do not wish to waste your space, or my own time, on personalities.²⁶

While he had his detractors, McNab also had his loyal supporters. It is recorded in the Queensland Parliamentary Debates that John Thompson was impressed by McNab's 'common-sense view'.²⁷

In a letter to Douglas, McNab reiterated that he was not a theorist. He had found "a certain disposition to regard and treat as fanatic, anyone, who showed an inclination to advocate the cause of the Aborigines or to benefit them."²⁸ His approach brought him into conflict with members of the pragmatic reserve movement, Matthew Hale, George Bridgman, Tom Petrie, and W L G Drew. *The Brisbane Courier* drew its readers' attention

to McNab's lack of practical experience.²⁹ Bishop Hale, the Anglican bishop of Brisbane recommended that McNab go to New Norcia and get some practical experience. Bishop Hale had been instrumental in setting up the settlement at Poonindie in South Australia in 1850 as Archdeacon of Adelaide. He spent five and a half years involved in its day to day running, and the institute survived for twenty-five years after his departure. He would have felt justified in thinking that his experience qualified him to speak on the Aborigines. McNab, however, was viewed as a 'parvenu' in the company of 'old hands' in Queensland, an iconoclast who raged against, but was dwarfed by, a monumental social injustice.

He insisted also that his conclusions were informed by his theology:

"Allow me then, in preference, to follow the teachings of theology, and to believe that, when by the malice of men, which God only suffers to act, certain races perish, sometimes by a decree of providence others take their place. Neither history nor science advances anything contrary to that doctrine. You say that no human means can save the Australian from a like doom. That is true; if the government annually vote thousands of pounds to maintain a police force for the protection of the colonists – by the extermination of the Aborigines – and does nothing to preserve them."³⁰

McNab rejected the idea that reserves should be self-supporting whereas the Commission and Douglas systematically justified their efforts in terms of pounds shillings and pence. Bishop Hale could, and did, cite figures, which proved that the settlement at Poonindie did run at a profit.³¹ In the prevailing atmosphere of government parsimony, administrators were reluctant to commit money on a purely philanthropic basis.

McNab had come to Queensland with the reasonable expectation that the colony was ready to take important steps towards civil rights for the Aborigines. When John Thompson noted the demise of the Tasmanian Aborigines as a spur to action,³² an atmosphere of reform enabled two government commissions to be appointed. W L G Drew, a Treasury Department civil servant, headed the first and produced a report duly ignored by the government and criticized by the *Brisbane Courier* for failing to address the issue of Native Police violence. The second, gazetted at the end of May 1876, included Drew but had the Anglican Archbishop Matthew Hale as Chairman.

While this commission put most of its energies into Bridgman's reserve at Mackay, McNab had launched his own personal campaign with applications for homesteads, forwarded through Douglas in the Lands

Department.

Prominence was given to McNab's efforts when, in response to John Thompson's plea, the Legislative Assembly printed the applications and the correspondence which ensued in the *Votes and Proceedings* of 1876.

McNab was appointed to the commission in 1876, it is not sure whether it was by initiatives from Douglas or by the Commissioners. But he encountered procrastination in his dealings with both the Lands Department and the Commission.

29 November 1876 Two Resolutions to help the conditions of the Blacks were passed by the Queensland Legislative Assembly.³³ McNab later viewed these resolutions as the culmination of his own lobbying efforts. The first resolved that reserves should be made for Aborigines under the authority of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868; the second that £500 should be granted annually for the purpose of implementing such measures. John Thompson moved the motion and told the House that:

With regard to the object of the resolutions he might say that they originated in the visit to the colony of the Revd Father McNab, who was influenced by an enthusiastic desire to ameliorate the condition of the Aborigines.

John Macrossan, another politician also spoke to the motion in praise of McNab.³⁴

However, against his opinion as to expedience, but because of the Bishop's expectations and his own desire, McNab prepared for the instruction of the blacks. From the beginning he had prayed, and requested prayers from others. He now adopted particular modes of dress, one for travelling and one for instruction. Both were photographed and sent ahead so that the blacks would recognise him when he came.

Marginalized from the Catholic mainstream in Queensland, McNab was unable to mobilize the weight of the Church behind his lobbying efforts. His initiatives were resisted by an almost exclusively Protestant administration. He acknowledged the authority vested in the Vatican and whose goals re the Aborigines he believed he shared. It was the Catholic Church, which gave McNab licence and scope to practice. Freelance, he would have had neither the opportunity nor the resources to pursue his enterprise. It was the church that provided the minimal support essential to his mission, but Quinn's permission to beg for money could be revoked at any time.

One of McNab's contributions to opinion on aborigines would be his optimistic approach, which refused to accept the widely held idea that the race was doomed to extinction, and that it was not worthwhile converting them or improving their physical condition. Accordingly he wrote to the Colonial Secretary, urging upon him the government's duty in the matter,

It seems to me an error in political economy, almost incredible, that a Government, which countenances the importation of temporary labourers from the South Sea Islands, and annually expends considerable sums of money in procuring immigration, should be indifferent to the extinction of the aboriginal population. They may be civilised and saved, and their energies being properly directed may help to develop the resources of the colony.⁵⁵

This new and wholesome approach that it was not merely a Christian duty to assist these poor wretches, but that they might be made into useful citizens with benefit to the country as a whole, was McNab's significant contribution to opinion in Queensland on the Aborigines.

Father McNab's efforts would be directed to obtaining social space and civil rights for Aborigines. He would seek the right for Aborigines to own land and he fought for the right to have their evidence accepted by magistrates. He would try to learn their languages.

Notes for Chapter 2

¹ Melbourne Archdiocese: James Alipius Goold OSA, 1848-1886; Thomas Joseph Carr, 1886-1917.

Sydney Archdiocese, John Polding OSB, Vicar Apostolic 1834-1842; Archbishop 1842-1877. Roger Bede Vaughan OSB, 1877-1833; Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, 1884-1911. Brisbane Diocese: James Quinn, 1859-1881;

Cairns Diocese: John Bishop Cani, Pro-Vicar Apostolic May 1879-1882; Paul Fortini, Pro-Vicar Apostolic 1882-1884 (recalled).

² James Waldersee, *A Grain of Mustard*, Kensington, Chevalier press, 1982, p 189.

³ Frances O'Donoghue, *The Bishop of Botany Bay*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1982, pp 132-133.

⁴ Michael A Endicott OSA *The Augustinians in Far North Queensland 1883-1941* Augustinian Historical Commission Australia, Brookvale, 1988, pp 173-174.

⁵ G. Hoskin, 'The Aboriginal Reserves of Queensland 1871-1885' BA (Hons.) Thesis, University of Queensland, 1961, p 27. Endicott, p 171'

⁶ Quinn quoted in Anne McLay, *James Quinn, First Catholic Bishop of Brisbane*, Armidale, Graphic Books, 1980, pp 187, 62, 63-65, 206, 52.

⁷ Memoir to Propaganda on the Mission to Australian Blacks 1875-1878', McNab to Vaughan, 10 July 1878

⁸ McClay, pp 111 and 175.

⁹ Neil Byrne, 'Robert Dunne, 1830-1917, Archbishop of Brisbane: a Biography', Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1989, p 182.

¹⁰ McNab to Douglas, 2 September 1876, Reprinted in *V & P of QLA, 1876*, p 170.

¹¹ O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, pp 130-132.

¹² Circular letter, 13 December 1875, James Quinn letter book, June 1875-1882, ACAS.

¹³ McNab to Macalister, 9 May 1876, reprinted in *V & P of QLA, 1876*, 1876, vol 3, p 167.

¹⁴ McNab to Douglas, 9 May 1876, *V & P of QLA, 1876*, Vol III, p 170.

¹⁵ McNab to Douglas, 24 July 1876 and 31 July 1876, reprinted in *V & P of QLA, 1876*, vol 3, p 162-164.

¹⁶ Douglas to Tully, 31 July 1876, reprinted in *V & P of QLA, 1876*, vol 3, p 164.

¹⁷ McNab to Douglas,, 16 August 1876, *V & P of QLA, 1876*, Vol. III, p 165.

¹⁸ McNab to Douglas, 2 September 1876, reprinted in *V & P of QLA, 1876*, vol 3, p 167.

¹⁹ McNab to Douglas, 2 September 1876.

²⁰ McConnell Papers, Fryer Library.

²¹ See 16 August 1876, 'Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, 1876'. Vol III.

²² *The Brisbane Courier*, Wednesday, 1 November 1876.

²³ *The Brisbane Courier* 'Leading Article – Rev D McNab', 1 November 1876.

²⁴ McNab to *Brisbane Courier*, 6 November 1876.

²⁵ *The Brisbane Courier*, Monday, 6 November 1876.

²⁶ *The Brisbane Courier*, Wednesday, 8 November 1876.

²⁷ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1876, vol 2, pp 1420 and 1422.

²⁸ McNab to Douglas, reprinted in *V & P of Queensland Assembly, 1876*, vol 3, p 166.

²⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 1 November 1876.

³⁰ McNab to *Brisbane Courier*, 8 November 1876.

³¹ *V & P of ASLA, 1856*, no 193, p 1.

³² Q P D, 1876, vol 2, p 1422.

³³ Q P D, 1876, vol 21.

³⁴ Q P D, 1876, pp 1420-1424.

³⁵ *Votes and Proceedings*, 1870, vol III, p 161.

Chapter 3

LOBBYING IN QUEENSLAND 1877 - 1879



*Map of Queensland From the Frontier, p vi
The settlement and economic exploitation of Queensland were based on immigration*

Part 1 Lobbying for Land Struggle between Squatters and Selectors

After some Durundur Blacks became Christians, neighbouring selectors petitioned against the reserve, complaining that good land had been assigned to Aborigines who should be confined to mountains and scrubs. At first, Douglas, the Minister for Lands, was reluctant to act with the power given him by the Legislative Assembly to help the Blacks. John McConnel had bought the land in 1841 with his brother, who left in 1861. In 1864 Henry Wood first became manager, later he became a partner, and was to play a significant role in the drama which unfolded over the Durundur reserve. In the beginning it had functioned as a collection point for Blacks of the district, who never gave any trouble. In 1864 more than five hundred had gathered there for a corroboree.



A Native Police encampment on the Herbert River about 1872 testifies to the state of war that existed in Queensland in the nineteenth century. (National Library of Australia) 13561 From the Frontier, p314

Local tribes remembered poisonings at the adjoining Kilcoy Station in 1841 and lived under constant threat of aggression from 1860-1880 from both a detachment of Native Police at Sandgate and from their Black neighbours around Bribie. The Durundur management probably offered an element of paternal protection for the local tribe in exchange for labour.

McNab had told Douglas that McConnel and Wood “were anxious to

have them (the Aborigines) settled immediately” and that it must be done so “at once, otherwise it would likely be broken up or totally taken up by white settlers.”¹ Prior to the Durundur Aboriginal reserve being gazetted, while it was still under consideration for that purpose, Douglas had told his chief draughtsman to “arrest survey of any selections which might have been made with the area known as Monkeybong Flat.”²

More Applications for Land

From January to May 1877 McNab applied for a further six reserves at Kenilworth, Imbil, Maroochy, Kilcoy, Mount Brisbane and Belleview. The small areas requested suggest that McNab’s intent had varied little from his original homestead applications in July and August of the previous year. Douglas referred them to the Commission, and then refused the requests for Kilcoy, Mt Brisbane and Belleview. There is no record of the others being granted.

McNab’s Campaign for reserves in North Queensland

8 January 1877, McNab from Kenilworth to Douglas:

Sir,

Such of the Durundur Blacks as I have lately seen have chosen Monkeybong Flat and adjoining land to the South East for their Homestead. Monkeybong Flat is divided next the proposed Camping ground on the South of the bridge over the River Stanley and is bounded on one side by the river on another by the road to Caboolture and on a third by a mountain’s range. (Sketch of the area included).³ These two boundaries are secured without fencing.

The number of Aborigines belonging to Durundur is --, and to Conandale Run, 12, all these latter are willing to settle down with the other at Monkeybong Flat. Messrs McConnell and Wood are anxious to have them settled there immediately. They will assist them to do so and will afterwards give them employment. Mr Wood is willing to look after them till the services of a manager are secured and I will point out the situation to the surveyors. He says they will not take to agriculture, but that they understand grazing and I would proceed with it. I have therefore to request that you would please to send a surveyor to mark out the boundaries of the reserve and the limits of the respective allotments immediately, as the Blacks are congregating for settlement. Otherwise they cannot remain for any length of time in one place – I suppose the Aboriginal Protection Commissioners and the local Guardians of Minors may be the Trustees. Whatever extent of land the Blacks are to get should be assigned to them at once, as otherwise it would likely be broken up or totally taken up by White Selectors. They need sufficient room for grazing.

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18.1.1877
8th January 1877
392 P.L.
24.1.77
McNab's note office maps
Such of the Durundur Blacks as I have lately seen have chosen Monkeybong Flat and adjoining land to the South East for their Homestead. Monkeybong Flat is divided next the proposed Camping ground on the South of the bridge over the River Stanley and is bounded on one side by the river on another by the road to Caboolture and on a third by a mountain's range. (Sketch of the area included).³ These two boundaries are secured without fencing.
The number of Aborigines belonging to Durundur is --, and to Conandale Run, 12, all these latter are willing to settle down with the other at Monkeybong Flat. Messrs McConnell and Wood are anxious to have them settled there immediately. They will assist them to do so and will afterwards give them employment. Mr Wood is willing to look after them till the services of a manager are secured and I will point out the situation to the surveyors. He says they will not take to agriculture, but that they understand grazing and I would proceed with it. I have therefore to request that you would please to send a surveyor to mark out the boundaries of the reserve and the limits of the respective allotments immediately, as the Blacks are congregating for settlement. Otherwise they cannot remain for any length of time in one place - I suppose the Aboriginal Protection Commissioners and the local Guardians of Minors may be the Trustees. Whatever extent of land the Blacks are to get should be assigned to them at once, as otherwise it would likely be broken up or totally taken up by White Selectors. They need sufficient room for grazing.

McNab to Douglas, from Kenilworth, 8 January 1877

A smaller patch of land would only make them serfs on the run, and I do not think they would remain on it as such. Such a policy would defeat its own end.

The Aborigines of Kenilworth wish also a settlement and would be assisted by Mr Lillis, but have not yet selected the situation. From what I see of the dispositions of the Blacks and the desire of the Squatters, I infer that a manager for the Blacks of the Wide Bay District should be immediately appointed. Mr Wood of Durundur mentioned the ... "Wild Scotchman" James McPherson as a fit manager. He is aware that McPherson's former career tells against him, but Mr Wood and others tell me that he is thoroughly reformed and now a very good man and perfectly conversant with the language of the Blacks. If you think that he would answer, I should like to communicate with him. But before doing so, with him or any others for the purpose of securing his services as a manager, I need to know what salary you would give him,

I am, Yours truly, Duncan McNab.

Memo: The Chief Draftsman will be good enough to note Office Maps and arrest survey of any Selections, which may have been made within the area known as Monkeybong Flat. Papers to be returned. 28 January 1877.

2 February 1877, McNab from Brisbane to Douglas:

Sir,

Having visited North Kenilworth Station and conversed with several of the Aborigines, who claim it as their country and are called Cabi, I have to inform you that they are anxious to get Homestead Areas reserved for them according to the Resolution of the Legislative Assembly on the 29th November 1876. Those of Cabi are 24 in number and those of Belli Creek, 14. The former want a settlement immediately below the junction of the Yahoo Creek with the Mary River and on the Little Yabba Creek, above Boodaumba; the latter on Mulligan's Flat along the Gympie Road about the junction of the Belli Creek with the Mary.

From Kenilworth I passed to Jurbil Station. There the Blacks number 18 and they want a settlement on the neck of land immediately below the entrance of the Yabba River into the Mary.

I do not yet know the exact number of the Aborigines at Maroochy, but I have a list of 28 and I conversed with several of them who are willing to settle. One told me to apply for a Homestead or at least a garden for him and his at a place called Denovan on the Maroochy river about five or six miles below Yandina.

Believe me, Yours truly Duncan McNab.⁵

50c
 Acknowledged
 5.2.77
 1152 16 Brisbane
 3 2 77
 2nd February 1877
 Sir
 Having visited North Kenilworth Station and conversed with several of the Aborigines, who claim it as their country and are called Cabi, I have to inform you that they are anxious to get Homestead Areas reserved for them according to the Resolution of the Legislative Assembly on the 29th of November 1876. — Those of Cabi are 24 in number and those of Belli Creek 14. The former want a settlement immediately below the junction of the Yahoo Creek with the Mary River & on the Little Yabba Creek above Boodaumba; the latter on Mulligan's Flat along the Gympie Road about the junction of the Belli Creek with the Mary.
 From Kenilworth I passed to Jurbil Station. There the Blacks number 18 and they want

McNab to Douglas from Brisbane, 2 February 1877, Lands Department File, Res 77-84 R 385. Durundur Aboriginal and Police Paddock Reserve File. This file is not found in QSA.

(149) H.

Kilcoy Station

23rd March 1877

3376 Mb

6.4.11

Dear Sir

Being here for the purpose of securing the settlement of the Aborigines on the land, first one, called Jerry, belonging to Belleview, and asked him to mention the place he would like to occupy, which he did. I send you a tracing of a government-survey and indicate the locality, in the hope that you will kindly take an interest in his welfare, direct him and assist him: and communicate with the Minister of Lands on the subject. I shall be glad to hear

McNab to Douglas from Kilcoy Station, 23 March 1877

10 January 1877 The Commission for the Aborigines was under serious attack both from without and within. *The Cooktown Courier* reacted with "impatience - ... almost ... contempt", against schemes pitifully limited in scope and intent, "schemes propounded by the Aboriginal Commission meeting in a snug committee room".

Durundur Reserve

10 March 1877 John Douglas, who would be promoted to the role of Colonial Secretary and Premier, changed his mind about Durundur, and was prepared to act because the reserve could function as a source of labour for local squatters, reduce the risk of robbery, and remove drunken Aborigines from city streets. 2500 acres was gazetted as a 'temporary reserve' on Durundur Station, at Monkeybong Flat, bounded by the Stanley River, the Caboolture Road and a mountain range. McNab said the Aborigines chose the site. Wood suggested the name be changed to 'Binambi'. But 'Durundur', the name of the pastoral station with which it was associated, stayed.

McNab along with Wood, who became his chief agent and caretaker, had gathered fifty local Blacks in March 1877. Some were employed on the Durundur Run.

23 March 1877 McNab from Kilcoy Station to Douglas

Dear Sir,

Being here for the purpose of securing the settlement of the Aborigines on the land, I met one, called Jerry, belonging to Belleview, and asked him to mention the place he would like to occupy, which he did. I send you a tracing of a Government-survey and indicate the locality, in the hope that you will kindly take an interest in his welfare, direct him and assist him: and communicate with the Minister of Lands on the subject. I shall be glad to hear from you at your earliest convenience. Address me at Durundur.

I am, Yours truly, McNab. Duncan McNab.⁷

26 March 1877 McNab to Douglas from Durundur:

Sir,

I was lately at Maroochy, and found most of the Aborigines there more inclined, for the present to occupy themselves in labouring for others, than to settle upon the land. Only three who wish to combine horticulture with fishing requested me to apply for a Homestead Area for them. I have marked the places they fixed upon. A & B on the enclosed tracing. The portion A is an elevated spot of ground lightly timbered and nearly if not completely surrounded by scrub and consists of, I think, about 80 acres, and was chosen by the King called Mr Master. The part marked B is for his brother Lary and another called Jacky.

3287.56

26th March 1877
Durundur

Sir

At Hilroy, last week, I met and conversed with 21 Aborigines, of whom 22 claimed Hilroy as their country, 14 Mount Brisbane and 5 Northbrook or Belleview. They requested me to apply to the government for homestead areas for them at the localities indicated on the enclosed tracings.

Mr Rutter promised to assist and direct those at Hilroy. I wrote to Mr Bowman and to Mr Simpson to do the same for those of Mount Brisbane and Belleview, requesting them at the same time to communicate with the Ministers of Lands on the subject.

Yours truly
H. J. Douglas Duncan Mc Nab

49K

3289.56 Durundur
26th March 1877

Sir

Maroochy I was lately at Maroochy, and found Aboriginals of the Aborigines there more inclined, for the present to occupy their selves in labouring for others, than to settle upon the land. Only those who wish to come here to the water with fishing requested me to apply for a homestead area for them. I have marked the places they proposed upon A & B. on the enclosed tracing. The portion A, is an elevated spot of ground lightly timbered and nearly if not completely surrounded by scrub, and contains, I think, about 80 acres, and was chosen by the King, called Mr Mather. The part marked B is for his brother Lory and an other called Paddy. Mr Lory Mather there will assist them and direct them and

Mr Low, Postmaster there will assist them and direct them and point out the ground to any Government officer.

Yours truly, Duncan McNab.

PS Lary's choice is that referred to in my letter of the 2nd of February 1877, and which I designated Denovan, by mistake, for Durundur. D McN.⁸

26 March 1877 McNab to Douglas from Durundur:

Sir,

At Kilcoy, last week, I met and conversed with 41 Aborigines of whom 22 claimed Kilcoy as their country, 14 Mount Brisbane and 5 Northbrook or Belleview. They requested me to apply to the Government for Homestead Areas for them at the localities indicated on the enclosed tracings.

Mr Butler promised to assist and direct those at Kilcoy.

I wrote to Mr Bowman and to Mr Simpson to do the same for those of Mount Brisbane and Belleview, requesting them at the same time to communicate with the Minister of Lands on the subject.

Yours truly, Duncan McNab.⁹

29 March 1877 Wood, Durundur to Douglas:

My dear Sir,

I wrote to you on the 26th instant and told you that we proposed placing the Blacks on their country at once. After writing to you the Revd Duncan McNab sent to me the copy of a letter sent to you on that day in which he stated that he heard that some Blacks that had been absent from the station for years had come in with the expectation of going on their land and being disappointed in this expectation had left. This is not quite accurate, the real fact being that one Black who had been away from us for some years did return and I took him away to Conondale to make use of him and he is now there.

My object in these initiatives to you is to ask your opinion with regard to what may be termed preliminaries. And I think – unavoidable expense at first.

All the Blacks employed here are in regular receipt of daily rations of flour, sugar, tea tobacco and beef. When they leave us, as it will be necessary for them all to do at first to lend a helping hand to their own place, there will be only what they can obtain by hunting to sustain them. There is a few pounds of money which they spend in these things but that will not last long. We ourselves can of course supply them with help and will do so cheerfully, as far as our ability goes but while there are losses they are not sufficient for a hopeful and encouraging start. They cannot always be successful in hunting and should this source fail or prove inadequate while their improvements were going on they might be discouraged.

Do you think the Government would sanction the expenditure of almost £50 – on the list of things, which I enclose. I really think them necessary. Indeed I do not know how this can be done without at first while attending the first occupation and improvement of the land by the Blacks.

I am aware that it is very essential to the success of this and perhaps succeeding undertakings that the question of expense should be considered. But on the other hand I think we may be able by a necessary and judicious expenditure in lean times to sustain them.

At first I undertake to supply them with Beef and to take charge of and dole out their rations to them if you wish us to do so. The Blacks one time culture the bark for their house, and are daily on their land. Mr McNab accompanies them and yesterday he baptized two of their children. If you will kindly let me have a

McNab has a list of Blacks between B... and Gympie.¹⁰

2 April 1877 The Blacks took up residence accompanied by McNab and began to construct permanent houses. Within a few weeks there were another fifty Blacks. The promising reports forwarded to Douglas during 1877 and 1888 included pleas for money.

9 April 1877 McNab to Douglas:

Sir,

I came to Durundur on the 20th Current expecting to find a considerable number of Aborigines settled on Monkey Bong Flat as I had written to Mr Wood to arrange with you the time at which they should get ... and the reserve. I could learn nothing of the arrangement, Mr Wood being at Conondale. To my astonishment and grief I was told that many Blacks, who had not been on the station for years before, had come, and departed, and that very few remained.

Before coming hither I had talked to Mr Thomas Petrie at the North Pine River and learnt from him that in the preceding week he had gone to Brisbane and tried in vain to find someone of the Commissioners for the Aborigines in order to get the boat for the Bribie Island Blacks, that he might search for a suitable place of settlement.

You know what a depressing effect the disappointment of hope deferred has even upon civilized people; and can therefore easily imagine how ruinous it is to the settlement of the Aborigines, who must be treated in some respects as mere children; and who are ready to consider the case as hopeless when disappointed. Moreover they are demoralized by hanging about the towns, and unable for want of the means of subsistence to remain unemployed on stations. Considering these things I began to fear that our exertions in their behalf and the Resolution of the Legislative Assembly adopted for their benefit on the 29th of November 1876 will be of no avail, in consequence of the extreme caution, or timidity of the Lands Office and of the Commissioners; or of their being too much occupied by other duties.

Such a result would, I doubt not, grieve you as much as me. It is impossible with all the

2

at first. As the blacks employed
here are in the regular receipt
of daily rations of flour, sugar,
Tenn. Tobacco and Beef.
When they leave us as it will
be necessary for them all to do
at first to send a help from home
to their own place there will
be only what they can obtain
by their own means to sustain them
There is a few pounds of money

✓ ✓

Printed

Durundur
Krisconne March 29, 1877

3383.77
6.4
Mrs. de m. L.

I write to you on the 26th
and told you that we
disposed of the blacks
on their own terms at once.
After writing to you the head
of the Nat. sent to me the
copies of a letter sent to you

20A

I came to Durbin on the 20th current
 expecting to find ^{3288.76} a considerable number of
 Aborigines settled on Monkey Bay flat,
 as I had written to Mr Wood to arrange with
 you the time at which they should get possession
 of the Reserve. I could learn nothing of the
 arrangements, Mr Wood being at Bourke.
 To my astonishment and if I was told
 that many blacks, who had not been at the
 station for years before, had come, and departed
 and that very few remained. Before coming
 hither I had called on Mr Thomas Petre of the
 North Pine River and learned from him that in
 the preceding week he had come to Brisbane
 and tried in vain to find someone of the Com-
 missioners for the Aborigines in order to get the
 boat for the Aborigine felid blacks; that he might
 search for a suitable place of settlement.
 You know what a depressing effect the disap-
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 of the Aborigines, who must be treated in
 some respects as mere children; and who are
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 couraged. Moreover they are demoralized by
 hanging about the towns, and unable for want
 of the means of subsistence to remain unemploy-
 ed on stations. Considering these things of

begin to fear that any exertions in their behalf
 and the Resolution of the Legislative Assembly
 adopted for their benefit on the 29th of Nov. 1876
 will be of no avail, in consequence of the
 caution, or timidity of the Lands Office and of
 the Commissioners; on their being too much
 occupied by other duties. Such a result would
 I doubt not, grieve you as well as me, it is
 impossible with all the demands on your
 time and services that you should be present
 at the installation of all the blacks in their
 settlements, and therefore I am inclined
 to recommend to the Magistrates and Principal
 Settlers in the colony to do what they can
 to settle the blacks at once on the land to put
 them in possession of their promised lands re-
 ferring to the Lands Office for its approval and
 sanction. I should be glad that the
 Government should instruct the Magistrates or
 Settlers to secure an establishment for the
 Aborigines at their respective homings approp-
 riately to the Government for that purpose; and that as
 soon as possible that the settled districts be
 disposed of; the unsettled parts, where the blacks
 are most numerous might be immediately
 attended to. Many individual efforts are next
 to nothing. To secure the preservation and
 settlement of the Aborigines, the immediate
 and efficient action of the Government is pre-
 requisite. Why should it be so tardy and cautious

in their destruction?

Your truly

Duncan Mc Nab

Hon. J. Douglas

missed some

in expenditure for their civilization when
so prompt and lavish in what is required for
their destruction?

demands on your time and services that you should be present at the installation of all the Blacks in their settlements and therefore I am inclined to recommend to the Squatters and principal Settlers in the colony to do what they can to settle the Blacks at once on the land to put them in possession of their Homesteads referring to the Lands Office for its approval and sanction. Indeed I should be glad that the Government should invite the Squatters and Settlers to secure an establishment to the Aborigines at their respective holdings applying to the Government for that purpose: and this as soon as possible: that the settled districts being disposed of; the unsettled parts where the Blacks are most numerous might be immediately attended to.

My individual efforts are next to nothing. To secure the preservation and settlement of the Aborigine, the immediate and efficient action of the Government is requisite. Why should it be timid and cautious in expenditure for their civilization when so prompt and lavish in what is required for their destruction?¹¹

McNab incurred the wrath of the bureaucrats when he wrote to local squatters suggesting that they take initiatives to settle Aborigines on homesteads without waiting for Lands Departmental approval.¹²

For McNab, Durundur was just one in a series of initiatives which he had hoped to generate in South East Queensland. McNab managed to establish Durundur's sister settlement at Bribie with the help of Tom Petrie.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the reserve already served the needs of the Durundur management in such a way, to say nothing of the domiciling, now at the government's expense, of a handy labour pool. This force was more likely to be employed on the larger pastoral properties. Wood records in all his reports that Aborigines were employed seasonally on Durundur and surrounding properties. The reserves would dovetail with the squatters' economic interests.

With this taken into account, it is not surprising that McNab left himself open to the charge of being the squatters' dupe. Still one can argue somewhat on his behalf, that some squatters, for whatever reasons offered McNab much needed and influential support for his campaign. On the other hand, though, through the agency of their local member John Pettigrew the district's selectors lobbied vigorously for the right to deny land to the Aborigines.

Most of the sites, which McNab proposed, were like Durundur, on land resumed from squatting runs where survey for selection was imminent or was already taking place. Arthur Palmer, a squatter himself, was later to say of McNab that his ideas were "utterly utopian ... and absurd."¹³ In one respect Palmer was right. McNab's faith in the squatters as a force for humanitarianism was misplaced. Henry Reynolds in

McNab to Douglas, Queensland Lands Dept Archives Res 77-84, R385, 9 April 1877.

Frontier claimed that it was the pastoral industry, which was the single most potent force in the destruction of Aboriginal society with squatters "the most persistent advocates of racist theories."¹⁴

Was McNab merely naïve? He had not experienced first hand the bloody battle being waged in the far north or on the western frontier of Queensland. If his experience of squatters was limited to Tom Petrie and Henry Wood, their response to the Aborigines was the exception rather than the rule. McNab disavowed the claim that he was "a tool in the hands of squatters to secure for them, use of lands reserved for Blacks",¹⁵ but there can be little doubt that his schemes proved convenient for some squatters in the settled districts, not least of all John McConnel and Henry Wood.

Having an area declared an Aboriginal reserve, held in trust by the local squatter (in this case Wood), meant that selection could be thwarted or at least delayed. At the same time unofficial use might be made of the land. 'Binambi' was about 2,500 acres of flat, well-watered country with natural boundaries, a mountain range and a river, in close proximity to the homestead at Durundur. Wood did not want the Aborigines to undertake agricultural pursuits there, but rather was anxious to see them set about fencing their boundaries and place their property in such a state that they could take stock up on agistment until the time arrived when they required the grass for their own use.¹⁶

13 April 1877 Henry Wood to The Honorable Secretary for Public Lands:

Sir,

At an interview I had with you two months since relative to the Aboriginal reserve at Durundur you were so good as to say that my cooperation and assistance in the establishment of this Reserve would be acceptable. As the Blacks have been removed to this land, and as I conceive this to be the time when they most require advice and assistance in the new set of circumstances in which they are placed and knowing also that you take great interest in this, their just experiment of the kind in Southern Queensland and will be glad to hear of its progress I write you a short account of what has been done in the matter and will tell you as far as I am able what is proposed to be done in the future.

After a few preliminary visits to their land for the purpose of cutting bark, the whole tribe with the exception of four absent ones removed on the 2nd last accompanied by the Reverend Duncan McNab who has remained with them and is helping advising and instructing them. This first proceeding was to make temporary camp where they will reside while their permanent houses are going up. The older and leading members of the tribe have selected sites for their homes at an average distance apart of 300 yards and we propose to mark off two acres of land as an allotment for each residence. The first permanent dwelling is

BRIGIDA - MY WIFE PAULA HAS KINDLY
TRANSCRIBED THIS LETTER OF HENRY WOOD'S - SEE
NEXT ITEM

Durundur
Binambi
April 13 1877
The Honorable the Secretary for Public Lands.
Sir. At an interview I had with you
two months since relative to the Aboriginal Reserve
at Durundur you were so good as to say that
my cooperation and assistance in the establishment
of this Reserve would be acceptable.
As the Blacks have been removed to this land
and as I conceive this to be the time when they
most require advice and assistance in the new
set of circumstances in which they are placed

Henry Wood to Secretary for Public Lands, 13 April 1877

in course of construction and is to be walled with split slats laid horizontally and looped with bark. Two hundred members of the tribe are engaged with this building and a party is daily told off to procure game, fish, or provender of any kind for the use of those working. Two men have taken a contract to supply this station with firewood at 23/- per each rood 14 in long and 10/- per cash for hewn wood 4 feet long. Two men have signed an agreement to work with Mr Surveyer Grant for one month and receive 10/- per week each and the usual rations. This is the position at present and with regard to the future we have advised them as soon as their improvements are finished to set about fencing their boundaries and place their property in such a state that they can take stock upon agistment until the time arrives when they require the grass for their own use. We have advised them to take contracts for registration and we are prepared to trust them with a contract of 1000 acres as soon as they have their place in some sort of shape.

There is a difficulty in carrying out their plans, which I will place before you. The Blacks are dependant upon two sources for the regular supply of their daily food. The first being the earnings – spent at this or a neighboring store of those engaged in contract work, which is of course insignificant, and the second being the supply brought in by the hunting party, which is of course uncertain. My plea is that unless some judicious provision is made for their daily wants from extraneous sources the enterprise might languish and perhaps prove unfortunate, one or two of the older and more experienced men have mentioned to Mr McNab and myself doubts of their ability to carry on and make things work well in the face of an insufficient food supply. I express a hope that the Government will see their way to permit a careful expenditure of £50 to be made on their behalf in the purchase of necessities of life and the few tools, which are indispensable for carrying on their work. At present all they require in this way they get here and they have the use of a horse and dray for carting.

The fifty pounds need not be expended at once but by degrees as occasion required and if the Government wished it Mr F... will be happy to assist the Government in the expression and distribution of the stores. If in addition to this sum the Government will add the gift of sufficient blankets for approaching winter it will have a good effect and leave no room for excuses of his going to Brisbane in search of a blanket at the usual time.

With your permission we propose to discard the present absurd appellation of this reserve (Monkey Bong Flat) and to call it by its Native name Binambi. I have only to add that there are numberless annoyances and delays in connection with this office which are not worth allusion to here but which I will explain to you if I have the opportunity when I visit Brisbane again. I have the honor to remain,

Your obedient, Henry Wood.¹⁷

17 April 1877 Aboriginal Commissioner from Brisbane to Tully:

Referring to certain papers forwarded by you on the 13th instant, I have the honor to state that at a Meeting of the Aboriginal Commission held on that day the following Minute was passed –

The Commissioners having considered the several communications received from the Lands Office on this day recommending certain reserves and homesteads for Aborigines therein referred to, instruct me to return the papers with the intimation that the other commissioners never have endorsed the views of the Revd Mr McNab as to separate selections in reserves and to individuals, but if the Government think proper to authorize the particular reserves referred to, the Commissioners can offer no objection.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your most obedient Servant,
(Memo on letter: Let the commissions report to me as to - proposed reservations – If ...we ... would try natural settlements ...

Separate the letters to distribute amongst the Commissioners for usual input - ... 26 April 1877.)¹⁸

3 May 1877 R I Smith, Land Commissioners Office Ipswich to Undersecretary for Public Lands Brisbane:

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your SC of the 27th ultimo, enclosing several letters upon the subject of reserves being proclaimed for the use of the Aborigines of the Colony, with your instructions for me to report upon the same particularly (if approved) would it be likely to retard settlement. In answer I beg to state

1st, if the Government thinks it desirable to grant reserves for the exclusive use of the Aborigines. I do not think it would retard settlement, provided the localities were selected with discretion, and not too many in number. I would respectfully suggest, say, one at Durundur, another on the upper Mary River, say about Kenilworth Station, and two others to the south of Brisbane; but to grant the ones suggested by the writers of the enclosed letters, at Kilcoy and Ivanhoe would certainly interfere with settlement, indeed it would be taking the best of the land lately thrown open for Homesteads.

2nd The reserve at Durundur at Monkey Bong Flat is in the resumed land not at present thrown open to the Public, therefore it does not interfere with settlement, and perhaps it would be better to adopt the same plan in any future Selections for reserves, viz to take the area out of the land resumed, but not as yet proclaimed open to Selection,

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant, R I Smith, Land Commissioner.¹⁹

16 May 1877 (received) McNab, from Caboolture to Douglas:

Sir,

In reply to my application for Homestead reserves for the Aborigines at Kenilworth, Imbil, and Maroochy I received a letter from the Department of Public Lands dated 5th February, 1877 stating that the subject referred to would be dealt with as early as practicable.

Let the Commission report to me as to how proposed reservations - if advised as mentioned - would be - settlement

3914 See Sec 3047
 Separate the letters & attachments
 arranged the Comms for report
 27.4.77

Brisbane April 17. 1877

Referring to certain papers forwarded by you on the 13th instant, I have the honor to state that at a meeting of the Aboriginal Commission held on that day the following Minute was passed -
 The Commission having considered the several communications received from the Lands Office on this day recommending certain reserves and homesteads for Aborigines thereon referred to instruct me to return the papers with the intimation that the other Commissioners have endorsed the views of the Rev. Mr. Mackay as to separate selections in reserves and to individuals, but if the Government think proper to authorize the particular reserves referred to the Commission can offer no objection

I have the honor to be
 Sir

Land Commissioner's Office
 Ipswich, 3rd May 1877

44032.111
 4 5/77

Have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your B.C. of the 27th ult. enclosing several letters upon the subject of reserves being proclaimed for the use of the Aborigines of the Colony, and your instructions for me to report upon the same particularly (if approved) would it be likely to retard settlement. In answer to your letter of the 27th the Government think it desirable to grant reserves for the exclusive use of the Aborigines. I do not think it would retard settlement, provided the locations were selected with discretion, and not too many in number. I would respectfully suggest, say one at Burundaw, another the upper Mary River, say about St. Michaels Station, and two others to the south of the river, but to grant the ones suggested by the writers of the enclosed letters, at this stage I would certainly interfere with settlement, which it would be taking the best of the land lately thrown open for homesteads. The reserves at Burundaw at Monday Bay that is in the reserved land, but present shown open to the public, they do not interfere with settlement, and perhaps it would be better to adopt the same plan in any future selections for reserves, viz to take the area out of the land reserved, but not to be proclaimed open to settlement.

Have the honor to be
 Sir
 Your obedient servant
 R. I. Smith
 Land Commissioner

The Under Secretary
 for Public Lands
 Brisbane

But I have heard nothing of it since. I want to know the result of my application.

Since then I have made similar applications in behalf of the Aborigines of Kilcoy, Mount Brisbane and Belleview, to which I still await an answer.

I am Yours truly, Duncan McNab

NB Address me at Durundur.

Memo: I do not propose to make reserves for Aborigines at Kilcoy, Mount Brisbane or Belleview.²⁰

22 May 1877 (received) McNab from Durundur to Douglas,

Sir,

I have applied for the names of the Aborigines at Yabbia, Jelo Jumma, Widdgee, Gympie and Miska but have not yet got replies to my letters. In the meantime I send you the accompanying list, as winter is now setting in and some of the returns may be late at coming to hand.

Several of the names are the same but belong to distinct individuals.

Believe me, Yours truly, Duncan McNab.²¹

22 May 1877 Drew to Secretary for Public Lands at Bribie:

Mr Petrie has been advised to procure supplies in order to avoid the necessity of the Blacks visiting the town and the police to assist in keeping those Blacks out of Brisbane.²²

24 May 1877 McNab from Manley Hotel, Caboolture to Alcock Tully, Undersecretary for Lands

Sir,

In reply to your letter of the ... instant I wish to say that although no - assigned for the Flat, some - for Lands not making reserves for Aborigines at Kilcoy, Mount Brisbane and Belleview, I doubt not they have grave reasons for not making the desired reserves at present.

I regret however that a movement so beneficial to the Aborigines and as previously begun, as it has been at Durundur, should be marred in its execution.

In the short time elapsed since the reserve at Binambi, the Aborigines residing on it have improved very much civilly, morally.

They have settled down on the land and mean to remain. They have made up their minds to work, learned to use some lots, built some slab and bark houses, and are employed on contract work, in order to maintain themselves, to pay those who are finishing their houses and to earn the means of improving and starting the reserve. They have renounced communism and polygamy and several of them profess their belief in the truths of Christianity and have been baptized and regularly married.

Should not such advancements encourage the Government to make still greater efforts for the farther settlement of the Aborigines on the land?

Unless some provision is made for them betimes, I may ask, what will become of them in the midst of so many selectors, who will not allow them to trespass upon their land?

I desire to call the attention of the Hon Secretary for Lands to the fact that now there is excited in the minds of a number of Aborigines a desire of settlement and of ameliorating their condition which if disappointed and allowed by procrastination to die out, cannot so easily be again excited. Thus their civilization would be rendered more difficult. Although the Minister of Lands does not see it expedient to grant all the reserves applied for, might he not grant one, e.g. that of Kilcoy as there the Blacks are closely related to those of Durundur?

If he will not consent to that for fear of locking up the land uselessly I hope he will at any rate allow them to occupy Homesteads, and then only proclaim them reserved when he finds they have resided on them and improved them. In several instances they might be sufficiently provided for by letting them have Homesteads in their own right for the payment of the fixed rent, the Government supplying what is requisite for survey fees. Such a measure would bind them to improvements, check their tendency to vagrancy, be in some cases more possible than reservation, less expensive to the Government and equally good for the Blacks.

What they most materially want in the settled districts are sufficiently remunerative employment and a Homestead on which to invest their earnings. This provided for, they should be as serviceable to Selectors as to Squatters. In unsettled districts I suppose that large reserves would achieve better, as then they might soon become extensive graziers.

I have been told that I proceed too fast. I apprehend the danger lies in progressing too slowly so that hope dies and the people perish before they be succored or civilized. Even if in my hurry I were to cause the loss or misapplication of a few acres of land, what would that be in comparison with the extinction of a race of people?

It has been said that I am a bit in the hand of the Squatters to secure to them the use of the lands reserved for the Blacks.

A simple remedy for such an evil, if it existed, would be the immediate settlement of the Blacks of a whole district and the appointment of a lay manager to look after and secure their interests.

It is said that White Settlers want the land. Is there not enough for both Blacks and Whites? Have not the former as fair a claim as the latter?

If the Blacks are to be civilized some good land should be assigned them, and not merely hunting ground, which would serve them only as savages.

In conclusion I request that you would please to communicate at least the substance of this letter to the Hon Secretary for Lands, in the hope that he may approve of one, or of all those suggestions as circumstances may render expedient, and intimate to me his pleasure in regard to them.

Yours truly, Duncan McNab.

119 P
 I am not prepared
 to make names for
 grants in Bell View
 or Bell View Pt

298506
 2257
 Col. Office
 16/5/77
 22 May 1877

Sir In reply to your application in connection
 received for the aborigines of Kaituma, the
 and Marosche. I received a letter from the
 agent of the Lands dated 5th Feb. 1877 stating
 that the subject referred to would be dealt with
 as early as practicable. But I have heard nothing
 of it since I want to know the result of my
 application.

Since then I have made similar application
 in behalf of the Aborigines of Piliy, Mome
 Brillane and Bell View, to which I still
 await an answer.

I am
 yours truly
 Duncan McNab
 Hon. J. Douglas
 P. S. Address at Durundur.

McNab from Durundur to Douglas, 16 May 1877

119 P
 Durundur
 22 May 1877
 5204 2077
 2257

Sir I am applied for the names
 of the Aborigines at Yabla, Jelo
 Juma, Widdge, Gympie &
 Nupha but have not yet got
 replies to my letters. In the
 mean time I send you the
 accompanying list, as winter
 is now setting in and somewhat
 the returns may be late at coming
 to hand.

Several of the names are the
 same but belong to distinct
 individuals.

Believe me
 yours truly
 Hon. J. Douglas
 Duncan McNab

McNab from Durundur to Douglas, 22 May 1877

proposers.
I have been told that I proceed to fact of apprehend
the danger lies in prologizing the process so that
the Indians and the people perish before they can
be encouraged or civilized. Even if my theory become
a cause the loss or misapplication of a few acres
of land is not worth that in comparison
with the extinction of a race of people?

It has been said that I am a bot in the hand
of the Legislature to draw to them the use of the
lands reserved for the Blacks.

A simple remedy for such an evil, & I think
would be the immediate settlement of the Blacks
of a whole district and the appointment of a
Surveyor to look after and secure their in-
terests.

It is said that White Letters mean the land.
Is there not enough for both Blacks & Whites?

I have not the former as fair a claim as the latter.
If the Blacks are to be civilized & some good land
should be assigned them, and not rather be hunting
ground, which would drive them out as savages.

In conclusion I request that you would please to
communicate, at least the substance of this
letter to the Hon. Secretary for Lands in that he
that he may approve of one, or of all those
suggestions, as various instances may render me
pleas'd, and intimate to me his pleasure
in regard to them.

Yours truly
James McNab

Shuck Tully Esq

#1

Alcock Tully Esq

Memo: I must insist to the Durundur at present.

Advise that the Minister will not permit of any other reserves ... to be ... established pending the result of the experiment at Durundur. In regard to the Aborigines ... alternative ... homesteads in the terms proposed by Mr McNab, Mr Douglas is of opinion that it would be better to defer action for the present.²³

Evangelization

June 1877 Bishop Quinn had changed his mind about priests trying to cope with ministry to the whites as well as to the Blacks. He had written his policy to Propaganda Fide:

Divided attention (of the clergy) will be useless to the Aborigines. They need zealous priests serving them exclusively. The authority of the (Pro-) Vicar Apostolic should be extended to the founding of missions throughout the colony, especially on coastal islands where the hope of success would be far greater because the Aborigines there are away from Europeans.²⁴

McNab had seemed reluctant to evangelize. He could speculate for action based on the material circumstances and the history of their persecution but he also seemed ignorant about Aboriginal spiritual values and lacked confidence about how to proceed. The lack of formal religious observance was seen as a lack of religiosity in general. There was an absence of doctrinal tradition and the Aborigines were reluctant to communicate their traditions to outsiders. But Quinn had asked him to do it so he methodically set about his task. He arranged for copies of his photograph to be distributed in advance so that the local tribes would recognize him. He pitched his tent in the vicinity of their encampment and commenced instruction of the young. But his compliance for religious instruction for the Aborigines did not mark the end of the conflict. There were other currents that shifted them into hostile camps.

Conflict with obvious English/Irish rivalry, between English Benedictine Roger Vaughan and the suffragan Irish Bishops, among whom were Quinn, his brother and his cousin, did not help the Scotsman's Benedictine alignment.

McNab had returned to Queensland as a political lobbyist, and an agitator for reform. He found only timid measures for Aboriginal betterment being generated from expediency. He began raising money for work among tribes at Gympie, Kilcoy, Durundur and Bribie Island. Though he had been gazetted a Commissioner for Aborigines, because he advocated individual homesteads rather than reserves, he became unpopular with other Commissioners.

Two resolutions about land grants and alleviation of Aboriginal deprivation were presented to the Government because of his efforts. Tom Petrie believed that McNab was the dupe of supposed converts. Bishop Quinn considered him as a tool of the government.

The want of money was a considerable impediment to McNab's work. While McNab was prepared to say that, with the exception of the Bishop of Port Victoria, the Bishop of Brisbane had done more for the mission to the Aborigines than all the other Australian Bishops together, he still had to accept that there were no means to procure or support missionaries for the Blacks. McNab seemed to think that the '*want of means*' might have been caused by a '*monomania for land*'.²⁵

Land Possession

McNab had been inspired by the success of Bishop Salvado's applications for rent-free agricultural leases for Aborigines in Western Australia, and he called on a provision in the *Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868*, that according to Section 21, the applicants had a right to free land, and included a clause enabling the government to:

*... grant, entrust or by proclamation to reserve either temporarily or permanently any crown lands required for the benefit of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the colony.*²⁶

18 June 1877 McNab from Adelaide Street, Brisbane in reply to letter 6 June:

Sir

Your letter of the 6th June reached me on Saturday last. Now I desire to learn what prospect the concept of the experiment for improving the conditions of the Aborigines at Durundur the Honorable Minister requires and what length of time he deems requisite to test its efficacy.

I also wish to know what salary he would assign to a schoolmaster who should teach the Blacks at Durundur, and Bribie Island.

You say that the Minister of Lands will not permit any other reserves being established, pending the result of the experiment at Durundur.

I am sorry he has come to that conclusion while the experiment is progressing favorably, and I hope he will change it – because it tends to check, if not to extinguish the desires of many of the Aborigines, in other parts, of being civilized and of maintaining themselves by honest industry, and also because I conceive it does not favorably carry into effect the Resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly 29th November, nor fairly try the effect of the measures suggested for the improvement of the great ... of the Blacks. I regret it all the more, because I am convinced that in its adoption the Minister is partly influenced by an uncalled

for and unfortunate agitation against the Blacks and the Squatters who wished to befriend them, got up mainly by interested Publicans, one of whom, in my hearing gave expression to the fiendish idea of placing a cask of spirits in the way of the Blacks, for the purpose of breaking up their establishment at Durundur. If the end sought to be secured by the experiment at Durundur is to be attained the means recommended and approved must be immediately and extensively applied.

To sacrifice the welfare and the interests of nearly all the Aborigines to such ill formed and selfish (if not malicious), complaints as have been lately urged against them and their patrons would certainly be maladministration and gross injustice. It would also indicate a degree of weakness, inconstancy, and incapacity in the Government, which I am unwilling to ascribe to it, considering the ability and promptitude with which the Minister has already met and silenced those complaints.

In conclusion you state that Mr Douglas is of opinion it would be better for the present to defer farther action in the settlement of the Aborigine. Does he mean at the same time to suspend the action of the Native Police against them?

Are they not everywhere perishing and requiring immediate succor?

I presume that he believes in the action of this violence in human affairs. Whether he does or not, I do. I believe in Mane, Thecel, Phares.²⁷

And therefore while he defends his action I must redouble my endeavors for the benefit of the Blacks. Again may I not ask why should the Government be so ready and lavish of action and expenditure for their destruction and so cautious and parsimonious in their efforts to civilize them?

I am,

Yours truly, Duncan McNab.

“Memo: I appreciate Mr McNab’s bold plea for the Aborigines. I will adhere to my opinion that we must proceed gradually: I intend to ... for ... at Durundur (25 June 1877.), and that W ... purposes visiting Durundur at the end of this week for the purpose of inspecting the reserve.”²⁸

Douglas referred the applications to the reconvened Aboriginal Commission where they died a natural death.

It must be considered that McNab’s blueprint for the improvement of the Aborigines’ condition failed to acknowledge the efficacy of their traditional collectivism. McNab later claimed that the Aborigines understood the rights of property and held that the practice of restricting the collection of bunya nuts according to which individuals owned the trees, (as he had witnessed near Kenilworth) was a form of proprietary instinct, but he failed to appreciate the spiritual significance of the deep-

rooted nomadic custom of the Aboriginal lifestyle, insisting that they must, in the future, live by pasturage, tillage or fishing.

Years later, in 1883 he remedied this short-falling to a degree by noting that:

*As they are clans or groups of associated relatives, and their dispositions and habits are social, their dwellings must be contiguous, so that small villages must be formed, having sufficient land attached, on which the Natives should be settled in distinct families.*²⁹

Though at the time of his original applications McNab made no such concessions, his advocacy of Aboriginal freehold title and his recognition that land possession was at the root of the struggle, would become his outstanding contribution to colonial discourse. It is for this he is rightfully best remembered.

10 August 1877 Henry Wood, Durundur, Brisbane, to W A Tully, Undersecretary for Public Lands:

Sir,

In compliance with your request I do myself the honor to extend to you the conditions and prospects of the Aboriginal Natives settled upon the Land set apart for them at Binambi near Durundur Station. Since writing to you in the month of April past the Blacks have principally resided in their Land.

The non-residents are thus engaged to work in the immediate neighborhood and it is the practice of those to return to their homes on Saturdays, leaving again for their work on Mondays.

When their contracts or work terminate, they remain altogether on the Land and continue their improvements until the time comes when they must again engage in labour.

Those residing always on the Land are the aged members of the tribe who are not able to take part in continuous labour. A fair amount of work has been done during the last few months the time the reserve has been established. The amount of money earned here during this period amounts to £87 1s 10d.

The amount of money spent in the same time in Katina amounts to £43 7s 10d , and the Balance £43 14s, has been handed to the Blacks in cash. The Blacks have been employed by settlers round about and by ourselves and have been ringbarking, hewing and splitting firewood. stripping bark, finding strayed horses and bullocks, storing corn, stock keeping, etc.

Their contracts have been well carried out particularly those for ringbarking, one of them for 920 acres, just completed, is admirably done.

They have now two such contracts on hand, of 780 acres and 500 acres each respectively.

The prices paid for their labour are as follows:

52/100
77,5354
49 L

I appreciate Mr Mac Rabs being
so anxious for the above purpose -
I will adhere to my opinion but we
must proceed publically - I intend
to refer the matter to the
Committee on the subject

25/7/52

Brisbane
Adelaide Street
18th June 1877

Your letter of the 6th of June
reached me on Saturday last -
I desire to know what prospect
the Government of the experiment for improving
the condition of the Aborigines at
Durundur. The Minister requires
to know the length of time he deems requisite
to be spent in the colony he would
assign to a school. It is to be held at
Durundur and Brisbane (I am
glad that the Minister of Lands will not
insist on any other location being established).
The result of the experiment at Durundur
will be the measure to that conclusion
favorably, and I hope he will change it - He
thinks it is to be checked, if not to enlarge it.
The views of many of the Aborigines, in
other parts, of being civilized and of man-
taining their selves by their own industry
and because of convince it does not favorably
to effect the resolution passed by
the Legislative Assembly. 29 7/5/77

not fairly try the effect of the measures suggested
for the improvement of the great body of the
Blacks. I regret it all the more, because I am
convinced that in its adoption the Committee
is possibly influenced by an uncalculated and
unfortunate agitation against the Blacks
the Aborigines who wished to befriend them,
got up mainly by interested publicans
of whom, in my hearing gave expression
to the fanatical idea of placing a school
at Durundur in the way of the Blacks, for the
purpose of breaking up their settlement
at Durundur. If the end sought to be attained
by the experiment at Durundur is to be attained
the means recommended and approved must
be immediately and extensively applied.
To sacrifice the welfare and the interests of
nearly all the Aborigines to such ill-founded
... selfish (if not uncharitable) complaints
as have been lately urged against them and
their patrons would certainly be an unwise
treatment and grossly unjust. It would also
indicate a degree of weakness, inconstancy, and
incapacity in the Government, which I am
unwilling to ascribe to it, or even to the ability
of the Ministers with which the Minister has al-
ready met and entered those complaints.
For conclusion you state that Mr Lang has
is of opinion it would be better for the present
to defer further action in the settlement of
the Aborigines, I have the same opinion.

time to suspend the action of the National Union
 against them? Are they not everywhere suffering
 and requiring immediate succour?
 I presume that he believes in the action of the
 violence in human affairs. Whether he sees
 or not I do not believe in Maine, Thurl. Thoreau.
 And therefore while he defers his action
 must redouble his labours for the benefit
 of the blacks. Again may I not ask, as he
 should the good men be so ready and labile
 of action and expenditure for their education
 and so cautious and parsimonious in their
 efforts to utilize them? I am

Yours truly

Jurcan M. Nab



*Lieutenant G Murray of the Native Police with his junior officers and seven of his boys who operated on the Dawson River in the late 1850's. The native Police earned their fearsome reputation by the proficiency of their sneak attacks on Aboriginal camps. Their deeds were so horrifying that orders were rarely written down and officials always evaded accountability. (E B Kennedy, *The Black Police of Queensland*, London, 1902. Frontispiece) From the Frontier p 314.*

Ringbarking, 1s per acre, split firewood 23s per cord, hewn firewood 25s per cord, bark stripping, £2 per 100 sheets; Stock-keepers by the week, 10s and the usual rations.

The Blacks have improved in health and appearance since they went to the reserve and there has been no mortality among them this winter.

I attribute this to the increased comfort they have lived in; regular work, abundance of good food, warm clothing, and the comfortable blankets sent to them by the Government this winter, have all contributed to their well-doing. And to these I must add the fact of their also keeping aloof from bush public houses.

The eight head of heifers purchased for them by the Government have been branded with the Aboriginal Registered Brand, and turned loose on Binambi. In addition to these eight head of cattle they now own two horses. There is plenty of work to be done in this neighborhood. and up to this time the Blacks have shown a disposition to continue in steady labour and I think will do so.

I have the honor to remain Sir,

Your obedient servant, Henry Wood.

The Honourable the Secretary for Public Lands

Memo: Inquire whether money for this reserve is effected?³⁰

16 September 1877 Thos Tweedie to John Pettigrew³¹ Esq. MLA :

Seeing that £500 has been voted for the Durundur reserve for Blackfellows, I beg to draw your attention to what I'm prepared to substantiate, that the Blacks that were on this reserve have returned to their old camps, and at the present time there are only a small number if any remaining before the Government proceeds to expend this grant of £500 would it not be advisable to have a thorough examination into the expenditure of the previous £700 and how it has been improved, to necessitate a further grant of £500.

Would you kindly ask for a special inquiry into the working of this humbug either in your place in the house or otherwise?

Thos Tweedie.³²

17 September 1877 TELEGRAM Pettigrew to Douglas:

JUST LEARNED THAT SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY WRONG ABOUT THE BLACKS RESERVE AT DURUNDUR. PART WITH NO MONEY UNTIL I SEE YOU.³³

29 September 1877 Edward Kirk to Douglas:

Part of the letter:...A little strict supervision by the person I have selected will answer very much better than any amount of wet nursing by me or anyone else...(It is not known whether he was a

*government official or landowner)*³⁴

These actions prompted a visit to the reserve by a Lands Department official, but in the following letter H Massie reported that all was functioning satisfactorily.

5 October 1877 H Massie from Land Commissioners Office, Brisbane to The Minister for Lands:

Sir,

In accordance with your request I proceeded to the Aboriginal reserve at Durundur, on the 25th of September 1877.

I have the honor to state for your information that I found thereon erected 5 slab huts and 15 gunyahs occupied by 19 Aboriginals, as follows - 6 old males, 9 females and 4 children, all the young and able being away at work in other localities. I consider the land selected well adapted for the said purpose. I may also state I found Mr Surveyor Grant surveying the said reserve.

I think little good will be done with the same until it is enclosed by a substantial fence.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant, H Massie

The Honourable The Minister for Lands.³⁵

McNab was confronting a frontier ethos that viewed evangelism with scepticism. Many colonials were dubious of McNab, whom they saw as seeking to actualize a body of theory without due reference to colonial realities. In 1877, John Pettigrew, in protest over the establishment of the Aboriginal reserve at Durundur asked the Minister for Lands, John Douglas, "How much is paid from the Treasury for christianizing the Blacks, and from what vote?"³⁶ In March of the following year, 1878, local residents raised a petition to Douglas that "the Aborigines be removed and the land thrown open for selection."³⁷

Douglas resisted attempts to force the cancellation of Durundur but he believed that Black interests could only be safeguarded if they were not opposed to those of white settlers.

Dear Sir
Buckley

8602. H
15.8.77

Henry Wood to Secretary
August 10 1877

The Honorable the Secretary of Public Lands.

In reply to the letter of the 15th inst. in which you inform me that the Commission is effected.

I am in compliance with your request to refer to you the condition and prospects of the Aboriginal Station situated upon the land set apart for them at Binacanti near Dunderberg Station. Since written to you in the month of April past the blacks have principally resided on their land. The men resident are thus engaged to work in the immediate neighbourhood and it is the practice of them to return to their houses on Saturdays, leaving again for their work on Sundays. When their content is less than

Henry Wood to the Secretary of Public Land, 10 August 1877.

Sept 16th 1877

John Pettigrew Esq. M.L.A.

Seeing that £500 has been voted for the Dunderberg reserve for blacks, I beg to draw your attention to what I am prepared to substantiate, that the blacks that were on this reserve have returned to their old camps. At the present time there are only a small number if any remaining before the government proceeds to expend this grant of £500 would it

Thos Tweedie to John Pettigrew Esq. MLA, 16 September 1877.

Not be advisable to have a thorough examination into the expenditure of the previous £700. If how it has been improved to necessitate a further grant of £500.

Would you kindly ask for a special inquiry into the working of this humberg either in your place in the house or otherwise.

Thos Tweedie.

Land Commissioner's Office
Brisbane

5 October 1877

10407. 1877
10.10.77

In accordance with your request I proceeded to the Aboriginal Reserve at Durumadu, on the 25th of September 1877.

I have the honor to state for your information that I found therein erected 8 slab huts & 15 Gumpahs occupied by 19 Aborigines, as follows 6 old Mulla, 9 females, & 4 Chilchew, all the young and able being away at work in other localities. I consider the land selected well adapted for the same purpose. I may also state I found Mr. Senior or Great, surveying the same Reserve.

I think little good will be done with the same until it is enclosed by a substantial fence.

I have the honor to be,

Your Obedient Servant
H Massie

The Secy to the Minister
for Lands

am

X

Notes for Chapter 3 Part 1

- ¹ McNab to Douglas, 8 January 1877.
- ² Douglas' annotation, 23 January 1877, on 'McNab to Douglas', 8 January 1877.
- ³ Editor's Note: See first page of original letter on p51 between the first two paragraphs.
- ⁴ McNab to Douglas from Kenilworth, 8 January 1877.
- ⁵ Lands Department File. Res 77-84, R 385. Durundur Aboriginal and Police Paddock, Reserve file, (This file is not held in Queensland State Archives), 2 February 1877.
- ⁶ *The Queenslander*, 28 April 1877; extract from *Cooktown Courier*, 10 January 1877.
- ⁷ McNab from Kilcoy Station to Douglas, 23 March 1877, QSA.
- ⁸ McNab to Douglas from Durundur, 26 March 1877, QSA.
- ⁹ McNab to Douglas from Durundur, 26 March 1877, QSA.
- ¹⁰ Wood, Durundur to Douglas, 29 March 1877. Since this letter was written on unnumbered cards it may not be in sequence, QSA.
- ¹¹ McNab to Douglas, Queensland Lands Dept Archives, Res 77-84, R385, 9 April 1877, QSA.
- ¹² McNab to Douglas, (undated – received 9 April 1877) QLD Res 77-84 R 385, QSA.
- ¹³ Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 1876, vol 2 p 1422.
- ¹⁴ Henry Reynolds, *Frontier*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987, p.106.
- ¹⁵ McNab to Tully, 24 May 1877, QSA.
- ¹⁶ Wood to Douglas, 13 April 1877, QSA.
- ¹⁷ Henry Wood to Secretary for Public Lands, 13 April 1877, QSA.
- ¹⁸ Aboriginal Commissioner to Tully, 17 April 1877, QSA.
- ¹⁹ R I Smith, Land Commissioners Office Ipswich to Undersecretary for Public Lands Brisbane, 3 May 1877, QSA.
- ²⁰ McNab, from Caboolture to Douglas, 16 May 1877, QSA.
- ²¹ McNab from Durundur to Douglas, 22 May 1877 (received) , QSA.
- ²² Drew to Secretary for Public Lands, Land Department files, Lan A 55, no 5475, 22 May 1877, QSA.
- ²³ McNab from Manley Hotel, Caboolture to Alcock Tully, Undersecretary for Lands, 24 May 1877, QSA.
- ²⁴ Quinn to Propaganda, 15 June 1877, Scritti Riferiti ai Congressi, Oceania, 11, f. 180-185. APF. (Quoted in Endicott p 175).
- ²⁵ McNab to Vaughan from Brisbane, 10 July 1878, SAA.
- ²⁶ Quoted in 'Winifred Cowin, European-Aboriginal Relations in Early Queensland, 1859-1897', BA Thesis, University of Queensland, 1950.
- ²⁷ Editor's note: In the book of Daniel, 5:25-28, Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall for Belshazzar, 'Mene' God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end, 'Tekel'

You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and 'Phares' Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

- ²⁸ McNab from Adelaide Street, Brisbane in reply to letter 6 June, 18 June 1877, QLD Res 77-84 R 385, QSA.
- ²⁹ McNab to John Forest, 25 May 1883, reprinted in V & P of LCWA, 1883, 2nd Session, paper 16, p 6.
- ³⁰ Henry Wood to W A Tully, Undersecretary for Public Lands, 10 August 1877, QSA.
- ³¹ John Pettigrew was the local member agitating to have the Reserve cancelled, QSA.
- ³² Thos Tweedie to Pettigrew Esq. MLA, 16 September 1877, Qld Res 77-84 R 385, QSA.
- ³³ TELEGRAM Pettigrew to Douglas, 17 September 1877, QSA.
- ³⁴ Kirk to Douglas, LAN A 58 no 10695, 19 September 1877, QSA.
- ³⁵ H Massie, from Land Commissioners Office, Brisbane to The Minister for Lands, 5 October 1877, QSA.
- ³⁶ *V & P of QLA*, 1878, 4th Session, p 24.
- ³⁷ Petition to Douglas, 20 March 1878, QLD Res 77-84 R 385, QSA.

Part 2 Lobbying for Aborigines and ‘Regular Marriage’

The struggle for civil rights for Aborigines was not limited to the Lands Department. McNab was registered as a marriage celebrant prior to October 1877 when a minor breach of regulations at Durundur sparked bad feelings between himself and the Registrar-General’s Office.

While McNab was at Durundur, the Registrar General threatened him with prosecution for marrying Blacks in certain assumed circumstances. It would seem an over-reaction to a minor breach of regulations but the ill feeling aroused eventually led to disclosing the official perceptions of Aborigines’ status in law.¹

16 March 1878, McNab from Kenilworth to Douglas:

Sir,

As I find several Aborigines inclined, nay anxious to occupy a Homestead on the same terms as white settlers, with the exception of paying the survey fees, which for the former is a considerable outlay especially at the commencement.

I am desirous of learning whether or not you are disposed to aid them in this matter by supplying them with the necessary amount from Government funds as you are empowered to do by the Resolution at the Legislative Assembly of the 29th November 1876.

I am, Yours truly, Duncan McNab.

Annotation - Advances not made 8 April 1878.²

22 March 1878 Signed petition to Minister for Public Lands:

*That Aborigines be removed and land thrown open for selection.*³

19 April 1878 McNab from Maryborough to Registrar General,

Sir

I hereby indicate to you that I have left Gympie and am now residing in Maryborough and Wide Bay District.

Yours truly D McNab.⁴

The Deputy Registrar General, William Blakeney informed him:

*As Maryborough and Wide Bay form two distinct registration districts, it will therefore be necessary for you to inform the Registrar-General in which of these districts you intend to reside.*⁵

After an exchange of curt letters between McNab, Jordan, (the Registrar-General), and Douglas, (now the Colonial Secretary), the Government Gazette published the relocation.

Requirements of Church Canon Law also slowed McNab’s campaign.

According to ecclesiastical law, some couples were not free to marry until the dispensation of certain impediments to that union. The nature of the Aboriginal marriage system meant that these impediments constantly arose. McNab did not have faculties for their dispensation. In June 1877 he had applied to Bishop Quinn, who had mislaid the list of special faculties sent to him by the Pope!

McNab wrote:

... he could not find it, so he gave me all the powers he had, adding that he was nearly certain he had all required. I could not however act on a merely probable opinion when there was a question of the validity of a sacrament.

McNab had prepared a lengthy statement in Italian to be submitted to Rome on the Aboriginal marriage system. He also applied for dispensations in two particular cases and clarification from the Pope of his precise dispensing faculties.

When McNab had returned to Brisbane in January 1878 Bishop Quinn had seemingly ignored the request and not forwarded⁶ his correspondence to Rome. The applications were eventually sent⁶ and replies received in August 1880, more than three years after their initial drafting.⁷

Why did McNab pursue the issue of Aboriginal marriages with such zeal? Like most missionaries he was offended by a moral code at odds with his own in terms of sexual proprieties but also he was convinced that the only hope for Aboriginal civilization lay in fundamental changes to their social system. Land and property could be inherited if there were marriage unions in line with European practice.⁸ Also he viewed with distaste Aboriginal polygamy and polyandry and complained of the shocking immoralities, which he had witnessed.

... the old men are polygamists, and so deprive the young men of having wives. They circumcise and mutilate the young, and cause them to commit unnatural crimes. Elsewhere some of the chiefs and some of those in contact with whites have a plurality of wives ... all the mischief arises from the influence of the old men over the young; and that you must subvert and in a manner destroy, if you would succeed in your enterprise.

McNab seemed to see monogamous marriage as a tool with which to break the power of the gerontocracy. He thought the old were afraid of want, for they depended for their subsistence mainly on the labours of the young.

*... you must make the young men see and understand how they are plundered and enslaved by the old men, who teach them that everything is common, and not belonging to each or any individual.*⁹

24 April 1878 reply. William Blakeney, Deputy Register General to McNab:

The Reverend Duncan McNab,

Sir,

I am instructed to acknowledge receipt of your letter on 19th instant advising your removal from Gympie, and your now residing in the Maryborough and Wide Bay District and to state that as Maryborough, and Wide Bay form two distinct registration districts, it will therefore be necessary for you to inform the Registrar General in which of these districts you intend to reside, before your removal can be notified,

William Blakeney Deputy Registrar General.¹⁰

2 May 1878 McNab to Registrar from Dundatha:

Sir,

On the 24th of last April the Deputy Registrar General wrote to me "I am instructed ... to state that as Maryborough and Wide Bay form two distinct registration districts it will therefore be necessary for you to inform the Registrar General in which of these districts you intend to reside."

I intend to reside in both just as I find the Blacks are situated. At present I am camped or reside at Dundatha on the North Bank of the River Mary about a mile and a half below the junction on the Saltwater Creek and the Mary which I believe is in the Wide Bay district, but I officiate in Maryborough about as often as here. I can see nothing in the Marriage Act to prevent the registration of my residence in both districts, in my case it makes no reference to my intention, and my actual residence is as I have stated at Dundatha,

Yours truly,

D McNab¹¹

10 May 1878 Jordan, Registrar General, Brisbane, to McNab,

Sir,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter on the 2nd instant and to inform you that the Marriage Act is quite distinct on the point that a clergyman must be registered for one particular Registry district, therefore it is necessary that you should inform me whether you reside in Maryborough or Wide Bay District to enable me to register you for the celebration of marriages.

Henry Jordan Registrar General.¹²

15 May 1878 McNab to Jordan,

Sir,

In reply to your letter on the 10th instant I have to refer you to my letter of the 2nd of this current May in which for the purpose of registration I distinctly informed you that my residence was at Dundatha in the Wide Bay district.

Believe me, Yours truly, McNab.¹³

16 May 1878 McNab then wrote to the Colonial Secretary asking for protection from annoyance and injustice from the bureaucrats:

Sir,

I have occasion to request that you would please to make the officers of the Registration Department ... and ... Register and publish my change of residence, and that you would protect me in future from injustice and annoyance by them. It means that they have recommenced their dodging (?) to disqualify me for celebrating marriages in Queensland, as you may perceive by their last three official letters to me and my replies to them.

With due respect

I am, Your humble servant D McNab.¹⁴

21 May 1878 Jordan to Colonial Secretary:

There has been some difficulty in getting Mr McNab to understand the necessity of adhering to the requirements of the Marriage and Registration Acts.

Government Gazette: The Revd D McNab, a Minister of the R C Church having removed from Gympie, the Registered District of Gympie to Dundatha, in the registry district of Wide Bay has given me notice of such removing according to the provision in the marriage Act of 1864.

21 May 1878, Jordan to Colonial Secretary,

Sir,

In reference to the letter of the Rev D McNab, I have the honor to report, that there has been no indisposition to notify the removal of this gentleman. It is published in the government Gazette on today. I enclose the correspondence, Letters 1 – 5.

It was, of course, necessary for Mr McNab to say in which of the two districts he wished to appear as resident, as he could not be registered as residing in the wide Bay and in the Maryborough districts, as he supposed.

There has been some difficulty in getting Mr McNab to understand the necessity of adhering to the requirement of the marriage and registration Acts; but there is not, I am assured the slightest ground for the comment contained in his letter now returned.

I believe that the Deputy Registrar General Mr Blakeney has patiently endeavored to explain to Mr McNab just how the law make binding on us as well (as) on Registered ministers and I am confident that this gentleman has always been treated with courtesy and

consideration.

Enclosed Government Gazette:

The Reverend James Conson ... and the Reverend Duncan McNab, A Minister of the Roman Catholic Church, having removed from Gympie, in the Registry District of Gympie to Dundatha, in the Registry District of Wide Bay, have both given me notice of such removing, according to the provisions of the Marriage Act of 1864,

Henry Jordan, Registrar General.¹⁵

27 May 1878 Jordan to Colonial Secretary

Sir,

I have the honor to return herewith, correspondence relating to the registration of the marriages of Aborigines, after having duly noted the Attorney General's Opinions thereupon, Henry Jordon.¹⁶

10 June 1878 McNab from Brisbane, to Colonial Secretary:

Sir,

Lest you should think that I trouble without cause, I must, in answer to your letter of the 31st of last month, inform you that my letter to the 15th May to the Registrar General simply referred him to my previous one to him dated the 2nd of May, and I gave him no additional information. I have then to thank you for your interference, as he has since published my change of residence.

I did not knowingly ask to be registered in two districts. At first I intimated to him my residence in the Wide Bay and Maryborough districts thinking they were but one. On being told that they were distinct I wrote to him at (sic) the above mentioned date that I officiated in both but mainly resided at Dundatha in the Wide Bay District: mainly only as a remark that I saw nothing in the marriage act to prevent the registration of my residence in both districts. Neither do I yet: for although the Act required the registration of the Designation and Residence of a Minister of Religion, and assumes, that such residence is in some district, requiring him to give timely intimation of the change of residence, it does not contain a clause prohibiting his being registered in two or more districts for the whole colony. Not that the question has been raised, if the law be such as I apprehend (sic) it, I do not hesitate to say that the last mode of registration is most appropriate and suitable to my mission and would tend to prevent a recurrence of misapprehensions,

With due respect, I remain Yours truly, D McNab.¹⁷

While McNab pursued his campaign for Aboriginal marriages by submitting registration certificates to the Registrar in the Maryborough district in May and June 1878, his efforts were being thwarted in Brisbane by the Registrar-General, Henry Jordan. Not one of the marriages was registered.

Rather Jordan sought legal advice from the Master of Titles who prepared a brief on the subject, which was forwarded via Douglas, to the Attorney General, Samuel Griffith, for comments.¹⁸

1 July 1878 Henry Jordan to the Colonial Secretary, to forward to the Attorney General:
Registrar General
Case for Counsel
/1837 Marriages of Aborigines
Registrar Generals Office July 1st 1878

Sir,

Referring to the Registration of the Marriages of Aborigines, which has recently assumed some consequence, in connection with the mission of the Rev Mr McNab, I have the honor now to enclose a case prepared at my request, by the Master of Titles, and respectfully to ask, that it may be submitted for the opinion of the Honorable Attorney General.

Henry Jordan.¹⁹

Case

By the Act 19 Vic No 34 (NSW) provision is made for the registration of Births, deaths and marriages.

S 2 of that Act provides for the appointment of a Registrar General.

S 3 authorizes the division of the colony into districts.

S 4 provides for the appointment of District Registrars for such Districts except as to the metropolitan district which is placed specially under the management of the Registrar General himself.

S 8 requires inter alia that, "every district registrar shall inform himself carefully of every birth marriage and death happening within his district and shall as soon as possible after the event without fee or reward register the same respectively.

S 33 provides that every district register who shall refuse or without reasonable cause omit to register any birth marriage or death of which he shall have had due notice shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding twenty pounds for every such offence.

The provisions for giving such notice in the case of births and deaths respectively are contained in Secs 21 and 28 of the Act. With penalty for neglect in Sec 32

The notice of marriages was provided for by an Act of the same session 19 Vic No 30 now repealed but for which 2 B Vic No 15 was substituted as referred to below.

3 July 1878

Handwritten initials

Registrar General

Case for Counsel

78/1837 Marriages of Aborigines

Registrar General's Office
July 1st 1878

CR 583
6 7 78

The Attorney General

The Secretary General

Referring to the registration of the marriages of Aborigines, which has recently assumed some consequence, in connection with the question of the Rev. Mr. McNeil, I have the honor now to enclose a case prepared at my request, by the Master of Titles, and respectfully to ask that it may be submitted for the opinion of the Honorable the Attorney General.

I have the honor to be
Your Most Obedient Servant

Henry Hodgson
Registrar General



The Honorable
The Colonial Secretary

The Registrar General

The Secretary General

C. noted. *Handwritten notes*
19/7/78
Colonial Secretary

Case

By the Act 19 Vic No 34 (NSW), provision is made for the registration of Births, deaths and marriages.

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Handwritten notes at the bottom of the case section

The reference COL/A260 2434/1878, QSA, actually consists of 7 pages of a case regarding Aboriginal Marriages in relation to the duty of recording births, deaths and marriages of persons residing in NSW and the State of Queensland. It is actually the considered opinion of the Attorney General of the day, July 1878.

with penalty for neglect in Sec 39.

The notice of marriages was provided for by an Act of the same session 19 Vic No 30. Now repealed but for which 23 Vic No 15 was substituted as referred to below.

The Act above quoted having been passed in New South Wales and containing references to that Colony and Sydney must for the purpose of this Colony be read according to S 36 of the Supreme Court Act 31 Vic No 23.

By the Act 23 Vic No 75 being the Marriage Act of 1874 after repealing a previous Act for regulating marriages (19 Vic No 30) After various provisions for registering ministers of religion and making various provisions as to the solemnization of Marriages S. 14. provides that every marriage shall be celebrated in the presence of two witnesses at least who shall sign a certificate which shall be also signed by the minister or registrar celebrating the marriage in form contained in Schedule D of that Act copy of which certificate is required to be delivered by the minister (and signed by himself) to one of the parties married, and the minister is required within one month thereafter to transmit the original certificate to the Registrar of the district within which such marriage was celebrated.

S. 16. exempts Jews and Quakers from the operation of the Act making special provision

this Act depending upon race, nationality, religion or irreligion, nor is there any such distinction to be found in the Registration Act previously quoted.

At the same time as a matter of fact and practice it has always been assumed from the inception of the Registration Act in New South Wales both in that Colony and in this since separation that such Act was not intended to apply to Aboriginal natives of the Colony and it is obvious that any attempt to carry out the provisions of that Act with regard to them would be attended by almost insuperable difficulties.

It is true that in one or perhaps a few more cases a marriage reported in due form by a minister as having been celebrated between aboriginals has been registered but the cases if more than one have been so few that it was not worth while to raise any objection.

Recently however the subject has assumed a new phase.

A certain gentleman duly registered as a Minister of religion entitled to celebrate marriages has recently taken up the work of a missionary endeavouring to convert the aboriginals to Christianity.

He has succeeded so far to his own satisfaction that he is believed to have

The Act above quoted having been passed in New South Wales and containing references to that colony and Sydney must for the purpose of this colony be read according to S 30 of the Supreme Court Act 31 Vic No 23.

By the Act 2B Vic No 15 being the Marriage Act of 1874 after repealing a previous Act for regulating marriages (19 Vic No 30) After various provisions for registering ministers of religion and as to the solemnization of Marriages S 14 provides that every Marriage shall be celebrated in the presence of two witnesses at least who shall sign a certificate which shall be also signed by the minister or registrar celebrating the marriage in form contained in Schedule D of that Act copy of which certificate is required to be delivered by the minister (and signed by himself) to one of the parties married, and the minister is required within one month thereafter to transmit the original certificate to the Registrar of the District within which such marriage was celebrated.

S 16 exempts Jews and Quakers from the operation of the Act making special provision for registration of their marriages but with this exception there is not any distinction in this Act depending upon race, nationality, religion or irreligion, nor is there any such distinction to be found in the Registration Act previously quoted.

It is true that in one or perhaps a few more cases a marriage reported in due form by a minister as having been celebrated between Aborigines has been registered but the cases if more than one have been so few that it was not worth while to raise any objection.

Recently however the subject has assumed a new phase.

A certain gentleman duly registered as a Minister of religion entitled to celebrate marriages has recently taken up the work of a missionary endeavouring to convert the aborigines to Christianity.

He has succeeded so far to his own satisfaction that he is believed to have induced a considerable number of them to submit to the rite of baptism and thereafter to have induced certain couples of his converts to submit themselves to the ceremony of marriage according to his rites.

He has thereupon transmitted to the Registrar of the District for registration Certificates in form D but necessarily omitting many particulars at the same time somewhat peremptorily requiring registration.

An examination of that form clearly shows that in the majority of cases it would be simply absurd to believe in the possibility of the information required being given except as a result of fertile imagination

on the part of the informant.

These certificates would be valueless to all intents and purposes whether from a statistical point of view (and in that view they would introduce confusion) or as capable of being connected with the individuals supposed to be married.

But on the one hand it appears to be the Registrars duty under Sec B of the Registration Act to register all marriages duly reported to him,. And under the 33rd section he is liable to penalties for not doing so on the other hand if so required he is equally bound to register births and deaths and presumably in case of a birth or death not reported to him under the 21st section of the Act to take steps to compel the giving information required for the purpose, and this from the nomadic habits of the Aborigines would necessitate the organization of a special machinery which does not at present exist.

Hereafter to have induced certain couples of his converts to submit themselves to the ceremony of marriage according to his rites. He has thereupon transmitted to the Registrar of the District for registration Certificates in form D but necessarily omitting many particulars at the same time somewhat peremptorily requiring registration.

An examination of that form clearly shows that in the majority of cases it would be simply absurd to believe in the possibility of the information required being given except as a result of fertile imagination on the part of the informants.

These certificates would be valueless to all intents and purposes whether from a statistical point of view (and in that view they would introduce confusion) or as capable of being connected with the individuals supposed to be married.

But on the one hand it appears to be the Registrar's duty under Sec B of the Registration Act to register all marriages duly reported to him, and under the 33rd section he is liable to penalties for not doing so. On the other hand if so required he is equally bound to register births and deaths and presumably in case of a birth or death not reported to him under the 21st section of the Act to take steps to compel the communication

necessitate the organization of a special machinery which does not at present exist.

The Honorable the Attorney General is respectfully requested to advise on the following points.

1. They do in time but the mind appears to be in a hurry to sign in such cases.
 2. I think not.
 3. I think not.
 4. I think that he would be justified in doing so.
 5. I think that he must in the future in the part he would of the Registrar's circumstances of the case - I do not think a change in the
- 1 Do the Acts quoted 19 Vic No 34 and 28 Vic No 15 or does either of them apply to the births marriages or deaths of aboriginals
- 2 And as to marriages should any distinction be made in case either husband or wife are of white blood or half caste
- 3 Would the omission of important particulars from certificates of marriage to any and if so to what extent justify a refusal to register.
- 4 If required to register such marriages would the Registrar General be justified in keeping a distinct and separate register of them so as to avoid the disturbances that might otherwise be occasioned in calculations of the general vital statistics.
- 5 If required to register marriages of aboriginals to what extent is the Registrar General or any District Registrar bound to enquire into or register aboriginal births or deaths and how could he enforce the giving information

The Honourable the Attorney General is respectfully requested to advise on the following points.

Hon Colonial Secretary

1. They do in times but the rigid application of them is becoming impossible in such cases.	1 Do the Acts quoted 19 Vic No 34 and 28 Vic No 15 or does either of them apply to the births marriages or deaths of Aborigines.
2. I think not.	2 And as to marriages should any distinction be made in case either husband are of white blood or half caste.
3. I think not.	3 Would the omission of important particulars from certificates of marriage to any and if so to what extent justify a refusal to register.
4. I think that he would be justified in doing so.	4 If required to register such marriages would the registrar General be justified in keeping a distinct and separate register of them so as to avoid the disturbance that might otherwise be occasioned in calculation of the general vital Statistics.
5. These matters must in the future as in the past be convinced of circumstances of the case – I do not think any change in the past practice is necessary.	5 If required to register marriages of Aborigines to what extent is the Registrar General or any District Registrar bound to enquire into or register aboriginal births or deaths and how could he enforce the giving information.
Signed 15/7/78	6 And generally on the premises.

Accompanying the ‘Case concerning registration of Aboriginal Births, Deaths and Marriages’ was a letter from Henry Jordan, the Registrar General to the Colonial Secretary:

Registrar General’s Office
20th July 1878

Sir,

I have the honor to return herewith, correspondence relating to the registration of the marriages of Aborigines, having duly noted the Attorney Generals opinions thereupon.

I have the honour to be Sir,

Your Most obedient Servant

Henry Jordan

Registrar General

The Honourable The Colonial Secretary

The brief noted that there was nothing in either the Marriage or Registration Acts, which specifically exempted Aborigines from their authority:

As a matter of fact and practice, it had always been assumed from the inception of the Registration Act in New South Wales both in that colony and in this since separation, that such an act was not intended to apply to Aboriginal Natives of the colony.²⁰

The whole incident of the ‘Case’ was a telling admission, less in its own right, than its frank acknowledgement of the gulf, which existed between the theoretical status of the Aborigines under law, and their actual position. The solution of a distinct register was offered.

As far as Father McNab was concerned the Aborigines were British subjects. His campaign for the registration of their marriages in particular, and for their civil rights in general were underwritten by a belief that Aborigines should be brought under British law and made subject to both its protection and its penalties.

The 1874 report of the Aboriginal Commissioners had noted:

*Hitherto the Aborigines have been almost exempt from both the protection and penalties of our laws, and, except in cases of personal violence towards Europeans, the records of our courts of law show but a very small proportion of Aboriginal offenders.*²¹

McNab insisted that laws, which theoretically protected Aborigines, be enforced. In particular he demanded their legal protection from murder by Native Troopers and white settlers. He also called for new laws to protect Aboriginal rights. He wanted the regulation of labour contracts and agreements. He suggested a law to protect Aborigines from slavery, that is, being forcibly abducted to perform unremunerated service. He also sought legal retribution against colonists killing game where it was scarce or otherwise destroying their (the Aborigines’) means of living.

But, the case did not only refer to marriages, but to births and deaths of Aborigines.

Because births and deaths were not recorded, there was no record of how many Aborigines were killed.

10/1962

Registrar General's Office
17th July 1878

Sir, I have the honor to return
herewith, correspondence relating to
the registration of the marriages of
Aboriginals, after having duly noted
the Attorney General's opinions thereupon.
I have the honor to be

Sir,
Your Most Obedient Servant
[Signature]
Registrar General

The Honorable
The Colonial Secretary 3

In Queensland Father McNab had campaigned for social justice for Aborigines. In his time there was no colonial consensus for Aboriginal policy. Five years after his death, Australia was in a state of political change as State politicians discussed Federation.

The Australian Colonials consulted the *Constitution of the United States of America* and the *Constitution of the Dominion of Canada* for guidance with regard to care of indigenous populations. In the United States and Canada, this issue came under Federal legislation. But not in Australia.

In 1901, the agreement the Australian States incorporated into the *Constitution of the Commonwealth* was different:

Section 51 precluded Federal Parliament from legislating on behalf of Aboriginal Peoples.
Section 127 excluded Aborigines from being counted in population figures of the Commonwealth or of a State.

P.Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898-1954.* University of Queensland Press, St.Lucia, 1973. p.52.

Notes for Chapter 3 Part 2

¹ McNab to Vaughan, 10 July 1878, SAA.

² Lan A 60 no 3528, 16 March 1878, QSA.

³ Signed petition to Minister for Public Lands, 22 March 1878, QSA.

⁴ McNab to Jordan (Registrar-General), 19 April 1878, Col A 260 no 2221, QSA.

⁵ Blakeney to McNab, 24 April 1878, Col A 260, no 2221, QSA.

⁶ McNab to Vaughan, 10 July 1878, SAA.

⁷ Propaganda to Quinn, 30 September 1880, copied by McNab. SAA.

⁸ McNab, 'Information for Missionaries to the Australian Aborigines', sent to Cardinal Moran, 29 August 1887, SAA.

⁹ McNab to Alphonse Tachon, 22 July 1895, AJH

¹⁰ William Blakeney, Deputy Register General to McNab no2221, 24 April 1878, QSA.

¹¹ McNab to Registrar from Dundatha, Col A 260, no 2221, 2 May 1878, QSA.

¹² Jordan Registrar General to McNab, General Registry Office, Brisbane, QSA Col A 260, no 2221, 10 May 1878, QSA.

¹³ McNab to Jordan, Col A 260, no 2221, 15 May 1878, QSA.

¹⁴ McNab to Colonial Secretary, Col A 260 no 2221. 16 May 1878, QSA.

¹⁵ Jordan to Colonial Secretary, Col A 260, no 2221, 21 May 1878, QSA.

¹⁶ Jordan to Colonial Secretary, Col A 260, no 2434, 27 May 1878, QSA.

¹⁷ McNab to Colonial Secretary, Col A 260, no 2221, 10 June 1878, QSA.

¹⁸ Master of Titles to Henry Jordan, June 1878, Col A 260 no 2434. QSA

¹⁹ Jordan to Colonial Secretary, Col/A260 2434/1878, 1 July 1878, QSA

²⁰ Case concerning Aboriginal marriages, Col/ A 260/1878 2434, 15 July 1878, QSA

²¹ 'Aborigines of Queensland', Report of the Commissioners, *V & P of QLA 1874*, p 439.

Part 3 'The Memoria' 10 July 1878

1 July 1878 Father McNab wrote to the Archbishop of Sydney saying that he was afraid he was suspected by the Bishop because he didn't want to sign a letter in support of his Bishop, and he came to a certain resolution, that it would be necessary that the Holy See send an authorization to gather information about the doings of Bishop Quinn and his priests.

5 July 1878 Father McNab wrote to the secretary of the Archbishop in which he explained his point of view:

Dear Reverend Father,

If your gracious Archbishop is able to conduct a legal investigation into the diocese of Brisbane personally or through one of your delegates, the following matters would be advisable or necessary to consider, in some circumstances (27 questions follow with other comments) ... I am led to believe that the priests didn't write anything derogatory to the Archbishop, ...and that finally, with an assertion on their part that the first justification was genuine that they would sign spontaneously and freely; adding that what the Bishop had done for the advancement of the religion in the diocese made the accusations incredible, and that soon they would send documented evidence of that and a categorical refutation of the accusations.

I wasn't present at any meeting after the Synod had finished, and as far as I remember, neither after the proposition was once spoken about. It was said to me indirectly that my presence there was not wanted.



*Archbishop Roger Vaughan of Sydney
Photo taken from Moran, Patrick Francis
Cardinal,*

*A History of the Catholic Church in Australasia,
Sydney, Frank Coffee and Company, 1896*

If a legal investigation will be made, especially the older priests could suggest many useful questions. Because I'm not sure about the conduct of some employees in the Post Office, could you please send any confidential letters to the house of Mr Alex McPherson, Warner St, Brisbane? ¹

10 July 1878 'The Memoria'

Father McNab wrote this long appeal to Archbishop Vaughan of Sydney. In it he told why he had lost the confidence of his Bishop, James Quinn of Brisbane:

My Lord,

You ask what hope there is of the conversion of the Blacks?

Viewing things as they are at present, I must reply little, or none. Viewing them as they might and ought to be, I perceive very good grounds of hope. I mean that if there is no probability of the conversion of the Aborigines that is due rather to the want of a proper effort for their conversion being made, than to the want of capacity or disposition in them. I have had to exert myself more and to spend more time in contending with the apathy, interests, prejudices, and hatred of the whites in this cause than with the indispositions, or incapacity of the Blacks, since I came to Queensland. To enable you to form a due estimate of my answer I must give you some account of how my time has been occupied since my advent hither, and of the grounds on which I form my opinion. I landed in Brisbane on Thursday 23rd of September 1875. Two days thereafter I called on the right Rev Dr J O'Quinn, Bishop of Brisbane. He received me kindly. I showed him my commendatory letters, and told him I had come to Queensland for the purpose of labouring for the civilization and conversion of the Aborigines: that I should render to him reasonable obedience while I remained in his diocese: that if I were not allowed to devote myself exclusively to the Blacks I should return whence I came; but when not engaged for their benefit I should be glad to do what I could for whites, by assisting the local clergy; but would not be bound to it.

I asked of him the necessary faculties for teaching the Blacks, and administrating the sacraments to them: and also leave to beg what should be necessary for my support and for carrying on the mission. He cordially approved of my design, granted my requests on the terms proposed, and moreover gave me letters commending myself and my mission to the clergy and laity of the diocese of Brisbane. Soon thereafter he introduced me to the Governor of the colony with the view to securing his patronage of my endeavours in behalf of the Aborigines; and kindly and hospitably invited me to reside with the other priests, as often as I should have occasion to be in Brisbane. He also supplied me with the requisition for maps. Subsequently he made me a present of a house. He advised me to commence my mission at Amity Point taking with me ... a bag of flour: but he confessed he was not in a condition to give me much information about the Blacks, or how I should proceed; as his attention had always been fully occupied with the whites, and if he were to undertake the mission he should have to grope his way as I had to do.

I spent the next three months in learning from the Whites all that I could of the history, habits, manners, mode of life and superstitions of the Blacks, and in reading up all the accounts that the oldest colonist had given of them to the Government, and in endeavouring to get into communication with the Blacks, with little success. Once only I had an opportunity of giving them instructions. I explained the Creed. I pitched my tent along with them but they would not have me. They told me lies, and in my temporary absence, broke up their encampment and departed leaving my tent untouched. In a subsequent interview I got them to promise that they would settle down on land, and adopt civilized habits, if the government would assist them. They said they believed in God; but not that the Son of God became man, or that the body would rise again. They would not teach me their language. Therefore I resolved to go north to Port MacKay to a governmental reserve for the Aborigines, in order to learn the language. The Bishop said that Father Bucas could at a short notice go home to

France and get any number of priests for the mission to the Blacks, and that he would release Father Bucas from the charge of the Whites when the next lot of priests, who were soon expected, should arrive.

To Mackay I went at Christmas. There I found Father Bucas a Breton priest who had been on the mission to the Maoris in new Zealand for three years, and came to Australia with the intention of attending to the Blacks, but being in bad health, had been sent to Port MacKay to labour for the whites. He is very good, being candid, upright, extremely charitable, affable, hospitable, a practical worker, a musician and universally liked. I remained on the reserve with the Blacks at Scrubby Creek, not far from MacKay, learning the language, principally from the manager Mr Bridgman, till I fell ill of fever on the 16th of March 1876. The Blacks there were perfectly naked, and knew very little English. Mr Bridgman would not then allow me, or any other missionary, to give them religious instructions. I told them I was there to learn their language, and would afterwards teach them what they should do to get to heaven. They were well pleased with the proposal, and helped me as well as they could to learn telling me the names of things, and other words. One day, when alone with them, the manager being absent for some days, an altercation arose in which some forty or fifty of them were engaged with knives in their hands, wrestling and fighting. I tried to pacify them, but they told me to keep out of the way, lest anything should happen to me; as they did not wish to hurt me: but they had their own laws. At night one of the ringleaders sought admission into my quarters for protection, and remained all night. Here I got an insight into many of their ways and dispositions, and especially an explanation of their marriage system, their communism, polygamy, polyandry, their regard for the bones of the deceased, and their frequent and regular lamentations for the dead not long after sunset. I was beginning to speak their language and had written over five hundred words.

I returned to Brisbane in the beginning of April still suffering from the low gastric fever. The Bishop generously welcomed me to remain with the Brisbane priests, although I had before declined to be affiliated to his diocese, when he had proposed it, adding as an inducement that there was a clerical fund to provide for the priests in case of sickness.

After ten days, my health not improving Dr O'Doherty decided I should either go to the Downs or travel southward. Accordingly I sailed for Sydney on the 11th of April and by stress of weather, was at sea for nearly a week greatly to the benefit of my health. I retain a grateful recollection of the kindness and hospitality I received from Your Grace and Archbishop Polding and others while in Sydney, and from the Right Rev Dr Quinn of Bathurst. You are aware that then I urged, to the utmost of my power, on the Archbishop, the necessity of doing something for the mission to the Blacks.

I asked him as Metropolitan to stir up the other Australian Bishops to redeem their promise to the Pope. But he replied that he thought he had done his part in that respect, as it was during his rule that the Spanish Benedictines had opened their mission in western Australia. I likewise asked the cooperation of the Bishop of Bathurst. He said he might assist some other time, but that then there was a priest from Ireland collecting in his diocese. He sent

by me a message to his brother of Brisbane advising him to get Father Bucas and one or two other priests to join me, to make a good collection in his own diocese for the mission to the Blacks, and then appeal to the other Australian Bishops. I have yet to learn whether or not Your Grace made application on behalf of the mission to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and if so, with what effect. After remaining some weeks with my cousin Mr MacKillop of Terra Bella I returned re-established in health to Brisbane on the 29 May 1876.

Notwithstanding our refinement and civilization we may justly be reproached with having in the midst of us a people in the want of the necessaries of life, without the benefit or protection of a government and without, I do not say Christian, but even human instruction sufficient to preserve them from cannibalism. They live frequently, not from choice, but from necessity, on reptiles, and such other food as men resort to only when reduced to the last extremity by siege or famine. In our time all condemn the institution of slavery and many feelingly lament the miseries to which slaves are subject. But what are these compared to the sufferings and degradation of our Australian Aborigines. Their labours are generally inadequately or not at all requited. All slaves are better clad, fed and housed than our Blacks. They are at any rate protected from foreign violence and extermination, whereas according to the statements of the public press the Aborigines have too frequently been, and still are occasionally subjected to an indiscriminate slaughter of the guilty and the innocent.

The government maintains a standing army of Native Police for the protection of the colonists, by the destruction of the Aborigines. Their misery is greatly increased, and I may say completed by their physical and moral corruption and degradation derived from their intercourse with Europeans. With reference to their dispositions I must say that they are quick at apprehension, and susceptible of instruction and training, and many tribes have expressed to me their desire of being civilized, and their inclination to give a fair hearing to the exposition of Christian doctrine: their normal habits, savage usages, their superstitions, and imperfect knowledge of our language, and the want of abstract terms in their own are great impediments to their improvement.

Considering this miserable condition of the Blacks I had come to the conclusion that the first step to be taken for their civilization and conversion should be to receive for their permanent settlements, the means of support and protection of the laws. Therefore on the 9th of May, I commenced my correspondence with the government on their behalf; of which I send you a private copy, and which culminated in the two Resolutions passed by the legislative Assembly on the 29th of November 1876, which I have transcribed from the Parliamentary Debates, and affixed to the correspondence.

The Bishop was not at home on my return to Brisbane. On his arrival I delivered the message from his brother, and pressed him to get other priests for the Aboriginal mission. He excused himself on the plea that he had no funds and that the diocese was heavily in debt: that he could not then release Father Bucas from the charge of MacKay. I told him that Father "Lemming" of Woolahra had informed me, he might get two priests each year from the institution for the conversion of heathens founded by the Bishop of Salford. The Bishop gave me to



*The original caption read:
 "The Best Shot in the Native Mounted Police".
 (W R O Hill, Forty five Years' Experience in North Queensland
 (Brisbane, 1907, 32).
 From the Frontier, p315*

understand that such was not the case, as he had been in treaty with them before, and that they would not come unless they got the management of the mission. He commended my effort to get what I could for the Blacks from the Government: but he was sure they would not do much and would turn against me. My answer was that I could get the civil rights of the Blacks from no other source. He advised me to take up some land and try to settle the Blacks on it. To this there were two objections: First, the Blacks would not come to it leaving the part of the country they called their own. Secondly by this limiting my action I could benefit only a few individuals, perhaps one or two hundred whereas I desired to secure civil rights for all, and to succeed in conferring a general benefit I required the cooperation of the government. I consented however to the suggestion of having a central station for the missionaries.

Consequently I immediately commenced a collection to procure funds for the establishment of a mission to the Aborigines of Queensland. His Lordship heading the Subscription list by a promise of £100 by instalments of £25 per six months. In the meantime Father Bucas wrote to the Bishop concerning a piece of land in the vicinity of Port MacKay, which he thought would answer the purpose and was then open for selection. His Lordship described it to me, and I concurred in their opinion. The Bishop in payment of his first instalment opened an account thus –

*The Australian Joint Stock Bank, Brisbane, In account with Right Rev James O'Quinn, Rev D McNab and Rev P Bucas: Aboriginal Mission Fund, Folio 370, 1876.
 June 2 to selves £25, June 27 to selves £24*

By an overdraft on the account on the 27th of June the Banker gave a Cheque for £125 to be sent to Father Bucas for the purchase of land for the Aboriginal Mission, without Father Bucas's signature or mine, notwithstanding the following Declaration, which I made verbally at the time and subsequently wrote thus –

*The Manager of the Australian Joint Stock Bank,
 Brisbane 27 June 1876*

Sir

I hereby repeat to you the notice which I gave you today in presence of His Lordship, namely, that I will not be responsible for any overdraft on the account opened in the Australian Joint Stock Bank in Brisbane for the Aboriginal Mission Fund in the names of the Right Rev James O'Quinn, Rev D McNab and Rev P Bucas without my knowledge and consent, of which the only proper expression is my signature to the cheque.

Yours truly, D McNab

On the 21st of July I told his Lordship that I had no confidence in his Banker – that the proposed establishment at Port Mackay would require considerable capital and yearly expenditure - that I was not content to spend my life in collecting money, or in learning dialects; and that I preferred acting on the permission he first gave me of asking and receiving

alms for myself and my mission – that I would go from station to station and see what I could do with those Blacks who understood English, and fish and hunt and beg for my support. From that day I believe I lost the confidence of my Bishop..

On the 26th I reached Gympie at Father Matthew Horan's request, to make a collection for my mission, (the money I had brought with me from Victoria being then mostly spent) I was surprised to find Father Andrew Horan there collecting for the Presbytery at Ipswich. I assisted during the Jubilee, and supplied Father Matthew's place when he went to assist his brother in Ipswich.

While at Gympie Father Bucas wrote to me that he intended to ask the Bishop's consent to his erecting on the land acquired for the Aboriginal mission an orphanage for the Whites of the North as well as for the Blacks; and to settle nuns there to take care of them. My reply was that such a course would be a manipulation of funds, and I hoped the Bishop would not consent to it. I found however on my return to Brisbane that His Lordship had approved, if not suggested Father Bucas's proposal, and he met my remonstrance by asserting that the nuns would help to teach the Blacks, and that their good example together with that of the orphans would greatly contribute to bring about the conversion of the Blacks. Now though the said orphanage is in the course of erection. As I thought the priests of the mission to the Aborigines would have quite enough to do without the charge of white orphans and nuns, whose company did not seem to me desirable, in such a retreat, and that nuns were not fit instructors for naked savages; yet I did not say, and as the money with which the land had been taken up consisted principally of the Bishop's subscription, I resolved to have no more to do with it, leaving the management of it to the Bishop and Father Bucas. I wrote to the latter that if he and the Bishop would look to the coast-Blacks, I should try to do something for those of the interior.

After leaving Gympie my time was mainly spent in calling on members of the Ministry and of the Parliament in order to induce them to make provision for the temporal wants of the Blacks. In December having been gazetted as one of the Commissioners for the Aborigines, and obtained from the government all I proposed for them, and a promise from the Secretary for Lands that he would give Homesteads to any Blacks whom I would persuade to settle down to industrious habits of life, I left Brisbane on a tour through the country for the purpose of settling the Blacks on the land. I thought that six or nine months or even a year, might be well spent in that manner and that they would be sure to hearken to my instructions after being thus settled and their civil rights secured to them. I again urged the Bishop to get other missionaries for the Blacks, adding that if he did not they would be sure to fall into the hands of the Protestants. He said the Protestants had nothing for them and that they would do only what they would be paid for.

I was succeeding in my purpose everywhere I went, and was well received by the Blacks, among whom in the South at the colony there was then a general excitement and expectation of something being done for their benefit. Those of Bribie, Durundur, Kilcoy, Mount Brisbane, Belleview, Kenilworth and Jurbil had agreed to my proposals and selected the land on which they wanted Homestead Areas or reserves, and my advent was anxiously expected in other

places. I sent their applications to the Government, when I was obliged to return to Brisbane to a meeting of the Commissioners, who in my absence had expressed their disapprobation of any grants of land being made to individual Blacks, and commended only the formation of reserves on which they should be congregated in great numbers.

Then also the Right Rev Dr J O'Quinn charged me with forgetting the main object of my mission, the conversion of the Blacks, and with having become a mere tool or agent of the Government, complaining of my handing over the Blacks to the government, and that there were no results from my labours. He said I had a horror of getting land for the church, he advised me to take up land in my own name, or even in his and settle the Blacks on it. I confessed I could not see things in the same light nor feel the justness of his reproof or expostulation. I was not a tool or agent of the Government from which I received no pay, and to which I was in no way bound, or under any restriction. I was as free as his Lordship from Government control in my speech, action, teaching and dealings with the Blacks, and what I did was solely for their benefit. The Blacks were in the power of the government from the beginning, and to it alone I could apply for their civil rights, and they did not become more enslaved to it by their requisition. I had not forgotten the main object of my mission, but I considered their settlement the first step to their conversion. So far from having a horror of getting land for the church, I thought it the best species of endowment, when it could be procured: but I did not see my way to take it up even at a sixpence an acre (with consequent obligations) when I had not that sixpence. If his Lordship wanted land in his own name he could apply for it. Then I conceived it was useless for the purpose intended as the Blacks would not leave their own country to settle on a reserve, and I could not take up land in the country of every tribe. He himself had already fruitlessly tried the experiment at Nudgee where he offered them not only land, but also employment and food, and they would not settle, nor remain with him.

Although I did not say it, I thought that he was more trammelled by the government than I was, in as much as in consequence of the aid he received from it, he was obliged to exclude prayers and catechetical instructions in time of school from his Catholic and convent schools. I also considered that if the Blacks got homestead areas each family could afford to graze a cow for the church, which would soon be ample provision for the clergy. I don't know what the Government or Rome would think of the policy of taking up land in the names of nuns. I was greatly embarrassed by the Bishop's lecture, for although he did not compel me to follow his suggestions, I had to do something to please him and meet his expectations and those of the Catholics of his diocese, as I could not carry on the mission without their assistance, dependant as I am on their charity; while at the same time I apprehended that when the Blacks would become Catholics the Government would come to help them.

Then with considerable reluctance on this account, but with great pleasure from another point of view, I commenced, against my decided opinion as to expediency, to prepare for the instruction of the Blacks. I had from the beginning earnestly recommended the matter to God and asked his guidance and assistance, well knowing I could do nothing of myself. I had endeavoured to secure the prayers of Religious and children and of many good people in

Victoria and Queensland. I had involved the intercession of the Mother of God, of St Francis Xavier and of all the Saints. Knowing that appearances make strong impressions especially on the savage and semi civilized I adopted a costume by which I might be known, and the object of my mission indicated. I have one for travelling, and another to use when giving instructions. The latter consists of a black soutane, a scarlet sash and a pretty large crucifix with a white faraiolo. I got them both photographed and sent before me among the Blacks my representation as travelling that I may be recognized by them. I procured a number of coloured engravings of subjects from the Bible and New Testament and of the establishment of the Church by Our Lord Jesus Christ, especially the Commission he gave to St Peter to feed his flock, and the power of the keys, then the succession of popes down to the present head of the Church, and then the photographs of the Bishop of Brisbane and my own. As I have everything to carry along with me, my house, and church, and books, and vestments, food and clothes, I tried to provide myself with horses and saddles and sacks.

Thus in the beginning of the year 1877 I proceeded alone to Mooroochie about seventy miles from Brisbane and commenced giving instructions to some Aborigines whom I found there. For some nights they listened to me attentively, and appeared interested in the subjects. They believed what I told them of God, of the creation and the fall of man. But when I came to the Trinity, the Incarnation, or other matters of mystery they replied in broken English "Bel me see it," i.e., "I don't understand it," and would proceed no farther. They however anxiously enquired when I should come again.

After parting with them, I reflected that possibly it was myself to blame for their not believing more, since I had neglected to tell them that even I did not comprehend those mysteries: so I resolved to avoid such an error for the future. From Mooroochie I directed my course to Durundur. There I had got a reserve of 2330 acres for the Blacks belonging to the station, or, rather to that part of the country. I camped along with them, because I have never heard of a people converted where the priest did not live with them, so that they might observe the whole tenor of his life, as well as hear his doctrine. In the midst of the forest they came every day to morning prayers, and before a great fire attended catechetical instructions at night. By day I divided them into hunting, fishing and working parties, and inspected and directed the operation of the workmen engaged in collecting materials, or in the construction of their houses. They had no houses before; they were sheltered at night only by the boughs of trees or a few sheets of bark rudely put together.

I availed myself of the services of the young, who understood English best, to instruct the old, what I had learned of the Native tongue at Port MacKay being of no use to me here; for to them it was quite unintelligible. They listened to me for six weeks before they expressed any opinion on what I taught them. Then they said they wanted to go up, and not down: that they received the religion as true and good, and would remain on the reserve Binambi, and make it their home. At the end of two months I baptised twenty-seven of them and married nine couples. An emissary had been sent by King Tidy of Sampson Vale to disperse them, but having listened to the Christian doctrine and closely observed all that was done he became a convert and was the first baptised and named Paul Wambalen. My practice is to give them some Saint's

name at baptism retaining as a surname that by which they are called in their own language, disregarding the nicknames by which they are known among the Whites.

I had occasion to ask the Bishop for dispensations in matrimonial cases; and I explained to him their system of marriage, and the circumstances of the cases requiring dispensation. In one case both he and I erred; as I found out subsequently by study, and that case to this day required a dispensation in radice. His Lordship had mislaid or lost the paper containing the list of the special faculties sent him by the Pope, and he could not find it so he gave me all the power he had, adding that he was nearly certain he had all required. I could not, however, act on a merely probable opinion where there was question of the validity of a sacrament so he said he would get a copy of the faculties from another Australian Bishop. The retreat for the clergy last year was in June. Then I gave the Bishop a statement of the marriage system of the Aborigines written in Italian for transmission to Rome and also an application for dispensations in two particular cases and an enumeration of the dispensing faculties I wanted from the Pope. He promised to send for them.

I was refused by Father Andrew Horan liberty to collect for my mission in Ipswich, although I had leave from the Bishop. After a month's negotiation and the interference of the Bishop I was permitted to collect in Toowoomba. I was freely allowed to collect and kindly treated by Father James Horan at Warwick. I was refused permission by Father Byrne in Dalby.

After some of the Durundur Blacks became Christians the bigots attacked the Minister of Land in Parliament, and the neighbouring selectors petitioned against the reserve, and complained that good land had been assigned to the Aborigines, whom they wished to confine to the mountains and the scrubs. After this I could not get the Minister of Lands to act at my suggestion any longer with the power given him for the benefit of the Blacks by the Legislative Assembly, he did not want to bring a nest of hornets about his ears. He soon became Colonial Secretary and Premier

In August I went to Donboy Creek on my way to the Logan District and learned that the Logan Blacks had gone to Nerang Creek, but could not follow them, because there was no grass for my horses, and I could not afford to give them corn. Three Blacks or rather two Blacks and one half caste whom I met expressed their willingness to be taught Christianity, and I told them to whom they should apply in their vicinity for instructions. The Logan Blacks had asked me to visit them for the purpose of settlement and instructions. I was anxiously looked for at this time in other places. At this time the Anglican Bishop Dr Hale wanted all the Commissioners to resign, and that he should be the sole Commissioner for the Blacks and paid by the Government. I would not resign myself and dissuaded the others from doing so, and thus defeated his purpose, at any rate for a time. Till then I had been enabled with the aid of the Commissioners to get boats and nets for the Bribie tribe and to get rations for poor decrepit Blacks from the Government. Now I had to expect the opposition of the Anglican Bishop, and that of some of the Commissioners, as soon after one of them told the Bishop they would support any measure he should bring forward as their chairman.

September I passed in Bribie Island. There being some children of age for school I taught

them by day their letters, leaving the European manager to look after the work. For the rest I followed the same course of instruction as at Durundur. There however I only baptised four and married one couple, and left six catechumen with a promise that I should see them again or ask the Bishop to send them some other priest, recommending them to learn as much as they could from the manager's wife who was a Catholic.

The Blacks do not like instruction. They want the bare idea quickly, and pay more attention and learn better at intervals than continuously. From Bribie I went back to Durundur and there passed part of October and November instructing and baptizing more, and hearing the first confessions of those previously christened, and giving some instructions for confirmation. In my absence, on the whole they had behaved very well, worked diligently and kept remarkably sober, even although a publican had brought drink to the reserve. Only two scandalous cases had occurred and they were of the parties requiring a *dispensatio in radice*, and of another who in very grave and urgent circumstances had asked that application for a dispensation on his behalf should be made to the Pope and could get no answer. There was no sign of any disposition to apostatise, they were proud of wearing the little crosses I had given them and one who had lost his was much distressed and made me promise to send him another from Brisbane. During my stay there however one man and his gin got drunk and made a great noise. On the second day thereafter having become perfectly sober they were so much ashamed of their misconduct that they left the reserve and camped by themselves for a fortnight.

While at Durundur the Registrar General threatened me with prosecution for marrying Blacks in certain assumed circumstances. He tried to get up a case against me in which the penalty would be £20; then he removed my name from the list of clergymen authorized to celebrate marriages in Queensland charging me with an offence rendering the perpetrator liable to a fine of £500, with or without five years' imprisonment. But he could not succeed because I had kept within the prescriptions of the law.

From Durundur I went to Kilcoy to teach the Blacks the truths of Christianity, at their own request, and remained with them some time. I did not however receive any of them into the church. The circumstances in which I found them were unfavourable to their conversion:

1. They had been disappointed in getting a reserve or Homestead;
2. I have some reason to believe the squatter was averse to their getting grants of land,
3. the king was a bigamist,
4. there were several white apostates from the Catholic Church on the station,
5. I had done nothing as I could not, in the above-mentioned case requiring a *dispensatio in radice*, although the woman was residing there with her relations, and the husband and his brother went thither in the hope that I would interfere, and get his partner restored to him. Knowing the impediment I could not help to unite them unlawfully. At the same time my inability to remedy the scandal tended to weaken

in their minds the beliefs of the indissolubility of marriage, which I had before explained to them. The husband and his brother were among the best instructed that I have received at Durundur, yet they left the reserve and the former had then no intention of returning and became evidently less attentive to religious practices. Perceiving the hindrance that the want of those dispensing faculties was to the admission of the Blacks into the church, and the evils resulting from it in the very beginning, and despairing of obtaining them from, or through the Bishop of Brisbane, I wrote for them long ago to your Grace, then to Father Tanganelli and at last to the Pope. You could not grant them, Father Tanganelli never answered me, and the Pope died, and as yet I have got no official notice of the existence of his successor.

Now deprived at any rate for a time of the assistance of the Government through the timidity, policy, and inconstancy of the Secretary for Lands, who would neither proclaim the reserves applied for, nor grant Homestead areas, and opposed by the Commissioners averse to making grants of land to individual Blacks I had to adopt a different course to secure their settlement. To such as I met unprovided for at Durundur, Kilcoy, Collington and other places I explained the unjust treatment they received from the ministry – the advantages that should accrue to them from the possession of a Homestead rather than a reserve, and advised them to take up homestead areas on the same terms as whites, and taught them to form a species of Trade Union for the purpose of paying the survey fees, which being required with the first year's rent, was at the beginning too heavy a charge for a Black fellow. They were pleased with my counsel and preferred the Homestead to the reserve, so that some would not settle at Durundur, although such as the Collington Blacks, agreed to work till they could secure their Homesteads. One man walked eighteen miles to learn from me how he could get land, then went off to get work by which he could earn enough to secure it, and subsequently came to me at a distance of seventy miles from where we first met in order to get his instructions on Christian Doctrine completed and himself baptised.

From Kilcoy I passed on to Collington. There I found only four or five adult Blacks, the others being in the mountains collecting bunya then in season. I remained with them till they were sufficiently instructed for baptism and marriage. I am sorry to say I could not admit any of them into the Church; because their matrimonial alliances could not be arranged without a papal dispensation, which I had not authority to impart. They were greatly disappointed and disheartened. Their objection appeared upon their countenances and they pleaded that they did not know before there was anything wrong in their existing union. I left them with a promise to ask for dispensation, and that I would either see them again or request the Bishop to send them some other priest. Sensible of the bad consequence of my wanting those faculties and that I could make but little progress without them I returned to Brisbane in the beginning of January 1878. On my return I learned from the Bishop that he had not even then applied to Rome for them, whereupon I told his Lordship I would not disturb the consciences of men in bona fide unless I could put them right and that till he should get me the necessary faculties I would go and remain with my friends in New South Wales or in Victoria. He said he thought that I would give up the mission.

I answered that I did not want to give up the mission, but I wanted the necessary powers for carrying on the work. Then he added that he could not prevent me from leaving the diocese; but that if I should do so, he would not let me back again. On hearing this I thought it would be a pity to leave all the Blacks in his diocese without any hope of being attended to and so deprived of the chance of salvation, and therefore I changed my mind and told him I should make a collection in Gympie and go to Broad Sound to learn the dialect I had commenced to learn at MacKay, most useful in the North, where most of the Blacks are, till the faculties could be procured. As he was then about to proceed to New Zealand for the benefit of his health, he promised to get a copy of the faculties sent by the Holy See to the Australian Bishops, and to write to me by the next boat from Sydney, and that he would immediately send for the other requisite powers to Rome. He sent me a copy of the Bishops' special powers from Sydney; but as yet after the lapse of six months there is no answer from Rome.

Instead of proceeding by sea to Broad Sound by the advice of Father Ahern I went towards it by land, turning aside to intermediate stations and instructing and baptizing Blacks on the way. I stopped first at Belli Creek and gave catechetical instructions for some time. As elsewhere some would not listen to me, and others listening would not believe; eight believed and were baptised and two married. The Mooroochie and Jurbil Blacks intended to meet me but were prevented by wet weather. There Mr Low, a protestant, the postmaster and a settler at Mooroochie, and intimately acquainted with the Blacks, told me that somehow I had inspired them with the most profound veneration of myself, that they understood and believed the religion I taught them and that it was well known to many more, even of those who had not seen me. I knew of nothing I had done to excite such veneration and I could not myself perceive it by them anymore than the strong affection which those of Durundur had professed for me to some Catholic Europeans on that station. They are naturally rather reticent of their opinion and by no means demonstrative: yet on one occasion as I was passing by coach through Mooroochie even those who previously had said to me "Bel me see it" crowded around me, called me their own father and wanted to be singly recognised and remembered, to the great astonishment of my fellow passengers. They were then a little affected by drink!

On another occasion, one night I remained in a wagonette near a farm house in which a Mount Brisbane Black and two of the Durundur Blacks were sent to sleep in a room near me, I could hear a conversation carried on till one or two in the morning. Next morning I asked one of the Durundur Blacks, a boy who attended me, what they were talking about so long.

He said he did not talk long, that he fell asleep, but that Tangaran was telling Johnnie, the Mount Brisbane Black, all about God and Jesus Christ. Johnnie wanted more instruction and to be baptised.

I went next to Kenilworth and found but few Blacks there. I received one family of five members into the fold of Christ. On my way to Jurbil I returned to Belli Creek where I had left some of my luggage and there learned from an Irish Catholic that the Blacks, in my absence, had paid great attention to, and provided for (to the best of their ability) a pastor who had camped with them, passing himself off as a Catholic priest who had been robbed. Then also I

met a mob of about 100 Coast Blacks mustering for a fight against the inland Burnet Blacks to avenge a murder committed some months before, some of my recent converts being in the number, and among them the son of the murdered king. Bent on such a purpose they would not then listen to religious instruction. I tried however to dissuade them from the combat and advised them to seek redress by law, although I knew they were not likely to get it as their evidence would not be taken, and generally they have not the benefit or protection of our laws. It was easy to show them that by their method the murderers might escape and one or more innocent men be killed. Some approved of my advice, but fearing that the leaders did not I gave intimation to the police magistrate at Gympie who promised to use his authority with the Police-Commissioner to prevent the fight. I suppose he was successful for I could get no account of its occurrence since.

At Jurbil, I found only three Blacks, of whom I baptised one, the others having been baptised before. The rest had gone to muster for the fight, from Gympie to the Caboolture they had been summoned to attend. They had regular couriers on foot to give regular intimation of the gradual approach of their foes. As nearly all were away from the stations at that time in quest of bunya I moved on to Maryborough without calling at a few stations by the way. Our venerable Bishop had more than once directed me to visit it, and the Commissioner of customs a Catholic and long resident there and yearly distributing to the Blacks the blanket supplied by Government, had promised to introduce me to them. Between Maryborough, Frazer Island, and the surrounding country the Blacks number about one thousand. They are very much corrupted by their intercourse with the whites, begging, and jobbing, and drinking in the town, and in consequence of the former residence among them of a Protestant missionary they expected to be supplied with food for listening. The Commissioner of customs did not keep his promise: and I was totally unknown to them till Father O'Brien told some of them who and what I was. This however availed but little. Providentially a Black who had visited those of Bribie Island, while I was there, knew me and introduced me to his tribe. I then got something of a footing and an audience. After a time I had sixteen prepared for baptism. On the eve of the day appointed for its administration a Protestant, from the very house from which I asked a Catholic sponsor, came to the camp with spirits and remained drinking with them all night. Four bottles of spirits were found next morning planted near the camp. Seven had taken too much; nine had not partaken of the drink, and these I baptised. Two of the others afterwards being penitent and reformed came to the church in Maryborough to be baptised and married. I had to leave a couple unbaptised for want of a Papal dispensation for their marriage.

Two young men came to me asking instructions, but did not again return having been hired immediately thereafter by timber-getters on Frazer island. Here the Blacks told me that they and all to the northward believed in the existence of God before any whites came among them. They call him Biral, i.e., The High One. They could not say the Most High for there are no degrees of comparison in their language. At Kilcoy and Mount Brisbane some called him Munbal, i.e., Thunder. While with the Blacks at Durundur a Chinese and two South Sea Islanders visited me. The Islanders were Protestants. One of them knew nothing more than the existence of God. The other had some knowledge of the Trinity and Redemption and some

.... ..
Mary MacKillop, writing from Bowen, to Dr Grant, Rector of the Scots College,
Rome, 13 May 1878

P.S. I saw Father McNab on my way up (he was then in Maryborough). He devotes himself entirely to the cause of the aborigines and has become quite a patriarch in appearance. His mission is painful and dangerous. Please pray for him.

.... ..

Sister Bonaventure Mahony, Maryborough, to Mary MacKillop, 3.10.1878

Dear old Father McNab is up from the island. (Fraser Island ?)

Friday, 4th (Same letter)

I was speaking for some time to dear old Father McNab last evening. He purposes going north next week. He cannot do much on the island till there is some employment got up for the blacks - digging, fishing or bark-getting. He will visit Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Bowen, Townsville.

He took a day and a half to come up this time and he slept on a plank in his boat with only a waterproof over him. His blacks went on shore. Douglas and his gin are baptised now and their baby, Gertrude - the mother, Jean Francis. How grand.

.... ..

Sister Bonaventure Mahony to Mary MacKillop, 10.10.1878.

Dear old Father McNab has come up from the island and goes north tomorrow in the boat. Fr Hanley goes as far as Bundaberg on a health trip.

.... ..

AP/83

Father Duncan McNab to ?

MARY MacKILLOP ARCHIVE
NORTH SYDNEY

Very Rev. Dear Father,

I am still waiting for a collection to be made next Sunday in the different churches in Brisbane to enable me to continue my mission to the Aborigines. In my last letter to you that I had come hither solely for their civilization and conversion, I remain here for that purpose only; yet when I cannot be occupied with them I do what I can with the other priests to help the Whites to heaven. In doing so I sometimes meet with cases that excite my compassion, as when I find people in difficulties who cannot help themselves and whom I am unable to relieve, e.g. unbaptised white children in the bush, especially when two or three years of age. This is hardly a case in point, for though I may not baptise them, I can tell the parents to bring them to the local clergy. I tell them, but will they do it? My next is exactly as I describe, i.e. nuns wanting an Extraordinary Confessor who cannot get one when required. Therefore I send you a few more interrogatories that may be serviceable if addressed to the Right Rev. Bishop of Brisbane or others whom they may concern.

Did not His Lordship disregard the application made by the Sister Provincial of the Order of St Joseph at the beginning of this month for an extraordinary confessor for her nuns?

Did he not since the recent departure of the Mother Superioress of the same nuns to Adelaide urge the Provincial and another Sister to sever their connection with the Mother House and deliver themselves over to him exclusively for Queensland? Did he not allege that they had come to Queensland with that understanding? Is that allegation true?

Did not the Sister Provincial in consequence of this pressure become disturbed in mind, unable to sleep, and suffer in her health? Does not such pressure thus brought to bear upon these Sisters to violate their rule approved by the Holy See, and which they have vowed to keep, tend to demoralize the nuns?

Extract from the 'Constitutions of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Australia', Ch. 6 - Of the Bishop of the Diocese.

'The Bishop of the Diocese has episcopal jurisdiction over the houses of the Sisters of the Institute that are in his Diocese, whence it is his right to appoint confessors for the Sisters, to examine postulants and novices according to the decree of the Council of Trent, to visit the houses of the Institute, the schools and other works of charity which are carried on by the Sisters, and to prevent remarkable faults, or correct them if such are committed by the Sisters. The Bishop of the Diocese cannot change the Constitutions, neither can he take away or lessen the authority which they confer on Superiors, namely, as to appointment of Sisters, visitation, the celebration of Chapters and other things of this kind. If the Bishop be not satisfied.....'

(Incomplete)

Concordat cum originali

Bible history, but of course was ignorant of the supremacy of St Peter and of his successors, and seemed much affected by the insight my pictures gave him of the whole and especially of the Church. They left me saying they would call again wishing to learn more. As there the Aborigines knew nothing of the management of homesteads, and were but poorly paid, if at all, for any work they could do I had to suggest to them the means of getting their wages increased and forming themselves into a Joint Stock Company for purchasing cattle, for the grazing of which I would try to get them land from the Government, and in the meantime I advised them to put their weekly contributions of two shillings each into the Government Savings Bank. The tribe I was instructing agreed to do so. Since my return to Brisbane I learned from the Colonial Secretary that the adjacent Frazer Island is already a reserve for the Blacks. It is not fit for cultivation, but is well-grassed and about seventy miles in length. In the course of this narrative I have repeatedly mentioned the labour of the Blacks. This does not mean skilled labour, or that work is their occupation, as a rule they all live in the forest by hunting and fishing and only occasionally do some work in town, or with selectors, or at mustering time with squatters.

Again this year the Registrar General was manoeuvring to get me disqualified for celebrating marriages in Queensland. I complained to the Premier who made him change his practice. I subsequently discovered that he had not registered the marriages of the Aborigines, which I had celebrated.

In the beginning of June 1878 I came back to Brisbane to urge on the government the necessity of giving civil rights to the Aborigines, and to attend to the annual clerical retreat at which my faculties for the mission expired. I reported to the Bishop my progress and reverses since the New Year. I represented to him the expediency of getting religious who would traverse the diocese in parties of two or three together visiting the different stations, and giving short missions to the Catholics scattered through the country, some of them having no opportunity at receiving sacraments becoming indifferent to the practice of religious duties and some apostatising. At the same time religious are needed to attend to the Aborigines.

I reminded him of Father Lemming's statement and of his own with reference to the Institute for the Conversion of Heathens founded by the Bishop of Salford. I remarked that they were much needed for the vast number of Kanakas on the sugar plantations and for the Chinese on the diggings. He said he would have given them the management of the mission to the Blacks, but that for some other reason they would not come.

In conclusion I stated that if I remained in one place hundreds of the Blacks would never hear the truths of faith, and that, as I could not be everywhere he would need either to get more missionaries for the Blacks, or make the local clergy attend to them, when once I had baptised them.

He said he would act on the latter alternative, and at the end of the diocesan synod he charged the priests to do so. Then also he stated that as the funds from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith were applied to the maintenance of students in the College of All Hallows and for importing them into this colony, that there were no funds for the mission to

the Aborigines, and that such institutions were best without any funds.

He promised me £10 to help to get a boat. I got contributions from some of the priests for the same purpose. After the Retreat I again presented myself to his Lordship saying that the Rev Mr Canali then subdeacon and to be ordained priest next month, and Father Mulhall had agreed to join me in the mission to the Blacks; that should he release Father Bucas from the charge of the whites at Port MacKay he would then have the religious men required by the Australian Bishops as the necessary condition at their co-operating to forward the mission to the Blacks. He had the men if he chose to use them.

Father Mulhall had told me that he would not camp with the Blacks nor teach them, but that he would collect for the mission, and help to get them employment, and to settle them on the land. His Lordship replied that he could not spare the Rev Mr Canali from the college nor Father Bucas from MacKay, that there he was already preparing to help the Blacks (by the erection of the orphanage?), but that Father Mulhall might join me if he liked. This Rev Father having reconsidered the matter declined to enter on the mission to the Blacks. Thus I am still alone, yet full of hope and praying that God may soon send sufficient and abler missionaries into the field.

The Italian priests in the Northern vicariate of Queensland are attending only to the whites. Now I have given to Your Grace a sketch of my proceedings since I came to Queensland.²

Now I will explain to you the grounds of the opinion I have formed regarding the conversion of the Aborigines.

The present prospect seems almost hopeless on account of the difficulties to be surmounted and my inability to cope with them. Hitherto I have made but little progress with the work of conversion, yet it seems fair when I take into account the little time I spent in actually instructing them, the scarce Black population in this southern portion of the colony and the class of it I had to deal with. Those who frequent the towns and are much mixed up with Europeans are always the worst and most difficult to manage.

The format of the four reasons why he stayed with them and did not proceed at once to the North?

First because the Bishop requested me to try to do something for those of Bribie Island; secondly because those of Durundur were amongst the first I met and I made them a promise, which I had to redeem; thirdly because they were near Brisbane and that suited my convenience for the purpose of intercourse with the Government and the Commissioners, necessary in the beginning: and fourthly some consideration for my health, suggested by the fever I took at MacKay, made me think it expedient to become better attuned to the climate before I should again venture into the tropics; and lastly the division of the Diocese of Brisbane restricted the extent of my jurisdiction.

I am gradually proceeding northward. Besides the difficulties enumerated in the

preceding narrative, there are others to be taken into account; the scattered conditions of the Blacks and the distances consequently to be travelled; also that they are never found in condition for instructions in great numbers but only in small groups of a few families together and never remain any length of time in one place, their nomad habits and the necessity of finding game causing them frequently to change their abode.

Add to these the diversity of languages; and the most serious obstacles are found to their conversion in the case of those enslaved to wine and women.

My prospect of success is also diminished by my own increasing infirmity and inability. I am now in my 59th year and growing feebler every year. I am unable to walk much on account of corns on the soles of my feet. I am an indifferent rider and a bad beggar; and am no musician.

My energy and faculties are impaired, my sight somewhat, and my memory considerably. This last defect is a great impediment to my success. For it hinders me from learning to speak the Native languages. Since I left MacKay, till lately, I paid no attention to the Native tongue farther than to get some indispensable words such as that for soul and spirit, partly because though useful, it is not necessary for first instructions, as the young taught the old, and partly because I was not able to pay a servant or interpreter, and partly because I had been told that the dialects were altogether different, and unintelligible to different tribes.

Latterly I found a knowledge of it indispensable for the confessions of the old; and I also found that although the dialects are numerous and different, they are intelligible over a great extent of country, and the languages comparatively few. Thus every little tribe between Brisbane and Rockhampton have what they call a language of their own, but which is only a dialect, and intelligible to all, at any rate as far as Bundaberg seventy miles to the North of Maryborough, if not to Rockhampton and all over the Burnet district.

Those at Durundur and near Brisbane regard the speech of the inhabitants of Frazer Island and Maryborough as a species of *Patois*. The language is different at Port MacKay, but to my knowledge it extends from Broad Sound to Townsville and probably from Rockhampton to Cardwell. That of the Barcoo is quite different.

Lately I commenced to write the words and I have now in writing about 1200 words of the Cabi language, spoken between this and Bundaberg and a translation of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the commandments. I have still a facility in detecting the philological relations of the words to those in European languages, and a couple of months after my return to Maryborough I expect to find out and arrange the grammatical inflections and construction of the language, as I have there got acquainted with a Black, who knows English well and also his Native tongue.

The want of money is a considerable impediment. I have seldom been able to keep and pay a Black-fellow, very necessary as a servant and interpreter. The Bishop indeed gave me ample liberty to beg, but I cannot say so much for some of the clergy, and as no one at first believed in the possibility of success the people were not very liberal (to gain a hearing from

a semi-civilized Black-fellow if he is not paid for it, one must have not only the appearance but also the impedimenta of a gentleman).

A foreign accent at once excites his contempt and makes him set down the speaker as a German whom he places in the same category as a Chinaman or a Kanaka. I have moreover to lose a great deal of time in making arrangements and in travelling and returning from the bush to the different centre of population to gather alms to enable me to carry on the mission. Without money enough to pay a servant guide and procure provisions I cannot go into the interior to distant stations. Since I came to Queensland, I think, I have collected only £130 or £140 exclusive of what I got for the land at MacKay.

I have before recorded the hindrance to success arising from the want of power to dispense in impediments to marriage. The power now particularly required is that of exempting the convert from the obligation of asking his first partner, when inaccessible or at a great distance whether or not he or she will become a Christian or consent to live together *sine offensa Creatoris*, so that he may be lawfully married to his present wife, or present husband, as the case may be.

Were I free from all defects; had I abundant means: and all necessary faculties I should still be quite unequal to the work to be done. I should be but a grain of salt in the ocean. More Missionaries are required. True, it is the work of God, and he gives the grace! "*Quomodo credent si non audient? Quomodo audient sine predicante?*" And then — "*Misit illos binos ante faciem suam etc.*"

The local clergy cannot supply their place, even if they were all willing, for they are too few for the Whites and people are dying without the sacraments through the want of priests. There is no priest at Claremont or at Nanango. How can one priest at Toowoomba attend to 3,000 Catholics scattered over a wide district and be of any service to the Blacks? Our Bishop unfortunately has got a bad name abroad so that priests are unwilling to come to the diocese. For the missionaries to the Aborigines he holds no inducement or encouragement, since when I speak to him of any who would come if provision were made for him, he says if he does not come without provision he has not the spirit of the mission. Why should such a spirit be more required in a priest than in a Bishop? He says that the mission to the Blacks, and such like are best without funds. They may perhaps, if by the imposition of his hands, he gives to the missionaries the gift of tongues and miracles. Till then I maintain that it is morally impossible to carry on the mission efficiently without funds.

I regret being compelled so often to differ in opinion from his Lordship, for our efforts would prove more efficient, as well as more agreeable, were we of one mind: and moreover I respect him and his authority, and I am glad to say that he has always been affable and kind to me individually: yet I cannot venerate his mistakes and he has confessed that he knows nothing of what ought to be the management of the mission to the Aborigines.

He says he has no means to procure or support missionaries for the Blacks. Yet, as far as I know, with the exception of the Bishop of Port Victoria, he has done more for the mission to

the Aborigines than all the other Australian Bishops together. Is it not strange that it is more difficult to move them to succour the Blacks spiritually than to move Protestant Government to supply their temporal wants? No means! Did he not state publicly before he went to Rome that he had as great an income as the Governor of the colony? With such an income is not his diocese in need of priests, churches, and schools and encumbered with debt?

Overlooking the present wants of his people does he not make more than ample provision for the church of the future by the purchase of land? That is if he has made his will, and that he can escape the charge from Government and that his successors will carry out his schemes. Is this a want of means or a monomania for land? Whatever it is, I believe he has no means; for the end of the synod this year he told us that his personal debts are over £800. Such being the case it is difficult and seems imprudent to expect much success for the mission to the Blacks under his rule.

I am in consequence sometimes tempted to think that it would be a benefit to religion here if God took him to heaven, if the Pope restricted his powers of embarrassing by division of his diocese, or in some other way; that is if he could replace him by a better manager.

As Father Tanganelli has gone the other day to Sydney he should be able to tell Your Grace better than I what is the prospect of the conversion of the Blacks in the North. As far as I can learn more priests are required there for the Whites. Unfortunately the misconduct of some has left a very unfavourable impression, on the minds of many Catholics in Queensland, of Italian priests. Judging by what I could perceive during my short acquaintance with them in Brisbane, the Rev Fathers in the North seem to me deficient in the spirit and energy and stamina required for the rough work of a mission to the Blacks. They might do well enough in a town.

Having so much of the present aspect of the mission, I now turn to the consideration of the probability of converting the Blacks, viewing things as they might and ought to be.

The success of the Spanish Benedictines in Western Australia and of Protestant missionaries in South Australia and Victoria sufficiently evinces the capability of the Aborigines to receive religious instruction; and my little experience in Queensland serves to confirm their testimony. Those who did not know them, or who judged of them when addressed in a language almost unknown to them, and in which they could express their sentiments only by halves have thought the Blacks stupid. They are not only fit to receive Christian truths, but they have also a clear perception and a strong sense of moral obligation when it is proposed to them, and their conscience aroused. They have neither reason of their own nor any prejudices against the truth. Their superstitions are easily removed and replaced by Catholic Belief.

Thus about Maryborough and elsewhere they believe that if they assign to the rainbow certain pebbles, which they fancy they themselves contain, and which their doctors pretend to suck from the affected part in case of pain or sickness, it will render them invulnerable. To disabuse them of their folly I have only to relate the history and show them the pictures of the

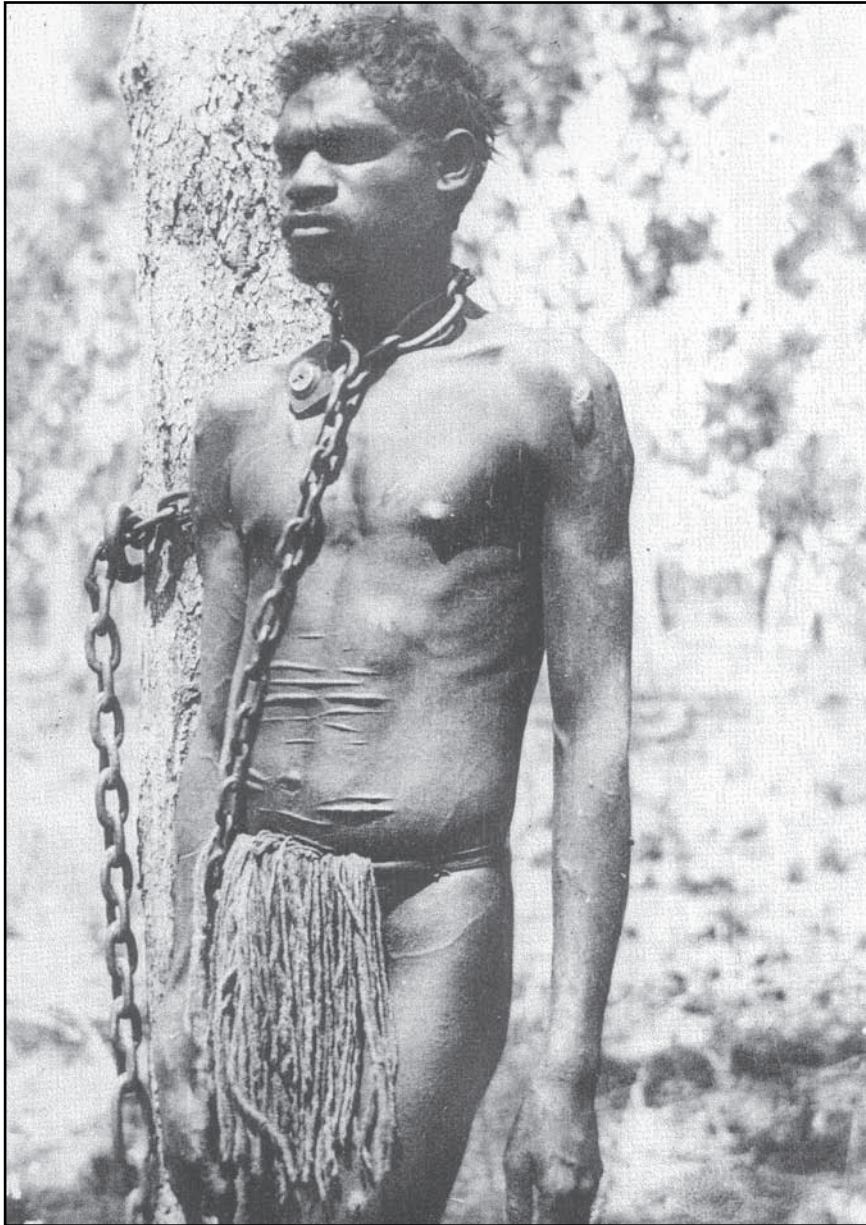
deluge and of the sacrifice of Noe, telling them how God had given the rainbow as a sign that he would not again destroy the world with water, and then to show the solar spectrum by means of a prism. Their lamentation for the dead are soon converted into supplications for the souls in Purgatory, their care for the bones of the deceased into the veneration of relics. When their practice of never mentioning the names of persons deceased is referred to. I desire them to recognise in that the remains of a tradition relative to the fall of man and that death is the punishment of sin, and remind them that they have been too long separated from the rest of mankind to know these things well. In the settled district of the colony they desire to be civilised and to live like Whites. The young men especially are anxious to get regularly married and have a settlement of their own because now the old men often kept the young gins themselves, and live upon the earnings of the lads. Of course not many ask for religious instruction. *Ignoti nulla cupido* but when sick they ask me what will become of a Blackfellow after death?

They are generally disposed to listen to instructions when once they are convinced that I am in earnest for their temporal and eternal welfare. But they like to get it in a few words, and not to be kept long at a time. When missionaries teach God gives grace and calls whom he will to salvation, then more priests are needed for the mission to the Blacks.

Were two appointed to the district between Brisbane and Rockhampton, two between Rockhampton and Cardwell and two between the sources of the Thompson and the Barcoo each would have but one language to learn and a good impetus would be given to the work with means somewhat in proportion to the end desired. I have notices that when once any considerable number in a locality become Christians, others like to follow. They dread being singular. Then it is more difficult to judge of their dispositions. If there was a Bishop at Rockhampton and another at Toowoomba, I think they would manage to provide for those missionaries. Why could not one at Brisbane do as much?

By the aid of the Government, reserves for Aborigines have been made at Durundur, Frazer Island, Mackay, Bowen, and Townsville, and more will be added according to the recommendations of the Commissioners. All these facilitate the conversion of the Blacks, if a sufficient number of priests attend to them, but the distance and the expense of travelling is rather much for one. Yet with sufficient means one could do much for them as they are along the coast and steamers are constantly passing up and down. If a priest does not see them, there is danger of the Blacks being misled by Protestant teachers.

I have written only of the semi civilized Blacks in the occupied districts of the colony because my experience is with them. I am told that the others totally removed from intercourse with Europeans are far more tractable and docile because more simple and less vicious, where they are not hostile. In the northern Vicariate of Cooktown they are mostly hostile and at present inaccessible and unapproachable except towards Cardwell. There a mission should be opened not only for the benefit of those residing there, but also in order to use them as medium of communication with hostile Blacks to the North and as interpreters. (There is now in Brisbane gaol a prisoner from Cape York from whom the language might be learned. It



An Aborigine named Cumjam in custody in March 1894 after his arrest for the murder of a white man in the Croydon district. Prisoners were often chained to trees if there was no gaol or lock-up.

From *the Frontier*; p202

ABORIGINES - Croydon District, 1894 (63494)

"Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane"

might also be acquired from gins in the Native Police barracks in the North.) There some of those now hunted to death by the Whites would be glad to take shelter.

A few days ago a good Catholic, a Member of Parliament for the North, told me that the Government would gladly make extensive reserves for the Blacks in the North, and also aid a mission in order to save a part of the great expense of maintaining the Native Police Force. This gentleman is at present a leading member of the Opposition, and his party is so confident of being in office after the Recess, which is to be followed by a general election, that they leave the present ministry in position only on sufferance preferring to have them excluded from power by the voice of the people. If there the Blacks are not soon succoured they will be exterminated. So now or never is there any prospect of their conversion. Were the priests now in the North replaced by English-speaking missionaries good and zealous, not too old nor yet too young, they would be more acceptable and more likely to succeed with the Blacks if in sufficient numbers. They would require no special preparations as the language can only be acquired on the spot.

I must not conclude without giving to Your Grace a brief explanation of the marriage system that prevails among the Aborigines. Each tribe if such it may be called has a local designation, and is divided into a species of castes not of separation but of pre-eminence, which may be termed Caste Sections, and these again are subdivided into Classes. The males of one class marry the females of another class of the opposite caste section and vice versa. The children are called not after the father, but after the mother, yet not by the name of her class but by that next to it in the same section.

All the father's class is called *iabo*, father. Betrothal is common at an early age. When a woman marries she marries a class with the consent of the principal; intercourse with any one of his class without that consent is but a venial offence. Some great men amongst them have a plurality of wives. For a regular marriage the consent of the parents, or in their defect, of the relatives of the female is required; after which the girl is led to the husband's hut, and thenceforth considered his wife. They use no ceremony. Theoretically marriage is indissoluble; but, at any rate among the semi civilized Blacks practically in many cases it is not so. Sometimes they kill their wives and marry others; oftener however they separate and take up others. In such cases commonly the gin first goes with some other man, or the husband is forced into the Native Police. At times they steal their wives, or rather the young people elope. Occasionally the woman, stunned by the stroke of a stick on the head, is carried off by force. Then the offender, when the case becomes known has to stand while the father and relatives hurl at him a certain number of spears and boomerangs defending himself only with a narrow shield. If the Raptor's party is defeated he must surrender the woman, who is sure to be ill treated by her own; if it prove victorious he retains her; but then all the young men of the tribe publicly *coeunt cum ea*.

They religiously observe the custom of providing for a deceased brother's wife or sister's husband, and if the individual be single, he or she marries the widow, or widower, as the case may be. From this simple statement your Grace will readily perceive how frequently there must

be occasions requiring a dispensation from impediments to marriage. They are commonly urgent at the time of baptism, for being either married in their own way or co-habiting, they cannot be baptised and left in the proximate occasion of sin.

Having now to the best of my ability answered your question I hope Your Grace will obtain for me the power I requested for the benefit of the Blacks who want admission into the Church.

I am, your humble servant, Duncan McNab.³

Troubles in Brisbane

22 July 1878 The Archbishop of Sydney having written to the priest McNab, asking why he wanted his protection, Father McNab answered him as follows:

Sir,

My reason to suspect that my authority has not been renewed is that I learned from the Bishop in his speech on the first day of the Synod that he wouldn't want the services of any priest who wasn't prepared to take his part in opposing those whom he called aggressive in the diocese of Brisbane: and so, because I was not prompted or convinced by his arguments, it was decided not to give me the protection I wanted,

I am yours D McNab⁴

Archbishop Vaughan mentions McNab in the following extract, See folio 871, *Scritti Riferiti ai Congressi, Oceania*, vol 12, 1879.

Is it not true

(1) the person who knew more than all the other priests of the diocese about the state of things and about the actions of the Bishop, is Dr Giovanni Cani, factotum of the diocese, general vicar for many years, still living in the city? He didn't sign and didn't make any promise to sign the justification. (See his letter, Information a p 47)

(2) The very reverend Father Dunne, who was also the general vicar, a very good priest and respectable – I don't think he has signed the justification: he didn't answer my letter, but his point of view is shown clearly in? Ricci's letter to the Coletti (see Information A pp 6, 11).

(3) Father McNab, an extremely good man, also a most holy priest, Scottish, with a steady and stable character, wrote to me that he couldn't sign the justification with a clear conscience (see Information A pp. 14, 15, 66).

(4) The priest Francesco Raercher, German, a zealous priest, steady, couldn't sign with a clear conscience (see Information A pp 24, 28, 32, 35, 38, 42).⁵

August 1878 When asked by Propaganda to comment on the

Vicariate of Cooktown, Bishop Quinn replied by repeating his words of the previous year that 'the experience of all Australian missions was proof that to combine the European and Aboriginal apostolate invariably resulted in the Aborigines being neglected'.⁶

The Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Vaughan, wrote to Propaganda:

The Australian savages are extremely uncivilized and those in the north are the worst of the lot. They live in rudimentary shelters and have no fixed abode, living from hand to mouth as they move from place to place. There have been some previous (Roman Catholic) missionary attempts to civilize them but all have failed, including the project by Bishop Salvado... All in all, I believe there is no hope. Even if huge sums of money were spent, the result might be a paltry ten per cent.⁷

27 August 1878 *Brisbane Courier*, Rev Father McNab:

The Rev Father McNab who is interesting himself greatly in the question of ameliorating the condition of the Aborigines, is, we (Maryborough Chronicle) understand, about to visit Frazer Island for the purpose of directing the energies of its dusky residents in an improving direction. The reverend gentleman, as our readers are doubtless aware, has had much experience in work of this kind, and has met with a considerable amount of success in his efforts. During his sojourn on the island he will make an effort to procure for some, regular employment at a fixed rate of wage, and this he hopes to do at the hands of the timber getters. If it is possible, he will procure fishing appliances for others, which has been done at Bribie Island with marked success.

The Vicariate of North Queensland was erected in 1877 with a special view for the conversion of the Aborigines. The territory had only a very small white population all included in three settlements, at Cardwell, on the coast, at George Town on the Etheridge, and at Normanton on the banks of the Norman River at the Gulf of Carpentaria; and all three settlements were near the southern boundary of the Vicariate. The remaining territory towards the north was supposed to be beyond the influence of the white population, and thus to afford a special field of labouring for the Blacks.

The discovery, however, of gold and silver mines, of an extensive stream-tin country of rich alluvial plains suited for the sugar cane and for agriculture, with an abundance of good water in the interior, and a healthy climate soon attracted the white explorers thither, and settlements, temporary or permanent, were gradually dotted over the whole of the extensive territory. This occupation by the white population led to constant conflicts with the Blacks, and to terrible deeds of cruelty by some unscrupulous representatives of European civilization. Even

MARY MacKILLIP ARCHIVES
NORTH SYDNEY

From St. Mary's Cathedral Brisbane

Mr. Walsh

Brisbane
31st July 1878

My dear Mr. Walsh

I am still here waiting
for a collection to be made next Sunday
in the different churches in Brisbane
to enable me to continue my mission
to the aborigines. In my last letter
I had come thither solely for their
civilization and conversion from
here for that purpose only, yet
which cannot be occupied as I like
I do what I can with the other
people to help the Whites to heaven
by doing so I do not meet with
cases that excite my compassion,
as we have found people in differ-
culties, as he cannot help them
debts, and so from I am unable to
relieve e.g. our baptizing of
children in the bush

unbaptized
white children
in the bush

(2)

when two or three years of age. This is
hardly a case in point, for though
my next baptize though can tell
the parents to bring them to the
local clergy, I tell them, but will they
do it? My next is exactly such
as I describe, i.e. I am wanting
an extraordinary confessor who
cannot get one when required.
Therefore I send you a few more
interrogatories that may be ser-
viceable if addressed to the Right
Rev Bishop of Brisbane or others
whom they may concern.
Did not His Lordship disregard the
application made by the Sister
Provincial of the Order of St. Joseph
at the beginning of this month
for an extraordinary confessor
for her nuns?
Did he not since the recent de parture
of the Mother Superior of the

along the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria the Natives became demoralized and were made more treacherous and cruel by the visits of the bêche de mer and pearl shell boats from the various stations.⁸

11 November 1878 *Brisbane Courier*, The Rev Duncan McNab, a minister of the Roman Catholic Church, has given notice of having removed from Dundathu, Wide Bay district, to Port Mackay.⁹

Notes for Chapter 3 Part 3

¹ McNab, 15 May 1878, 1 July 1878, and 5 July 1878, re Brisbane problems, APF.

² This is the point where the letter in the Australian Catholic Record begins.

³ Duncan McNab's report to Archbishop Vaughan from Brisbane, 10 July 1878, SAA

A section of this, edited by Professor Patrick O'Farrell, and published in *The Australasian Catholic Record*, vol LVI, October 1979, no 4, pp 429-435.

Patrick O'Farrell sent the author a typescript of the entire letter, 3 October 1979, which is included here.

There is more than one version of the 'Memoria'. A sequel was sent to Rome 15 September 1879. In his letter, 10 July 1878 (sent through +R B Vaughan to Propaganda) Duncan McNab gave what account he could of civilisation and conversion of Australian Aborigines of the Brisbane Diocese.

There follows the Memoria. Duncan was not an Italian stylist; his Italian was always a direct translation from the English in which he obviously thought, and his phrasing at times presents difficulties.

F J Dennett translated a copy in Jesuit Archives Hawthorn from the Italian, S J. 26 November 1979. He wrote to Brigida Nailon re his translation of 'Memoria'.

"From internal evidence it appears that this document was written in Rome. It seems to be only a draft – at any rate it cannot have been submitted to the Congregation De Propaganda Fide in its present form. This is clear from the confusion of the numbering, and also from some peculiar constructions and ill-made sentences, hardly intelligible at times which would surely have been corrected in the final fair copy. I have translated it exactly as it stands. The phrase "propria religione" I have rendered as "Religion of their own" but McNab may have been thinking in English terms and have intended "Proper" or "real" religion."

The word "selvaggi" has been translated "savages", but in Italian it does not imply anything more than "wildness", like the French "sauvage". McNab seems to mean by the "selvaggi" those Natives who have had little or no contact with Europeans.

The words "communism" and "communistic", as used by McNab, do not of course mean communism in the modern sense, but refer to the communal or tribal manner of nomadic living which the Aborigines followed as distinct from the individual and permanent dwellings of Europeans."

⁴ McNab, 22 July 1878 to Vaughan, re Brisbane problems, SRC, Oceania, vol 12 fol 658 r, APF.

⁵ SRC, Oceania, fol 871. APF.

⁶ Quinn to Propaganda, SRC, Oceania, 11, f, 17, 10 August 1878, APF. (Quoted in Endicott p 175).

⁷ Vaughan to Propaganda, SRC, Oceania, 11, ff. 744-45, 10 August 1878, APF. (Quoted in Endicott p 175)

⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 27 August 1878.

⁹ Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, *A History of the Catholic Church in Australasia: From Authentic Sources*, Sydney, Frank Coffee and Company, 1896, p 424.

Cardinal Moran wrote, *"The whites themselves regard as hopeless all attempts to civilize or convert the Aborigines. It has become a proverb among them, that you might as well set to work to whitewash the gum trees in the bush as to try to Christianise the Blacks."*

Part 4 The Commissioners

The Commission for Aborigines: Queensland Parliament

22 February 1878

To the Editor, *Brisbane Courier*; 'The Condition of the Aborigines':

Sir, Last month I intimated to the Government the resignation of my appointment as a Commissioner to enquire into the condition of the Aborigines, without assigning any cause.

It has since occurred to me that my partial reticence might possibly prove injurious to the interest of the Aborigines, by hindering others from striving to promote their civilization and enlightenment, if they should hence infer that I had abandoned the cause in consequence of finding the Blacks intractable. In justice to the Aborigines, and to prevent or remove such an erroneous impression, I must say that such is not the case; that I have not yet despaired at nor abandoned their cause.

That more progress in their civilization and settlement has not been made ought not to be ascribed entirely to the faults of the Blacks, but rather to the opposition of some bigots of envious selectors and interested publicans; to the late Ministry, of which some members opposed the Premier's desire of carrying into effect the resolution of the Legislative Assembly of November 29, 1876, for the benefit of the Aborigines of 'Queensland; to the heads of religious denominations in the colony, who neglected to supply them with missionaries; and to the misconceptions and prejudices of the Commissioners.

Of the various reasons that induced me to break off my connection with the Commissioners I may mention as one, that notwithstanding my appreciation of the talent and ability with which they respectively fulfil their other offices, I found them more of a hindrance than a help in the civilization and settlement of the Blacks. Since, in their last report to the Government, they stated that they could not recommend with confidence of success, or even hope for any measure that would improve the social or moral condition of the adult Aborigines, I have felt that I cannot adopt their opinion, as by experience I am perfectly satisfied that adult Blacks are susceptible of moral and social improvement, that certain measures of justice, the grace of God, and Christian instruction may effect for them, what they have done, and do for others equally uncultivated and savage.

After such a declaration of inability, I do not see that the Commissioners are justified in continuing in the position they hold relative to the Aborigines and the Government; and I do not deem it expedient to act in concert with them any longer.

By inserting this letter in an early issue of the courier and Queenslander, you will much oblige,

Yours, Duncan McNab.

Bowen, February 15.

February to April 1879

Bitter words were splashed over the pages of the Brisbane Courier and the Queenslander over differences in values and methods of the Commissioners. W Drew was a member of the Anglican Synod; J Douglas a prominent member of the Anglican laity and a Freemason.

22 March 1879

To the Editor of the Brisbane Courier, 'The Aborigines Commission':

Sir,

Reading in the Queensland, yesterday the remarks of the right Rev Dr Matthew B Hale, on my letter of February 15, I noticed several inaccuracies and statements requiring correction and elucidation, in order to place the subject treated in its proper light before the public and the present Ministry. Since the unfavourable opinion of the former, or the inaction of the latter, must seriously affect the present and future treatment and condition of the Blacks, I now desire, with your permission, to supply to some extent the needed correction and information. At the very outset his lordship mistakes the impediments I had enumerated to the settlement and civilization of the Blacks for the reasons I had assigned for my resignation of the Commission. But let that pass, along with the garbled quotation from my letter. Aliquando dormitat Homerus.

"The field of labour which Mr McNab had selected for himself was the Native reserve at Durundur."

The assertion is very inaccurate. Binambi, at Durundur, was indeed a field, but by no means the field of my labour, as his lordship may learn by examining my correspondence with the Registration Office. I have pleaded, though ineffectually, for the civil rights of the Aborigines of the whole of Queensland, and have treated and camped with them at various places from the Logan to Bowen. Of the three years and a half that I have been thus employed, only about three or four months have I passed at Durundur.

A few months after the reserve was opened it was visited by the Secretary for Lands, who expressed himself well satisfied with the progress made, the appearance, condition, deportment, and declared sentiments of its inhabitants. The report of the condition of the Natives on the reserve by Mr H Wood, laid before the last session of Parliament, represents them after a few months' tuition, and an expenditure by Government of not more than £50, as far advanced in civilization as those of the Mackay reserve after four years' training and an expenditure of £1450. That by Messrs Wood and Smith records additional improvements. Last year I had a letter from Mr Wood stating that they continued to do well, and that one of them had commenced to deposit in the Government Savings Bank at Caboolture a portion of his earnings. How they are now, I cannot tell. They are probably deteriorated in consequence of their intimacy with the Bribie tribe, and their being in a manner left to themselves, not having, like those of Mackay, the benefit of a resident manager, in consequence of the other land applied for not having been granted to the adjoining tribes. The Secretary for Lands could not give a manager to every station, but he could to each district.

"I do not suppose that anyone amongst the Commissioners would claim to be wholly exempt from misconceptions and prejudices but I can safely affirm that, whatever these may have been, they have in no way whatever interfered with Mr McNab's dealings with the Natives."

What does this mean? Does it refer to my intercourse with the Aborigines, or to my communications with the Government on their behalf? In the first sense my incarceration would interfere with my dealings with the Natives. There was a movement begun for my imprisonment for five years, but I was never told that it was suggested by any of the Commissioners. I mentioned the misconceptions and prejudices of the Commissioners, not simply as interfering with my individual independent action, but as an impediment to the progress of the work in which I was engaged singly and collectively with the other Commissioners. The right reverend gentleman appears most anxious to convince the public of their non-interferences with my efforts for the Blacks.

"He had, however, as already stated, commenced an independent work of his own, and with that work the Commissioners never interfered in any way. But they never in any way interfered with the freedom of his actions. In this, as in everything else, Mr McNab communicated directly with the heads of departments without let or hindrance."

There are two sides to every question. Perhaps Dr Hale is not aware that at a meeting of the Commissioners, at which he was not present, I was openly censured for communicating directly with the head of a department, and told I should not do so otherwise than through the secretary of the Commission. After my correspondence with the Secretary for Lands had been laid before Parliament, and Mr Thompson's motions on the 29th November, 1876, had been discussed and approved, the late Premier, then Secretary for Lands, told me that the resolutions of the Legislative Assembly would be carried into effect, and that homesteads or reserves would be granted to such Blacks as I would persuade to apply for them, and occupy and utilize them. I then proceeded to visit them at different stations in order to settle them on the land. The application for a reserve at Durundur was acceded to. Those for lands for the Blacks at Kilcoy, Mount Brisbane, Belleview, Inbil, Mooroochy, and Kenilworth, were by the Under Secretary for Lands sent to the Commissioners.

Subsequently I got nothing from the Government for the Blacks except through the influence of the Commissioners. So far I had succeeded in persuading those Natives to desire a settlement, and my advent was anxiously looked for, and desired by the Blacks of the Logan, Jabba, and other places. At Kenilworth I received a letter, intimating that the other Commissioners did not approve of grants of land to individual Blacks. The land asked was not conceded, and thus the progress of settlement was stopped. Had the Commissioners co-operated with me, and the Ministry used the power given by the Legislative Assembly, the Aborigines of Binambi, instead of being insulated to the extent they now are, would have encouraged and supported in their new position by similar settlements in their neighbourhood, and by this time the Natives of more than half the occupied districts of the

colony might have been settled like those of Durundur.

I next asked the Secretary for Lands to allow the Blacks to occupy Homesteads without any title till he should see that they would reside on them and improve them. Again, by the Under Secretary, contrary to the instructions of his superior, I was told to go and persuade the Commissioners to accede to my application. This, of course, caused me more than once to explain to the Commissioners the necessity of land, in some form for the settlement of the Natives, to check their nomad habits and their communism, and that many of them, who would not live on the reserve, would willingly occupy homesteads. Was not their disapprobation of the concession of the allotments applied for an interference with my independent work, and the settlement of the Blacks? Was it not, in fact, a reversion of the decision of the Legislative Assembly? Did it not compel me to invert the order of my course and sit down to give the Natives religious instruction before I had procured for them domiciles and their civil rights? Was not the recommendation of an unfit manager for the Bribie tribe by one of the Commissioners, and his being kept in position there after my explaining to them his unsuitableness, and the assumption after his dismissal of one who had been before discharged for his misconduct, an impediment to the civilisation of those Natives? Was it not a hindrance arising from misconception and from prejudice to have refused their concurrence to the opening an Aboriginal reserve at Cardwell for the purpose of communicating through friendly tribes to those who were hostile the benevolent intentions of the Government, and of affording a refuge to those who are hunted down on the Palmer, on the plea that the Blacks regard their destruction as their fate, and that therefore it would be useless? Sub-inspector O'Connor did not find it impracticable to make a truce with hostile northern Blacks.

Why did not the Commissioners when asked second my repeated appeals to the Ministry for the civil rights of the Blacks, such as their being recognised as British subjects, the protection of our laws, and their gradual subjection to them, the assignment of residence, the legitimizing of their marriages when converted to Christianity, and the legitimacy of their children, etc.? Is not the very existence of an Aboriginal Commission, composed of gentlemen (no matter how great their zeal and talent) having important charges requiring, by their own admission, all their time and energy, unbelievers in the improbability of the adult Blacks, of itself a hindrance to the civilisation and settlement of the Aborigines? One who claimed to be the originator of the former Commission told me it had been appointed for the purpose of shelving the Aboriginal question, and serving as a blind to the Home government. Is not the second like the first? What could I say but that I found it more a hindrance than help?

As Dr Hale is not content with what I stated of my reasons for my withdrawal from the Commission, I will now mention another, in the hope that he may perceive its force. Soon after I had refused to resign my position as a Commissioner, and dissuaded others from resigning, that he might be the sole Commissioner, I found myself to a great extent ostracized, or, at any rate, placed in a false position, when at a subsequent meeting I understood that the others had resolved to support any measure he should propose as their chairman. This made him virtually sole Commissioner. At the last meeting I attended I learned that they had resolved to have a travelling secretary, who should annually receive £150 for travelling expenses, and

£200 for salary. If his lordship succeeds in becoming thus their travelling secretary as well as chairman, although he cannot see his way to elevate the moral and social condition of the natives, he will improve his own. I have no objection to his services being paid for, but, for the reasons I explained to the Commissioners, I am decidedly against his being sole Commissioner or protector of the Aborigine; and I consider the second arrangement worse than the abdication of the Commissioners, because while it gives additional force and authority to any project he may devise, it releases him from personal responsibility.

I am as anxious as his lordship to be clearly understood, and I say plainly what I mean. I am not offended by the Commissioners; I rejoice at the good they have done, but I deplore the condition of the Aborigines, and the inertness or incapacity of those who can and ought to improve it.

Yours, Duncan McNab Mackay, March 8.

25 March 1879 A letter to the Editor of the Brisbane Courier, entitled, 'Father McNab and the Aborigines Commissioners' was published:

Sir,

Bishop Hale being absent from Brisbane I cannot allow the unworthy innuendoes aimed at him in the Rev Mr McNab's letter in the morning's Courier, to remain unanswered. I was of course aware that when clergymen of any of the Protestant denominations rushed into print, especially upon disputed quotations of theology or doctrine, the pen might be expected to assume the mastery of reason, but I was under the impression that, thanks to a stricter discipline and training, the clergy of the church of Rome possessed their passions and feelings under more perfect command. Father McNab's letter has proved this impression to be erroneous. Without even the excuse of an exciting topic he is evidently an angry man, and does not hesitate to accuse Bishop Hale of wishing to aggrandize himself at the expense of his fellow Commissioners, but also of a desire to literally make capital out of the Commission and pocket moneys voted for the Blacks. His words are: -

"At the last meeting I attended I learned that they (the Commissioners) had resolved to have a travelling secretary, who should annually receive £150 for travelling expenses, and £200 for salary. If his lordship succeeds in becoming thus their travelling secretary as well as chairman, although he cannot see his way to elevate the moral and social condition of the Natives, he will improve his own. I have no objection to his services being paid for, but, for the reasons I explained to the Commissioners, I am decidedly against his being sole Commissioner or protector of the Aborigines."

In reply to the charges brought by Mr McNab, it is sufficient to say that for more than a third of a century before that reverend gentleman was heard of, Bishop Hale had not only been engaged in efforts to ameliorate the condition of the Blacks of other colonies, but had practically demonstrated how this could be best carried into effect. The same earnestness and wisdom which proved so effective in South Australia have been at the service of the cause here

ever since his Lordship's first appointment to the Commission. His advice and opinion have always been given unostentatiously; whilst, so far from wishing travelling or other expenses to be paid to them, he recently, when the public funds failed, desired to carry on the settlement at Bribie Island by private subscription, (which those who know him best will understand meant pretty much at his own cost) to prevent the settlement being broken up and the Blacks dispersed.

Having been on the Commission from its first formation, having attended almost every meeting held by the Commissioners, and taken a deep interest in all that has been done, I can honestly say that I cannot tell what possible cause of offence Father McNab can imagine himself to have; and sure I am that if the public could be made aware of the patience and respect with which his no doubt interesting, but nevertheless somewhat lengthened addresses have always been listened to by the Commissioners, he would be pronounced a very ungrateful man. For Father McNab's voice is low and his speech the reverse of concise. I know, of course, that our ideas as to the best means of benefiting the Blacks differ, but these differences were always argued with courtesy and disagreed amicably. Mr McNab's efforts were directed to settling the Blacks singly or in families on the land, conveying the land to them in fee simple, and Christianizing old and young. The object of the other Commissioners was to establish reserves in the several settled districts of the colony to which the Blacks could resort when they pleased, and where the young being aggregated together could be taught, and those more advanced in years might be supplied with food, clothing, and tobacco, and spend their few remaining years in peace and comfort.

The one scheme I believe to be, and indeed we have proved it at MacKay to be, practicable. The other is impracticable. It is manifestly useless to preach to an unfed and unclad man, whilst the conveyance of land to individual Blacks, as urged by Mr McNab, has been repeatedly tried and always failed.

I wonder after all, what good Father McNab expects will result to the cause from his letter; or rather I wonder he does not see the positive harm his letters will occasion. He must know that the public do not care one farthing about Father McNab, myself, or any other Commissioner, but many do care that all that it is possible to accomplish for the Blacks should be done. To such as these his letters must be most discouraging. Others there are again – and I fear the great majority – who are either altogether indifferent about the Blacks, or have made up their minds that nothing can be done for them. These doubtless will be confirmed in their indifference or hopeless belief by the apparent disunion of those appointed to give effect to an opposite theory. Father McNab's life, I am aware, is one of entire and daily self-denial. It cannot be disputed, however, that his letters are an unmixed evil.

Personally I not only believe that it is our bounden duty to do all we can for the Aborigines, but that it is feasible and even easy to do much. We can at any rate see that the old and middle aged in the settled districts have reserves to resort to, and that they are supplied with the means of living and dying in peace and comfort. They will not trouble us long. We can also see that on those reserves the young are clothed, fed, and instructed. Although, for

reasons which appear to me to be good and sufficient, I have ceased to be a Commissioner, I shall always feel that no statesman or colonist could ever be engaged in a higher or nobler cause than in endeavouring to ameliorate the condition of the Aborigines of this colony.

In conclusion, may I ask you to be good enough to give publicity to the following extract from instructions passed under the royal sign manual and published in the Government Gazette, 1875, page 215, par. 14:

“And we do further direct and enjoin that you do the utmost of your power to promote religion and education among the Native inhabitants of our said colony, and of the lands and islands thereto adjoining; and that you do especially take care to protect them in their persons, and in the free enjoyment of their possessions; and that you do by all lawful means prevent and restrain all violence and injustice which may in any manner be practiced or attempted against them.”

Yours, W L G Drew,

Toowong, March 22.

The Government had hoped to come to terms with McNab by making him a Commissioner but this had merely carried his criticisms to the heart of the organization. Father McNab proposed an advanced scheme whereby Aborigines would receive actual civil rights through such initial procedures as freehold land ownership, full recognition as British subjects under the law and Christian marriage.² But he had ventured much further than these cautious gentlemen were willing to tread. McNab wanted too much too soon, they considered, and they endured *“bis no doubt interesting but somewhat lengthened addresses”* with patience and respect:³ and carefully closed minds.⁴

McNab refused to accept the tenet, which held that the Aborigines were a dying race. The reserves were established to ‘smooth the dying pillow of the Blacks. The 1874 report of the Commissioners had concluded that the Aborigines were ‘doomed to early extinction’.⁵ Hale expressed the same view. Douglas’s decision to accede to McNab’s request for a reserve at Durundur was predicted on the understanding that it would only be a temporary hindrance to the selectors’ grab for land.⁷

Social-Darwinist inspired Fatalism

McNab rejected this Social-Darwinist inspired fatalism, by his writings, asserting that:

The first and chief cause of their disappearance is their being killed in districts newly occupied by Europeans. Sometimes this is styled ‘war’, although the mere disparity of forces, especially of weapons, and the helplessness of the Blacks in such a contest, suggest ‘massacre’ as a more appropriate term. It is easy to find a good name for a bad deed, but it is an error to use it, as it tends to remove from men’s minds the horror... The word ‘war’ and the phrase ‘dispersing the Blacks’ are inappropriate when, as is often the case, the violence used is

unnecessary, cruel and unjust, either in its occasion or in the inhuman manner of its execution by an indiscriminate slaughter of the guilty and the innocent.⁸

The 1879 Estimates Debate

The agitation over Durundur culminated in the 1879 estimates debate, when the reserve came under stinging attack from the member for East Moreton, James Garrick, a prominent liberal. Garrick charged the reserve’s management with improprieties and demanded too that the area be made available for selection, he claimed to have received information to the effect that Durundur cattle grazed over the area long after it was proclaimed a reserve: that half of the land had been let out – *“probably to the owners of Durundur themselves: that funds allotted for fencing had been misused and that the trustees were totally irresponsible.”*⁹

Father McNab Leaves Queensland

Reports made in The Advocate give some idea of Father McNab’s movements as he travelled in Victoria on his way to Europe. After labouring on the mission in Queensland, Father McNab arrived in Melbourne by the S S ‘City of Adelaide’ en route for Europe.

10 May 1879 Father McNab was in the Sandhurst Diocese

7 June 1879 Father McNab was in Geelong hearing Confessions in Gaelic for the benefit of the old folk.

21 June 1879 Father McNab was in the Sandhurst Diocese.

22 June 1879 At McNab’s request, Archbishop Goold of Melbourne wrote in Italian to recommend him to Cardinal Simeoni. He described him as a good priest who had worked among the Natives of Brisbane. He was disposed, with the blessing of the Holy See, through the good will of Cardinal Simeoni to busy himself with the conversion of these ‘infelici’.¹⁰

9 August 1879 Father McNab stayed for a short time among his fellow countrymen in the Little River (Geelong) district.

Father McNab’s high hopes had plummeted. Receiving little but opposition from the Church, State Parliament, or from his fellow Commissioners, Father McNab left Queensland in 1879 with the comment that his resignation from the Aboriginal Commission, and from Binambi, was a direct result of his associates *“nibbling at, or rather trifling with, the question of Aboriginal Civilisation.”*¹¹



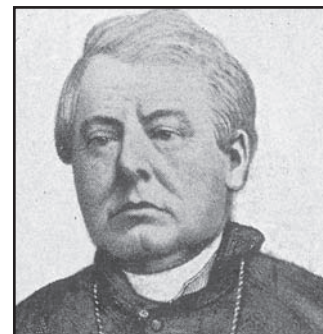
ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, R.C. MELBOURNE

Emza Roma.

Mi perdonerà l'Emza V. se mi prendo la libertà di
scrivere la presente. Il Rev. ^{fr.} Mr. Nab mi ha
pregato di raccomandarlo alla favorevole ~~conoscenza~~
del V. Emza. Roma: colla presente vengo di buon
grado a soddisfare alla sua domanda. Questo buon
Dio ha fatigato cum aliquo fructu fra l'indigeni di
Brisbane e è disposto con la benedizione della S. Sede
mediante la buona volontà dell'Emza V. di occuparsi
alla conversione di questi infelici. Spero che V.
Emza. stia bene di salute e desiderandole dal
Signore ogni bene spirituale e temporale Ho l'onore
di riverirla distintamente a dichiararmi con
tutta la riverenza e rispetto dell'Emza V. Roma

Emo. Sig. Card. Simeoni
Prefetto di Propaganda
22 Giugno 1879

Devotissimo ed Obligatissimo
G. A. Goold
Parco di Melbourne



Notes for Chapter 3 Part 4

¹ 'Story of John Douglas', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, p 91.

² The Brisbane Courier, 22 March 1879.

³ Letter from W L G Drew, *The Brisbane Courier*, 25 March 1879.

⁴ Evans, *Queensland Heritage*, p 4.

⁵ *V & P of QLA, 1874*, vol 2, p 439.

⁶ Matthew Hale, 'The Responsibility of the Church of England as Regards the Aborigines of Australia', Paper read at Church Congress, Melbourne, November 1882, Hale Papers, University of Bristol Library.

⁷ Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 1879, vol 30, p 1620.

⁸ 'Report of the Trustees of the Aboriginal Reserve at Binambi, Durundur', to the Colonial Secretary' reprinted in *V & P of QLA, 1878*, vol 2, p 67.

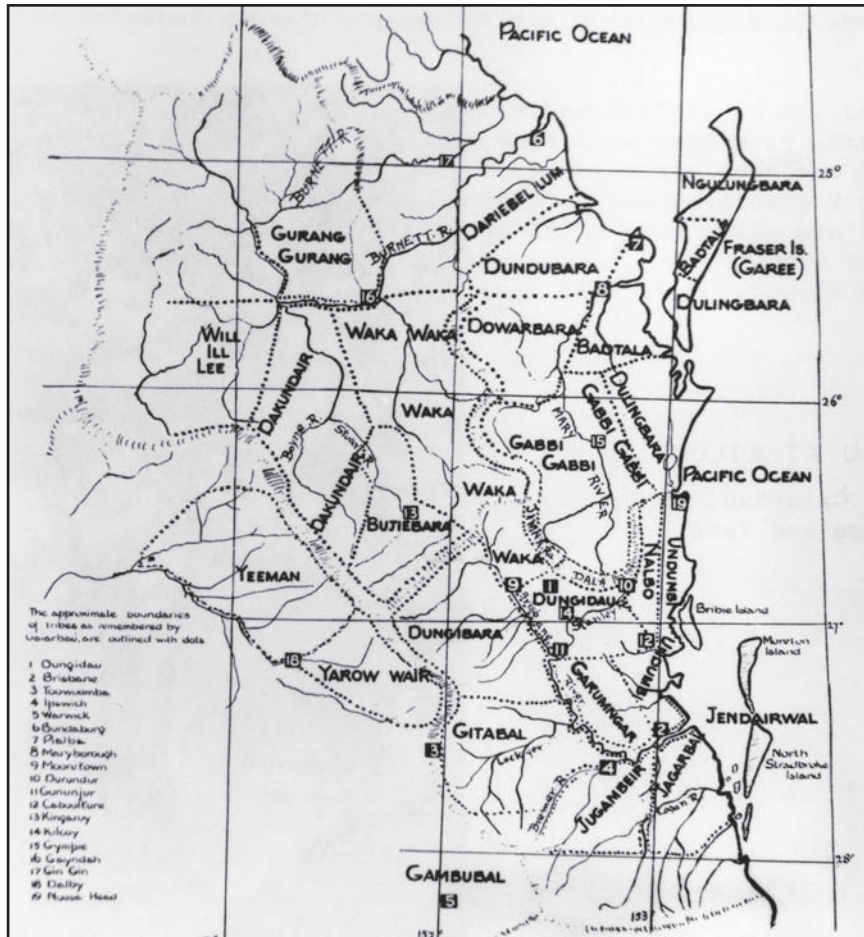
⁹ Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 1879 pp 1618-1620.

¹⁰ Goold to Simeoni, 22 June 1879, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881: fol 167, APF.

¹¹ *Lengthening Shadows on Durundur Country*, Woodford Bicentennial Committee, 1988, p 13. JOL

Part 5 Review of Local History

In order to put Father McNab's activities into a chronological context, an attempt is made here to synchronise a small part of indigenous history with the history of local Queensland immigrants.



Tribal map: The appropriate boundaries of tribes as remembered by Gaiarbau are outlined with dots.

1. Dugundau, 2. Brisbane, 3. Toowoomba, 4. Ipswich, 5. Warwick, 6. Bundaburg, 7. Pinalba,
8. Maryborough, 9. Mooretown, 10. Durundur, 11. Gununjur, 12. Caboolture, 13. Kingaroy,
14. Kilcoy, 15. Gympie, 16. Gayndab, 17. Gin Gin, 18. Dalby, 19. Noosa Head.

Queensland Ethnobiography (Transcripts), Sources, Extracts and Background Notes.
Some original views around Kilcoy by Gerry Langevad; with Barbara Langevad,
Brisbane Dept of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, Archaeology Branch, 1982

Binambi — is the name of a water hole which was (in the old days) used to collect jinding — or magic white stones used for healing and rainmaking; this water hole is rather close, maybe next to, the present-day prison, WOODFORD.

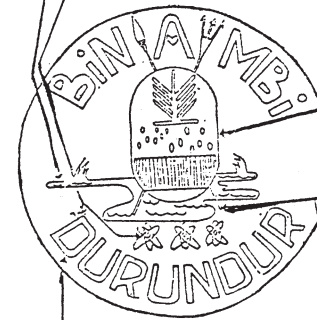
The water hole signifies the water hole, Binambi.

The stones of power (jinding) which were collected at Binambi

The Shield design

is a fern, spore-fern, timber design, one of many of the Dugidau, the people who owned & named the area; * the shield being in the centre gives the overall design, the heart of the Dugidau.

The spears give the emblem Aboriginality, in the sense of the spear being the basic weapon (whether it is a multi-pronged fishing spear or single blade hunting & fighting spear). It shows the only Australian to use a spear was, and still is, the Aborigine.



1841: Durundur is the name of one of the first white settlements in the area which was bought for and owned (by Deed of white man's law) by the Archer brothers.

● This emblem was compiled on Dugidau land by a WAKKA WAKKA Warrior.

The red ochre found at Durundur was used to paint bodies for ceremonies and celebrations, and to paint bones before burial. Never traded in big amounts, a piece about the size of the thumb would purchase a duljin, (a special ornament cut from the Nautilus shell in the shape of a half moon) and was valuable to inland tribes. This small quantity was used to paint fifty men.

Lengthening shadows on Durundur Country, 1980, p4. JOL

The Jinibara tribe was composed of four local groups: Dungidau, Dal:a, Nalbo, and Garumnga. In addition there was the Jukambe, the Jergarbal, and the Kitabal tribes who together were known as Biri:n people. Each of these peoples' languages varied in greater or lesser degree from the others so that individuals could converse in several dialects. The Dungidau group had lived on and in the proximity of Durundur Run.¹

Place Names of Aboriginal Origin

Durundur - Place of scrub, Moreton Bay Ash, or derived from the word 'Doorandoor' meaning tree grubs, also rain or wet.

Monkey Bong - For some reason sheep were associated with the monkey. Many sheep had died along this creek and it is reported that the Aboriginal shepherds reported this as 'more monkey bong' that is, more sheep have died.



Gaiarbau, Yoel, Yunnamaloo and Yandab at Kilcoy, Lengthening Shadows.p3

Gaiarbau related that at Durundur, the place of the witchety grub, the Aborigines found Jinding, a magical sacred stone, and red ochre.

The small white Jinding, found in the Binambi waterhole, was used by the medicine man (the Gundir) in the making of rain and in healing of the sick.²

Immigration and Land Settlement

The settlement and economic exploitation of Queensland were based on immigration.

1842

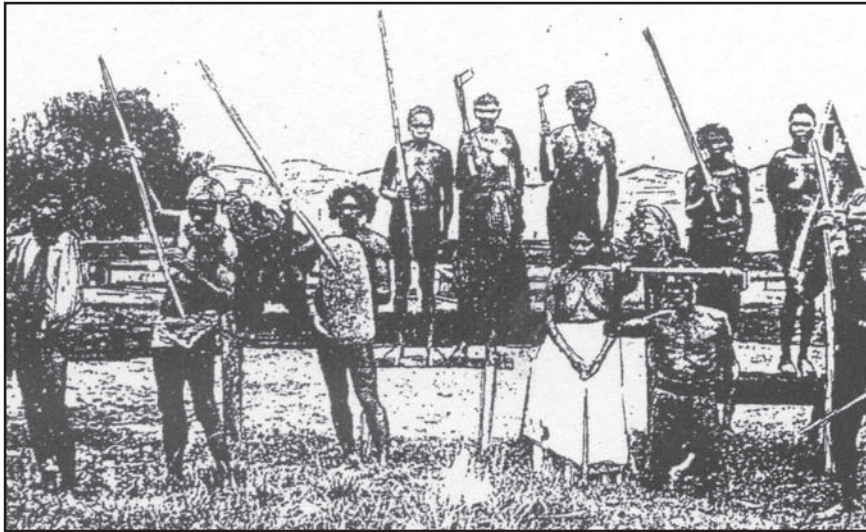
Squatters The sons of the English, Scottish and Anglo-Irish landed gentry and professional classes, drove their stock up towards the north. David Archer, the third of nine boys, came to Australia in 1835 at the age of 17. He worked on the sheep station at Wallerwong, 100 miles west of Sydney (belonging to his great uncle William Walker). By 1839 David owned 1600 sheep of his own. Forming a partnership with his cousin Edward Walker who owned sheep too, they planned to take up land on the Darling Downs. On arrival, they thought that all the good land had been taken up. David, his two brothers, John and Tom, four shepherds, two Blackfellows and Paddy Hogan pushed on hoping to select good land round the Brisbane river.

Following the tracks of the McConnells, Balfours and McKenzies, David's party crossed the Brisbane River twice, and then the Stanley. Cutting through the scrub occupied by wild Blacks, they came upon Durundur on the right bank of the Stanley River on a ridge, out of flood level. Living conditions were primitive. The small party built huts with bark roofs. Their tables were made of slabs with posts in the ground. They sat on three legged stools and cooked in a cast iron pot over an open fire.

In 1842 the N.S.W. Government sent a Land commissioner, Dr Simpson to appraise and report on the Upper Stanley River area. He camped on a small creek running into the Stanley River. As his assessment took some time, the creek became known as the Commissioner's Creek and as there were flats in the area, the name Commissioner's Flat was born.

The area was first selected in 1848 as part of Durundur run.

In 1845 cattle replaced sheep on Durundur and when in 1848, David Archer disposed of Durundur to the McConnells of Cressbrook, substantial cattle yards had been constructed.³



Aborigines of 'Durundur' pose on Stockyard fence. About 1843 (*Lengthening Shadows* p8)

Late 1840's The Rev J D Lang arranged for three shiploads of immigrants to come to Moreton Bay'

1861

Bishop James Quinn established the Queensland Immigration Society to bring out 3900 victims of the Irish enclosure movement; they settled on farms in the Logan, Warwick and Toowoomba districts.

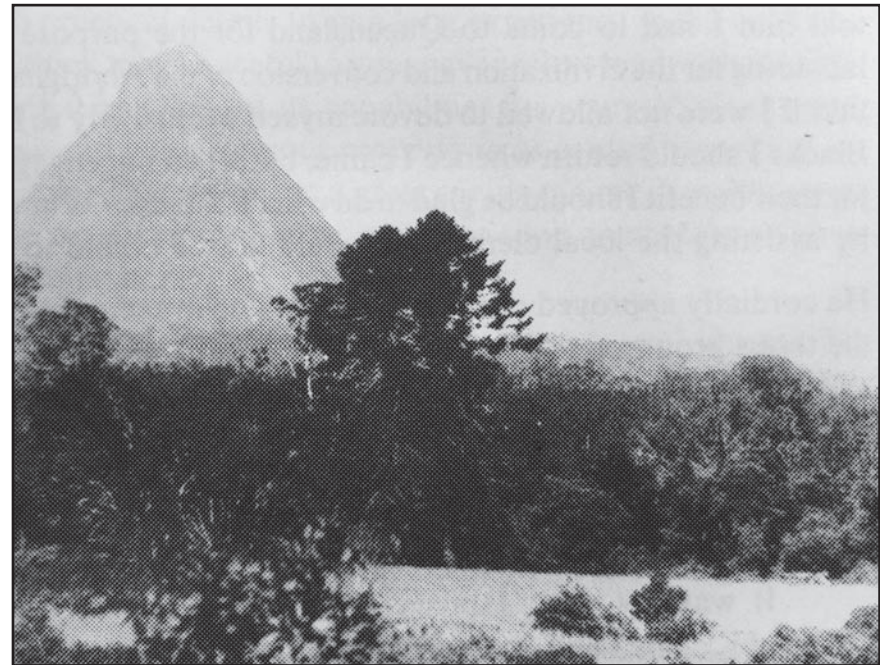
When the first census of the newly created colony of Queensland was taken in 1861, the white population numbered 30,000, concentrated mainly in the southeast corner where the Aborigines had already been 'pacified' and reduced in numbers. Aborigines were not counted. The crude justifications of Social Darwinism had doomed them to extinction.⁴

A J McConnel, son of J McConnel, wrote the diary of Durundur and Conondale Stations. He said, "The Blacks at Durundur spoke both Wokka and Kabi dialects." He wrote:

The Durundur and Upper Mary River Blacks were a fine lot of people. The boys were first-rate stock hands and some of them were good workers about the homestead. While my father owned Durundur they gave no trouble. They were very frightened of the coast and Bribie Blacks

whom they termed 'saucy fellows'. Any of them who were camped away from the head station came in whenever they heard that the Bribie people were on the walk-about. They took the same precaution when the Native Police (under Inspector Wheeler whose headquarters were at Sandgate) were on patrol, as they were liable to be shot on sight by some of his troopers. One of the boys told me that a bullet once went through the hair on top of his head, as he was trying to keep out of sight in a waterhole. The Blacks had some marriage rules, for example, some men were not allowed to marry certain women.

Years before, about 1841 or early 1842, the Mary River Blacks had crossed the range from Conondale to Kilcoy and speared some of the shepherds at the sheep station where Mount Kilcoy homestead was afterwards built. The remaining shepherds were frightened and left their camp, but before doing so put poison in the flour they left behind them. This the Blacks took to their camp on the lagoons. Here they cooked and ate it. One of the Durundur boys told me his father saw the results and related. *"plenty fellow been jump about like fish when you catch him. After him been eatin damper, big mob been die."*⁵



Glasshouse Mountain (*Lengthening Shadows* p11) 191197

Beyond Durundur, etched against the eastern skyline were the sharp peaks of the Glasshouse Mountains that had overlooked the principal Kipper (initiation) ring at Durundur throughout all those countless years that stretched backwards into the Dreamtime. These mountains played a very important part in Aboriginal lives and ceremonies.

No Kippers (initiations) were made on Durundur after the early 1870's. The principal Waraba or Kipper Ring was on Running Creek, a branch of the Stanley about four miles north of Durundur marked on the right hand of the Beerwah road. As I remember it the principal ring was circular and about a chain in diameter. It was a bank of earth about a foot high and about a yard wide. This was joined to a smaller ring about 50 yards distant by a raised pathway, about three or four feet wide and a few inches high. Small tea-tree saplings grew on the sides of the rings and the paths. Other Waraba rings, not so well defined were on Dandy Creek, Kilcoy, and on Waraba Creek, a branch of the Caboolture River.



Aborigine climbing a tree using a knotted vine. (Lengthening Shadows pp10-11)

1848

The following extract is from the *New South Wales Government Gazette*, of Tuesday, May 9:

Colonial Secretary's Office Sydney, 11 May 1848.

Claims to Leases of Crown Land beyond the settled Districts, Moreton Bay Districts.

His Excellency the Governor directs it to be notified for the information of all persons interested. That in pursuance of Her Majesty's Order in Council, of 9th March, 1847, the under mentioned persons have demanded leases of the Several Runs of Crown Land, particularized in connection with their respective names.

Persons who object to any of these claims, either wholly or in part, should lodge caveats at this office within two months from the present date, specifying the Lands to which their objections are based.

It is to be distinctly understood, that the government does not pledge itself to the issue of a Lease in any case until due enquiry has been made into the validity of the claim, and whether or not it may be necessary to reserve any portion of the Land claimed, for any of the public purposes contemplated in the Order in council.

By His Excellency's Command, E Deas Thomson

No 2

Archer David and Company, (per D Archer).

Name of Run—Durundur.

Estimated Area—38,400 Acres.

Estimated Grazing Capabilities—2000 Cattle.

Bounded on the north by the Wide Bay Range; on the west by Colin John Mackenzie's Run;

on the south by d'Aguilar Range.

No 3

Archer David and Company, (per D Archer).

Name of Run – Cooyar

Estimated Area – 64,000 Acres

Estimated Grazing Capabilities – 400 Cattle and 16,000 sheep

The run is comprised within the ranges dividing Cooyar Creek from Emu Creek on the south; the Burnett on the north; and the main dividing Range on the west; and extends down the right bank of Cooyar Creek one and a half miles, in a straight direction below a Water Hole, known as the

'Large Round Water Hole', and on the left bank, one and a half mile below the junction of Yeramir or Little Cooyar Creek with the main Cooyar Creek.

1851 The Durundur run was transferred to D and J McConnel in 1851.

1860 this area was 128,000 acres.

1868 the rent was re-assessed, the area being 133 and a half square miles.

1869

the rent was £206.5 per annum on an area of 108 square miles.



*Aborigines of 'Durundur' 1867, Clothed and Captive.
From left: 1. Unknown, 2. King Buckna, 3. Werrum, 4. Tungarun, and Lucy far right.
Front: Sitting on right: Buckna, Buckna's wife, Maria.
(Lengthening Shadows p 9) 191198*

Land Grants

Land Grants were not given on arrival to persons receiving free or assisted passages to Queensland; but after three years' continuous residence in the colony they were eligible to select 80 to 160 acres under the Homestead Clauses of the Land Act.

Land Regulations in 1869

The new Land Act comprehended many principles which were

entirely new in Australian legislation, and on that account may be looked upon as a subject of interest in relation to its future operation. The practical working of a measure so fraught with power, according as it was administered to improve the colony, attracted at the outset considerable attention, affecting, as it did, the interest of almost every colonist. It certainly was the one in which most of the population were concerned; and whether it was the labourer or shepherd, with his few pounds in the savings' bank, or the owner of flocks without number, each of them looked to the land question as one on which his labours depended for providing, in after years, the means which should enable him to retire from the battle of life, or leave his family in the enjoyment of competence.

Land could be purchased in any township reserves, where the areas were large enough to allow it, on the same terms as in the settled districts; and under the sixteenth clause of the act selections were allowed on land that had never been under pastoral lease, and was not at the time of application under licence, at the price of second-class pastoral land, viz., 5 shillings per acre.

In the settled districts most of the land had been up to the present time under lease for pastoral purposes. Each division or block of country was called a run, bearing a distinctive name, which the holder occupied with sheep or cattle, and paid a rent assessed on its capabilities for grazing. These leases had been renewed from time to time on the terms contained in the several acts of parliament in force at the expiration of the leases. Under the present act it was proposed to resume the whole of each run at the expiration of twelve months; but in the event of the lessee being willing to come under the provisions of the act, he would be allowed a lease for ten years of half his run, and a licence for the resumed half, which is open to selection before survey in the manner prescribed by the act.

In each settled district of the colony there was a Land commissioner, and in each of the towns a land agent, who was authorized to receive applications within the sub-district assigned to him. The machinery in working the act would, therefore, on a proper explanation being given, appear very plain and simple. Under the act it would be observed that 10,880 acres, inclusive of the three leases of land, may be obtained by one selector; and though, perhaps, he may have a difficulty in securing such a large area in the most convenient situation, there could be no question of his ability to purchase that extent in some suitable locality where his operations could be conducted advantageously. It is scarcely necessary to point out that a lease of 10,880 acres for ten years at an annual rent of £368, which is the rent chargeable for that extent of land, was not a bad

investment. The area allowed also was sufficiently large to enable sheep farming to pay when paddocking was resorted to, or to combine that class of farming with agriculture. The reduction in the price of land was unquestionably one of the most important principles of the measure.

The introduction of the clauses referring to homesteads in the act is one of its distinctive features; and, being to a certain extent derived from America, the result of its operation is looked upon with some degree of anxiety.

The act allows any person who is the head of a family, or who is of the age of twenty-one years, to enter upon eighty acres of agricultural land, or one hundred and sixty acres of pastoral land, open to selection, on payment annually for five years at the rate of nine pence an acre for the former, and sixpence for the latter description of land.

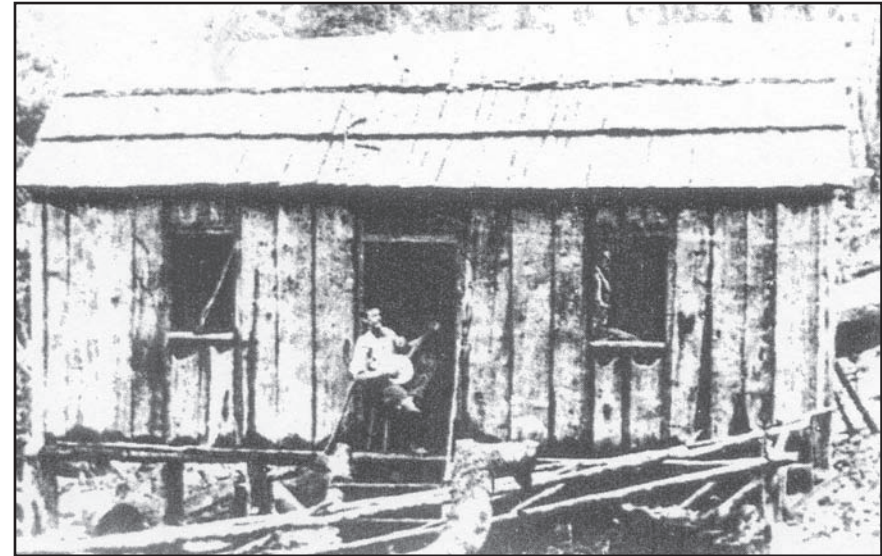
There are also the following conditions to be observed in applying for a homestead and in occupying it afterwards. In the first place, the applicant must lodge with the land agent the form K in the regulations, together with the first year's rent and survey fee, having previously made the declaration appearing on said form that he or she is the head of a family, or is twenty-one years of age, that such application is made for his, or her exclusive use, and that he or she has not on any former occasion exercised such right or homestead selection, and that such entry is made for the use of the applicant, &c. Residence is required during the five years, and also, in addition, either that one-tenth of the land should be cultivated, or that the portion should be securely fenced. On proof being furnished to the commissioner of the conditions being fulfilled, a Crown grant shall issue to the holder. Lands acquired under the homestead clauses of the act do not become liable to the satisfaction of any debts contracted prior to the issuing of the Crown grant. There is also a provision to the effect that after affording proof of two years' residence and the prescribed extent of cultivation, the selector may obtain a grant on paying the upset price of the land.

General Provisions

The Government has power to proclaim township reserves on suitable sites, and also to grant as reserves land for a number of public purposes too numerous to mention, but which may be generally understood as having reference to the industrial, scholastic, recreational, and charitable wants of the community.

1875 25,000 acres were resumed on Durundur run.

The first selector (on Durundur run) was Richard John Geddes, 14 December 1875 with 640 acres.



A Settler's Hut, (From Durundur to Woodford, p18)

Soon after the purchase of Conondale, gold was found at Gympie and a rush commenced. The road to the gold fields passed by Durundur and Conondale and hundreds of gold seekers passed that way. The only vehicles that crossed the range were bullock drays and wheelbarrows.

An extra cutter was chartered to take stores to Caboolture and a supply was arranged. Soon afterwards a new road nearer the coast, marked by Tom Petrie was opened by the government and most of the traffic went that way to avoid the mountain range.

1877 A further cut in area occurred. This consisted of 800 acres pre-empted and 80 acres selected.

1878 A further 2100 acres were reserved for an Aboriginal reserve.

The run was subdivided into Durundur No 1 and Durundur No 2 in 1880, the latter being approximately 25 square miles in extent.

In 1882, B E Franz purchased Durundur No 2, 2 square miles in area. In the following year it was reduced to 1 _ square miles.

1888 saw Durundur No 2 split again, this time the leased part comprised 340 acres with an equivalent resumption of 340 acres.

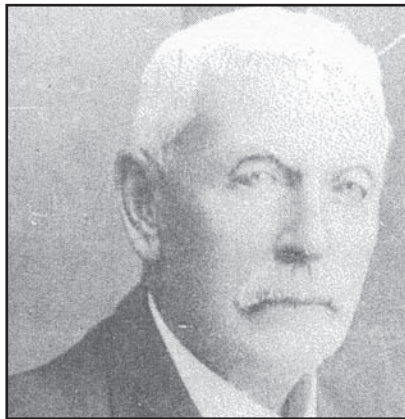
1890 James Horne became the occupant, but forfeited the lease in 1898.

1893 Durundur No 1 suffered a further subdivision into No 3, 4, and 5.⁷

As game was plentiful about Durundur, the Blacks there were generally well grown and nourished. There were lots of marsupials, some emu, and in the season a plentiful feast of parrots. These were caught in hand nets when flying near the ground over a saddle or a spur. The birds chose the low ground to fly over the ridge and the Blacks fixed their nets there. The birds were further induced to fly low by the Blacks throwing pieces of bark over them, which they mistook for hawks. This harvest lasted while the trees were in blossom. The parrots were principally 'blue mountains' and 'green backs'.

There were also lots of carpet snakes, goannas and plenty of fish in the streams. Sometimes the Blacks would construct a wall of bushes with a small exit at the end of a reach. Some men would block that with their nets; the rest of the mob would beat the hole driving the fish down to the walled end. Some mullet would try to jump the wall and were caught in nets.

The tracks of opossums or goannas were noticed in the tree's bark. The Blacks climbed with a vine round them and the tree, which supported the body while they cut a toe notch; or an oval shaped hole to get out the opossum or sugar bat. Formerly the Blacks used stone tomahawks, but the station Blacksmith made small iron mortising axes for them.⁸



Henry Conwell Wood, (1840-1925), (From Durundur to Woodford, p15)



H C Wood and Mrs Wood and daughters Cammilla and Veronica, (From Durundur to Woodford, p16)

Henry Conwell Wood (1840-1925) was born in Bellary, northwest Madras, India, the son of a British Army colonel of the East India Company. Wood was educated at Cheltenham College and after business experience in London where he worked with his uncles, members of the London Stock Exchange, and farming in Herefordshire, he arrived in Queensland aged twenty-four.

Wood came to Durundur to learn the sheep and cattle business. In 1874, he became a partner of John McConnel, the firm being known as J Mc Connel and Co. For some years he was a member of the Legislative Council.

Timber:

It was Wood who employed Mr George Mason to take charge of the Conondale section of the run and in 1876, McConnel, Wood, and Mason formed a partnership to cut and sell red cedar logs. Some logs were carted to Caboolture and some went by river to Maryborough. Men followed the logs in boats to prevent jamming and to see that the logs did not end up in backwaters.⁹ At Tiaro, the logs were made into rafts and floated to Maryborough.

1878

A great deal of the Durundur Station was resumed for closer settlement in 1878. The McConnels and Wood between them managed to

hold 18,000 acres.

Woodford was named after Durundur's owner, arising on an area selected mainly by Durundur employees.

Woodford first began as a cluster of buildings—a hotel, a post office, and a police station immediately south of Post Office Creek. There was an abundance of good splitting timber at Durundur and most of the buildings had slab walls placed vertically in the earlier buildings; later on they were in a horizontal position. (*Lengthening Shadows*)



Scene in Queens Park, Maryborough (with the Post Office and St Mary's Catholic Church in the Background)
From the Frontier p 12
ABORIGINES - Maryborough, 1870's (69224) "Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane"

1880's

Queensland attracted 106,000 new arrivals. In 1883, there had been 28,000.

In 1881, a public meeting was held to establish a school. The District Inspector proposed a site on Crown Land, or rather a Camping reserve having an area of 640 acres.

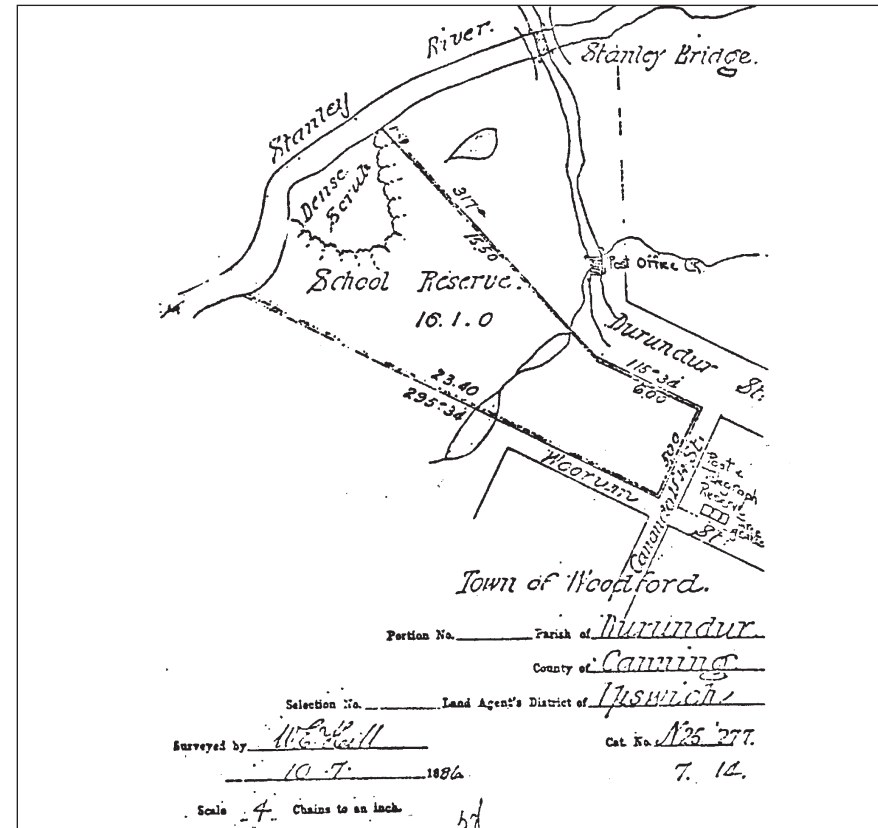
16 May 1882 he wrote:

...I may inform you that the selectors are, or have been, servants in the employ of Durundur Station and that when the Certificates of Title are available, the homesteads will in all probability revert to Durundur. Beside the main road, all the land has been surveyed but all these homesteads are not yet occupied. That as fast as applications are received for homesteads on the N E side of the main road the required survey is made. Most of the land is still the property of the Crown. The reserves close to the range are continued on the other side of the main road

where I suggested last year the site of the proposed school should be.

This point would accommodate the families of M Keliher, J Hennessey, J Ahern, W Tracey, O Haggar, J Fletcher, G Draper, T Beanland and G Gentry.

(*Lengthening Shadows* p 15)



Plans for Woodford State School, *Lengthening Shadows* p 15

1882 The 'Binambi Report' by Smith, Wood and Nicholson recorded a decreasing number of Aborigines. The few children born were not of full descent and the total number of persons in the reserve was about forty. They did not stay for any length of time.¹⁰

1883 Legislation was enacted restricting the area that could be held in one run in the Moreton Bay area, and Durundur had 3 areas excised from it. One of these known as the Cove was on the Eastern side of the Stanley

River, from about 2 miles north of Woodford to a point about one and a half miles north of where the Commissioner's Flat School stood.

The selection of the cove was 'dummied' by the Durundur owners and to all intents and purposes it was still part of Durundur.¹¹

1891

The European population of Queensland was 394,000, an increase of 1200% in thirty years.

Between 1861 and the termination of state-assisted immigration in 1893, Queensland attracted 208,000 immigrants of whom 46,000 were farm labourers and 36,000 were domestic servants. Queensland had achieved its aim of populating the land—or, rather, land that could be populated by Europeans. By 1891 its population had risen to 394,000, an increase of 1200 per cent in thirty years. Queensland had the highest percentage of foreign-born residents of all the colonies.¹²



An Aboriginal Camp near the Comet River in 1895 with both traditional and European objects in evidence.

From the Frontier p 12

ABORIGINES - Comet River (p.12, top photo, From the Frontier)

"Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane"

1897

Aboriginal survivors were brought under the charge of the state and placed on reserves.

About the turn of the century this area was resumed for closer settlement. Whilst the areas were being designed and surveyed, the worst drought ever known to white man, settled over Queensland, and the Crown having control of the Cove, moved many government-owned

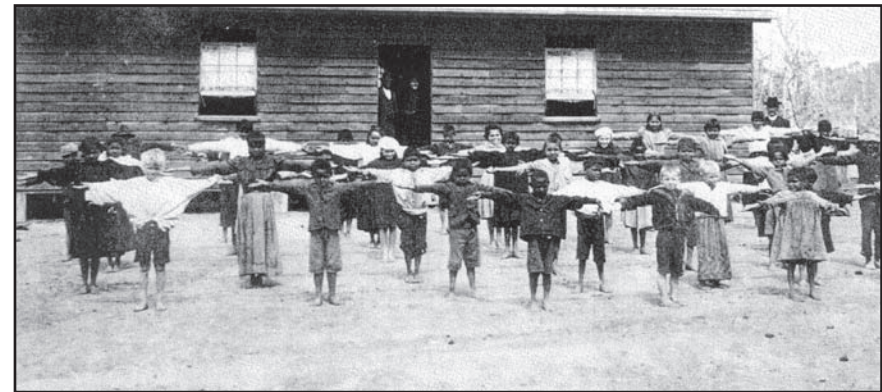
cattle, police horses and Army remounts from many parts of the State to the area. Large numbers of the stock perished and many drought-weakened stock were bogged in the creeks and lagoons in the area.

The forest area was thrown open for selection in 1902 and the scrub areas at the northern end in 1904.¹³

1902

Mr Tronson was in charge of the Binambi reserve, He wrote:

Male Aborigines were allotted jobs each day and listed among these were clearing, house-building, fencing, brushing, gardening, sawing and splitting wood, cleaning out the lagoon, sharpening tools and stacking timber.



Deebing Creek Mission near Ipswich in 1903.

From the Frontier (F A Whitehead Collection, National Library of Australia), p182

25 October 1902 With the closing of Binambi Aboriginal Settlement on Durundur run, land was again thrown open for closer settlement. Despite the terrible drought of that year, with its huge stock losses and large scale take-overs by the banks, settlers moved in, and though the good seasons returned, the whole way of life on the land had been altered. Gone were the spacious days of big acreages and large homesteads where lavish hospitality was freely dispensed.¹⁵

1905

The Aboriginal settlement moved from Woodford to Barambah (now Cherbourg) in February 1905. Some Aborigines walked overland from Woodford while others went by train from Caboolture to Wondai and then walked to Barambah. Mr Tronson remained in charge.¹⁶

1911

There were only an estimated 8400 of the original inhabitants remaining in Queensland.¹⁷

All that remains of Binambi today is a waterhole, and a sign naming the property, 'Black Flat'.



'Black Flat' - the site of Binambi Aboriginal settlement,
From *Durundur to Woodford*, p 28 (191201)



Binambi Today - 'Black Flat',
From *Durundur to Woodford*, p 29

Notes for Chapter 3 Part 5

¹*The Aboriginal Perspective*, Queensland Ethnohistory Transcripts, v 1 n 1. Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland.

²*The Aboriginal Perspective*, Queensland Ethnohistory Transcripts, v 1 n 1.

³*Thoughts of the Past*, Woodford Centenary of Education, no page numbers. JOL.

⁴Duncan Waterson, and Maurice French, *From the Frontier: a pictorial history of Queensland to 1920*, 1987, p 4.

⁵*Lengthening Shadows on Durundur Country*, Woodford Bicentennial Committee, 1988, p 9. JOL

⁶*Thoughts of the Past*, Woodford Centenary of Education. (no page numbers, Woodford State School, 1975/

⁷*From Durundur to Woodford 1882-1982*, 1982, pp 18-23

⁸*Lengthening Shadows on Durundur Country*, 1988, pp 10-11. JOL.

⁹*Lengthening Shadows on Durundur Country* 1988 p 6.

¹⁰*Lengthening Shadows on Durundur Country* 1988, p 26.

¹¹*Thoughts of the Past*, 'Commissioner's Flat', Woodford Centenary of Education.

¹²*From the Frontier*, p 4.

¹³*Thoughts of the Past*, 'Commissioner's Flat', Woodford Centenary of Education.

¹⁴'Diary of A Tronson', Superintendent of Binambi Aboriginal Reserve, *Lengthening Shadows*, p26

¹⁵*Lengthening Shadows*, p 6.

¹⁶*Lengthening Shadows* p 6

¹⁷*From the Frontier* p3.

FATHER McNAB LOBBIES OVERSEAS



To Europe

August 1879 Father McNab sailed from Melbourne in The Kent. The round the world trip would take him through Egypt, Southern Europe, the British Isles and the United States. Equipped with a letter of introduction from his Bishop in Melbourne, James Goold, McNab arrived in Rome in September 1879. In Rome McNab drafted a supplement to his major report of July 1878 to Archbishop Vaughan.

W. Kensington Park
4 Arby Road
12th Sept. 1880

Dear Sir

I wish to leave
London as soon as possible
I should feel obliged to you
for informing me when I
may see the Colonial Secretary
and if it cannot be soon, if
the intention be requisite?
Yesterday I called to the Colonial
Office with the hope of seeing
you. I suppose you did not get
my card, as you had told, you were
engaged with Sir Michael. I re-
gret it since possibly should Sir
Michael might have seen me
and asked for better information
he desired. Believe me
yours truly
Rev. Dominic McNab

Father McNab to Colonial Office London, 3 September.

15 September 1879

Avendo già data una relazione di quanto ho potuto fare per la civilizzazione e la conversione alla santa fede degli Aborigeni Australiani della diocesi di Brisbane nella mia lettera, scritta il dì 10mo di Luglio 1878 per l'informazione della Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, e trasmessa al Revmo R. B. Naughtan Arcivescovo di Sydney, e pensando che egli l'abbia rimessa a Roma, mi pare che non sia espediente il riportarla qui, e che basti aggiungere quanto è avvenuta d'allora, ed accennare brevemente, alcune cose ed osservazioni la cognizione delle quali, credo, essere utile o necessaria alla Sacra Congregazione nella sua santa impresa di convertire gli Australiani Selvaggi al Cristianesimo.

The beginning of Father McNab's 'Memoria', in Italian to Cardinal Simeoni, Propaganda, 15 September 1879, SRC, Oceania, 12, f 172, APF. This document is not in McNab's handwriting.

This 'Memoria' broadened the attack beyond Bishop Quinn to the inertness of the Australian Bishops in general. McNab insisted that the missionary effort be initiated by, and directed from Rome:

for they (the missionaries) cannot be hoped for from the Catholic Bishops of Australia. These, who have done much for religion among the colonists, and desire the conversion of unbelievers, will not apply themselves to it, thinking they have enough to do with Catholic colonists.

McNab advised as to the nationality of the missionaries, and the division of labor:

English-speaking priests are more suitable for missionary work in the areas settled by the colonists where the young natives know a little English, and some priests, British subjects, are almost necessary for dealing with the governments; Irishmen would be better for making collections for the missions.

He explained that he had not abandoned the Queensland mission out of weakness or fear, but that after several heat strokes he became unable

to walk or to speak at any length without fainting and his doctor told him not to stay in a tropical climate in summer time.

He had come to Rome to beg from the Holy Father and the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda for active missionaries, furnished with the means necessary so that those few who had become Christians might not perish, and that the benefit of the faith might be extended to others. His other object was to complain of lack of Australian Church support for Aboriginal evangelization.

He argued that missionaries needed to be sent by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda for they could not be hoped for from the Catholic Bishops of Australia. One of them was said to hold the theory that God wished to save natives through the natural law alone; others said that natives were not of their dioceses. After the Provincial Synod of Melbourne all of them declared publicly that they had neither the men nor the money and they fulfilled their obligations towards the natives when according to their promise to the Holy Father they helped a society of religious men commissioned by him to do the work of conversion. For such reasons the Supreme Pontiff should not only send missionaries, but also the missionaries should remain directly subject to him.

McNab's words echoed Propaganda's sentiments. He was encouraged to seek priestly assistance from a number of missionary congregations in the United States. Cardinal Simeoni responded with another approach to the General of the Jesuits, Pietro Bechse, with a view to obtaining Jesuit support for a mission to the Australian Aborigines. Three years later, in 1882, this would result in a mission in the Northern Territory. Cardinal Simeoni authorized McNab to request assistance from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, a central organization, based in France.

29 September 1879 Father Pietro Bechse, the General of the Jesuits, wrote in Italian to Cardinal Simeoni in Rome when he was returning McNab's memorial on the Australian mission (Enc. 169-172, Duncan McNab: Memorial, Rome, 15 September 1870 in Italian).

Up to this time, Father Bechse had not received replies from the Austrian and the Irish Provincials. Perhaps he would find them waiting in Fiesole, when he returned that day, and if so he would write at once. The Jesuits then occupied the Villa San Girolamo at Fiesole.

7
Roma 29 Sett. 1879

Eminentissime Principe 168

Con questo foglio restituisco a Vostra Eminenza Romana la Memoria sopra le missioni di Australia, la quale si è degnata comunicarmi. Fino a questo momento non ho ancora ricevuto risposta dei Provinciali di Austria e Polonia: forse la trovano in Fiesole, dove intendo di abitare oggi stesso, e non mancherò di rispondere più tardi. Intanto col più profondo ossequio bacio il S. Anello e riverentemente mi confermo

Di Vostra Eminenza Romana

*Sua Emza Romana
V. Cap. Profetto della S. C.
di Propaganda Fide*

*Uomo ubi sum in Fiesole
Pietro Bechse Prop. Gen.
della Compia di Gesù*

Father Bechse, General SJ to Cardinal Simeoni,
29 September 1879, returning Memorandum
fol 168, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881

October 1879 In Northern Australia, Bishop John Cani had moved to Cooktown and had become responsible for the Vicariate. He told Antonio, his priest-brother in Rome:

I will speak another time about the great cruelty done to the poor Aborigines. I have some hope of instructing Aboriginal children. They appear intelligent and are willing to be instructed, but it is difficult to obtain them. Europeans who have a few of them are unwilling to hand them over, because they are a good source of labor. Various Catholics have promised to instruct and to prepare for baptism the children in their care. I have no doubt that I soon will obtain some young Aborigines when they are found in the bush – still happens occasionally – because there still continues the practice of exterminating the Aborigines, as has been done in other parts of Australia.

17 October 1879

The Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, in Lyons, President Father des Garets wrote to Cardinal Simeoni about Father McNab's mission. He said that the Scottish priest, Father Duncan McNab had presented a recommendation from Cardinal Simeoni in order to receive funds for the voyage of missionaries that he hoped to find and take with him to Australia. Father des Garets reminded Cardinal Simeoni of the basic rule of the Association and Propaganda only to allocate funds to bishops and vicars apostolic. Australia had been divided into districts. To which diocese did Father McNab belong? The Association could write to his bishop? If the diocese were not wealthy and thereby excluded from their list for annual subsidies, they would accept a request from the bishop. If on the other hand, the Holy See had set up a special mission for McNab, its location and name could be inscribed in their Annales, with a proper description of an appropriate subsidy.

Father McNab wrote to Propaganda that according to some French priests, an appeal to obtain missionaries for Aborigines in Australia should be made to the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris.

20 October 1879 Father Pietro Bechse, the S J General, wrote to Cardinal Simeoni:

While I was in Rome last September, your very Reverend Eminence told me about a new mission to be tried among the barbarians and the aboriginal savages of Australia. This idea seems to me to be worthy of the charity and the zeal of the Holy Congregation, and the difficulties and grave dangers they say surround this planned mission certainly should not weaken the keen desire that we have to second the desire of the holy See in this case as well. However, I expected, and now I find it true, a difficulty, that seems to me for now to be insurmountable. That is the absolute lack of subjects at the present.

Eminenza Reverendissima 177

Quando nel prossimo passato Settembre fui in Roma, V. Eminenza R. Ma.
 come parola di una nuova missione da tentare tra i barbari e selvaggi Aborigeni
 dell'Australia. L'idea mi sembrò degna della carità e dello zelo di Vostra S. C.
 e le difficoltà e pericoli gravi, che si dicono circondare quella progettata missione, non-
 illanguidirebbero certo il vivo desiderio, che abbiamo di assecondare le brame della S.
 Sede anche in questo caso. Previdi però allora, ed ora trovo al fatto, una difficoltà,
 che per adesso mi sembra insormontabile; l'assoluta mancanza cioè di soggetti nel
 momento presente.

Si come la Provincia di Austria ha già Collegio e Convitto e parecchie piccole
 Stazioni di Missioni nei distretti di Adelaide, e la Provincia d'Irlanda ha Collegi
 e Missioni in Melbourne ed in Sydney, ho scritto subito ai due rispettivi Provinciali
 per proporre la cosa. L'uno e l'altro mi hanno risposto esponendami l'estrema penuria
 di soggetti in cui si trovano e la somma difficoltà, che provano per sostenere in quelle
 remote regioni quel che già hanno assunto oltre le loro forze. Io so di certo, che queste
 difficoltà sono purtroppo vere, e tutte le altre Province sentono simile penuria di soggetti.
 Eppure io ho del continuo pressanti domande, sia per supplire il vuoto lasciato dai
 missionarii che muoiono, sia per provvedere le nuove missioni, che si sono recentemente

Al Sua Eminenza Reverendissima
 Il Sig. Card. Giovanni Simeoni
 Prefetto della S. C. di Propaganda

Father Bechse, SJ General from Fiesole in Italian to Cardinal Simeoni, 20 October 1879.

Notes on the condition of the Aborigines
of Queensland.

According to the statement of the Chief Commissioner of Police in Brisbane the natives of Queensland in their wild state, where they have not been injured by the Colonists, are of a gentle and friendly disposition. He also said that in several of every ten cases of foul crimes committed by the Blacks, provocation had been given by the Whites. Yet the Queensland Government maintains a standing army of native troopers under European officers for the protection of the Colonists, and of their flocks, by the destruction of the Aborigines. The occasion of the existence of such a force will readily be gathered from the following address of the aboriginal Yagan to Mr. G. H. Moore Advocate General of Victoria in 1843. "Why do you white

r. receive.
Mr. Herbert. 26
Lord Cadogan.
Sir M. Hicks each. 27
Draft 2/3 on 5/3

23th Feb. 1880

Sir,
I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to acknowledge the receipt of your Memorandum on the condition of the Aborigines of Queensland, received in a letter from Cardinal Manning

have a feast. Then you white men come and shoot the poor black fellows!"

Then with his eagle eye flashing and holding up one of his fingers before Mr Moore's face, he shouted out,

"For every black man you white fellows shoot I will kill a white man.

And so with "the poor hungry women; they have always been accustomed to dig up every edible root, and when they come across a potato garden, of course down goes the wannal (yam stick) and up comes the potato which is at once put into the bag! Then you white men shoot the poor black fellows.

I will take life for life!"

(Brough Smith *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol 2, p 228).

Although many of the Queensland natives include some other things in their idea of personal rights, yet should they find themselves similarly circumstanced, they would act in the same way.

When a Squatter has his cattle speared by the Blacks (no matter that they may have been impelled to the commission of the outrage by hunger, or by the seduction of their women, or by the murder of a comrade, possibly through the timidity of the shepherd) he calls for the **Native Police** to 'disperse the Blacks' which means 'to shoot them.'

This happens when he has not taken the precaution to prevent the assault by getting the Police to clear the country of the natives before he occupies it. At times the black troopers are taken up when drunk, or entrapped, or forced into the service. They are taken from the South and sent North or the North West of the colony. They exasperate the natives by taking as wives for a time the black gins (women) of the district in which they are located.

I have never heard of such a force in existence against the Blacks in any other Australian colony. Why should it be necessary in Queensland?

Even if necessary, its action ought to be discriminative, so as not to involve the innocent in the punishment of the guilty.

Such however seems not to have been always the case. For the statements of the public motive and the evidence laid before a Parliamentary Committee, were to show the reverse to have been too often the practice and at times the innocent were punished for the guilty.

On Hinchinbrook Island the missionary, Mr Fuller, found only women and children, all the men having been shot by the **Native Police** a few weeks previous to his arrival.

Not only the troopers but even some of the officers have been charged with cruelty and murder, yet allowed to escape with impunity. Especially not very long ago one called Wheeler, who thus accused was released on bail, and of course left the colony and could not be found.

The exercise of this force would not be so often required if the government were to take care to show a firm and friendly disposition to the natives, as was suggested to it some time

ago.

Little more than a year ago *The Queenslander* mentioned a truce made by a Native Sergeant Connor with a hostile tribe in the North of Queensland. The tribe strictly observed the terms of the truce.

Long before the Messrs Low, brothers and squatters in Queensland, declined the offered aid of the **Native Police** for the dispersion of the Blacks, gave them notice of the approach of the Police and sent them to the mountains till after the departure of the force.

Shortly thereafter, some of their cattle were speared by the Blacks. They secured the culprits, bound them to trees for a night, and in the morning producing their guns convinced them that they were in their power, and deserving of punishment. They then pardoned and released them on condition that they should not repeat the offence. From that day forward the Messrs Low never lost anything by the Blacks. On the contrary they became very friendly and careful. In fact the squatters have worked their station mainly by them. The natives were about three hundred in number there.

The existence of the **Native Police Force** might be a great advantage were it only used in necessary self-defence and with proper moderation; and were it to hinder the killings of the natives with impunity by private individuals. But unhappily hundreds of them have been so killed and many of them are still so killed. Yet I never heard of the execution of a Colonist for the murder of a native in Queensland.

To maintain the **Native Police** the government annually expends over six thousand pounds sterling as may be seen from the estimates.

By this double agency of public and private force the Blacks are destroyed too quickly even for the interest of the squatters whose runs in some districts are eaten up by marsupials, so that they are compelled to put a price upon their heads for their extirpation. Without being killed the natives are often grievously injured by the Colonists.

Last Spring on my way from Townsville to Brisbane, on board a steamer, I met an explorer by name, Carbard (whose father resides at Charters Towers) who had in his possession two black boys whom he had captured in the interior and was bringing to Ipswich. He told me that frequently the Whites seize the black gins and after keeping and abusing them for a few days let them go. A person said he had seen a carrier run down a black boy, tie him in chains on his dray and after two days sell him to another carrier for two pounds ten shillings.

I have known occasions in which a settler engaged a party of blacks to ring trees for him, promising them food during the time of work and five pounds sterling when finished. He supplied the food, but when after two months the job was finished; he said he had no money, but would give a cheque for the amount. In payment, he gave a piece of paper on which he had written, "*Give the bearer a kick.*"

These things I mention not as solitary instances of what the poor natives have to suffer,

but as samples of the treatment they too often receive. Although the Aborigines are British subjects, they are practically without a government and beyond the protection of the laws even in the settled portions of the colony. They have no rights, or they are generally ignored. When they suffer wrong, they have no redress as their evidence is not received in Court. There are laws affecting them, but as a rule they are not enforced. Lately a law was made to authorize the reception of their declarations, in certain circumstances, as equivalent to an oath, but the judges do not act upon it.

There is a law prohibiting the sale to them of intoxicating liquors; but habitually disregarded with the exception of a raid made a couple of years ago on some publicans in or about Brisbane. On one occasion I complained of the violation of this law; and offered information that would convict the delinquent on the evidence of Aborigines, who understood the nature of an oath and were Christians: but the Police Magistrate in Brisbane told me he would not consider the case unless I became the prosecutor, alleging that the Police had too much to do.

The natives frequently wound and maim, and sometimes kill each other in the vicinity of towns, or at destined battle fields, known to the neighboring White Selectors, and which might also be known to the Police, who might and ought to prevent these evils, but as a rule, they heed them not, and do not interfere.

Even when the Aborigines become Christians, and are regularly married by a clergyman, duly authorized by government to celebrate marriages in Queensland, difficulties are thrown in the way of their registration.

Last year the Attorney General of Queensland was consulted as to the validity of such marriages; and I was told by an official in the Registration Department, that he gave it as his opinion that such marriages are invalid, and require a special Act of Parliament to legalize them.

The country of the Aborigines is occupied by Europeans and their descendants, without their consent, without any compensation being made to them (beyond a blanket given annually to each of a number resident in the occupied districts of the colony) or any adequate provision for their maintenance. They are not yet allowed to possess in their own right one foot of land in the colony unless they have purchased it and paid for it in the same way as aliens.

This is not so bad where the country is wide and occupied only by squatters who after all are the natives' best friends, as they often give them employment and remuneration, and suffer them to occupy their runs. But where the country is narrow, as in the North of Queensland, and so here it is taken up for townships or gold fields, or tenanted by small Selectors, who will not suffer them on their land, lest they should disturb their cattle, it becomes a question of life or death for the natives, and conflicts, in the process lots of things, become inevitable.

In the occupied districts of the Colony I have found the Aborigines quick of appreciation, and susceptible of instruction and training and many tribes have expressed to me their desire of being civilized, and I found them disposed to give a fair hearing to the truths of Christianity.

These remarks are applicable especially to those between fifteen and thirty years of age.

The old are opposed to change for fear of want, as they depend for their subsistence mainly on the labors of the young. But when assured of help in their decrepitude, they acquiesce to the proposed change.

Till instructed they have no idea that they can become possessed of property like the Whites, although they had their separate hunting grounds, and some families the monopoly of the game on a particular mountain and individuals the fruit of particular trees by hereditary right. When once they learn that they can possess property, they are willing to labor for its acquirement, and wish to transmit it to their posterity.

Like all men they are unwilling to labor, if they can do without it, or are inadequately compensated, but when fairly paid they work well. In the South of the colony they are addicted to intemperance, but at Mackay and to the North of it they are temperate even when employed about the towns and have money. The principal impediments to their civilization are their communism, their nomad habits, and the polygamy of their chiefs.

The Queensland Government annually furnished a quantity of blankets to the natives of the occupied districts of the colony. For the last four or five years it has commenced feeble attempts at their civilization, and has expended about five or six hundred pounds per annum in these efforts.

It has appointed more than one Commission to enquire into the condition of the Aborigines and into the necessary steps for its improvement.

Yes and the first Commission, as I learnt from one, who claimed to have been mainly instrumental in calling it into existence, was instituted for the purpose of shelving the question, and serving as a blind to the home government.

The second consisted of members incapable by their own admission.

When I left Queensland last spring the members were Matthew B Hale, Bishop of Brisbane, A G Gregory and W Land and Corough. The others had resigned.

After four years training no social or moral improvement was perceptible at the Mackay Reserve. Even the children had not received any religious instruction. Five years more and another settlement deemed requisite before their settlement as civilized men and women could be commenced.

Contrast this state of things with the progress made by adult natives at the Reserve of Binambi at Durundur in three or four months.

The Commissioner had to abandon the settlement at Bribie, as they had employed improper managers, and not complied with the reasonable demands of the natives.

After a lengthened correspondence the late Queensland Government in 1876 authorized Reserves to be made for such Aborigines as might express a desire to settle on the lands of the Colony. Consequently the settlement of the natives was successfully begun on Binambi at

Durundur.

The natives of diverse parts wanted settlements, and application was made for those of Kenilworth, Jurbil, Mooroochy, Belleview, Kilcoy and Mount Brisbane, but were refused, the Commissioners for the Aborigines, all but one, disapproving of grants of land to individual Blacks, and the White Selectors petitioning against the Reserve at Binambi, (because it was good land, and they wanted to leave to the Blacks only the mountains and the scrubs) the Minister of Lands declined to carry out any further the resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

Subsequently the late government refused to let the natives have Homesteads on the same terms as the Colonists minus the Survey Fees.

Thus although many of the natives are anxious to settle on the land and support themselves by industry, they are left without a home.

Of course Dipper, Ghepara and Nilapi did not get the land applied for.

What is the Reserve at Mackay, the only one now worked by the Commissioners to the whole colony; even if its soil were fit for agricultural production: which it is not: as it consists of sand and what is called devil, devil land, that is a species of swamp in winter and crab holes in summer.

Many natives would occupy Homesteads, who would not live on a reserve. Both are useful, but the homestead is the cheapest to the Government the most suitable and eligible and the most effective means of civilization.

It may be said that the natives never had a home.

That is true in the sense of a fixed abode: but they had a territory, which was their own, on which they had a right to reside and did so and used it for their maintenance to the exclusion of all other.

This home and right they never resigned. It was taken from them. Then they lived on the spontaneous productions of the soil and by hunting and fishing. Now that the circumstances of their country are changed or rapidly changing they must live differently mainly by pasturage or tillage, and it behoves the government that has brought about the change to enable them to do so.

Notwithstanding the extent, the variety and munificence of the philanthropic, educational and religious institutions of the colonists, notwithstanding their progress in opulence, in refinement and civilization they may justly be reproached while having for a long time in the midst of them a people in want of the necessaries of life, without the benefit or protection of a government, and without, I do not say Christian but was human instruction sufficient to preserve them from cannibalism.

They live frequently, not from choice, but by necessity, on reptiles and such food as men resort to only when reduced to the last extremity by siege or famine. In our time all condemn the institution of slavery, and many feelingly lament the miseries to which slaves are subjected. But what are these compared to the suffering and the degradation of the Queensland

Aborigines?

All slaves are better fed and housed than our blacks! They are at any rate protected from foreign violence and extermination whereas the natives have too frequently been and still are occasionally subjected to an indiscriminate slaughter of the guilty and the innocent. Their misery is greatly increased, and I may say completed by the physical and moral corruption and degradation derived from their intercourse with Europeans.

By instruction from home the Queensland Government has legislated for and protected the interests of South Sea Islanders and others, and appointed special inspectors to see that contracts made with them are just and fairly carried out, and that they are humanely treated; and I doubt not that by direction from the Colonial Office it will in like manner provide for the more equitable treatment and the well being of the Aborigines.

For the greater part of four years I have camped and lived with the natives of Queensland, and was one of the Commissioners appointed to look after their interests till I resigned in consequence of my associates having declared their incompetence and my finding the then existing Ministry and the country nibbling at or rather trifling with the question of Aboriginal civilization

Duncan McNab.⁹

In this letter, McNab claimed that the first Aboriginal Commission was called for the purpose of shelving the question of responsibility for the Aborigines and serving as a blind to the Home Government.

Western Australian Plea for Missionaries

4 December 1979 The Leading Article: 'Religious Wanted at the North-West Coast', *West Australian Catholic Record*, set the scene for an invitation to Father McNab:

Our Vicar General, Father Gibney entertains a very great interest in the affairs of the North West in their religious aspect. Last year he paid a visit to that part of the colony and during an absence from Perth, extending over 6 months he was enabled fully to inform himself on all the religious requirements of the place. His report may be summarised: there are a considerable number of Catholics, scattered here and there without any spiritual aid; there is a multitude of natives with no one to care for them.

A special feature of the case is that, not only is there no present possibility of sending them a priest from Perth, but also that there is but little likelihood that a priest may soon be sent there. His Lordship Bishop Griver will ere long be on his way to Europe in order to seek help for the wants of his diocese and no doubt, the spiritual destitution of the poor people on

the North West coast will have a share in his anxieties, but that he will succeed in procuring a priest ready to process to that place and fitted for that post is far from certain. A priest for that mission must be ready for great endeavours and sacrifices.... It is not only poverty that he will have to put up with, but likewise he will have to bear the greater discouragement of seeing all his pains spent upon a sparse and insignificant congregation. Dr Griver, will, no doubt, do his best to secure the services of a truly apostolic man fitted for the place, but it is painful to think that his best efforts may be all in vain; that not such a person may be easily met with. And in view of a failure not at all unlikely it may be asked – Can aid be hoped for in any other quarter?

A certain hope presents itself to our mind, but before expressing it with that deference, which all the circumstances of the case require, we would like to allege especially that it is not only the care of the European residents which demand attention, but in equal, if not greater degree of the salvation of many natives of the district. Father Gibney's notes amply testify that the aborigines of that region are numerous, intelligent and tractable.

The Catholic Church takes no heed of colour but recognizes it is her special province to help in saving every man's soul. The want at the North West is of some saving means of grace for whites, and blacks, to meet the knowledge and service of God from dying out of the lives of Catholics living there and to cause the light of salvation to shine upon the dusky aboriginals "who now sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

In circumstances such as these, a wistful glance is turned in the direction of the fervent community of Benedictine monks at New Norcia. From Perth aid is almost hopeless. With his staff of only 9 priests for his enormous diocese bishop Griver can do nothing. He will go to Europe and there probably fail to get a suitable missionary. The work at the North West would demand an apostle, and even an apostle would labour, to a great extent in vain. It is a work especially requiring the services of a religious community. There is no further question on the point. It has been proved that there is no other means possible for the welfare of the natives than the plan so successfully adopted at New Norcia. A plan, which embodies religious teaching with civilising employment. A plan also requiring the agency of a laborious and devoted community.

Only then from the Brotherhood (Benedictines) of New Norcia may the help required be looked for. They alone can speedily fill up the gap. And it is emphatically a speedy help, which is wanted. At the North West the natives are doomed to perish before the superior race. If done in time, numbers may be saved but if delay takes place, they will already have disappeared.

A clergyman of the Church of England, Revd Mr Hayton has been sent to the North West and before going he made a promise to his superior that he would make the matter of schools for native children his chief concern. We can't but speak in terms of praise for the Bishop and clergyman of the Protestant Church for their zeal and charity towards the native race and only too gladly would we see their good example in this instance followed, where it is by any means possible to do so by the authorities of our own church.

There seems however no other resource possible than to trust that the good monks of New Norcia will take the task upon themselves for the honour of God and salvation of souls.

A priest or two of those at the monastery and a few lay brothers would suffice to lay the foundations of a great work and to bring speedy relief in a case of pressing need. The good monks themselves can alone know all the difficulties that be in the way, but we trust, that in stating the urgent need of spiritual help for the North West we will not have spoken fruitlessly but that, on a thorough examination of all the circumstances to be considered it may be hoped that the difficulties which intervene, however great, shall not yet be found to be insuperable.¹⁰

Search Continued for Missionaries

11 December 1879 Father McNab wrote from Glasgow to Cardinal Simeoni.

Your Eminence,

I have not been able to find missionaries for the Australian Aborigines, even though I have searched in ten religious orders and in 10 seminaries at Paris, London, in Scotland and in Ireland.

The monks are otherwise engaged, and many seminarists are appointed for other missions. It was said to me that the monks of Mill Hill could have undertaken the mission to the Australians if they hadn't been obliged by the Congregation of Propaganda to take the mission of Burma. The Franciscan Fathers at Cairo and at Alexandria said to me that there is not the least probability of converting the Maomentanik and so it would probably be better to change the Mill Hill monks' mission.

The only individuals who wanted to consider the case of the Australian Aborigines are a Franciscan priest at Waterford, a secular priest at Cork, two others in Victoria and a student theologian at the seminary at Bathurst. But I have not yet received a positive or conclusive answer from any of these, and in the existing circumstances, I don't expect one.

Some consideration must be given to the monks, the General of the Jesuit Fathers, the English Provincial of the Fathers of the Congregation of the Holy See Redeemer, the Prior of Mill Hill and the Bishop of Salford. As the generals of these congregations and the Bishop of Adelaide are in Rome, I will leave everything to them and to the Holy Congregation of Propaganda hoping that without delay they will provide as best they can for the salvation of the Australian Aborigines.

Duncan McNab

Glasgow, 552 St Vincent Street, 11 December 1879¹¹

After a month's stay in Rome, McNab began a tour of French, English, Scottish and Irish seminaries and monasteries in what would prove an unsuccessful bid for support and personnel.¹² Before departing from Rome he advised Simeoni that he also intended:

*Going to England to seek for these poor Aborigines of Australia the protection of the laws and their civil rights.*¹³

Eminenza

Non ho potuto trovare missionarii per gli Aborigeni Australiani; benchè li ho creati da dieci Ordini Religiosi, da dieci Seminarii a Parigi, a Londra, nella Scozia e nell'Irlanda.

I Religiosi sono altrimenti impiegati; e molti fuori dei Seminarii sono destinati ad altre missioni.

Mi fu detto che i Religiosi di Mill Hill potrebbero intraprendere le missioni agli Australiani, se non fossero stati costretti dalla S. Cong. di Propaganda a prendere la missione di Burma. A Cairo era ~~stato~~ andava un certo Padre Francescano, che non vive la memoria per l'abilità di convertire i Maomettani; e per questo sarebbe forse meglio cangiare quella missione dei Religiosi di Mill Hill.

Alcuni individui singolari i quali hanno voluto considerare il caso degli Aborigeni Australiani sono un Padre Francescano a Waterford, un prete secolare a Cork, due altri in Vittoria, ed un alunno teologo del seminario di Bathurst. Ma da essi non ho ancora ricevuta una risposta positiva o definitiva, e nelle circostanze espresse non ho sperato.

Tra i Religiosi il Generale dei Padri Gesuiti, il Monsignore inglese dei Padri della Cong. del St. Redentore, il Rettore di Mill Hill ed il Vescovo di Salisford ci vogliono dare qualche considerazione. Siccome i generali di queste Congregazioni ed il Vescovo di

Abilati stanno in Roma lascio tutto alla S. Cong. di Propaganda ed a loro, sperando che senza dimora provvederanno, come meglio si può, per la salute degli Aborigeni Australiani.

Con la Sua Eminenza

Il più umilissimo servo

Duncan MacNab

Glasgow, 552 St. Vincent Street
11^{mo} Decemb. 1879

Rimò Monsignore

Dopo di avere scritto all'Illustre Cardinale
Prefetto della Congregazione di Propaganda ho ricevuto una lettera
dal Padre Michele P. Horgan, il quale viveva a 23 Pope's
Quay, Cork, nell'Irlanda dicendo che egli è disposto ad
essere mandato da Propaganda come missionario
agli aborigeni dell'Australia: e per questo io lo raccomando
mandato alla detta Congregazione, se il Vescovo di Salford
ora in Roma lo giudica atto a tal officio.
Se i Religiosi Missionari e quelli di Mill Hill intra-
prendiamo la missione, tutto andrà bene. Se no,
allora il Padre Horgan ed il Padre P. Begg addeffo
nel convento Franciscano a Waterford in Irlanda,
similmente disposti, potranno mandarsi a missiona-
zione propria colla speranza di ottenere socci nell'Aus-
tralia. Se la S. C. di Roma volesse considerarci come loro,
ma bisogna che sapria che non potrei far nulla
essendo ancora debole.

Con grande sollecitudine aspetto la decisione del mio
caso dal Santo Officio.

Con profonda stima mi saluto
il suo umilissimo servo

Duncan McNab

Alloa 15 dicembre 1879

Indirizzo
552 St. Vincent Street
Glasgow
Scozia

15 December 1879 From Alloa, Father Duncan McNab wrote to Mgr Masotti from 552 St Vincent Street, Glasgow:

Sir, after having written to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda, I received a letter from Father Michael P Horgan, who is staying at 23 Pope's Quay, Cork, in Ireland, saying that he is willing to be sent by the Propaganda as a missionary to the Australian Aborigines. Therefore, I am recommending him to the Holy Congregation, if the Bishop of Salford, now in Rome, judges him fitted for such an office.

If the Religious Redemptionists or those of Mill Hill will undertake the mission, everything will go well. If not, then Father Horgan and Father P Begg, who is now in the Franciscan convent at Waterford in Ireland, and similarly willing, will be able to go themselves to start the work with the hope of getting associates in Australia. If the Congregation Propaganda would like, I would go with them, but you need to know that I wouldn't be able to do much, as I am still weak.

I am waiting the prompt decision by the Holy Office about my case,

Yours, Duncan McNab.¹⁴

6 January 1880 Father Horgan, Cork, wrote to Mgr Masotti, Propaganda, that he was happy to join McNab, he wrote from 23 Pope's Quay, Cork, Ireland,

Very Rev Monsignor Masotti.

The Rev Duncan McNab has forwarded my name to the Propaganda as one of the number, who are to go on the mission to the aborigines of Australia.

I shall be most happy to be engaged on so good a mission. I have expressed to the Rev D McNab one difficulty which is in my way, and which is one I cannot meet. It is, that I cannot well wait a long time, until the missionary party leaves, as I have not any resources, and am being entertained by a relative, on whose goodness I would not like to trespass.

Archbishop Eyre of Glasgow, in whose diocese I served five years and a half previous to my going to the mission in England, has most generously volunteered to pay the expense of my voyage in Australia, and I have asked the Rev D McNab to consent to take me to Australia, where I could be of some use until the missionary party be organized.

I have not heard yet from him, and I would consider it a great favor, if I could know if my petition is exactly en règle, and if I could receive some little authorization from you, very Rev Monsignor, for that purpose. My anxiety is, to relieve myself from uncertainty and idleness, as also, not to lose, perhaps, the excellent offer made by his Grace Archbishop Eyre. I would be delighted to give some assistance, wherever necessary in Australia, until my services would be required for the special mission to the Aborigines, to which I have bound myself. I shall esteem it a great favor to receive your honored reply. I am in excellent health, and I am very desirous for work.

I have the honor to remain, Very Rev Monsignor,

Your humble and obedient Servant,

Michael Peter Horgan.¹⁵

Reaction at Government Level in London

11 January 1880 While in Paris, McNab addressed a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Michael Hicks-Beach, noting the injustices of the colonial situation and setting out his scheme to right these wrongs. It was, for the most part the same manifesto, which had been forwarded to Douglas three and a half years before. From Rome, at the end of the same month, McNab again wrote to the Colonial Office, seeking an interview with Hicks-Beach and advising his imminent departure for London.¹⁶

Queensland No. 543		D RECEIVED C. O. 13 JAN 1880
Office or Individual. Monsignor Cardinal	(Subject.) Conditions of the Aborigines	
Date. 1880 13 Jan?	London Rev. J. McNab	
at previous Paper.		
No. 13: 28 Feb. 1880	(Minutes) Mr. Braunsdon. Although His Lordship's exposition of the querances of the Queensland Aborigines is not very connected, the points to which he draws attention fall conveniently under three heads i. The brutality of the Native Trooper Force pp 1-6 ii. The want of a recognized legal status & rights, held by the Aborigines. iii. The action taken by the Queensland Government in the matter. pp 11-15 The charges against the Native Troopers are perhaps a little tinged, but there can be no doubt from the previous correspondence on the subject - more especially from the admissions contained in the 4th Vol. that the 1258/175. That the general	

Minutes of the Meeting in London about this letter.
Conditions of the Aborigines Received C.O 13 January 1880.

13 January 1880 McNab had forwarded his description of the treatment of Queensland's Aborigines, 'Notes on the Condition of the Aborigines of Queensland'.¹⁷ This lengthy document for which McNab is probably best remembered, detailed particular instances of persecution. It was drafted in October 1879 and sent by the English Cardinal, H E Manning.

(Minutes)

Mr. Braunsdon.

Although His Lordship's exposition of the querances of the Queensland Aborigines is not very connected, the points to which he draws attention fall conveniently under three heads

- i. The brutality of the Native Trooper Force pp 1-6
- ii. The want of a recognized legal status & rights, held by the Aborigines.
- iii. The action taken by the Queensland Government in the matter. pp 11-15

The charges against the Native Troopers are perhaps a little tinged, but there can be no doubt from the previous correspondence on the subject - more especially from the admissions contained in the 4th Vol. that the 1258/175. That the general

13 January 1880 1

general feeling respecting the Force represents a general tendency in these numbers of it. It seems fully certain

that the current official opinion 'The blacks were deprived' often implies a great deal of indiscriminate

if two of the particular cases instanced by we have already heard: (1) the massacre at Knickerbocker Island, which was reported on by the Governor ^{G. 1839} 1839. The original charge

* contained in the enclosure to Mr Cooper's letter may have been supported - but Mr Stanger, Commissioner of Africa, in replying does not actually deny the ^{innocence} innocence of such an affair & the basis of the enclosure this letter is questionable.

f. 4. 3. The case of Uchala, submitted in the form who killed a native by treachery, reported by the Governor after taking in ^{G. 1839} 7/38 pp 4.5. It was stated that he was the perpetrator for wilful murder, but if Mr Stanger's statement is correct, he should be treated as such.

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ii. Desire want of legal status & rights.

f. 7. It is stated that the Aborigines are outside the law, which implies means that, amongst other things, that the shooting of a native is almost invariably regarded into a capital murder or manslaughter.

f. 7. These evidence is not received in Court, though it has been proved for the purpose.

f. 7. A law prohibiting beside the terms of interceding is said to be habitually disregarded

18.

In attention is paid to natives coming & killing each other.

18.

Difficulties are put in the way of registration of native marriages

19.

Their right to land is held void.

iii.

The action of the Queensland Government

Gov 39
12078/74

A Royal Commission was appointed in 1873 & reappointed in 1874 to carry out its own recommendations: see Report (print)

attached to ⁴²⁰ 12012/74

In 1876. Governor Cairns appointed a Permanent Commission to inquire into the condition of the aborigines, and the sum of £500 was appropriated therefor to be spent upon their civilization for some years.

11

Mr. Whitaker states that the first Commission called into existence to inquire into the question, what the sound &

incapable -

He also says that the permission granted to the aborigines to settle on Reserves, & there

12.

homesteads on the same terms as Aborigines, was subsequently withdrawn - He also points out

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12.

He also says that the permission granted to the aborigines to settle on Reserves, & there homesteads on the same terms as Aborigines, was subsequently withdrawn - He also points out

that at present the practice, which is thereby now looked by the Commission -

15

In conclusion he remarks that under his instructions from the Home Government, attention has been paid to the condition of the South Sea Islanders (Tonga Islands), but that the aborigines require an interference in their favour quite as much as the former.

relate probably to a series of papers in his possession.
 That I have obtained a Parliamentary Paper - Queensland Bound Volume
 from which it appears that in 1876 some correspondence
 passed between Mr. McLeod & the Queensland Government
 upon this question - It was considered by Bishop Hall, and
 the Commission on Aborigines that Mr. McLeod's proposals were
 not practical. These proposals are contained in pp. 145-149.

(1876) letter
 pp 141-4,
 p. 170.

Mr. McLeod, I believe, had an interview with
 you at the time when this paper was received -
 It should, I suppose, be referred to the Queensland
 Government - Victoria is doing all it can for
 its aborigines, & her South's holder proposes to take up
 the matter seriously, ^{to give} a paragraph in the Governor's
 speech during the session - and ~~perhaps~~ Queensland
 might be willing to do its utmost in the matter.

The views of the Rev. Dr. Dumenil
 18 Jan 1880

... report, ... referred to the Queensland
 Government - Victoria is doing all it can for
 its aborigines, & her South's holder proposes to take up
 the matter seriously, ^{to give} a paragraph in the Governor's
 speech during the session - and ~~perhaps~~ Queensland
 might be willing to do its utmost in the matter.

The views of the Rev. Dr. Dumenil
 18 Jan 1880
 That are already thoroughly
 well known to the Queensland
 Govt. see papers presented to
 the Leg. Assembly 1876 alluded
 to above, but at the same time
 it is well that the Home Govt
 should press upon the Col. Govt
 the necessity of doing all in
 their power to furnish out of

Paris
16th January 80

Sir

You asked me what can be done for the
land blacks?

You know better than I what the
Office can do for them, and what the Queensland
Government. I know what they need to be done
for them, and will state it as briefly as I can
They need protection for their lives (A) and
mutual injury (B)
Such protection should be made for them as
enable them to live as civilized men. Their right
to land should be made for the decrepit, as for
poor persons (C)

They should be acknowledged as British subjects
and have the protection of the laws, and be ad-
mitted into the courts of justice for the redress of
wrongs inflicted on them.

Their marriages, at any rate when celebrated
by a registered clergyman, should be legalized
and registered.
Laws affecting them should be enforced.

Father McNab from Paris to the Colonial Office London, 16 Jan 1880,
Pro Co 234/40, 626. 1668/80, Batty Library.

if an appeal is made to the present Governor only,
as I have reason to know that in consequence of the
opinions he formed of the Aborigines of Western
Australia he considers it his duty to attempt
anything in their favor. I think that no more
direct remonstrance or direction effectual it
should be directed to the Governor in Council.
I have the honor to remain

Yours truly

Duncan McNab

16 January 1880 In answer to a request for directives, McNab
wrote again to the Colonial Office, this time from Paris:

Sir,

You asked me what can be done for the Queensland Blacks?

You know better than I what the Colonial Office can do for them, and what the
Queensland Government. I know what they need to be done for them, and will state it as briefly
as I can.

1. They need protection for their lives and from mutual injury.
2. Such provision should be made for them as would enable them to live like civilized
men. Their right to land should be acknowledged.
3. Provision should be made for the decrepit as for poor persons.
4. They should be acknowledged as British subjects, should have the protection of the
laws and be admitted in the courts of justice for the redress of wrongs inflicted on them.
5. Their marriages, at any rate when celebrated by a registered clergyman, should be
legalized and registered.

6. Laws affecting them should be enforced. With regard to the wild Blacks in the
unsettled portions of the colony. I have but one remark to make in addition to what I wrote on
the subject to Governor Cairns—Namely that it ought not to be permitted to Black troopers, or

to others, to kill them, except in necessary self defence or in punishment of murder and then the guilty parties only and not a mob indiscriminately should be punished. When any of them commit other crimes they should be captured and otherwise chastised as by forced labour, e.g., turning a stiff crank; and should they intermit their exertions, then natives might be curtailed. This would be the very best punishment for an Aboriginal and one that could be inflicted without the danger of his contamination by sojourn with European criminals.

One great plea for the existence of the **Black Police** in Queensland is that Europeans are not to follow an Aboriginal in the scrub and catch him but the Blacks can, then by all means let them do so, and that only.

Their rifle, when they get within speaking distance would be as good a help as it is to the bushrangers to stick up travellers. I have known a case in which a white woman, Mrs Carroll living near Mooloola, covering the Black Captain Piper, with a gun, caused him to kneel down and beg for his life and confess he had murdered a botanist.

At another time in like manner she made two Blackfellows bring back her husband's boat, which they had taken away. As they disregarded her first command she shot a ball over their heads. They then plunged into the water leaving the boat. On her threatening to shoot the men in the water, unless they brought back the boat they did so.

It may not be possible to prevent them from waging war against each other in the interior and the outskirts of the colony, but in the occupied regions their mutual conflicts should be prevented. They should also be punished for injuring each other and for drunkenness.

The best and most practical provision is the availing to them sufficient and available land, at their own request, or that of those who have an interest in their welfare, instead of leaving it to the option of an incompetent. I have known a tribe whose land is mainly occupied by a township.

Fulfilling the conditions of residence on a homestead area would greatly tend to civilize them. Along the coasts boats and nets would be desirable. I do not mean that they should be domiciled like paupers: but only that a certain weekly allowance of food should be given them from stores in their vicinity. Every squatter has a store.

In conclusion I have no great hope of much good being done for the Blacks, if an appeal is made to the present Governor only as I have reason to know that in consequence of the opinions he formed of the Aborigines of Western Australia he considered it ineffectual to attempt anything in their favour. I think that for the remonstrance or direction to be effectual it should be directed to the Governor in Council.

I have the honour to remain, Yours truly, Duncan McNab.¹⁸

18 January 1880 Therefore McNab's entreaties did effect some response, but the Colonial Office minutes show that his ideas were considered impractical and "much of what he writes is an old story."¹⁹ There was some appreciation however, that indiscretions occurred in

dealings with the distant colony's indigenous population:

It seems pretty certain that the current official phrase 'the blacks were dispersed' often implies a great deal of inhumanity.²⁰

28 January 1880 Memorandum by McNab to Propaganda, Italian, re faculties. Here are extracts from letters regarding faculties sought in Australia

1. To dispense from the interrogation of the first, pagan, spouse, an velit, Sc.

As explained in letter to Cardinal Prefect. Sought by Ordinaries of Vicars Apostolic of Queensland, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Port Victoria;

2. Dispensation in radica;

3. Whether Aborigines are permitted to eat reptiles on days of abstinence.

These 3 petitions were referred to the Holy Office, in February.

McNab notes 2 other items on this memorandum:

4. To get a letter to present to Missionaries of Sacred Blood in the United States; and

5. To get a travelling-allowance.²¹

30 January 1880 Father McNab wrote a note in Italian from Scotch College, Rome, to Propaganda. He suggested that this year's grant from the Propagation of the Faith be divided, half to the Pro Vicar, Queensland and a quarter each to the Bishops of Brisbane and Adelaide. He thought New Norcia belonged to the Diocese of Perth. He knew that the Bishop of Port Victoria was already receiving help from the Propagation of the Faith, and that he should extend his operations in favor of the Aborigines, especially as far as Port Darwin.²²

From Rome, McNab wrote again to the Colonial Office of his intention to leave Rome directly for London and that there would be time to arrange for his meeting with the Honorable Secretary for the Colonies. He would call immediately on arrival.²³

31 January 1880 In the eyes of the Colonial Office, McNab was little more than a well-meaning but ill-informed humanitarian. The combination of a Colonial Office reluctant to meddle in the 'internal affairs of Queensland and a Queensland administration anxious to resist interference was powerful. But the grudging admission from the Colonial Office that the matter "should, I suppose, be referred to the Queensland Government" was something.²⁴

leg. Duncan b. 9. Feb. 1880 *London.*
 $\frac{10}{57 \frac{1}{2} 80} + \frac{10}{1068/50}$

MINUTE.

Mr. J. J. 23 Feb. 1880
Mr. Wing. 24
Mr. Bram. 24
Mr. Mead.
Mr. Herbert. 26
Lord Cadogan.
Sir M. 1 cks Beach. 27

McNab
28th Feb. 1880
Sir,
I am directed by the

1880 Minutes

2 February 1880 Father McNab wrote to Mary MacKillop from Scotch College in Rome:

My dear Cousin,

Having yesterday received your long and interesting letter, I hasten to reply lest I should not have leisure to do so for some time to come, although I have but very little to say, having already written to Uncle Peter from whom you will, of course, get all my news.

You may well imagine how much I felt for him on hearing of his illness, and even the hope there is at his recovery does not altogether satisfy me. My greatest comfort is the knowledge I had of his having received the Sacraments some time previously and his being so prepared before pain and sickness could distract him, making it an easy matter for him again to dispose himself for those sacraments.

I am glad to find, notwithstanding your opinion that men are Catholics merely because their forefathers were such, that you have so much faith in preachers.

Father Anselm, who had said three Masses for the repose of my soul, was not a little astonished to get a letter from me, dated London instead of Purgatory. I subsequently saw him at Fort Augustus. Mrs McDonnell, formerly of Keppoch, whom also I visited in London, had been praying for the same purpose for a twelve-month. I saw Father Coll at Fort Augustus. He is somewhat lame, I think from rheumatism; or rather I should say crippled till he gets warm walking. Then he is fit still to follow deer and other game on a mountainside. He enquired very particularly concerning all his friends and acquaintances in Australia. A gentleman with whom he often goes out shooting made him lately a present of a handsome conveyance. I know not by what name to call it.

I can do nothing at present relative to Mrs Webster except that I had asked about her at Invernevis, and that she was not known to Mrs McDonald. Mrs McCallum is no more, but I suppose your mother heard of that before.

You say you have cold weather in Victoria. Except about a fortnight since I went to Scotland till now I have been in the midst of snow and frost, often of both.

As I hope to see you ere long, I will write no more at present.

Your affectionate cousin, D McNab.²⁵

RECEIVED
S. O.
4 FEB
1880

1668
60

I intend to leave Rome directly for London by the middle of next week. Hope this notice will give you time to arrange for my meeting the Hon Secretary for the Colonies. I will call on you on my arrival.

Duncan McNab
Rome 30 Jan. 1880

Father McNab from Rome to Colonial Office to London, Vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 204, 30 January 1880, received 4 February 1880, APF



Rome, Scotch College
2nd Feb 1880

My Dear Cousin

Having yesterday

received your long and interesting
although in part do let
I happen to reply that should
not have leisure to do so for
some time to come, although
I have but very little to say,
having already written to Uncle
Peter from whom you
will of course get all my
news. You may well imagine
how much I felt for Nixon on
hearing of his illness and even
the hope there is of his recovery
does not set together so as to
My greatest comfort is the
assurance of having of his having

do not think it can bring you
any real comfort as I have
not letters of encourage news
to impart I found but little or
no direct deal among Secu-
lars or Regulars in my search
for missionaries for the
Australians Aborigines.
I met Dr Reynolds in Rome
in January last, and told him
when he asked my opinion
of what should be done with
the six tribes in Western
Australia that they should be immediately
taken care of unless they were
of a perfect accord with the Ec-
clesiastical authority there.
I am sorry and ashamed
at the manner in which they

have been treated, and of my
lack of the change, because it is
their benefit and that of the
people that the effort was made for
is however a pledge of a great
ward, it ^{seems} ~~has~~ been a probable circum-
stance in the dispensation of
Providence that the letters
from the staff of Jesus of
his servants often comes from
those whom he has placed in
the world in the pursuit of
in the Christian dispensation.
Everywhere the corruption of
human nature is found and
makes itself felt even in
the best works of man, and
nature it was least to be
expected, so that the Christian

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop (Mother Mary of the Cross) from
Scotch College in Rome, 2 February 1880, AMMNS

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop (Mother Mary of the Cross) from
Scotch College in Rome, 2 February 1880, AMMNS Page 2

edit at present. I have heard
that instructions have be-
come been sent from
Rome to the Augustinians
in Western Australia to
work them less more for
the conversion of the blacks
and I suppose this to be
a consequence of their
complaints of their
Lately I met that they
V. G. of North who is
in address for an
and he told me that at
Voice there are nearly
instructions as common to
since 1848. The blacks on
the settlement are doing
well and the more are

It is my hope that the
that God will call little
and assign to such a
to his work reward or
penalities from some
that the sisters of St
one giving great satisfaction
in the Holy Diocese, and doing
much good. They are themselves
in peace and contentedly
happy & this ought certainly
to calm your soul; and make you
hope that God in his own time
and way will enable them
to accomplish all that the
designs. We know not how
it will come to pass.
I was lately at Quilba &
Lourdes & felt much

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop (Mother Mary of the Cross) from
Scotch College in Rome, 2 February 1880, AMMNS Page 3

aggravated by the apathy of
I can now be called an
Anglican and of George
who is said to be a
I did not see George
near the sheep station.
I had a long conversation
with Mr. Blane who
I have been told had had
a very evil influence on
the family. He is an
elder in the parish and
does not believe or more
know the Confession of
Faith of the Scottish
Episcopate and is full of pre-
judice against the
doctrines I apprehend
that he will be

it incorrectly to this side a
try to combat some prejudices
which it seems to me he
has already excited in their
minds. As an antidote to
some extent, I intend
as soon as I have leisure
to send to Rome a written
account of the interview.
I need not ask you to pray
for them; as I trust your
charities will move you
to do so.
My labours for the blacks
be a fruitless and
hopeless; yet I believe
some good may result
from them although
there is little or no appearance

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop (Mother Mary of the Cross) from
Scotch College in Rome, 2 February 1880, AMMNS Page 4

11 February 1880 Mc Nab called at the Colonial Office for his interview, but it was not granted.²⁶

12 February 1880 In London, McNab wrote to the Colonial Secretary of his desire to leave London in the near future and asked again for an interview. He had called at the Colonial Office the previous day to be told that both men whom he wished to see were engaged with each other, and he could have seen Sir Michael then. There is record of a cryptic note of Sir Michael's comment, "I do not think it necessary that Mr McNab call on me."²⁷

W. Hensington Park
4 Ashby Road
12 Feb. 1880

Dear Sir

I wish to leave London as soon as possible I should feel obliged to you for informing me when I may see the Colonial Secretary, as it cannot be soon, if the interview be requisite?

Yesterday I called to the Colonial Office with the hope of seeing you. I suppose you did not get my card, as you told, you were engaged with Sir Michael. I regret it since possibly should Sir Michael might have seen me and asked to have information he desired. Believe me

yours truly
Geo. Linnian McNab

Father McNab to Colonial Office London, 12th February 1880

22 February 1880 It was decided that a letter would be sent from the office of the Secretary of State for the Colonies to acknowledge receipt of the Memorandum received in a letter from Cardinal Manning. In this Sir Michael Hicks Beach would thank McNab for his suggestions and state that he had transmitted copies of the papers to the Governor of Queensland with the request that he would bring the matter before his ministers.²⁸

McNab's theories on the granting of land were also noted:

if the Blacks show a tendency to settle upon the land, the colony might well relax the regulations in order to allow them to do so.

Yet Herbert (ex Colonial Secretary of Queensland), whose opinion, backed up by colonial experience, would doubtless have carried weight, also wrote:

I do not think that much more can be done than is being done by Queensland in this matter ... as to civilizing this interesting but hopeless race, it is hardly to be understood how a man with large experience of them can dream of any real progress ever being made in that direction.²⁹

28 February 1880 A copy of the minutes of the meeting held to discuss McNab's letters was sent to the Governor. The discussion fell under three headings:

- (i) The brutality of the Native Trooper Force;
- (ii) The want of a required legal status and rights felt by the Aborigines;
- (iii) The action taken by the Queensland government in the matter.

With regard to the first, it was agreed that the current official position

"The blacks were dispersed",

often implied a great deal of inhumanity.

Of the two particular cases instanced by McNab,

1. The alleged Hinchinbrook Island incident was reported. The Commissioner of Police in replying did not exactly deny the occurrence;
2. Wheeler, a Sub Inspector in the force had flogged a native boy to death. He was to be prosecuted for wilful murder, but if McNab's statement was correct, he escaped justice.

With regard to the second point, it was stated by McNab that the statement 'Aborigines were outside the Law' meant, among other things:

- a. The shooting of a native was not necessarily inquired into as either murder or manslaughter;
- b. Their evidence was not received in court, though a law had been passed for that purpose;
- c. A law prohibiting sale to them of intoxicating liquors was said to be habitually disregarded;
- d. No attention was paid to natives wounding and killing each other;
- e. Difficulties were put in the way of registering native marriages;
- f. Their right to land was held void.

3. With regard to the third point, a Royal Commission was appointed in 1873 and reappointed in 1874 to carry out its own recommendations. In 1876, Governor Gavin appointed a Permanent Commission to inquire into the condition of the Aborigines and the sum of £500 per annum appeared to have been spent upon their civilization for some years.

Since the correspondence noted in the Parliamentary Papers in Queensland in 1876, had been referred to the Anglican Bishop Hale who considered that McNab's proposals were not practical, the Colonial Secretary in London was therefore advised to refer McNab's paper back to the Queensland Government, pressing the colonies for the need to do something about the natives wounding and killing each other. There would be a necessity of doing all in their power to punish outrages upon the Blacks and to procure their humane treatment by the settlers.

It was decided that everything that McNab had written, except as to the acquisition of land was an old story.

However, if the Blacks were showing a tendency to settle upon the land, the colony might well relax the regulations in order to allow them to do so. A report upon the settlement near Durundur should be asked for.

It was accepted that Blacks were killed owing to the timidity of shepherds and that many whites of the lower orders were frightened out of their lives at the idea of Blacks and would shoot them in a panic stricken notion of their own lives being in danger. There was no doubt that juries were averse to convicting white men.

The concluding advice to the Colonial Secretary was that as long as there were large tribes of natives and large tracts of almost unpeopled country there would be occasional collisions. As to assisting the interesting but hopeless race, it would be hard to understand how a man

with extensive experience of them could reach in the direction suggested.³⁰

Memorandum
di D. Domenico Mac Nab. 186
Missionario in Australia.

1. Facoltà di dispensare dall'interrogazione del primo sposo infedele su soliti - come spiegato nella lettera al Capo Prefetto, tra concessi agli ordinari del Vicariato, di Queensland, di Brisbane, di Adelaide, di Perth, e di Port Victoria. - Al S. O. (Copia Estratto di lettera).
2. Dispensatio in radice. Al S. O. (Copia d'istanza).
3. Se è permesso agli Aborigines di cibarsi di rettili nei giorni di astinenza. - Al S. O.
4. Lettera tra presentata ai missionari del Prejiosissimo Sangue negli Stati Uniti di America.
5. Suicidio per violico.

T Roma 28 Gennaio 1880.
Domenico Mac Nab

Memo of McNab to Propaganda Fide re faculties, 28/1/80
 (Sent to Holy Office in February), SRC Oceania, fol 186

28 February 1880 The reply to Father McNab:

Sir,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to acknowledge the receipt of your Memorandum on the Condition of the aborigines of Queensland, received in a letter from Cardinal Manning dated the 13th of January and also of your letter of the 16th of January on the same subject.

Sir Michael Hicks Beach does not think it necessary to trouble you to call upon him but desires me to thank you for your suggestion and to inform you that he has transmitted copies of the papers to the Governor of Queensland with the request that he will take the opportunity of bringing the whole project of the condition and treatment of the aborigines before his Ministers,

I am, E.W.

Continuation of the Search for Missionaries in the United States

In the meantime, McNab, after a brief stay in London, had pressed on to the final of his overseas venture. Conscious of his failure to recruit any European assistance, McNab sailed for the United States, arriving in New York in March 1880. Soon he was back in Victoria.

16 March 1880 Father McNab, Ohio, Cincinnati, to Mgr Masotti, Propaganda, in Italian, (Melrose, by Lara, Victoria)

As I must, I want to tell the congregation of Propaganda that after a happy voyage by land and sea I arrived at New York the second day of this month. I was kindly received and helped by the Cardinal Archbishop of that city. However, not being able to find any missionaries in his Archdiocese for the Australian Aborigines, I passed, after the advice of his secretary, to that of Newark to the Passionist Fathers in Hoboken, who are numerous and zealous.

I learned from their very Reverend Provincial Father Vittorio Carnuchio that some priests could be obtained from there for that mission. He promised to write about this to the Father General in Rome. I told him that the Father General would find all the information about the mission he wanted at the Propaganda and that he should deal with Cardinal Simeoni. I spoke with some of those Passionist Fathers and they seemed to me to be good and capable and ready to undertake the mission for the Aborigines. They speak English better than those at Mariastein. So God gave me more success right from the beginning in America than in my trips to Europe. "Spiritu ubi vult spirit." From New York I passed via Pittsburgh to Cincinnati and had to travel another 100 miles to Mariastein.

I presented my letters from Cardinal Simeoni and the General to Father Austermann, who could give him only Father Hennebery, an Irish CPPS, already in Queensland, (a good missionary, says Austermann), and the hope of others, all going well, after 2-3 years. Here in Ohio, Father Otto Jair, OSF, V G, will speak to his provincial and if he can get missionaries will

*quali contengono i motivi dello medesimo. Nella stessa lettera la
prega di sottoporre al giudizio di costoro l'operato del suddetto
proprio dal suddetto sacerdote; se è parso agli aborigeni austri-
liani di abitare i villaggi nei giorni di assistenza. = sicuro che l'U.S.A.
si compiacia di rimettergli a suo tempo le relative conclusioni di costoro
supponendo il sotto scritto.*

Curacao *Mgr Angelo Jacobini Affessor del S. Ufficio*
29 Febbr. 1880
*Il sott. legno di sopra rimette qui accolto alla S. S. U. A. una istanza del
Vicario apost. del Curacao con cui implora la facoltà di somministrare l'oc-
monia del Battesimo in due casi a lui pregato a voler parlar in corp.*

Curacao *Mgr segretario dei Santi*
29 Febbraro 1880
Il sott. legno di sopra rimette qui accolto come sopra.

To the Holy Office concerning McNab's requests, Lettere, 1880, vol 376, fol 85, 29 February 1880.

write to Cardinal Simeoni.³¹

There were no promises of help so McNab moved to a Passionist Monastery at Hoboken, New Jersey. Their General refused permission, pleading a lack of resources. McNab later surmised it was memories of the Passionist fiasco at Stradbroke in the 1840's and the subsequent ill feeling between Polding and themselves that caused the decision.³²

After Hoboken, McNab moved west. He later claimed to have successfully negotiated with the Fathers of the Precious Blood at Mariastein in Ohio, for two priests to open a mission near Windorah at the junction of the Thompson and Barcoo Rivers in Western Queensland. Quinn seemingly refused to give diocesan support for the project and it was never attempted.³³

McNab terminated his American journey in San Francisco, where he compared notes on missiology with the Dominicans and worked for some months to raise funds for his return trip to Sydney, which was duly completed in August 1880. Though he did not know at the time, his visit to America would yield no fruit.³⁴

10 April 1880 Father McNab, San Francisco, California to Mgr Masotti, Propaganda, in Italian:

Sir,

Here there are very many Jesuit Fathers and I have therefore requested Father Varsi, the college superior of St Ignazio to give a few priests for the Australian natives. He promised to write to the Father General immediately about this, and he says that if the Jesuits are to be banished from France it will be easy to find some for Australia. I have also written to the Capuchin Father Superior in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for missionaries, but I haven't yet received an answer.

Soon I am returning to Australia after doing as much as I could to find missionaries in America. I will entreat certain secular priests in the dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat and Bathurst to work with Father Hennebery of the Congregation of Propaganda, at least until such time as they can send him colleagues from his congregation in Ohio.

The end of a McNab note to Cardinal Simeoni reads as follows:

As I must go to Australia at the end of this month, or somewhere else, I am very anxious to know the decision of the Holy Office about the validity of my ordination. Therefore, I ask Your Eminence to bid them to inform me of the news.

In the nineteenth century, the Australian Church was preoccupied with adapting its Irish Catholicism to the status quo. White society in Australia was at worst hostile and at best ambivalent towards the

85 34 b
Mgi Angelo Jacobini Officiario del S. Officio Irlanda
27 Feb. 1880.
Sono state proposte a questo S. O. due questi intorno alla validità di un matrimonio contratto da due indigeni in Australia. Il sott. legge i: se promessa di rimane. Tard qui acceduto alla S. O. S. O. una copia dei suddetti questi pregandole di tutte. parole al giudizio di questa Segreteria quando essi di sua competenza e se si possa al tempo stesso di parlarne per avere la volontà ripartita?
Mgi Faustino Segretario del Vicariato

27 Feb. 1880
Questa S. O. non avendo alcuna ingerenza nel territorio delle Missioni in Australia. Ma si ha alcune parte nell'ammmissione degli alunni nel medesimo, non concesso il sacerdote D. Simeone Masotti al quale si riferisce il progetto suo figlio del 21 cor. per averne le informazioni convenienti per farne l'uso che si conviene di quello ne è il protettore, una consuetudine fosse che S. O. lo si voglia trattare all'incirca con Emmanuele S. O. E parlo il sott. legge intorno ad S. O. la carta se lui non affegge a di propria?

Mgi Angelo Jacobini Officiario del S. Officio Australia
29 Feb. 1880.
Il sacerdote Duncan Mac Nab Missionario per gli Aborigeni australiani nella Diocesi di Brisbane ha scritto all'Emo Prefetto di questa S. O. pregandolo di ottenergli dal S. Padre la facoltà di dispensare i matrimoni aborigeni convertiti che vogliono unirsi in matrimonio cristiano dall'obbligo d'interrogare anzitutto il coniuge infedele con cui avevano già contratto matrimonio prima della conversione. E la stessa facoltà ha egli implorato per i vescovi di Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth e Port Victoria e per l'Ab. Vicario apost. del Queensland. Inoltre ha implorato la dispensa in ratiore per la validità del matrimonio contratto da due aborigeni convertiti senza averne prima l'accennata interrogazione la quale sarebbe stata necessaria per parte di uno di essi. E avendo tale facoltà a dispensa di comm. dispensa di colata (segreteria), il sott. legge rimette alla S. O. S. O. cui si sott. e una delle ratiore soucand' presentate dal sacerdote.

27 February 1880, 27 February 1880,
29 February 1880

California
San Francisco

Monsignore

Qui i Padri Gesuiti sono affai
numerosi, e perciò ho richiesto il Padre Sabatini
Superiore del collegio di St. Ignazio di dare
alcuni preti nei selvaggi Australiani.
Egli ha promesso di scriverne immediatamente
al Padre Generale, e dice che se i Gesuiti duranno
a bandirsi dalla Francia sarà facile trovarne
alcuni per l'Australia.

Ho scritto anche per missionari a St. Perdon
dei Padri Cappuccini nella Archidiece di
Milwaukee, ma non ho ancora ricevuto
risposta.

Richiedo all'Australia quanto prima ho fatto
avendo fatto quanto poteva per trovare
missionari in America.

Supplirò i preti suoi loro nelle diocesi
di Melbourne, Ballarat e Bathurst e
lavorare col Padre Bennicherry della Congregazione
del M. S. almeno fino a che gli si possano
mandare socii dalla sua Congregazione in
Australia.

Mi creda il suo umilissimo servo

Dionisio Mac Nab

Il dì 10 marzo 1880

Father McNab from San Francisco, California to Ser Mons Masotti,
Propaganda Fide, 10 April 1880

Aborigines. The major non-British culture in the nineteenth century was that of the Aborigines. The Australian Church was still preoccupied with adapting its Irish Catholicism that its need to embrace the non-British cultures in Australia would continue to be neglected.³⁶

European immigrants were operating under the impact of the book, *The Origin of Species*, published by Darwin in 1859. Over and above the racial attitudes that newcomers brought with them, racist attitudes towards aborigines had been prevalent from the early days of Australia's white settlement. This did not augur well for McNab's lobby for acquisition of land for Aborigines.

Acceptance of a social Darwinism that proposed survival of the fittest regarding white supremacy and Aboriginal extermination was typified in a letter to *The Queenslander* in May 1880 in which the question was asked and answered,

"Is there room for both of us here? No! Then the sooner the weak are wiped out, the better."

It had been early in 1880 that Father Bucas had left the MacKay district. Unfortunately, after a severe falling out with James Quinn, he transferred to Port Douglas in the Vicariate of Cooktown leaving his foundation work for Aborigines behind.³⁷

In Mackay the Sisters of Mercy had replaced the other sisters at his orphanage. In July Sister Coulan RSM complained to the Police Magistrate about the "considerable number of Aborigines in the neighborhood." Captain Goodall promised that the Native Police would "call round at the orphanage in a few days" to warn off "the wild blacks." In this way Father Bucas's original intentions for the area were entirely reversed. The place for them was no longer available.³⁸

24 June 1880 Report on the Aboriginal Reserve Durundur, to the Minister for Lands, Brisbane, from R I Smith, Henry Wood and J J Nicholson:

Sir,

Two years have gone by since a report on the Aboriginal Reserve at Binambi Durundur has been presented to you. It is probable that you will be asked for information respecting this Reservation during the Coming Session of the Legislative Assembly and we now do ourselves the honor to acquaint you with the condition and prospects of the place and the people for whose use and benefit it has been set apart.

1. As to the natives themselves the most marked feature is their diminishing numbers, their decaying and feeble existence and their near prospect of absolute extinction. Since we

Report on Aboriginal Reserve Durundur 24 June 1880

Durundur
Kinamba Durundur

24 June 1880

The Honorable
The Minister for Lands
Brisbane

Two years have gone by since a report on the Aboriginal Reserve at Kinamba Durundur has been presented to you. It is probable that you will be asked for information respecting this reservation during the coming session of the Legislative Assembly and you now do ourselves the honor to acquaint you with the condition and prospects of the place and the people for whose sake and benefit it has been set apart.

As to the Natives themselves the most marked feature is their diminishing numbers, their decaying and feeble existence and their near prospect of absolute extinction. Since we last reported to your predecessor in office the deaths have been eight in number and no black children have been born. Their general state of health is bad and nearly the whole of them are suffering from aggravated pulmonary complaints which in a very few years will carry them off.

They live in tolerable comfort and prosperity in their own way without the least desire or inclination to change their mode and habits of life. With the exception of a few indigent and helpless old people supported from the funds set

Report on Aboriginal Reserve Durundur to the Honorable, The Minister for Lands, Brisbane, signed by R I Smith, Henry Wood and J J Nicholson, 4 June 1880.

Monsignore.

Come debbo, voglio fare sapere alla S. C. de Propaganda che dopo un prospero viaggio per terra e per mare approda a New-York il secondo giorno di questo mese. Fui ben ricevutamente accolto ed accolto dal Cardinale Archevescovo di quella città. Non trovando però missionarii per gli aborigeni Australiani nella sua Archidiece, per consiglio del suo segretario, preparai quella di Newark ai Padri Sacerdoti in Hoboken, i quali sono numerosi e buoni. Dal loro Molto Rev. Padre Provinciale Vittore Carmuccio intesi che ivi si potevano ottenere alcuni preti per quella missione. Egli promise di scrivere al Padre Generale in Roma. Io gli dissi che a Propaganda troverebbe il Padre Generale tutta la notizia che desidero e che dovrebbe trattarne coll'Emo Cardinale Propetto. Parlai con alcuni di quei Padri Sacerdoti e mi parvero buoni, ubili e pronti ad intraprendere la missione agli aborigeni. Parlano inglese meglio di colui a cui accennai. Così Gesù mi ha dato migliore successo dal principio in America, che in molti luoghi e viaggi nell'Europa. "Spiritus ubi vult spirat." La New York prepa per l'Aborigena Cincinatti sperando di trovare qui

Father McNab from Ohio to Mgr Masotti, Propaganda Fide, 16 March 1880. He tells him he is going to Melrose, Lara, Victoria. for 185, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881

In February 1880, London issued a gentle reminder to the Queensland Government noting the government's responsibilities to the Aborigines, requesting a report on Durundur and forwarding a copy of 'Notes on the Condition ...'.

12 July 1880 Arthur Palmer's reply reiterated the impracticality of McNab's proposals and highlighted the extent to which the Scottish cleric had been alienated from the mainstream by enclosing with his reply one of Hale's letters to the *Brisbane Courier*:

Palmer diluted the part being played by the **Native Police** and concluded:

Although I regret to say that steps which have been taken on their behalf have given no adequate return for the care bestowed upon them, and consequently there is little encouragement to hope that any lasting benefit will accrue there from, the efforts of the government will be nonetheless strenuous.⁴⁰

10 September 1880 It was good enough for the Colonial Office. The letter from Hale in particular made its point.⁴¹

14 September 1880 Herbert reiterated his confidence in the Queensland Government's readiness to deal benevolently with their black charges and to punish cases of abuse.⁴² The new Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Earl of Kimberley, was prepared to defer to Herbert's expertise and let the matter drop there.

Notes for Chapter 4

¹ McNab 'Memoria', (in Italian) to Simeoni, Propaganda, 15 September 1879: SRC, Oceania, 12, f. 172, APF.

² McNab, Memorial to Propaganda Fide from Rome. APF.

³ Bechse to Simeoni, 29 September 1879, APF.

⁴ Bechse to Simeoni, 29 September 1879, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 168, APF. See Footnote 14 in Ch 5

⁵ J Cani to Antonio Cani, 15 October 1879, SRC, Oceania, 12, ff. 46-50. (In Endicott p 176) APF

⁶ Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, to Cardinal Simeoni, 17 October 1879, re. McNab's mission, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881: 174-5, APF.

⁷ McNab to Propaganda, in Italian, no date, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 176, APF.

⁸ *SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881: fol 177*: Bechse, General SJ in Italian, from Fiesole, to Cardinal Simeoni, 20 October 1879. APF

⁹ McNab to Colonial Office London, 24 October 1879, *Queensland State Archives* C O, 234/40, QSA and also BL.

¹⁰ Leading Article, 'Religious Wanted at the North-West Coast', *West Australian Catholic Record*, 4 December 1879, Box B 24, Book 2, North West, pp 48-54. ACAP

¹¹ McNab, Glasgow, to Cardinal Simeoni, 11 December 1879, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 178 & 180, APF.

¹² McNab to Simeoni, 11 December 1879, SRC, Oceania, vol 13 fol 178, APF.

¹³ McNab, 'Memoria', 15 September 1879, APF.

¹⁴ McNab, Alloa, to Mgr Masotti, 15 December 1879, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 181, APF.

¹⁵ Father. Horgan, Cork, to Mgr Masotti, 6 January 1880, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 182-3, APF.

¹⁶ McNab to Hicks-Beach, 11 Jan 1880, PRO CO 234/40, no 1668.

¹⁷ McNab, 'Notes on the Condition ...', PRO CO 234/40 no 573. BL, WA

¹⁸ McNab to Colonial Office, London, from Paris. 16 January 1880, 626, 1668/80, BL, WA

¹⁹ R G W H (Robert Herbert), annotation, 11 February 1880, PRO CO 23440, no 573, QSA

²⁰ H W J, annotation, 18 Jan 1880, PRO CO 234/240, no 573, QSA

²¹ Memo of McNab to Propaganda, 28 January 1880, re faculties. (Sent on to Holy Office in February), SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881: fol 186, APF.

²² Note of McNab, Scotch College, Rome, to Propaganda 30 January 1880 (re Division of funding for work among aborigines), SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 204, APF.

²³ McNab to Colonial Office, London, from Rome, 30 January 1880, APF.

²⁴ G B P, 31 January 1880, PRO CO 234/40, no 573, QSA

²⁵ Father McNab to Mary MacKillop (Mother Mary of the Cross) from Scotch College in Rome, 2 February 1880, AMMNS.

²⁶ 11 February 1880, PRO, CO 234/40, no 1668, QSA

²⁷ Minutes of Meeting, Colonial Office, London, 18 February 1880, BL, WA

²⁸ The documents containing this information were obtained from the Batty Library in Perth, WA

²⁹ Herbert, 18 February 1880, PRO CO 234/40, no 573, QSA

³⁰ Palmer to the Administrator of the Queensland Government, 12 July 1880, PRO, CO 234/40, no 13929, QSA

³¹ H W J, 10 September 1880, PRO, CO 234 40, no 13929, QSA

³² Herbert, 14 September 1880, PRO CO 234/40, no 13929, QSA

³³ McNab to Eminenza, 5 July 1883, cited in Byrne, *Robert Dunne, 1830-1917, Archbishop of Brisbane*, p 267.

³⁴ McNab to Moran, 29 August 1887, ACAS.

³⁵ End of a McNab note to Cardinal Simeoni relating to the validity of his ordination? Fol 179, e, APF.

³⁶ Quoted in K E Evans, 'Missionary Effort towards the Cape York Aborigines, 1886-1910', BA Hons Thesis, University of Queensland, 1969, p 17. (Endicott, p 170).

³⁷ McLay, *James Quinn*, p 162.

³⁸ R L Evans, 'Queensland's First Aboriginal Reserve', *Queensland Heritage*, p.3.

³⁹ Report on Aboriginal Reserve Durundur, signed by R I Smith, Henry Wood and J J Nicholson, 24 June 1880, QSA

⁴⁰ CO 234/40, QSA

⁴¹ McNab, Ohio, to Mgr Masotti, Propaganda, 16 March 1880. (Going to Melrose, Lara, Victoria), SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 185, APF.

⁴² McNab to Simeoni, 22 October 1880, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, fol 166, APF.

Chapter 5

BACK TO AUSTRALIA, AUGUST 1880



3 August 1880 Father McNab from St John's College Sydney, to Mgr Masotti, Propaganda, in Italian.

Very Rev Monsignor,

I arrived here the 1st of August... While I was in California I searched in vain for missionaries from the Dominicans in San Francisco and from the Capuchins in Milwaukee. An Irish lay priest of St Giuseppe Church promised to ask his Exeat from the Archbishop and to come to save the Aborigines of Queensland.

Aus. Austr.
Sydney
Collegio di S. G. Massotti
3 Agosto 1880

Mons. Mandignone.

Approdo qui al giorno
1 Agosto. — Mentre era in California cercai
in vano missionari dei Domenicani in San Francisco
e dei Capuchini in Milwaukee.
Un prete irlandese promise di chiedere
l'Exeat per venire in Australia a salvare
gli Aborigeni di Queensland.

Desideravo arrivare qui molto prima, ma per
mancanza di denaro ho dovuto lavorare nella missione
in California per qualche tempo. Ho dimesso
una bra mandata qui dalla Provvidenza divina,
perché io acquistavo migliore salute e mi appressavo
per tutto il tempo che ci voleva all'Australia. Dopo
il lungo viaggio per mare mi trovai guarito e come
se fossi inglobato per alcuni anni, tanto mi hanno
creduto le forze d'Australia e di Europa. Quella buona
memoria di cui in giorni passati ricordavo la vita. Nel
viaggio di mare ho potuto ricattare a memoria
quasi tutto il vocabolario che aveva detto il
lingua...

Father McNab to Mgr Massotti, SRC, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 374, 3 August 1880, APF

22 or
375

Ho sperato di vedere il Padre G. Henry
nel 1877 e di accettare con lui qualche
traffico di lavoro. Di poi accorsi che
non era possibile di farlo. Di M. Massotti
ho detto per il momento
con la massima stima il suo umilissimo
servo
Duncan Mac Nab

Indirizzo
Rev. D. Mac Nab
St John's College
Sydney
Australia

Conclusion to letter 3 August 1880.

Oceania
Australia 3 agosto 1880
Sydney

Il P. Mac Nab è arrivato
in Sydney —

24 Set. 1880
Rogato

Memo made in Propaganda Fide regarding Father McNab's arrival in Sydney.

I hoped to arrive here much earlier, but because of lack of money I had to work in the mission in California for some time. This stay seems to me to have been sent by divine providence, because, all the time I was in America I gained health and strength and now, after

the long sea voyage, I feel completely recovered and as if I have got younger by 10 years, that's how much my strength in spirit and body has grown. But the thing that seems the most miraculous is that even my memory has been in large part restored. On the sea voyage I was able to learn nearly all the vocabulary I had written down of a native Australian language by heart. I hope to be able to see Father Henneberry of the P P S in a few days and to plan with him what he is able to do for the natives. Then I will write to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda.¹

27 August 1880 J Masotti, Secretary, from the Palace of the Holy Office, to Mgr James Quinn, Bishop of Brisbane:

The doubt and the questions submitted by the priest Duncan McNab, missionary for the Australian Aborigines in the diocese of Brisbane, which were the subjects of your dispatches from Your Most Illustrious Lordship, one dated the 29th February of the current year the other 8 May, were taken under examination by the Most Eminent Inquisitors-General in their meeting of Wednesday the 18th instant, and were given by them the following answers.

To the doubt, whether the Australian Aborigines may be permitted to eat reptiles on days of abstinence, the reply is in the affirmative.

With regard to the faculty of dispensing from the summoning of the unbaptised spouse it was decreed as follows:

Let the Rev Lord Bishop of Brisbane be given power to sub delegate missionary and other faculties according to the Brief of Benedict XIV of 16 January 1749, with the instruction thereto annexed. For this end let a copy of the said instruction be enclosed herewith.

Finally, with regard to the particular case of George MacKenzie and Sara Danber, the Most Eminent Inquisitors-General have decreed that the Ordinary should be written to "ad mentem".

The "ad mentem" means the following:

If the man to whom the aforesaid Sara was married while unbaptised is still unbaptised, and if he cannot be summonsed even summarily and informally, or (supposing he were to be summonsed) it is foreseen that he would give a negative answer, let the Ordinary dispense from the summoning. If, however, it is uncertain whether he can be summonsed or whether the summons would turn out to be useless, let the Ordinary summons him and if there should be some other difficulty let him reopen the case. But if the man has been baptized, let the case be started all over again, the man stating when he has received baptism.

The Holy Father having deigned to grant a dispensation from the summoning of the unbaptised spouse according to the mind of the Most Eminent Fathers, the undersigned assessor of the Holy Office gladly brings it to your Lordship's notice, at the same time taking occasion to renew the affirmation of his great respect.

A Jacobini.²

An Instruction relating to the brief of Benedict XIV on the dispensation from Summoning. (Omitted etc.) It has been thought opportune to point out briefly in what cases one can make use of the faculty of dispensing from summoning, and also on the other hand, in what manner summonses should be executed when they are necessary.

In all those cases, then, in which the dwelling-place of the unbaptised spouse is certain and he can easily be cited, he must always be summonsed in person; a time being allowed, according to the distances between places, long enough for him to be able to manifest his will.

When, however the dwelling-place is certain, but the unbaptised spouse hides himself, or flees in all haste from the messenger so as not to receive the summons in person – in such cases, all opportune diligence being used according to the legal formalities of the local courts, the summons can be executed at the house which is his usual dwelling, and if perchance he has not a fixed ... (rest of document missing)...

14 September 1880 McNab's pleas were falling on deaf ears in the Colonial Office. It was agreed that correspondence with Father McNab should not be prolonged:

Although a well-meaning man, he is one of those enthusiasts it is impossible to convince.³

24 September 1880 Father McNab wrote to his cousin Mary MacKillop, Mother Mary of the Cross, from Ararat in Victoria:

My dear Cousin,

I got yours of the 20th August about the 8th September, from the sister to whom you entrusted it and also a good deal of the history of the removal of the nuns from Queensland.

I wrote to you I think on the 3rd February but I do not know whether or not you got that letter. I am thankful to you for writing to me so soon after hearing of my return. It is a pleasure for me to write you; but I do not think it can bring you any great comfort as I have but little of encouraging news to impart.

I found but little or no disinterested zeal among Seculars or Regulars in my search for missionaries for the Australian Aborigines. I met Dr Reynolds in Rome January last, and told him when he asked my opinion of what should be done with the sisters in Queensland, that they should be immediately removed unless they were of a perfect accord with the ecclesiastical authority there.

I am sorry and ashamed of the manner in which they have been treated, and yet I am glad of the change, because it is for their benefit and that of others. No doubt the cross was heavy. It is, however, a pledge of greater reward. It seems a remarkable circumstance in the dispensation of Providence that the bitterest part of the Cross of Jesus and of His servants often comes from those whom He has placed in authority in the Jewish and in the Christian dispensations. Everywhere the corruption of human nature is found and makes itself felt even

want for writing, as he said that the clearest proof of the divine institution of the Catholic Church is its continued existence in spite of the blindness and faults of the clergy and all the great heresies and schisms true their origin to them. Yet God did not withhold His grace or His gifts confirmed in grace to his own directors, but fallible men that they might have compassion on those who err. Government not the diocesan intended at the presence of scandals and evils in the Church; for our Lord has told us that tares will grow with the wheat till the harvest.

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop, 24 September 1880, AMMNS

Do not think it can bring you any real comfort as I have not uttered encouraging news to impart I fear but little or no direct zeal among Seculars or Regulars in my search for missionaries for the Australian Aborigines. I met Dr Reynolds in Province in January last, and to him when he asked my opinion what should be done with the Sisters in diocesan schools, that they should be removed as soon as possible from a perfect accord with the Ecclesiastical authority there is. I am sorry and ashamed of the manner in which they

have been treated, and of my gladness of the change, because it is their best part and that of their people. I do not doubt the crop was heavy, it is however a pledge of a great harvest. It is a remarkable circumstance in the dispensation of Providence that the bitter part of the crop of ideas of this sort comes from those whom he has placed in authority in the Church & in the Christian dispensation. Everywhere the respect to an of human nature is found and makes itself felt even in the best most safe and where it was least to be expected, that the truthman

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop, 24 September 1880, AMMNS



File 1209

Perth
September 1880

My Dear Mother

I got yours of the 24th of Aug. that about the 25th of September from the sister to whom you enclose a letter also a good deal of the history of the removal of the school from Queensland. I was so glad to hear of this on the 3rd of February, but I do not know whether you are that letter. I am thankful to you for writing to me to show at the teaching of my religion it is a pleasure for me to write you but I

at it at present. I have heard that in Australia have been exactly been a sort of conversion to the spirit of monks in Western Australia to most their values more by the conversion of the blacks and I suppose this to be a consequence of their complaints of their misery. Lately I met Father Gilling N.P. of Perth who is collecting addresses for an Epiphany and he told me that at No. 11, there are nearly as many as in Perth since 1848. The blacks and the settlement are doing well and the monks are

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop, 24 September 1880, AMMNS

agreed by the apostles of the Diocese now he can be Anglican and George who is said to be a Protestant. I did not see George there was at the sheep station. I had a long conversation with Mr. Glance who I have been told had had a very evil influence on that family. He is an older man than the Sisters and does not believe or even know the Confession of Faith of the Catholic Church and is full of prejudice against Catholic doctrine. I apprehend that he will be heard

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop, 24 September 1880, AMMNS

It is my hope that the Good Shepherd that God will call him to his work and assign to each one according to his work reward or punishment. I do not understand from some that the Sisters of St Joseph are giving great satisfaction in the Holy Diocese, and doing much good. They are their selves in health and can be trusted to support work, and make you hope that God in his own time and way will enable them to accomplish all that he designs. We know not how it will come to pass. I was told at Brisbane Extra Stella and felt much

it incorrectly to the sides a try to conquer some prejudices which it seems to me he has already excited in their minds. As an antidote to some extent, I intended as soon as I have leisure to send to Kate & written account of the interview. I need not ask you to pray for them; as I know your charity will move you to do so. Mrs. Labours for the blacks been fruitful and hopeful; yet I believe some good may result from them although there is little or no appearance

New Guinea. An attempt, strict
 is made to join in. Withers
 declines to do so for the
 present farther than
 to collect if permitted, a
 third is still undecided.
 One in Sandhurst middle
 aged recently arrived there
 and unattached has
 volunteered so that he
 and I are for the present
 the only two. I do not know
 what we shall do till
 I communicate with the
 bishops and hear from
 them. I again see things
 are nearly as they were
 last year. Believe me
 your affectionate cousin
 D. McNab
 Street Victoria Hill Station

9 D. McNab 24.9.1880
 leading a regular moral life
 and endeavouring to save
 their own souls, but doing
 little for others. Attached.
 He had gone about 1000
 miles to the North of their
 settlement and seen numerous
 tribes, who he says might
 easily be converted, but
 no one attends to them.
 His Bishop is going down
 to Papua will call the at-
 tention of Propaganda
 to them and he hopes some
 thing may be done for
 them. I know not how
 since Propaganda could
 not find missionaries
 for those of Queensland.

Father McNab to Mary MacKillop, 24 September 1880, AMMNS

in the best works of man, and where it was least to be expected. So that the Irishman was not far wrong, who said that the clearest proof of the Divine institution of the Catholic Church is its continued existence in spite of the blunders and faults of the clergy. All the great heresies and schisms owe their origins to them. Yet God did not appoint angels or saints confirmed in grace to be our directors, but fallible men, that they might have compassion on those who err. So we must not be disheartened at the presence of scandals and evils in the Church, for our Lord has told us that tares will grow with the wheat till the harvest. It is only at the day of Judgement that God will complete His work and assign to each one, according to His work, reward or punishment.

I understood from some priests that the Sisters of St Joseph are giving a great satisfaction in the Archdiocese and doing much good. They are themselves also in peace and comparatively happy and this ought certainly to comfort you and make you hope that God in His own time and way will enable them to accomplish all that He designs. We know not how till it comes to pass.

I was lately at Dubbo and Terra Bella and felt much aggrieved by the apostasy of Duncan now become an Anglican and of George who is said to be a Presbyterian. I did not see George. He was at the sheep station. I had a long conversation with Mr Home(?) who, I have been told, had a very evil influence on the family. He is an elder in the Kirk and does not believe or even

know the confession of Faith of the Scottish Kirk and is full of prejudice against the Catholic Doctrine. I apprehend that he will rehearse it incorrectly to the girls and try to confirm some prejudices which it seems to me he has already excited in their minds. As an antidote to some extent, I intend as soon as I have leisure to send to Kate a written account of the interview. I need not ask you to pray for them, as I know your charity will move you to do so.

My labours for the Blacks seem fruitless and hopeless, yet I believe some good may result from them although there is little or no appearance of it at present.

I have heard that instructions have recently been sent from Rome to the Spanish monks in Western Australia to exert themselves more for the conversion of the Blacks and I suppose this to be a consequence of my complaints at their inaction.

Lately I met Father Gibney, V G of Perth, who is collecting in Sydney for an orphanage and he told me that at New Norcia there are nearly as many instructors as converts since 1848. The Blacks on the settlement are doing well and the Monks are leading a regular monastic life and endeavouring to save their own souls and their pupils' but doing little for other Blacks.

He had gone about 1000 miles to the north of their settlement and seen numerous tribes, who he says might easily be converted, but no one attends to them. His Bishop will call the attention of Propaganda to them and he hopes something may be done for them. I know not how since Propaganda could not find Missionaries for those of Queensland.

In America I found the Passionist Fathers at Hoboken ready and willing to send some priests to the Australian Aboriginal mission but their General in Rome has prohibited them. The fathers of the congregation of the Most Precious Blood in Ohio promised to send some after two years and to allow Father Henneberry, one of their Order now in Ballarat, to begin the work with secular priests if he liked. They never mentioned the subject to him in their letters and he does not think himself authorized to act without written instructions. Moreover he is not inclined, although he would act if commanded. Besides he is not very fit having had sunstroke, and being unable to bear the heat. Last year he ran away from Bundaberg on account of it.

My letter to a student in the seminary at Bathurst who was deliberating about joining the mission was intercepted by the rector who likewise was opposed to my having an interview with his subject. My letter on the subject to the bishop is, as far as I know, still unanswered. I have learned that Father is destined – if not gone – to New Guinea. Another priest expected to join in Victoria declines to do so for the present farther than to collect if permitted. A third is still undecided. One in Sandhurst middle-aged recently arrived there and unattached has volunteered. So that he and I are for the present the only two. I do not know what we shall do till I communicate with the bishops and hear from them.

So you see, things are nearly as they were last year.

Believe me, your affectionate cousin, D McNab.

Address – Victoria Valley Station, By Dunkeld, Victoria.⁴

30 September 1880 John Cardinal S Simeoni, Prefect Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to Dr Quinn, Bishop of Brisbane:

Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord,

The priest, Duncan McNab, a missionary who has been commissioned to study the possibility of establishing a new mission among the Australian savages, before he left Rome submitted certain doubts and questions to the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office. Their Eminences the Inquisitors having decided that the relevant answers should be communicated to him through Your Lordship, I therefore send you a copy of the same that you may be so good as to carry out this decision. For your guidance, the last letter that I received from the aforesaid missionary is addressed from Sydney St John's College.

I take this occasion of wishing Your Lordship every prosperity from the Lord.

Rome, Your Lordship's in all fraternity, John Cardinal S Simeoni, Prefect.

22 October 1880 Father Duncan McNab wrote to Cardinal Simeoni in Italian from Warraguri, Victoria giving his address as Melrose, by Lara, Victoria. He had written last August to Mgr Masotti, Secretary, Propaganda, about the Aboriginal mission.

He had seen Father Henneberry CPPS, a few days later. He said his superior Father Austermann had said nothing about the licence he had promised McNab to give him to go on an Aboriginal mission with secular priests until such time as he could supply other regulars. Father Henneberry preferred giving missions to colonists and in fact was not very suitable for the heat of aboriginal missions, having had sunstroke. He said that there were others in his monastery willing to go on aboriginal missions if Austermann, the Provincial, gave the word. Austermann may want to use money from mission giving, to re-open the college in California. Horgan, instead of going to Australia had gone to the Honduras.

Of the priests in Victoria, one was making retreat, after which he would tell McNab if his vocation is for the Aboriginal missions. The other was unwilling for the present, but if given leave would collect money for the mission for six months. The rector of the Bathurst seminary refused to allow McNab to appeal to students without a letter from the bishop so McNab was awaiting a reply from the bishop. Father Edward Kelly, of Sandhurst, a secular, was willing to join him.

McNab had written to the bishops to see if they would give the help promised. He grieved that only Kelly and he were prepared to do this work, especially as the minister for the colonies some time ago sent a dispatch from London to the Governor of Queensland to give civil rights to Aborigines.

The general of the Passionists had forbidden Hoboken (New Jersey) Passionists, who were fit and willing to undertake Aboriginal missions. Perhaps it's because their men brought by Bishop Polding to Queensland many years ago were not well treated. But now Australia did not depend on one bishop alone. He asked Cardinal Simeoni to put this to the general of the Congregation of Passionists.

Bishop M Quinn said that the Jesuits of Adelaide originally came for an Aboriginal mission. Up to now they were occupied with colonists. Surely, now Jesuits were expelled from France, their general could put men to the work for which they originally came.

*Australia 20 giugno 1880
Lara (Victoria)
Australia*

*Duncan Mac Nab
è di parere che dalla Propaganda
gostare della fede in questi
colano di questi al Pro. Sic.
Ap. del Queensland, al Vesc. di
Brisbane, ed al Vesc. di Adelaide.*

*15 July 1880
Date al S. Ufficio
le notizie più retali
richieste ed ho per S. agosto
1880-*

Propaganda Note regarding Father McNab before 22 October 1880.

187.

o pure condonare il Padre Generale, credo bene, che gli
 permetterebbe loro di venire in Australia per questa missione.
 Monsignora M. Quina vescovo di Bathurst di poche
 Padri Gesuiti in Abilade da Principio vennero lo ho
 delooggi. Fin ora si sono occupati di coloni. E ora
 tempo che prestassero aiuto agli indigeni. Dovrebbe essere
 facile per loro Generale di supplire missionari, ora che
 tanti Gesuiti sono esiliati dalla Francia.
 Poche che sia necessario che sua Eminenza a questi questo
 buoni Religiosi a superare la corruzione della natura umana
 che da per tutto impedisce l'opera di Dio. Ovunque si parla
 inglese veggio i Religiosi accattarsi o sciatro o vicino
 alla grande popolazione delle città, e dove tanto comodi
 nei loro ammassi che paiono non volersi sottrarre
 alla grande fatica ed ai pericoli, né avere zelo per la gloria
 di Dio e la salute delle anime sufficienti a muoversi
 ad aiutarli prendersi i travagli inseparabili dalla pro-
 pagazione della fede tra i delooggi. Ho cercato missionari
 fin ora indarno da più di trenta conventi e collegi.
 Nella sua lettera del 22 Aprile sua Eminenza mi dimanda
 quale è la natura dei rettili di cui si dicono i delooggi.
 Sono serpenti (alcuni assai grossi e da 7 a 10 piedi in lun-
 ghezza) lucente, ignavia, cobra, o vermi bianchi simili
 ai vermi di terra, ma più grandi, che nascono e crescono
 in legno sotto acqua di mare, ed un'altra specie di vermi
 che cresce in tronchi d'alberi caduti in terra, chiamati
 Quina, torfo, e formiche bianche.
 La forma Baptesimi Adultorum è troppo lunga per del-
 viaggi, i quali di più si possono stare attenti per
 loro tempo, e sarebbe meglio per loro ed anche
 più conveniente se i missionari adoperassero la
 facoltà di sostituire la forma Baptesimi Adulorum
 con alcuna triverna, e di una loro
 Nella sua Eminenza li missionari sono
 Duncan Mac Nab

22 Oct 1880
 Warraguri, Victoria, Australia

Australia 1880 56

~~22 Oct~~
 1880

Juditha
 Rev. D. M. Nab
 Melrose
 Prof. Lara
 Victoria
 Australia

Gennajo
 Nella missione
 per la conversione
 degli aborigeni Australiani
 Warraguri del suo
 Duncan Mac Nab
 Lettera di M. Nab
 sulla missione per la conversione
 degli aborigeni Australiani

Father McNab's letter of fol 166 dated 22 October 1880 from Warraguri, Victoria

End of letter fol 187 perhaps continues letter of fol 166 dated 22 October 1880 from Warraguri, Victoria SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.

sending some of our monks to those missions, I would request the said Holy Congregation through your Eminence to exempt me from undertaking such an obligation, and that because of the great scarcity of subjects, so much that I don't think they have among them people capable of the desired purpose.

31 December 1880 McNab from St Kilian's College, South Brisbane to the Secretary for Lands:

Recd. D. McNab asks that Mr Henry Wood may be appointed Black Protector at Durundur
31.12.80
JP

South Brisbane
 31st Dec. St. Kilian's College
 31st December 1880

Sir

In consequence of information received that the Blacks on the Reserve at Binambi are misled and overreached by various individuals, I have to request that you would please to appoint Mr Henry Wood of Durundur their protector as you have Mr Brooke for those of MacKay.

I have the honor to remain
 Yours truly
 Duncan McNab

I think Mr Wood should be appointed protector without salary

31 December 1880, Father McNab wrote from St Kilian's College, South Brisbane, QSA:

Sir,

In consequence of information I received that the Blacks on the Reserve at Binambi are misled and overreached by various individuals, I have to request that you would please appoint Mr Henry Wood of Durundur their Protector as you have Mr Brooke for those of MacKay.

I have the honor to remain,

Yours truly, Duncan McNab.

Memo: I think Mr Wood should be appointed protection without salary.⁹

11 January 1881 Binambi Aboriginal Reserve, Protector's Duties (12 duties were written in McNab's writing):

1. To protect the Blacks, their rights and property.
2. To teach them the value of labor and of money, and how best to employ their labor, savings, and rent on the Reserve and to train them in buying and selling.
3. To endeavor to procure for their remunerative employment.
4. To write their contracts with Whites, or when made in his absence to sanction and ratify them, when equitable, and to annul them when unjust in his opinion, to see that they are provided with proper rations and fair wages.
5. To sue employers for wages or rations due to Blacks, and for damages for trespass on Reserve, after a fortnight's notice.
6. To endeavor to procure from the Government or from the present occupants of the territory originally belonging to the tribe of Blacks ration and medicine for the sick and decrepit among them.
7. To remove them from bad company and dangerous and suspected places especially from public houses and from places where they are supplied with fermented liquor. (Vagrancy)
8. To sue and bring to punishment such persons as supply them with intoxicating drink, ... contrary to law or otherwise injure them.
9. To get the Police to apprehend and punish them by confinement and hard labor when they get drunk or injure one another, or Whites.
10. To remove and exclude from the Reserve such persons as he finds ... interference on the ... by advice or otherwise..

Binambi Aboriginal Reserve
 General directions in regard to Protection duties
 389th
 11.1.81

- 1st To protect the Blacks, their rights and lives fully.
 - 2 To teach them the value of labour and of money, and to see that they have fair wages and that they are to train them in buying and selling.
 - 3 To endeavour to procure for them remunerative employment.
 - 4 To write these contracts with Whites, or in his absence to sanction and ratify them, when equitable, and to annul them when unjust in his opinion: to see that they are provided with the proper rations and fair wages.
 - 5 To sue employers for wages or rations due to the Blacks after a fortnight's notice to all labourers to procure from the Government or from the present occupants of the territory, originally belonging to the title of Blacks, rations and medicine for the sick and for other things. To induce them to keep away from bad company and from general gaming places especially from public houses and from places where they are supplied with fermented liquor.
- (Lapin?)
- To sue and bring to punishment such persons as supply them with intoxicating drinks, ^{sent to the law} ~~and other things~~ injure them.
- To get the Police to apprehend and furnish them

11. To procure from the Government the land in fee simple, with a clause against alienation, for the Blacks that will utilize and live on the Reserve.
12. To transmit to the Secretary for Lands quarterly reports of the condition and progress of the Blacks on the Reserve.

11 January 1881 Memo, Only numbers 3 and 12 of the original duties unchanged.

All other duties scribbled through or changed. The heading changed to Binambi Aboriginal Reserve, General directions in Protection 11 January 1881.¹⁰

12 January 1881 Mr Wood appointed as Protector.¹¹

February 1881 McNab, back in Victoria, took up his pen to the Colonial Office once more. Through his agent in London he requested the support of the Aborigines Protection Society for his lobbying efforts. In a letter to the Earl of Kimberley he renewed his campaign, bringing to light more specific cases of abuses and complaining of government inaction. In addition he accused the government with the 'doomed race theory', which was regularly expressed in most colonial thinking both in the press and parliament.¹²

13 February 1881 Father Giovanni Cani wrote from Thursday Island, to Cardinal Simeoni in Italian, that he was going on a very perilous journey to New Guinea. With regard to the Aboriginal mission he had been seeking to locate populous zones of natives, before beginning the mission. He had discovered that there were very many blacks in some places more to the north of Cooktown. Means and missionaries would be necessary. After a year or two the Aboriginal mission could be supported in great part from agriculture or fishing.

When he returned from New Guinea he intended to write to the Cardinal about the result of tentative moves to be made in his absence. He was sorry to say that certain people, unexpectedly, had placed obstacles in the way. Among other things, Father McNab and Bishop J Quinn (perhaps with the best intentions) had done everything possible to induce Father P Bucas, the one priest who was really of use to Bishop Cani, to leave the Vicariate.

He had left his will with Father Bucas to send to Bishop Vaughan and had left him in charge.¹³

General Directions to Aboriginal Protectors, 11 January 1881, in Father McNab's handwriting, edited by someone else, Queensland State Archives.

Ho l'onore di significare a Sua Altezza Reale che
 la sua lettera del fine di Settembre arrivò debitamente nel principio
 di Dicembre. Spese coll'ajuto del signore di tenanni nella stessa
 Summa dentro una settimana. Tutto è pronto, il bagaglio sta già
 abbato nel piccolo vascello che ci porterà al luogo delle nostre
 esplorazioni. Va da in compagnia del Sig. Goldie, uno degli esploranti
 vi della St. Quirica, il quale è stato sempre in buona religione cogli
 indigeni nei vari luoghi che ha visitati. Non si deve negare che
 i pericoli nella St. Quirica, ed in alcuni delle isole sono accresciuti di
 molto nell'anno scorso, quasi tutti che si erano recati colà per la pesca
 e per procurare private rare, e nuove, ed altri oggetti d'interesse sono
 stati uccisi, ed loro vascelli distrutti, e messi a pezzi. Spontaneamente
 le guide le cui guide sono cadute vittime degli indigeni. I missionari
 tutti all'Atkins Island nel principio dell'ottobre scorso, e alcuni altri
 partiti lentamente. Il numero delle conversioni del Protestantismo
 non alla Chiesa Cattolica si va accrescendo, ed i convertiti sono
 rivolti assai bene. La frequenza dei M. è cresciuta di molto
 e spero che il mio lavoro continuerà a crescere sempre più.
 Si procederà senza indugio al bisogno di quella cattolica. La Chiesa
 Douglas la chiesa sarà finita e pagata in pochi giorni: questa
 ha impastato saroggi, e però perchè la popolazione cattolica è consistita
 di numero e di mezza. La chiesa è tutta di legno con tetto di pino
 galvanizzato. Le dimensioni sono 60 piedi lunghezza, 28 piedi larghezza,
 la somma del costo è di 19 mila sterline ma s'aspetta di più.
 La chiesa di King, benchè va ora costruita
 per non fare sbilire. Le non legioni si diminuiscono di molto e non
 andati almeno. La chiesa è di legno con tetto pino galvanizzato,
 Thursday Island 40 piedi lunghezza, e 25 larghezza, costerà più di 1400 sterline
 18 febbraio 1881.
 di un tempore, ed il materiale costrutto. Ho l'onore di
 se tal. per non segnare di Sua Altezza Reale. Giovanni Cani

Bishop Giovanni Cani, Thursday Island, to Cardinal Simeoni, 13 February 1881: Beginning and end of letter. Fol 915-6, Fol 480, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.

Ensigne

Sinceramente ringrazio Sua
 Ensigne della sua lettera del 22 Dec. 1880, come
 pure per documenti relativi alle dispendiosità
 materiariali per selvaggi convertiti della sua
 fedeltà, ed al uso dei mezzi in giorni d'assenza
 mandati al Vescovo di Brisbane. Di questa do-
 cumentazione ho fatto una copia.
 Con molto piacere le debbo ancora fare noto che un
 altro tirano sacerdate il Padre Pietro M. Lucas,
 ora nel Nord di Queensland, il quale per tre anni
 fu impiegato nella missione ai Maori della
 Nuova Zelanda, e di poi per circa dieci anni
 ministro ai coloni di Queensland, si è dedicato
 alla missione agli aborigeni Australiani. Ora
 siamo tre per questa missione, e adesso
 raccogliamo denaro nelle diverse diocesi
 dell'Australia per istituire una missione
 centrale ove i selvaggi sono numerosi.
 Quelli che io sono prima battezzati sono in
 diverse parti per le coste orientali di Queens-
 land, ed il Vescovo aveva promesso di farli visi-
 tare dai preti delle parrocchie nelle quali vivono,
 ma ora dice che questo è impossibile.

Father McNab from Adelaide to Cardinal Simeoni, 11 April 1881, fol 954-5, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881

As he had promised me, the Secretary for the Colonists wrote to the Governor of Queensland in order that the ministers might consider the subject of the treatment of the savages, and that they should give justice to them, but they didn't take any notice, therefore I have had to write again to the Secretary for the Colonists to criticize the Governor for this and also for other acts of cruelty and injustice.

I wrote again to my agent in London so that he might send deputations from the Society for the Protection of Aborigines to the Minister for the Colonists to obtain justice for them. The Prime Minister of Queensland is now in London and I hope that the British Government will force him to treat the natives as subjects and not to shoot them like beasts.

I am at the moment in Adelaide, in part to explain to the Jesuit Provincial how I think it would be best for them to begin the mission to the Aborigines.¹⁴

But Mc Nab was not having much of an effect in London, in April 1881 He was again snubbed by an insipid response from Downing Street.¹⁵

25 June 1881 McNab appealed for his mission at the Cathedral in Ballarat.

2 July 1881 'The grand, earnest old Scottish clergyman' preached at Ballarat and the collection amounted to close on £40.

8 July 1881 In his letter to Lord Kimberley in February 1881, was McNab charging the government with something more than neglect, indeed was he accusing them of having a deliberate policy of extermination? The Queensland government denied the allegation. Arthur Palmer, the Minister for Lands, Brisbane wrote to A E Kennedy:

I have the honour to inform your Excellency that many of the statements contained in Mr McNab's letter are positively untrue and the government here has done and is doing all in their power to conciliate and civilize the blacks¹⁶

9 July 1881 £12 was donated when McNab preached at Ballarat East.

Vicariate of Cooktown

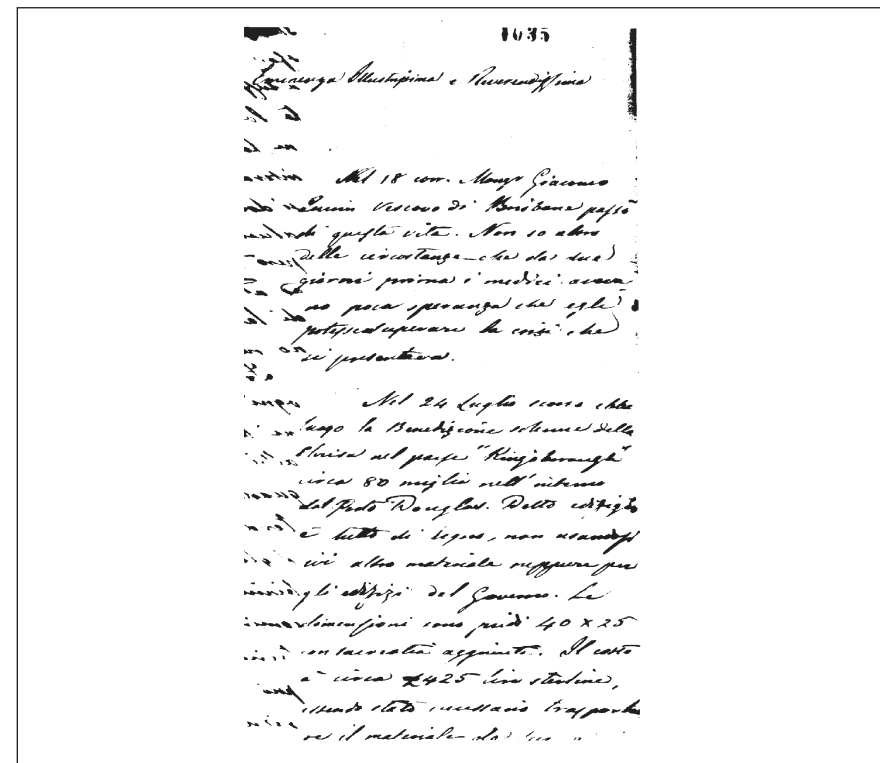
The existence of the Vicariate had been influenced by the developmental pattern of institutional Catholicism in Queensland as a whole. When the Province of Brisbane had been formed in 1877, the Vicariate became part of that Province. Major challenges to the future of the Vicariate arose at the Second Plenary Council of 1885,¹⁷ in the economic depression of the early 1890's, and at the Plenary Council of 1895.¹⁸

There were no functioning parishes existing in the vicariate when it began in 1877. The second facet of the Vicariate's primary mandate, Aboriginal evangelization, had motivated Propaganda to establish a

jurisdiction that in terms of Catholic population, ecclesiastical infrastructure and financial resources were impossible for Diocesan priests to develop and barely possible for Religious priests to sustain.¹⁹

Bishop John Cani was one of five Vicars Apostolic in far north Queensland while tribal Aborigines survived. He lacked that high degree of administrative control, which was a Moran trademark. He was a fringe dweller in the Australian Episcopal circle, because he was of different nationality, not a vigorous promoter of the prevailing Irish-Australian Catholicism, but he had his own channel of influence to Propaganda.²⁰

An ecclesiastical jurisdiction has to maintain and develop the relationship of people with God. This task is primarily pastoral, but has a vital secondary dimension that is administrative. No matter how high its ideals, any organization needs an infrastructure that before long involves the mundane reality of bricks and mortar, of cashbook and ledger.²¹



Bishop Cani from Cooktown, to Cardinal Simeoni, 21 August 1881 fol 1035-6, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.

21 August 1881 Bishop Cani, Cooktown, wrote to Cardinal Simeoni about Bishop Quinn's death, the opening of a new Church and his expectations of civilizing some natives:

On the 18th of this month Monsignor Giacomo Quinn, Bishop of Brisbane diocese, passed away. I don't know all the circumstances – two days before the doctors had little hope that he could survive the treatment.

On the 24th of last July the Church in Ringsborough, about 80 miles from Port Douglas was blessed. The church is made entirely from wood, because there wasn't any other material available. Measurements are 40' x 25'. The cost is around \$425 sterling because materials had to be brought in. For three weeks we tried as hard as we could to collect enough money to pay the whole sum and we don't owe anyone. But unfortunately the congregation is forced to go elsewhere with work and few remain in the district. We are trying to do everything we can to support religion in other areas, and also as much as circumstances permit to convert the natives. We already have a few little ones who are learning Christian Doctrine. You can't expect a big result but at least we will do all we can..²²

Strega. Abbiamo fatto ogni
 sforzo per raccogliere denaro
 sufficiente per pagare tut-
 ta la somma del tuo lettera-
 re, e la chiesa è finalmente
 interamente pagata, e questo
 mi dà piacere, insieme a molti
 altri. Speriamo che
 presto la popolazione è costata
 ad avere almeno in una
 di loro, e pochi restano
 nel distretto.
 Possiamo di qua fare
 ogni progresso per provvedere
 ai bisogni della religione
 altri luoghi, e di fare
 quanto bene ci stanga per
 tenerlo per la conversione
 degli indigeni. Già ne ab-
 biamo alcuni piccoli che
 cominciano imparare la dot-
 trina cristiana. Non si
 può aspettare un gran
 risultato, ma almeno si

Bishop Cani from Cooktown, to Cardinal Simeoni, 21 August 1881 fol 1035-6, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.

font tutto quello che si può.
 Raccomandarmi alle oropie
 ni di V. Eugenio Pardi e
 benedire lei. Per favore,
 ho l'onore di ringraziarVi
 di un lunga lettera e di
 una a S. Alessio Simeoni
 Giovanni Cani
 A un lunga lettera e di
 di un Card. Giovanni Simeoni
 l'ufficio S. Congregazione Propaganda

Bishop Cani from Cooktown, to Cardinal Simeoni, 21 August 1881 fol 1035-6, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.

Oceania (Australia)
 21 Agosto 1881
 Puccinfrant
 Il Reverendo Cane
 annunciar la morte
 del Reverendo B. Quinn
 e del d'aper aperto
 una nuova chiesa,
 e che alcuni a
 civilizzare alcuni indigeni
 12 Agosto 1881
 n. p. p.

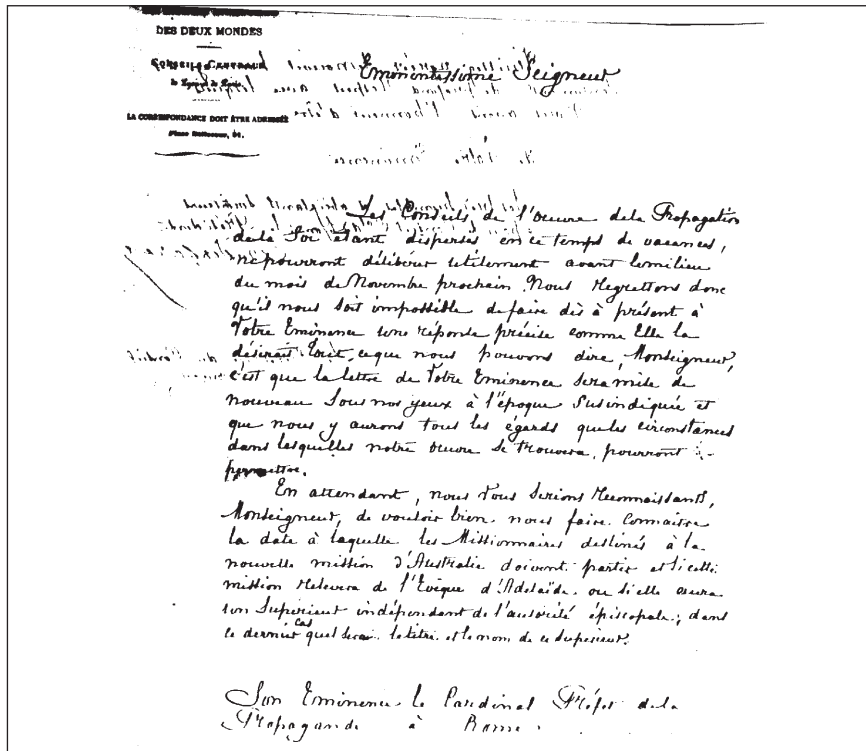
Bishop Cani from Cooktown, to Cardinal Simeoni, 21 August 1881 fol 1035-6, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.

27 August 1881 Father McNab was still in Melbourne.²³

September 1881 Two years after Bishop Cani took charge of the Vicariate, he told Propaganda Fide that friendly relations had been established with Aborigines away from European contact to the north of Cooktown.²⁴ In itself this was an achievement:

It is very difficult to approach the Aborigines because they live in a continual state of terror and are wary of all Europeans. We try sometimes to visit them in their bush camps, but they flee. All we can do is to leave them some European artefacts they are known to appreciate, and then hope that on future occasions they will give their confidence to us, who approach them with benevolent intentions.

The Bishop had planned that two of his four priests, Peter Bucas and Michael Hackett would evangelise the Aborigines north of Cooktown.²⁵ He was keen to implement Propaganda's call for clergy to be apportioned between ministry to local Catholics and Aboriginal evangelisation.



The Secretary of the Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, to Cardinal Simeoni, 1 October 1881, for 1064, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881

1 October 1881 The Secretary of Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, to Cardinal Simeoni, perhaps re the Jesuit mission to Aborigines:

Very Eminent Monsignor,

Because the council of the Propagation of the Faith is scattered during this holiday time, they will not be able to consult usefully together before the middle of next November. Therefore, we are sorry that it is impossible for the present for us to give you the precise answer that you wanted.

All that we can say Monsignor, is that we will look at your letter again at the time we indicated above and that we will give it all the consideration that the circumstances in which our work finds itself will permit.

In the meantime, we would be grateful to you, monsignor, if you could let us know the date when the missionaries who are intended for the new mission to Australia have to leave, and if this mission will be taken up by the Bishop of Adelaide or if it will have a superior who is independent from the Episcopal authority: if the latter is the case, what would be the title and the name of this superior.²⁶

8 October 1881 Father McNab was in Brisbane at the Month's Mind for the late Bishop.²⁷

11 October 1881 Bishop Cani, Brisbane to Cardinal Simeoni:

I have the honour of telling you that Don Antonio will have to deliver by hand a letter of exchange to the value of £330 sterling from the faithful of the Brisbane for the Holy Father.

I am very sorry that the Bishop of Brisbane wasn't able to enjoy the consolation of passing it on himself, it being received a few days before his death. I must ask you to present the said offering to his Holiness, with my most humble and respectful regards, love and ready obedience on my part, by the clergy and all the believers in this diocese and to entreat his Holy and Apostolic Benediction for us.

The ready and cordial cooperation of the clergy and the good disposition of the people are a great help and comfort to me in my efforts to further the interests of Religion and good of the soul, very much more than that which I will be able to hope for from the point of view of the not very favourable circumstances that appeared a few weeks ago. We need time and patience to know the real state of affairs in this diocese. It will be my duty to give a faithful report to Your Eminence without delay because the exact knowledge will be a great help to Propaganda, if maybe less correct and also exaggerated representations have been made about this place.

I received your letter dated 3 of last August, thank you very much for that. I will make contact with the fathers of the congregation of Santo Guore of Issundum, as your Eminence wanted, and I will make every effort to lend myself to be as much of a help as I can.

In the Vicariate of Queensland another church is being built and a house for the

missionaries in Herberton, where tin has recently been discovered. This place is 80 miles from Port Douglas. A school is also being built in Cooktown, and when that's finished they'll build a small convent in the same town and another in Port Douglas.

The Vicariate needs three more priests. Two of these will occupy themselves entirely with the aboriginal mission as soon as others for the Europeans can be found. I hope that the Jesuit Fathers who are in Adelaide will come to the Vicariate soon to start the Aboriginal mission at the Gulf of Carpentaria, and that other missionaries will come to start one at Cardwell and Cairns on the east coast. The blacks display intelligence and seem willing. In Cooktown they often go to town to the priest's house and take some interest in worship in the church.

I made every effort to provide for both the missions in the Vicariate and the Diocese of Brisbane. I ask all the extraordinary faculties that were given to the Brisbane Bishop, especially everything that has to do with Aborigines and power to dispense from the Interpolation of the Breve of S S Benedetto XIV 16 January 1845 or 1145 with the instruction etc. I also ask you the promise or privilege for me and the other missionaries in this diocese and in the Vicariate of Queensland to be able to use a short formula of what was approved for the baptism of adults, as much for Aborigines as for Europeans. The circumstance of the people in these towns seems to warrant the request of this privilege.²⁸

12 October 1881 McNab from Brisbane, to the Secretary for Public Lands:

Sir,

As directed, I request in writing that suitable reserves may be made for the aborigines in some places in consequence of extensive and contiguous selections, the scrubs in the vicinity of rivers are cut down or the good land converted into farms and plantations, so that they are deprived of their best fishing and hunting grounds, and left only the reserves and desert land, where they must soon die of want. There is not much difference between being shot and dying of starvation. If properly dealt with their services may become very useful to the Colonists, as they have been at Durundur.

They have a right to live and therefore suitable reserves should be set apart for them that they may have the means of subsistence. Such Reserves where they are numerous are especially necessary and would be useful in the vicinity of sugar plantations as on the Herbert and Johnson (sic) Rivers.

I understand that one is requisite also not far from Cairns, on the property of a French gentleman who employed them on his plantation and the District Commissioner should be able to induce the most suitable situation for the Reserve and so should Mr T H Fitzgerald and the Commissioner on the Johnston, and the Commission and Dr Cani at Cairns.

As nearly the whole of Queensland is now occupied by the squatters and other purposes, and as I understood from the Colonial Secretary that the Blacks are unjustly treated, poisoned and shot by civilians, Reserves should be made also in the squatting districts, so that they may

have a place of refuge as well as means of subsistence. If they were trained to cultivate, less land would serve them, in the meantime much more land is necessary in such places, than where they can get employment. I learned from the Police that out of Burke and Cook districts they are most numerous on . . . and therefore I think that a large Reserve should be made for them there. The . . . Land Commission and Mr Gordon, Stocking Inspector, should be able to designate the most suitable location for it.

By the timely formation of such Reserves in Cook and Burke, and the conciliatory efforts of the Government, they may be saved from destruction as most useful substitute in most of the other colonies and . . . such efforts for their preservation have come too late.

McNab.²⁹

18 October 1881 McNab from St Kilians, Brisbane, to W Perkins Secretary for Public Lands,

Sir,

Permit me to direct your attention to the proximate destruction of kangaroos, in consequence of the Marsupial Act recently sanctioned by the Legislature as another reason for making reserves for the Aborigines in squatting districts,

I have the honor to be,

Yours truly McNab.³⁰

16 November 1881

Memo, The Secretary of Lands would be glad if Mr McNab were to indicate the places where reserves are required.³¹

After Bishop Quinn died, Bishop Cani went south to administer the vacant diocese. He used his temporary charge of the Diocese of Brisbane to have Father McNab change his plans for the Aborigines around Brisbane to those in the Vicariate. Bishop Cani was doubly interested in redirecting McNab to the Vicariate because the latter had prospects of obtaining missionary priests to assist him.

So, late in 1881, with hopes, possibly too high, of personnel from the Congregation of the Most Precious Blood, based at Marianstein in Ohio, and from the Province of the Congregation of Passionists in New Jersey, Father McNab abandoned his plan for a mission in Western Queensland near the Thomson and Barcoo Rivers, and went to the Cardwell area of the vicariate.

In Father McNab, Bishop Cani had obtained the only priest in eastern Australia who was devoting himself to Aborigines in a full time capacity. Since Father McNab had already encouraged the Jesuits to evangelize in

the Northern Territory, those plans were deferred.

3 December 1881 McNab from Cooktown:

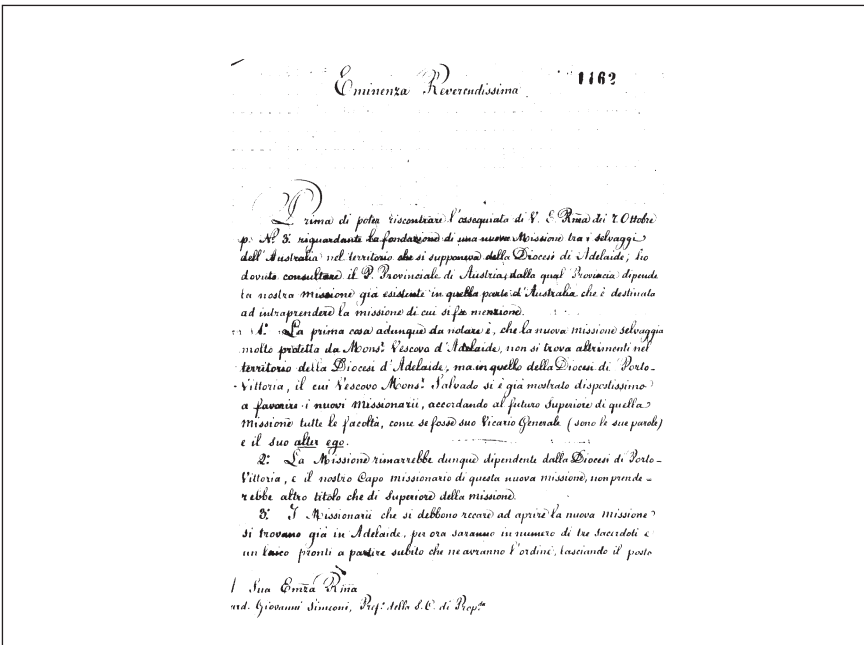
Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 16th November 1881, I move to say that I repeat an inability quite to satisfy the desire of the Hon Secretary for Lands, by indicating the exact places where the Aborigine Reserves are required in the Squatter's district, as I am unacquainted with them.

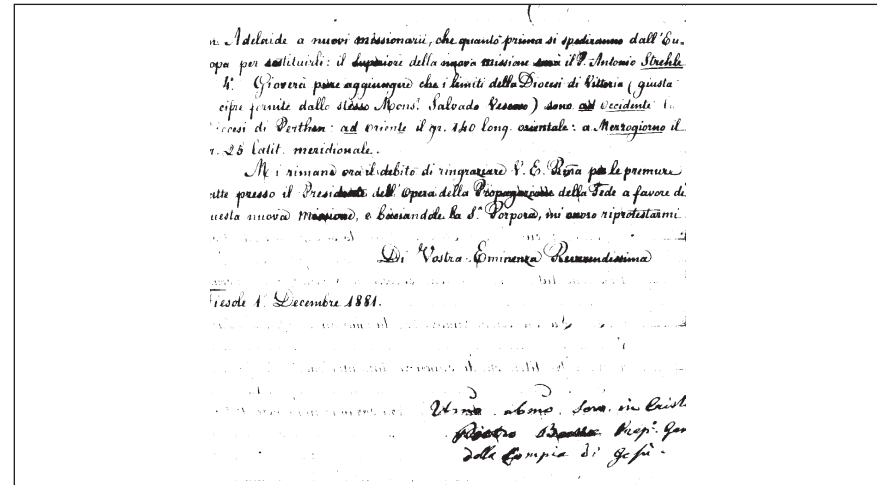
Each tribe of Blacks has its local boundaries (about sixty miles in extent on the coast, I know not how extensive in the interior) and ordinarily may wish to reside within their own limits. Where they are most numerous. The Reserves need to be more frequent and larger and near the water courses. From considerable inquiry I am satisfied that a Reserve is needed at the junction of the Thompson River and the Victoria or Barcoo. I mean the land between these rivers flowing by the sides of the Johnston Range.

For the rest, till I shall have learned more of the squatting districts, I can only repeat my former suggestion that the localities for best Reserves should be fixed by the local Land Commissioners and the Stock Inspector.

I am, Yours truly, D McNab.³²



Father Bechse, SJ General to Cardinal Simioni, regarding the Jesuit mission with Father Strehle, 1 December 1881, for 1162, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.



Father Bechse, SJ General to Cardinal Simioni, regarding the Jesuit mission with Father Strehle, 1 December 1881, for 1162, SRC Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881.

1 December 1881 Father Bechse, S J General wrote to Cardinal Simeoni from Fiesole, about the Jesuit mission with Father Strehle.³³ Presumably the visit to Sevenhill which he mentions took place between McNab's leaving Queensland and his embarking on his other venture among the natives of the Kimberley district of Western Australia. The visit to Rapid Creek took place when he had given up his work in the Kimberley and was on his way to join the Jesuits in the parish of Richmond, where he remained till his death.³⁴

20 January 1882 Memo: Revd D McNab re Aborigines Reserves:

Suggest that McNab should report as to the best means of utilizing Reserves.³⁵

10 March 1882

Application to have reserve made as Police Paddock and Aboriginal Reserve to be cancelled.³⁶

8 April 1882 *Brisbane Courier*:

The Rev Father McNab, whose name is well known in connection with efforts for the benefit of the aborigines of this colony, which unfortunately have hitherto been attended with but little success, is still persevering in the charitable work. On Sunday last he returned to Townsville, after a sojourn of several weeks in the vicinity of Cardwell, whither he had been to inspect an Aboriginal Reserve proclaimed by the Government close to what is known as Kohn's selection, where a settler of that name was murdered by the blacks some years ago.

He found the reserve to consist of nothing but sandy ridges, mangrove swamps, and ti-tree scrubs, and the only living things he saw were a few selectors' cattle, the birds, and the mosquitoes. He was therefore obliged to give up all idea of starting a native settlement there, and his object in visiting Townsville was either to meet some assistants, who were promised him from Brisbane, or to engage the services of an aboriginal whom he has known for a long time, and who was baptized by him.

Father McNab will return to Cardwell whence he will probably set out in search of land suitable for a mission station, which he will probably take up as a homestead, so as to be safe from any of those vicissitudes which sometimes overtake ordinary aboriginal reserves.

It is stated that the Rev Dr Cani, Bishop of Northern Queensland, is also interesting himself on behalf of the natives, and is endeavouring to get the Passionist Fathers to undertake a mission to them. Other efforts are likely to be made by the Catholic authorities in the south; and, however doubtful we may be as to the possibility of permanently benefiting the aborigines of this colony, we must all cordially wish God speed to anyone who, in spite of hardship and discomfort, will labour to reclaim these wretched savages, who are at present being driven into a position of worse misery and degradation by the very civilization which ought to be their best protection.⁵⁷

While McNab was making preparations to minister in the Vicariate, Bishop Cani told him that he would take over the negotiations with the Americans.

Shortly afterwards, Bishop Cani was appointed to the newly-created Diocese of Rockhampton, so the correspondence with the Americans was inconclusive, and McNab was left in the hands of the next Pro-Vicar, Paul Fortini.

McNab discovered the difficulty of working under Fortini, and soon had cause to complain to Propaganda that Fortini forbade him to finalise a mission site before it was inspected by himself, yet made no effort to visit the area.³⁸

8 July 1882 Father McNab had told Propaganda Fide that in Queensland it was easier to interest Cabinet Ministers who were Protestant than it was to obtain support from the Catholic Church in matters of Aboriginal welfare and evangelisation.³⁹

8 August 1882 Bishop Salvado wrote to Dr Griver, Bishop of Perth (both in Rome, whereto they had travelled together) when he heard that Dr Griver was about to leave:

“I proposed to him a priest from Sardinia, to take to Australia” (no name given).

Bishop Griver returned to Rome later.

24 September 1882

After he had persuaded the South Australian Jesuits assigned to Aboriginal missions, to select the Northern Territory rather than Queensland, Father McNab turned his attention to Western Australia.

Three Jesuit Fathers and one Lay Brother went to Palmerston to establish a mission for the conversion of the natives.

10 October 1882

The Jesuit missionaries settled at a reserve granted by the Government. The site was heavily wooded, fertile and well watered, in area not more than 320 acres. At the request of the Mission Superior a larger grant was made of about a thousand acres extending right to the ocean, something they wanted in view of the fishing.⁴⁰

Despite feeling that he had achieved little, motivated by a compelling sense of duty, McNab would keep trying to improve the conditions of Aborigines for the next 15 years.

Notes for Chapter 5

¹ McNab to Masotti, 3 August 1880, Scritti Riferiti ai Congressi, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 374, APF.

² Masotti to Quinn, 27 August 1880, SAA.

³ G B P, 14 September 1880, P R O, CO, 234/40, no 15497, QSA.

⁴ McNab to Mary MacKillop, 24 September 1880, AMMNS.

⁵ Simeoni to Quinn, 30 September 1880, SAA.

⁶ McNab to Simeoni. cf fol 187, 22 October 1880, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 166 APF

⁷ Lan A 74, no 16639, 21 December 1880, QSA. (See p 161).

⁸ CP General to Mgr Masotti, Propaganda 29 December 1880, 1880-1881, fol 480, APF.

⁹ McNab to Secretary for Lands, 31 December 1880, QSA.

¹⁰ Binambi Aboriginal Reserve, Protector Duties, 11 January 1881, QSA.

¹¹ Mr Wood appointed as Protector, 12 January 1881.

¹² McNab to Colonial Office, 7 February 1881, Col A 316, no 2895, QSA.

¹³ Cani, Thursday Island, to Cardinal Simeoni, 13 February 1881, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 915-6, APF.

¹⁴ McNab, Adelaide, to Cardinal Simeoni, 11 April 1881, 1880-1881, fol 954-5, SRC, Oceania, vol 13 APF.

¹⁵ Kimberley to Marquis of Normandy, April 1881, Col A 316, no 2895, QSA.

¹⁶ Palmer to Kennedy, 8 July 1881, forwarded to Kimberley, P R O CO 234/40., no 15497, QSA.

¹⁷ The Australian Bishops in 1885 made a decision to have an annual collection in favour of Aboriginal missions.

¹⁸ A vicariate was an interim jurisdiction whose future had to be determined as time progressed, Michael A Endicott, OSA, *The Augustinians in Far North Queensland, 1883-1941*, Augustinian Historical Commission, Australia, 1988, p 53.

¹⁹ Endicott, p 54.

²⁰ Endicott, p 64

²¹ Endicott, p 71

²² Cani from Cooktown to Simeoni, 21 August 1881, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 1035-6, APF.

²³ *The Advocate*.

²⁴ *The Augustinians in Far North Queensland, 1883-1941*.

²⁵ Cani to Propaganda, 21 May 1881, SRC, Oceania, 13, f. 623-624, (In Endicott, p 177), APF.

²⁶ Secretary of the Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, to Cardinal Simeoni, 1 October 1881, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880-1881, fol 1064 APF.

²⁷ *The Advocate*.

²⁸ Cani, Brisbane to Simeoni, 11 October 1881, SRC, Oceania, vol 13, 1880 - 1881, fol 1067, APF.

²⁹ McNab to Secretary for Public Lands, QSA Lan A 74, no 16639, 12 October 1881.

³⁰ McNab to Secretary for Public Lands, Lan 74, no, 16639, 18 October 1881, QSA. (see p. 153)

³¹ Lan A 74, no 16639, 15 November 1881, QSA.

³² Lan A 74, no 16639, 3 December 1881, QSA.

³³ Bechse to Simeoni, 1 December 1881, SRC, Oceania APF.

³⁴ Dennett to Nailon 30, October 1979.

³⁵ Memo, Lan A 74, no 16639. 20 January 1882, QSA.

³⁶ Application to have reserve made as Police Paddock and Aboriginal Reserve to be cancelled, 10 March 1882. QSA.

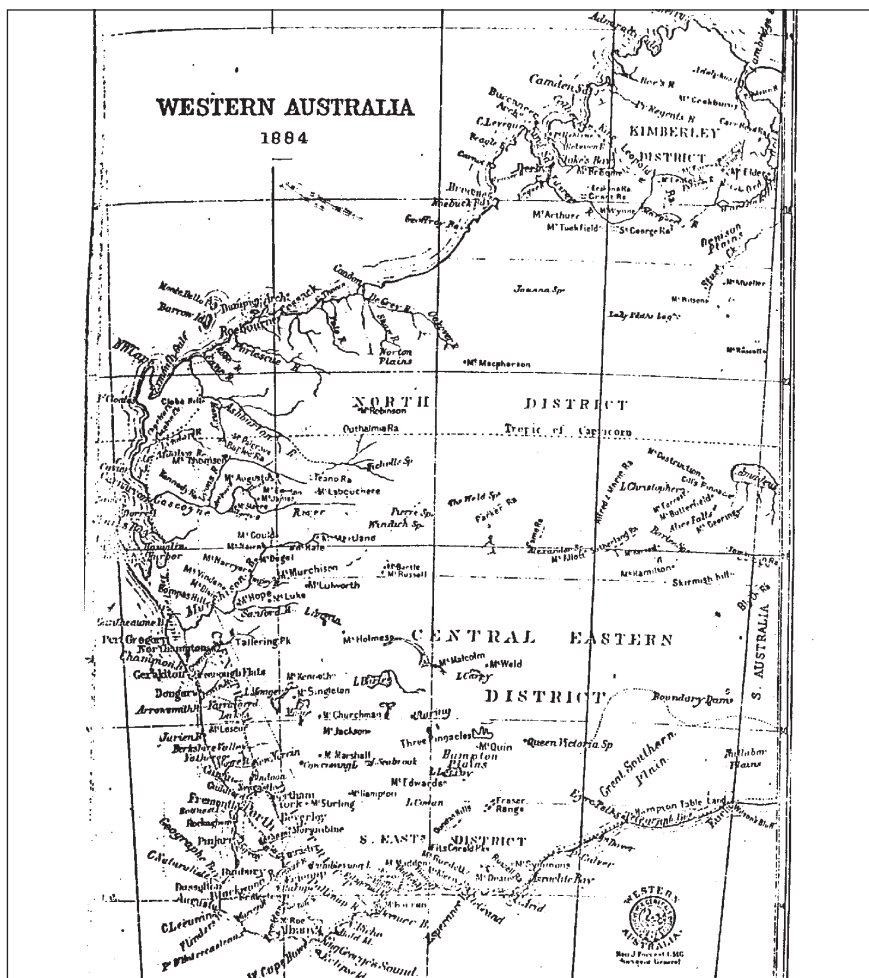
³⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 April 1882, ACAB.

³⁸ D F Bourke, *Western Australia*, pp 144-47.

³⁹ *Australian*, 8 July 1882.

⁴⁰ Antonius Strele SJ, Jesuit Mission, Rapid Creek, *Footprints*, vol 2, no 8, October 1975, pages 14-15. Translation by T J Whitty MSC, Randwick, September 1975. As found in *The Acts & Decrees of the Plenary Council of Australia*, held at Sydney in 1885, (Appendix V – Relationes Missionum Apud Aborigines. no 2, - De Missione Societatis Jesu ad Aborigines in 'Rapid Creek' Palmerston in Territorio Seprionali Australis).

TAKING UP LAND IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Western Australia 1884

The Aboriginal predicament drew the Western Australian Bishops into colonial politics. There they remained quite openly, their activity accepted – or at least largely tolerated – to a degree certainly not the case in the eastern colonies. Abbot Salvado came to Western Australia in the 1840's. He learnt the Aboriginal language and tried to understand the culture so as to relate it to Christian teaching. He realised that he was confronting the biggest social and moral problem in the colony, the 'white treatment of Aborigines. Archbishop Polding had written to him in 1863:

The march of European civilisation is the march of desolation, and unless means are used which our liberals repudiate, the black savage will be exterminated to make a place for the white savage – far more ruthless.

In the 1870's, in order to forward some legislative protection for Aboriginal rights, Abbot Salvado sought and obtained the collaboration of the Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, an English Catholic aristocrat, who had been, in New Zealand, not only Premier, but Minister for Native Affairs. Weld's championing of the Aborigines, his efforts to secure their protection, and recognition of their rights to equal justice aroused strong public opposition, especially from large landowners. Eventually the Colonial Office censured Weld, but Salvado continued to urge on him that "Both races must be placed on one and the same level". He continued to make practical legislative suggestions. Weld persisted, and the outcome was protective legislation, pilloried and ignored by most of the colonists as 'nigger coddling'. Therefore, however enlightened and humane, the Weld-Salvado legislation of the early 1870's made little headway against colonists determined to exploit and exterminate.

Salvado, because of the extensive monastery lands of New Norcia, was a large landowner with conservative Spanish inclinations, having interests and associations in common with the colonial gentry. He sometimes supported the establishment politically. In these attitudes he was very different to Bishop Gibney.

Effect of Colonial Politics on Aboriginal Peoples

The taking up of land displaced Aboriginal Peoples all over Western Australia. After 1840, for fifty years, pastoralism on land leased from the Crown dominated land utilization in Western Australia.

'Temporary Occupation Leases' and 'Licenses to Depasture' made it possible for settlers to run their livestock in the bush. In 1851, these were replaced by a system of pastoral leases, of one year's duration in settled areas and near the coast, and of eight years' duration farther inland. Pastoralists paid an annual rent of 10 shillings for every 1000 acres leased.

After the introduction of convict transportation in 1850, the availability of ticket-of-leave and expirée labour for shepherding encouraged the expansion of the pastoral industry, and therefore of the area under leasehold. The 1860's saw the first major push into the eastern districts and the North-West. This was followed by consolidation in the Murchison and Ashburton districts in the 1870's, a major rush for pastoral land in the early 1880s, and expansion in the Pilbara and Eastern Goldfields, as pastoralists followed the gold rushes of the 1890s.

As they prospered, pastoralists endeavoured to insure the security of their tenure by purchasing from the crown the choicer parts of their runs. In 1873 they were assisted by the establishment of a system of 'Special Occupation Licenses' that enabled settlers to select (before survey) lots of 100 to 500 acres at 10 shillings per acre, payable over three-year or ten-year terms. Although the 'Special Occupation License' was intended to encourage settlement by small farmers, it enabled pastoralists to 'pick the eyes out of the landscape'. In 1877 the Surveyor-General asserted that his surveyors were like nomads, with half their time spent travelling through the desert from one oasis to another – that is, they had to cover long distances through pastoral leasehold land in order to survey the small pockets of land under 'Special Occupation License', selected by leaseholders on patches of good soil and alongside permanent water.

Between 1870 and 1888, over 4000 occupation blocks were sold, with an average area of just under 40 ha. In other words less than 170 000 ha of rural land were sold at this time, and more than 40 million ha were under leasehold. In the early 1880's, on a number of occasions, the Commissioner for Crown Lands was critical of the way in which pastoralists had used the regulations to buy up all the springs and water-holes, as well as small plots in the centre of every good piece of land. Also, the progress of closer settlement was restricting pastoralism to the hotter drier parts of the State with natural pastures everywhere deteriorating after half a century of grazing.

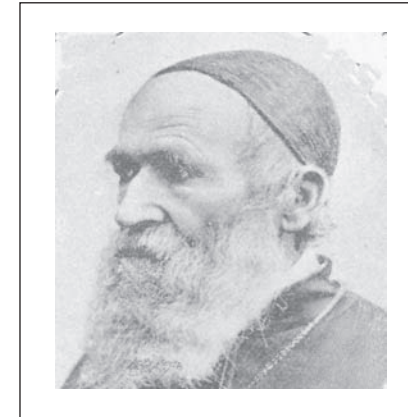
Since the pastoral industry was of fundamental importance to the Western Australian economy, the Government progressively introduced longer leases and easier terms in order to encourage and protect the pastoral leaseholders.²

1878

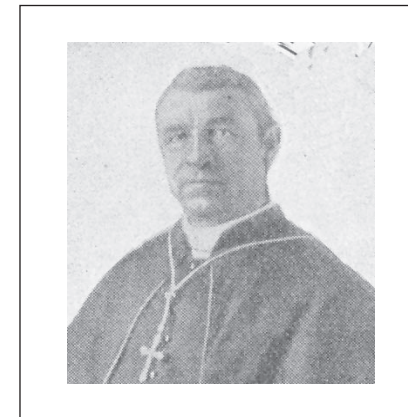
A newspaper article outlined Church policy³ about the Aboriginal situation in Western Australia:

it is a work requiring the services of a religious community... there is no other means possible for the welfare of the natives than the plan which embodies religious teaching with

civilizing employment requiring the agency of a laborious and devoted community, ... a wistful glance is turned in the direction of the fervent community of Benedictine monks at New Norcia, for from Perth, aid is almost hopeless. With his staff of only nine priests for his enormous diocese, Bishop Griver can do nothing, the work of the North-West would demand an apostle and even an apostle would labour to a great extent in vain.



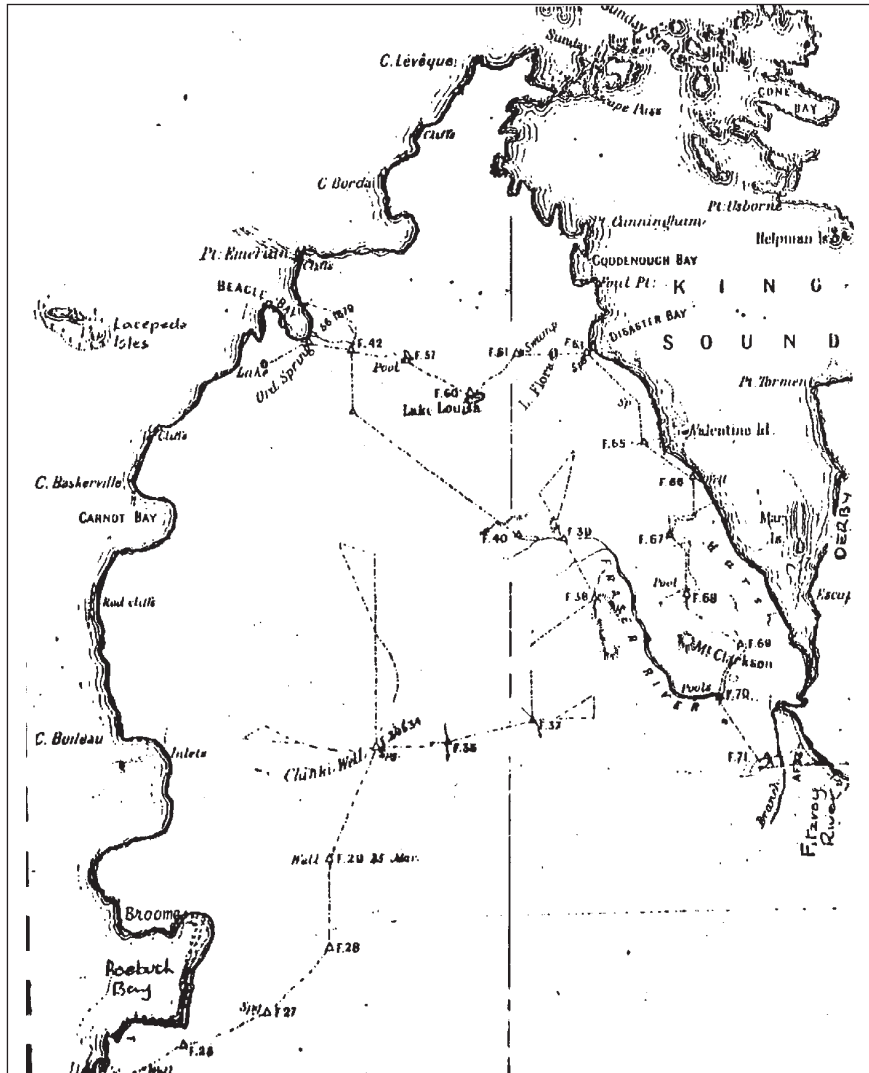
Bishop Martin Griver, Apostolic Administrator 1862-1873



Bishop Matthew Gibney, 1887-1925

Bishop M Griver sent his Irish Vicar General, Father Matthew Gibney, to report on the possibility of starting a mission in the North-West and he left on the 'Rosette', 30 July 1878 to return after four months.

1 January 1879 Bishop Griver asked the Governor to reserve 50,000 acres for the establishment of a Catholic mission.



1879 "Wait for the report of the Government's exploration party of a newly discovered stretch of land."
This map shows the route taken by the party on the Dampier Peninsula. It was used by Bishop Gibney in 1890.

21 January 1879 Sir John Forrest replied, suggesting that the Bishop wait for the report of the Government's exploration party⁴ of a newly discovered stretch of land around the Fitzroy River, named 'Kimberley', after Lord Kimberley, then Colonial Secretary in the House of Commons in England. The Alexander Forrest expedition explored the lower Fitzroy valley, describing it as:

"20 million acres of good, well-watered country suitable for pastoral purposes, besides a large area suitable for the cultivation of sugar, rice and coffee....capable of de-pasturing a million sheep."

Although Forrest did not penetrate the extremely rugged and inaccessible King Leopold and Durack ranges⁵, colonists could now look to the North-West with hope and optimism.

The Squatting Era

During 1879, the first sheep arrived in the west Kimberley. They were brought by ship to Beagle Bay, and from there 625 sheep were taken to establish Yeeda Station and 500 sheep to establish Meda Station.⁶

Hamlet Cornish and his friends formed the First Kimberley Syndicate, the 'Murray Squatting Company'. They applied for some of the land being granted rent-free for 14 years.⁷ Full of wonder at the great adventure, Hamlet exclaimed:

"Imagine, thousands of acres of grassland and all a chap has to do is march in and squat on it."

Hamlet and his companions arrived at Beagle Bay in the 'Mary Smith' with 700 sheep, and horses. They met Julius Brockman who had applied for 400,000 acres on the South side of the Fitzroy River. While he went south for more sheep, he left a mob of 400 sheep with the new group of settlers, and set out for Lake Louisa 25 miles away, driving the five mobs of sheep. Some of the Aborigines they met spoke English. Hamlet Cornish called his land 'Yeeda Station'.

When they returned to Beagle Bay they hired a shepherd, Brown, an escaped convict, whom the Captain of a trading schooner had hired from the Government. A 'lifer', he had escaped from Lacepede Islands when sent with a guard for water.⁸ The Government planned a new landing place at one of the Yeeda sheep wells, Derby would be its new name.

1880 A Port was established in Derby to provide a sea route for export of wool.

1882 Anthony Cornish, brother of Hamlet, was the first European pastoralist to be fatally speared at Mt Anderson Station by Aborigines.

When Captain Walcott and a party of police troopers rode out to

apprehend his murderer, they held 40 natives in chains until the murderer was captured. As *Justice of the Peace*, Captain Walcott tried the prisoners on the Government cutter 'Gertrude'. The sheep killers and the men who attacked the shepherd, Chilly, were sentenced to Rottnest Island.⁹

1883 In response to Cornish's death, the first Government Resident of the west Kimberley region was appointed, and four police officers, a post-master, a clerk of courts, and a custom officer arrived in Derby. Derby and Broome townsites were declared.

Father McNab in Western Australia 1883-1887

17 February 1883 In his 63rd year, Father McNab accepted Bishop Griver's invitation to the west.

McNab wired Father Gibney that he had left Queensland and was sailing for Perth from Adelaide:

I have left Queensland. I sail for Perth tomorrow. D McNab¹⁰

19 March 1883 C H Clifton wrote from the Registrar General's Office in Perth to the Very Rev M Gibney Vicar General:

Sir,

I beg to notify – simply as a matter of courtesy- that the Rev McNab had not registered his name in this office for celebrating marriages- in accordance with the 12th Section of 19th Victoria, No 12. I have the honour to be C H Clifton, Registrar General.

20 March 1883

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the names of the Reverends Duncan McNab and Frederik Chamelecik have been duly registered in this office for the celebrating of Marriages in this Colony, and that a notification to that effect will appear in the next issue of the Government Gazette. I have the honour to be Sir, Your obedient servant, C H Clifton, Registrar General.¹¹

Chaplain at the Aboriginal prison on Rottnest Island

31 March 1883 Malcolm Fraser, the Colonial Secretary wrote to Father Gibney:

My dear Sir,

The Administration has no objection to Father McNab coming to Rottnest if he can make arrangements. The only document necessary will be one of the attached forms filled up which I shall be prepared to do for Father McNab.

Excuse haste, Yours very truly, Malcolm Fraser.

I would have liked to have been able to offer more than this. MF¹²



A picture of Rottnest Island showing the land surrounding Perth in the distance to the north.

2 April 1883 A rough draft of a letter with corrections in M Gibney's handwriting is found in the Perth Archives:

Sir,

Referring to our conversation re the Rottnest native prisoners, during which you were good enough to inform me that you would have no difficulty in permitting the Rev D McNab to reside for some time on Rottnest Island with the view of making an attempt to instruct the native prisoners confined there provided he could make arrangements.

I now beg to say that since the interview Your Excellency kindly favoured me with, I have spoken with Mrs Couderot, the wife of the Superintendent of the Salt Works, and that she has professed her willingness to receive the Rev D McNab at her house. The Rev gentleman will probably therefore be prepared to remove to Rottnest in the course of a few days and I shall be glad if your Excellency will kindly issue the necessary instructions for his being permitted to take up his residence on the island and try what he can do for the Blacks,

I have the honour to be Sir, Your most obedient servant, (no signature)

To His Excellency, The Administrator, Perth.¹³



Salt Lakes in recent times on Rottnest Island

14 May 1883 A letter from Malcolm Fraser, the Colonial Secretary, to Father Gibney linked the Kimberley Aborigines with Rottnest prison:

Your letter of the 10th instant requesting that the native prisoner now under sentence of death for the murder of Mr A Cornish may be sent to Rottnest some few days before the date fixed for his execution in order that he may in a measure be prepared by the Revd D McNab has been submitted to his Excellency, the Administrator, who has instructed me to inform you that until such time as the verdict and sentence have been considered and disposed of by the Executive Council, no further steps can be taken and the prisoner must remain in Perth.

I have the honour to be Sir,

Your obedient servant, Malcolm Fraser, Colonial Secretary.¹⁴

In the sad sequel to the youthful enterprise of taking up land, the prisoner Guirella was hanged. Brown, the escaped lifer convict was left in charge at Yeeda Station.

At Beagle Bay, a wide drift of sheep carcasses and bones spread from the shore, refuse from the last settler's landing. The squatting era was underway in the Kimberley.¹⁵ The Kimberley pastoralist era was on its way in the North-West.

Soon Yeeda Station carried more stock than any other station in the district, 10,900 sheep, 45 horses and 50 cattle. It had changed owners. Sir John Forrest had given Hamlet Cornish and a friend a contract to plot a track with water every 15 miles southward to La Grange Bay.¹⁶

A committee had recommended by a majority, that squatters be entitled to renew their leases for a further term at the same rent as was paid in the beginning. In the case of Kimberley pastoral leases, this was agreed to by the Government and afterwards approved by the Secretary of State.¹⁷

Among other squatters at this time, the Daly brothers from Dunolly in Victoria took up land to become Kimberley pastoralists. Cornelius eventually joined the first group of missionaries.¹⁸

Rottnest Prison

According to the report of 1884, the Superintendent had a vegetable garden, which was provided with workers, but Aboriginal prisoners were never given vegetables. They had a strict and unvaried diet of 2 lbs bread in winter, and 1¹/₂ in summer, 12 oz of meat, 4 oz of rice, 1¹/₂ of tea, and 1¹/₂ sugar. On Sundays they had neither meat nor rice but were allowed to go free on the Island to get bush foods.

McNab's position as Chaplain at the agricultural penal reserve gave him the opportunity to learn something of Western Australian tribes. He wrote long reports pointing out the futility of punishing people for reasons that in most cases they did not understand. He found that the inmates responded well to the simple instruction in the white man's law, but urged that they should at this stage be tried in the light of their tribal law and that Christianity should be taught with emphasis on the best aspects of their own beliefs. They should be encouraged, he believed through training in agriculture, various trades and the management of their own affairs to settle in stable occupations or on land of their own; but he stressed from his experience on Queensland reserves that little could be done with those who had abandoned their tribal code for the worst practises of white society. In fact his proposals echoed the intentions of Governor Hutt over 40 years before, for Hutt had established the dreaded island settlement as a humane alternative to close confinement and chaining of prisoners.¹⁹

11 May 1883

A letter from Father McNab was written to the Governor from Rottnest Island:

Sir,

During the last month, with Your Excellency's permission I have given instructions in the principles of our civilisation and the leading truths of Christianity to the native prisoners at Rottnest.

I find the Australian Aborigines here much the same as elsewhere, but not so quick in their perceptions. Yet they are quite susceptible of instruction and improvement. They understand what I have taught them relative to the rights of property and seem convinced of the inexpediency of their communistic principles in the altered condition of their country.

Many of them likewise begin to know the value of labour and the use of money. Some seem anxious to acquire property and would adopt the habits of civilised life if they had the ability or saw their way to commence, when released from confinement. Some are learning to read, and will soon succeed in their endeavour. This will be a great help to their improvement. Their progress would be accelerated by the appointment of a proper time and place for their tuition. They work cheerfully and well at the various employments in which they are engaged. But they learn little by the exercise, as the principles of their operations are not pointed out, or explained to them. Some are engaged in farming, some in quarrying, some attend a mason or a carpenter. They would soon learn those trades if properly instructed in the crafts and kept regularly at them. I am aware that there is a difficulty in imparting this knowledge to them as their languages are unknown to the tradesmen and most of them know but little, or nothing of English. Yet there are to be found among them some, from every district, who might be used as interpreters to communicate instruction to the rest. Mr Jackson says that he has regular employment for only about eighty natives and there are here about 180.

The maintenance of so many for years at the public expense, without utilising their labour, seems to me a great loss and a serious defect of economy. Even in Queensland, when natives are imprisoned for a considerable time, they are taught some trade, at which they can employ themselves when released. Why should they not be so taught here? It would tend much to their correction and improvement. The adoption of the French system of dividing prisoners' earnings into one-half for the Government, a fourth to procure them present comforts, e.g., tobacco, and a fourth to enable them to commence business when released, would be a great stimulus to make them learn and be diligent. Some might thus, especially from the North-West, be profitably occupied in making nets for dugong and other fishing, others in boat building and cooperage. Shoemaking and tailoring for the establishment would be suitable employments. Saddlery would be very useful for those from cattle stations in the interior. Those engaged in farming or building operations should be kept regularly at those occupations and have their rules explained to them. I do not think the hoeing or scratching the sand practised here is fitted to give them much insight into farming operations, but a better system might be adopted and they might be taught gardening and the cultivation of

arrowroot and of other useful plants; they might also be profitably employed in basket and mat making. For mats there is ample supply of material on this island. The collection and preparation of fibre for rope, or paper, or upholstery, would also be a suitable and beneficial employment.

Such industries would be very beneficial for them on returning home and when well acquired would qualify them for teaching others of their respective tribes. Those occupations would be preferred which would best enable them to provide for their own subsistence as civilised men, such as curing fish and tillage.

To encourage and help them it would be just and commendable to make to them grants of land in fee simple in their own countries on their release from prison, if they desired to occupy and utilise them.

It is an easy matter to teach them to read and write during the term of their imprisonment. If in addition to such training they were also instructed in the leading truths and morals of the Gospel, I doubt not that their correction and improvement would follow as a natural consequence and so one great end of their imprisonment would be attained and they might moreover become the instruments or means of civilising many other natives.

With due respect I submit the preceding notes to Your Excellency's consideration.

D McNab²⁰

25 May 1883 Father McNab wrote to the Governor of Western Australia from Rottnest Island:

Sir,

Deeply interested in the preservation and improvement of the Australian Aborigines, I feel encouraged, by the agreement of His Excellency the Administrator with several of the suggestions contained in my letter of the 11th current, to submit to the Government other reflections, which I hope may meet with their approval, and tend to facilitate and accelerate the settlement and civilisation of the natives of Western Australia.

For the sake of brevity and perspicuity, I have arranged my remarks and suggestions under the following heads: -

- I. Preservation.
- II. Provision.
- III. Protection, Training, and Assistance.
- IV. Education.
- V. Laws.

The first and all-important question that presents itself to me when considering the condition of the natives, with a view to their benefit, is how to preserve them from

extermination. The solution of the difficulty depends in a great measure on the relation in which they stand to the colonists being peaceable, friendly and independent in the possession and use of their mutual rights, and on the attitude and action of the government, especially where they are in considerable numbers, being beneficent, general, prompt, and efficacious in the prevention and repression of mutual aggression, the protection of lives, liberty, property, and rights, and in providing for the well-being and good guidance of all.

In the settled districts of all the colonies, it is notorious that the natives have rapidly decreased in numbers. In Tasmania they are extinct, and in Victoria are likely soon to be so likewise.

This decrease is owing

- (1.) to violence;
- (2.) to precarious or inferior diet;
- (3.) to intoxication;
- (4.) to exposure to the inclemency of the weather;
- (5.) to polyandry and polygamy among themselves, and to the promiscuous intercourse of their women with Europeans;
- (6.) to diseases communicated to them by Europeans, such as measles, &c.

1. Preservation.

The first and chief cause of their disappearance is their being killed in districts newly occupied by Europeans. I am glad to learn that fewer natives have thus perished in Western Australia than in most of the other colonies, and that the Government strives to protect the natives. Yet I am sorry that this colony is not free from the crime of shedding innocent blood. I know that self-defence is ordinarily alleged in excuse, or justification. But I am aware that too often provocation is given to aggression by delinquency; and I do not believe that the avenging of the maiming or theft of sheep or cattle, by the murder of the aggressor, is in the circumstances an act of necessary self-defence. It is easy to find a good name for a bad deed; but it is improper to use it, as it tends to remove from the minds of men the horror they have of crime. The expression "necessary self-defence" is inapplicable when, either in its occasion, or in the inhuman manner of its execution by the indiscriminate slaughter of the innocent and of the guilty. The right to redress wrongs, and to enforce the law lies with the constituted authorities, not with private individuals. It matters not whether the natives be destroyed by poisoned flour as elsewhere, or as here by the resentment of settlers, or the ferocity of native troopers or trackers, for whenever the force employed exceeds what is justifiable in necessary self-defence, and results in death, a horrid murder is committed, a crime crying to heaven for vengeance.

Native police or trackers require to be sharply looked after, and their action restricted to the simple performance of their duty. For they have an intense hatred of distant blacks,

because, like other natives, they foolishly believe that sickness, disease, and death, when not the effect of violence, are always induced by the evil influence of strangers. It may be necessary to furnish them with revolvers for their protection in the discharge of their duty; but the supplying them with rifles or carbines is too strong a temptation to bloodshed, and the certain occasion and means of the murder of innocent natives. It is said that even civilised and Christian policemen are not always humane or just to natives. In newly occupied districts the natives should be treated as men and not shot down as vermin. The nearest magistrate should be instructed to make provision for them, and offer them terms of peace and protection through an interpreter from a friendly tribe, who should declare to them the benevolent disposition of the government, and its ability to protect them, and to chastise them should they assail the colonists, or their property. A truce on such terms was made with a tribe of wild natives in Queensland by police Sergeant Connor, and it was religiously observed by them. Sir John O'Shanassy fixed the boundaries of a nomad tribe at his station near Mount Howitt, and they were duly respected by the natives.

Let them and the colonists, the police and the native trackers understand that murder by any party will be treated as a capital offence, and that minor faults will be punished in proportion to the gravity of the crime; and then as far as practicable rigorously enforce the law. Chastise the natives for killing or maiming the cattle of the settlers, and the latter for destroying the game of the former till they are otherwise provided for. Finally, let their right to live and to land for their maintenance be acknowledged, and secured to them, in compensation for the damage they have sustained by the advent of Europeans into their country; let assistance be rendered to them (as I shall presently describe) to be civilised and settled, and by stringent law and severe penalties restrain the settlers and their dependents from the too common crime of seducing native women, and so giving provocation to their husbands or relatives to commit outrages in retaliation, and I doubt not that peace may be preserved. Were these measures fully adopted, unquestionably great destruction of lives would be prevented, and fewer colonists as well as natives would perish by violence.

I admire and cannot too highly extol the action of the late Governor in the cause of law and order for the protection of the natives of this Colony.

(2.) It is generally admitted that the occupation of the country, especially by farmers, diminishes the game, on which the natives mainly depend for their subsistence, and what remains becomes so shy that it is very difficult of capture by them, without some new means of destruction. Then in seasons of drought they have no alternative but to steal, or starve. I have known a district where, at such a time, even the opossums were so lean that the natives would have perished, had they not been aided by the settlers. Thus their decrease may partly be ascribed to precarious and inferior diet. The remedy is to make provision for them, and supply them with implements for fishing and tillage.

(3.) That they suffer from the abuse of intoxicating liquors they themselves and all others admit. Their exclusion from towns and places where such drinks are sold would be beneficial on more pleas than one. Were the existing law relative to this subject enforced it

would in a great measure remedy the evil. I would add as a preventive the inculcation of abstinence by the force of moral principle, and the suggestion to the natives of using their surplus cash for the acquisition of property. I have known a native who never would take intoxicating drink; another who was an abstainer for two years in the vicinity of a public house; and a whole tribe who took a temperance pledge, and kept it for a long time, although repeatedly tempted by Europeans to break it.

(4.) Exposure to the inclemency of the weather either after drink or after residence for a time with civilised people often subjects the natives to disease of the lungs, of which very many die. Of course the natural preventive of such a result is proper house accommodation, and sufficient clothing, which they must be taught to use and be supplied with, mainly by their own industry. In those cases it is commonly a change of clothing they require.

(5.) Their polygamy and polyandry, with their pernicious effects, should be stopped by their conversion to Christianity. Even without that they might to some extent be prevented by granting them land, which they could transmit to their posterity, only on condition of their contracting a regular marriage and having legitimate offspring. To this they readily consent. The profligacy of Europeans should be checked by subjecting such as seduce gins to the legal penalty of seduction. As the natives are unacquainted with the law, the cases should be taken up on behalf of the husbands, or parents, or guardians, by the Crown Prosecutor or the Police.

(6.) To prevent and cure infectious diseases they should be kept as far as possible from infection, and medical aid should be supplied when needful. Moral instruction should also be beneficial for the prevention of some of those diseases.

11. Provision.

Next to the preservation of the natives the provision that should be made for their maintenance presents itself for our consideration. For this the essential requisite is land. Happily there is plenty of it, and they have the first and best right to it and to the use of it. They have always occupied it, and used it for their support, and never alienated it. The law contemplates such provision to be made for them, and therefore it empowers the governor to assign it to them. Their being well settled on the land is a necessary condition of their preservation. They cannot all be in the service of settlers, and therefore they must be left the means of living as civilised men, and taught to change their use of land from mere hunting and fishing to grazing and agriculture. A sufficient area for their maintenance should be reserved for each tribe. They require but little of agricultural land, and therefore a greater extent of pastoral. For it is not to be expected that people who have lived by the chase will submit to the constant toil required by extensive cultivation.

They should be left, as much as possible, to their own selection (although guided) within the former boundaries of their own territory, for they will not willingly stay beyond them.

As they are clans or groups of associated relatives, and their dispositions and habits are

social, their dwellings must be contiguous, so that small villages may be formed, having sufficient land attached, on which the natives should be settled in distinct families.

The arable ground should be divided between the families, and the pasture land be common.

Three hundred and twenty or six hundred and forty acres, according to the quality of the soil, should be sufficient for each adult. The land secured to individuals ought to be conveyed to them in fee simple, with an irritant clause, in case of attempted alienation; and with another clause causing it to revert to the crown if not occupied and utilised by the natives.

The owners, and especially their families, should be bound to a certain amount of residence.

Should they absent themselves for lengthened periods, as over six months, otherwise than on business, such as the service of settlers for their own and their families support, the ordinary law against vagrancy should be enforced, substituting forced hard labour for solitary confinement.

They should also be bound to make certain improvements, according to the nature and condition of the subject.

They should have the right of transmitting the land and their real property by hereditary succession, only on condition of their contracting a regular marriage and having legitimate offspring, otherwise, if not devised by will, it should appertain to the nearest relative according to colonial law (by Aboriginal kinship, maternal uncles are called fathers, and are in the same degree, not to mention other anomalies), and in defect thereof, revert to the Crown.

I consider this distribution of land to natives preferable to an ordinary reserve, for their benefit, for several reasons. First — because hostile tribes cannot be congregated on a reserve, and even those who are friendly will not live together in very considerable numbers for any length of time. Secondly — because thus they are sooner put in an independent position, and inspired with energy and self-reliance, they feel an interest in their property, have a motive of action supplied to them, and a subject on which to invest their earnings. Thirdly — because I have seen that the Indian Mission settlements in California were ruined and dissolved by the arrival there of immigrants or settlers, precisely because they had everything in common, and no Indian could claim land or stock or produce as exclusively and legally his own.

Although the natives are greatly improved on the Aboriginal reserves in Victoria, they are sadly deficient in one essential point, viz., morality. In the school of twenty-nine children at Lake Condah, I saw only three purely natives. I have heard and read the like complaints of other reserves in Victoria. Lastly, because the work and expense of the civilisation and settlement of the natives in distinct families, has to be begun or recommenced after perhaps years of residence on a reserve, reserves are temporary expedients, whereas the object desired is the permanent settlement of the natives on the land. This can only be attained by their being domiciled like the colonists, and not merely preserved like cattle on a run.

The chief advantages to be derived from the distribution of land to the natives would be, first, their preservation, next, the opportunity it would afford of altering their marriage system, and the communism that flows from it; the keeping their families distinct, and yet in such juxtaposition as to have them within easy reach of any place that might be provided for their religious or secular education: then to some extent it removes them from temptation, hastens their civilisation, and supplies them with a powerful stimulus to acquire property and to labor. What an impetus would not this give to the progress of the colony in this and especially in the succeeding generations! Many think the natives will never be settled in a civilised state, and that therefore it is useless to make provision for them. Some certainly never will, and those, except the sick and the poor, I should leave to provide for themselves as best they may. None will unless they can see that by the change they better their condition. It is easy to convince them of the superiority of civilised life. The natives know not their rights, nor that they can possess property like settlers, nor how to acquire it, any more than how to use it; but many are willing to learn, and when informed that they can become owners of property, they are anxious to acquire it, and some profess their readiness to labor for its acquisition.

The principal impediments to their civilisation arising from their own social system, next to their communism, which would be removed by this arrangement of land, is the influence of the old and of the indolent.

The old are opposed to a change, because, depending on the young for their subsistence, they are afraid of want in consequence of the alteration.

If, however, provision be made for them as paupers, when they become decrepit, they will acquiesce. In many cases they might be provided with some clothing and weekly supplies of food from mission stations, or from stores, or squatting stations, with but little expense to the Government.

The idle that want to live by other people's labor are apt to maltreat those who wish to live as civilised men. They should be restrained by punishment, such as a short imprisonment with hard labor for threatening, flogging for assault, and capital punishment for murder.

111. Protection, Training, and Assistance.

Protection should be secured to the natives by law and fact from aggression on life, limbs, morality, liberty, rights, and property.

All cases of alleged cruelty or ill-treatment of natives should be inquired into. It would be expedient to have proper men appointed to see that all contracts and agreements (at least all of considerable importance and duration) entered into, or about to be made with Europeans, are in writing, and are fair and equitable; to watch over the interest and welfare of the natives, with power to sue for wages, and enforce agreements on their behalf.

Some such regulations as are contained in the Queensland Polynesian laborers Act of 1868 might well be applied to the cases of natives employed by Colonists, e.g.: -

21. *"the wages of every laborer shall be paid at the expiration of each six*

months of his agreement in current coin of the realm, and in the presence of an Inspector or Police Magistrate, and no payment of wages to a laborer shall be of any force or effect unless the same has been made in the presence of an Inspector, or Police Magistrate. No employer shall deduct any sum from the wages of a laborer in respect of moneys paid during his term of service, unless such moneys have been paid in the presence of and with the consent of an Inspector, or a police magistrate. No employer shall charge him with the payment of any moneys on account of stores supplied to such laborer, or deduct any sum in respect thereof from the wages due to him."

22. *"If the wages payable to a laborer are due, an Inspector may demand payment of the same from the employer, and if such wages remain unpaid for a period of fourteen days after demand has been so made, the Inspector may sue for and recover the same on behalf of the laborer, in a summary way, before two Justices of the Peace."*

23. *"Employer to provide return passage."*

24. *"Every employer shall provide his laborers with proper medicine and medical attendance during disease or sickness; and any employer who neglects to provide a laborer, when sick, with such medicine and medical attendance, shall for every such offence forfeit and pay a penalty not exceeding twenty pounds, and not less than five pounds, and shall further be liable to pay any reasonable expense incurred by an inspector in providing such medicine and medical attendance."*

38. *"All agreements heretofore made, or hereafter to be made with Pacific Island laborers, are hereby expressly declared to be subject to the provisions of the Act 25th Victoria, no. 11, 'The Master and Servants Act, 1861.'"*

I might cite from the same Act other useful regulations, such as those referring to registers, deaths, desertions, nominal returns, etc. It may be asked how is all this to be done? The Government may employ Inspectors, or the Police and resident magistrates, or missionaries. Probably all will be required. The ministry may direct the settlement of the natives, or they may consign the management of it to an Aboriginal Protection Board.

As far as my knowledge and experience go, I am led to believe that Aboriginal commissions or Protection Boards (I have been a member of one such) are miserably inefficient. Wherever they have been established the natives have perished, or are rapidly disappearing.

The training I mean is instruction and guidance in ordinary farming and dairy management, in cooorage and the curing of fish along the coast, and also in station work, in shepherding, grazing, and the management of stock in the interior.

To secure this necessary training, I should expect the government to give to the person

in charge of one or more native settlements the means of paying and maintaining a good foreman, well-skilled in the industries required, for each village or station.

As farther assistance from Government, I should expect plans, surveys, and title deeds should be given free of cost. Moreover, some help would be needed in the beginning to provide them with seeds, materials for nets, tools, a boat, or implements for husbandry.

In some cases a small allowance might be requisite at first for food and clothing. Medical aid should be given when necessary.

I would not have the natives to imagine that they are to get these and all things for nothing, and that they are to be kept as gentlemen. Their having to earn their position will make them esteem and value it the more, and take better care of what belongs to them. They must be taught to manage their own affairs. Generally they should be able to do more than support themselves by the wages they can earn from settlers, provided they be fairly paid for their labours, or by the profit of their fishing, or other industry. With a little help in the beginning, they should be able to supply themselves with requisite food and implements, and gradually to stock their land by their earnings and the natural increase of their flocks. They might also, to some extent, be assisted by their prosperous Christian neighbours. If they had land sufficient, they should, after a time, be able to pay their managers or foremen till they could do without them. All this, if adopted and acted on, would entail very considerable expense upon the colony. Certainly it would, and if at once and generally applied might be more that the government could accomplish; because they may not have the men or means requisite to carry the enterprise to a successful issue. But what is there to be had, without considerable expense that is worth the having? Are not the colonists enriched by the land of the natives, for which they have received no compensation?

I only unfold a system, which may be followed as occasion and means allow. The sooner it is acted on the more natives will be saved, civilised, and made useful subjects, to the great benefit of the Colony.

1V. Education.

As education is secured to the youth of the colony, so it ought to be likewise to the children of the natives. To make it generally efficient, the attendance at school should be made compulsory, and, in my opinion, or rather to my certain knowledge, if the education be purely secular, and not religious it will prove worse than useless. I should not deem it religious merely for including scripture lessons,. To be such it should impart a knowledge of the attributes of God as the foundation of morality, and, in forming a conscience, impress upon their minds a sense of responsibility for their actions. Where missionaries are in charge of native settlements, it is desirable that should they also be the guardians of orphans, of half-castes neglected by their fathers, and of such children as may be entrusted to them by their parents or natural guardians.

Besides letters and useful arts, they should be taught the value of labor, the use of money, and the principles of our civilisation; and especially how to manage their own affairs.

V. Laws

Now I have but little to write beyond the enumeration of the special laws I have already indicated as desirable to be made or enforced for the benefit of the natives.

1. A law to legalise their offspring by their first marriage. By the law of nature, their first marriage is perfectly valid; and it is unjust to brand their children with the stain or infamy of bastardy, and so deprive them of their natural and civil rights. Their system is the same as that of the American Indians, which for a regular marriage requires the consent of the parents, or, in their defect, of the nearest relative of the bride. Although too many, especially of their chiefs or leading men are polygamists, their theory condemns the practice. It is, however, wrong in another respect, namely, in permitting, with the consent of the principal party, intercourse with the men or women of the same class as the spouse.
2. A law prohibiting colonists from killing game where it is scarce, or otherwise destroying their means of living, where no sufficient provision is made for the natives.

Such a law seems specially needed in unsettled and in newly settled districts. I am informed that in the North-West the sheep have completely destroyed a certain plant in the beds of rivers from the fruit of which the natives used to make bread and on which they greatly depended for their supply of food. If in such districts the colonists wish to use or destroy the game, they ought betimes to come to an understanding with the natives, who, I doubt not, would exchange their game for sheep or cattle, and so prevent the ill-feeling and conflicts that often occur between them. Could not runs be let with this condition? If such a law or measure be impracticable, suitable reserves should immediately be made for them where they could live unmolested.
3. A law to protect them from slavery or being forcibly abducted to perform unremunerated service.
4. alteration of land Laws where they are requisite, e.g., to bind them to residence, and to make improvements on their allotments.
5. application to them of the law requiring legitimacy of birth for succession to real property.
6. A modified law of vagrancy in settled districts where provision is made for them.
7. Enforcement of compulsory education in settled districts.
8. A prohibition against their frequenting towns and places where intoxicating liquors are sold.
9. A law for punishing the seducers of native women, and authorising officials or others to prosecute on behalf of the interested native.

10. A law framing general regulations relative to their employment by colonists.

In conclusion, I have only to add that the adoption and promulgation of these or of such suggestions will be of no benefit to the natives unless the measures indicated be applied to them. Just as the publication of reserves for Aborigines in the *Government Gazette* (which the natives never see, and if they did, cannot read) can serve only to exclude settlers for a time, but can be of benefit to the natives only when the reserve is pointed out and consigned to them, and they are taught how to use it.

I am afraid I have trespassed too much upon your valuable time by the length of this communication. I hope, however, you will excuse me on account of the importance of the subject in consideration.

D. McNAB.²¹

Father McNab's theories on Aboriginal education and his letters and papers were tabled in the Legislative Council by His Excellency's command in 1883. He urged that Aborigines be tried in the light of their tribal law and that Christianity be taught with an emphasis on the best aspects of their own beliefs. His theories had developed into a classic statement about what could be done for Aboriginal welfare. Later legislation in Western Australia saw the implementation of some of his ideas.²²

The Ministry of Father McNab

12 August 1883 Cardinal Simeoni wrote from Rome to McNab, in Rottneest, by Fremantle, Australia:

Reverend Sir,

I received safely your letter of June 5, and although I am sorry that you were unable to found a Mission in the eastern part of Australia I am pleased to hear that you have gone to the west and begun work there among the aborigines (selvaggi – savages!) in Rottneest Island.

I hope the Lord will of a surety render to you the merit your zeal deserves and that He will deign to bless your efforts and make them fruitful.

I presume that when Monsignor Gibney returns which he will do, I hope, soon, he will give you his advice and protection so that you may expand more the glory of God and bring about the salvation of souls. I therefore pray God to give you an abundance of His graces.

Affectionately, Giovanni Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect.

(i selvaggi dell'isola di Rottneest)²³

27 August 1883 In the Perth archives a rough draft of a letter from Bishop Griver is addressed to the Honourable Colonial Secretary Perth:

Sir,

I have the honour to advise you for the information of His Excellency the Governor that I have had under consideration a proposal from two worthy priests, the Rev D McNab and the Rev A Martelli, to undertake a mission to the natives of our North-West Coast in any part thereof where I shall elect to send them. I may say at the outset that they are both worthy of confidence.

The Rev D McNab has had experience at this kind of missionary work in Queensland and he came hither at my instance. I urged him, knowing, as I do, that the Imperial Government is favourable to the protection and civilization of the Aboriginal races more than colonial representatives generally. This he too knows, having been in communication with the Colonial Office. The Rev A Martelli served in a type of mission not far removed from that he is now willing to undertake. Of European descent, born in India, he served there on the mission for over twenty years and came hither for health's sake only.

These two gentlemen I have resolved to send out – the sooner the better- to whatever place appears to present the greatest facilities for their enterprise.

They will require support. I am therefore under the necessity of asking you to present my prayer on their behalf to His Excellency that he may be pleased to place on the Estimates a modest sum for their support – say £200 each – besides such other aid as may be deemed necessary or suitable in some degree, to show these 'wild men of the woods' how they may in some sort procure support or help themselves.

Seeing that absolutely no compensation has been made them or provision made for them up to the present time although we have laid hold of all they possessed, but to a vast extent have deprived them of their means of subsistence especially by the occupation of the water courses and the adjacent land – their hunting grounds: and that, moreover thousands of pounds are being annually expended not for their protection but rather for their detection and punishment, it cannot be considered inopportune to ask help for them when such help is sure to be dispensed by willing hands.

I may add that I have the assurance of some gentlemen in the Legislative Council that any such measure will meet with their support.²⁴

During 1883, Father McNab landed with his horses at Geraldton to assess native reserves between the Murchison and the De Gray Rivers, to search out encampments (mainly mythical), and to examine areas likely for encampments. He judged these reserves as 'clearly intended only for a name' and saw little prospect for a mission on them. The natives employed by the pearling fleets around Cossack had been recruited or shanghaied from tribes between Campion Bay and the Kimberley Coast and were unlikely to settle down on a mission so far from home. Ill health had prevented Father Martelli from accompanying him, during four weeks on the Gascoyne.

21 September 1883 The Commissioners appointed by the Governor to look at the situation of Aborigines had begun their report.

They wrote under the following headings:

I. Present state of the Aboriginal Race.

II. Medical and Poor Relief.

III. Missions.

IV. Rottnest Island Prison, and evidence taken.

V. General Remarks.

In the districts north of the Murchison River, and especially that portion lying to the east of the North-West Cape, the native population supplies the principal labour of the district, and do nearly all the shepherding, shearing, stock-riding, and even fencing. They are also largely utilised as pearl shell divers, and are in every way a most useful factor in the prosperity of the settlers.

A valuable contribution respecting the natives of this portion of the colony is printed in Appendix II to this report from R J Scholl, Esq., for nearly 20 years Government Resident of the north district, which has been kindly placed at our disposal.

As far as we can gather, the natives at the North-West have not very materially decreased as yet but there are evidences that they are decreasing, rather than increasing. The greater number are in the service of the settlers, and not, as is often found in other parts of the colony, without any fixed employment.

In the Kimberley district, which is in its infancy, the natives are being employed as pearl-ers and station hands; there is every reason to expect that they will prove as useful as those more to the south.

There has not been any attempt made to instruct the natives of our northern districts in anything but the way to work.²⁵

At this time, Parliamentary debate began to reveal the predominant opinion that the responsibility of whites to the natives was complete when they were taught to be 'useful' to the settlers, and when they were treated 'humanely' by being clothed and fed, and by not being handled cruelly and when any obvious physical distress was relieved.

Conditions at Rottnest Prison

In 1883, the Governor, F Napier Broome, appointed the commission to report into the treatment of Aboriginal native prisoners of the crown in the colony and also into certain other matters relative to Aboriginal natives.

27 October 1883 The Commission commenced its duties by collecting evidence and information from people connected with Rottnest Prison.

William Dockwrey Jackson:

I am Superintendent of Rottnest.

There are at present 148 native prisoners on Rottnest. The staff is at present one chief and six assistant warders. There are also on the Island four white prisoners and two reformatory boys in charge of Mr Watson. There is also a military guard of eight.

There are 37 adult Europeans residing on the island, viz., 27 men and 10 women, besides 27 children.

There are 36 cells, but six are used for European prisoners and two as association wards. I have had five natives in a 6 X 10 cell, but as a general rule there are only four.

Ventilation is procured by an opening over door 12 X 10 inches, and by a grating in door 8 X 6 inches. There is no draught through. There is always a strong close smell in the cell during the night, especially during summer.

Henry Calvert Barnett:

I am colonial surgeon at Fremantle and Medical Officer at Rottnest. I have been in that capacity for eleven years. From my experience of Rottnest I have formed an opinion that Rottnest is not a fit place for the detention of natives belonging to the tropical portions of the colony. My reason for this opinion is formed from the fact that last winter, a winter of exceptional severity, natives were brought from a warm climate, in over-crowded steamers, during cold and wet weather, and placed in an over-crowded prison with total change of diet, surroundings, and occupation.

Depressed by confinement and sickness, and then subjected to the most remarkable and sudden variations of temperature, it is not strange that they have succumbed to this epidemic of influenza, and to the bronchitis and consumption which followed on it. I do not think a prison on the mainland in the same latitude would be preferable to Rottnest. I think imprisonment in their own districts would be less risk to their health. During this winter the epidemic of influenza, which is usual every year, has been more severe at Fremantle among the white population.

During my experience at Rottnest, I have observed that a continued confinement – anything over 12 months – materially affects the general health and depresses the spirits of a native. This applies to all parts of Australia where I have had considerable experience of judging of the natives. The late epidemic of influenza, which was fatal to so many broke out suddenly after the arrival of a number of natives from the north, and I think they brought it with them. Natives arriving from the north generally arrive very badly covered, having only a small blanket. They frequently arrive in an emaciated condition with colds, coughs, and sometimes more important, pulmonary complaints, as they have a wretched time on board ship. On the passage from Fremantle to Rottnest natives are often exposed to rain and wet, and get a severe drenching. There is a great loss of time in going and returning to Rottnest, and on several occasions the weather has been so bad as to be too rough for the harbour Master's

boat to venture. . . .

There have been epidemics of influenza often at Rottnest before, but not nearly so severe as the last. The epidemic of measles was taken to the Island by natives who caught the disease on board the steamers. The first case of measles that came under my notice was an employee of the steamer. . . .

The diet, I think, might be improved by the addition of vegetables, which could be grown on a large scale on the Island. I think also a larger allowance of animal food should be given and that no difference should be made on Sunday. I think, with a diet better arranged, the natives would be healthier and stronger for work. The diet is a very monotonous one, and if possible a change in the way of cooking should be practised. I think fishing might be carried on for the benefit of the natives. In cases of illness all needful medical comforts are provided for the natives. I think that if the Sunday rations were given out uncooked, it would be a good arrangement and very acceptable to the natives.

I think there should be two suits of clothing for each native, in order that a change may be provided for them in winter when needful. I think clothes should be washed at intervals. It is injurious to a native to work him in chains.

As colonial surgeon at Fremantle, I look upon all natives as paupers, and I always attend to them when they come to me or when I am informed by the police.

(Signed) H. Calvert Barnett,

Colonial Surgeon at Fremantle.

Adam Oliver:

I am Chief Warder at Rottnest. A great deal of trouble is found in finding out the right natives for the right warrants, and sometimes a considerable time elapses before it is satisfactorily arranged. I believe, however, that eventually the right persons are attached to the right warrants. The uncivilised natives have no idea how long they are to be imprisoned, but frequently make inquiries through the civilised and more intelligent natives. The civilised natives have generally a very good idea. The natives all long for their own country, and pine very much to return. They are very pleased when they get their liberty.

The prisoners are employed in cultivating the farm, cutting and collecting wood, making the road to the light house, salt works, etc. they are good working fellows, and can do a good day's work, and are willing and anxious to please. Wheat, barley, rye and hay are grown. Rye and barley are only fair crops this year. The land is worn out and overrun with weeds.

Natives often get wet in winter, and have no change of clothing. They have to dry their clothes as best they can. They generally get wet in winter. No mattress or bed or straw is allowed except to natives in hospital. The medicines prescribed by the Medical Officer are compounded by me, without any extra remuneration, and I have also to attend to the sick natives. The Medical officer rarely compounds medicines for the natives, but he writes the

prescriptions and I make them up.

I think if the prisoners were in large rooms with large fireplaces, it would be better for them. Natives who die are buried in their blankets, according to their own custom, by their friends. The grave is from 5 to 6 feet deep.

The water supply from the well is not very good, and I think a tank is very much required. My quarters are very small, and the smell from the yard is offensive, and comes into my quarters through the three windows opening on the yard. There are four rooms, one of which is very small. My family consists of myself, wife, and four children. I believe my health is suffering in consequence of the offensive air from the prison yard coming into my quarters.

I think fish-hooks and lines should be provided for the natives by the Government.

Aboriginal Native Widgie Widgie Johnnie:

I belong to "Ekacootharra" or Pyramid Station, in the north district. I am here for killing a native. I do not like Rottnest; it makes me ill. I have been two winters here. I came in the steamer. I had a chain round my neck all the way down. I was all right when I was in my own country. I used to be a pearl-diver, but latterly a shepherd. I get enough to eat of meat, the bread is too hard and too much cooked and makes me ill, the rice and tea are good. I am cold in winter, my blanket no good, it is old. I do not know when I am going back, but I shall be very glad to go. I expect to go by and by.

Aboriginal Native Charlie:

I come from the Lower Gascoyne. I have been here four months. I was sentenced to 6 months for stealing a pipe from Mr R Shaw. I picked up the pipe and gave it to a native policeman. I did not know to whom the pipe belonged. I do not like Rottnest. I am sick of it. I have been sick and do not eat much. I came in the steamer from Gascoyne, and had a chain round my neck all the way to Champion Bay, when it was taken off. I expect to go to my country soon, and shall be very glad. I sleep in a cell with three others. It is cold in winter. My blanket is old and no good. I have been a pearl diver and horse-rider for Mr Brockman. I used to like diving, but do not now. I work in the garden with several others.

Mr John Watson:

Sir,

I venture most respectfully to submit to your consideration some suggestions relative to the technical training of the aboriginal native prisoners confined in the Rottnest Penal establishment.

I feel convinced that, if the necessary facilities were afforded me, I could teach many of them the trade of carpentry; the consequence of which would be that on their liberation they would be able to earn a good living, and would also be of the greatest use to the pioneer settlers in the more distant parts of this colony.

What would be required to enable me to carry this idea into practical effect would be a

liberty given to me to select my men, who should not be too old to learn, nor undergoing any very prolonged sentence; also a supply of tools.

I feel sure, from my knowledge of, and the interest I take in, the welfare of the native prisoners, I could guarantee to turn out several men each year, well qualified to work as bush carpenters; and this, I think, you will admit, would be a great improvement upon the present system of treatment.

My practical experience of Rottneest will, I think be sufficient to assure you that any promises I may make would be fulfilled to the utmost of my ability.

Hoping to receive a reply at your earliest convenience.

John Watson, Officer in charge of Reformatory, Rottneest Island.

**Abstract Return of Aboriginal Prisoners at Rottneest Prison
From 1st January 1878, to 30th September 1883: -**

Year	In Gaol 1st January	Received during the year	Total	No. of deaths	Discharged during each year
1878	88	58	146	9	59
1879	78	28	106	3	52
1880	51	30	81	-	47
1881	34	60	94	1	31
1882	62	157	219	10	55
*1883	149	120	269	+59	47
				82	291

Doc 1122
 (S Calisto) Roma 13 Octubre
 My dear Lord -
 Apenas supe, en el sabado pasado, en Roma habia regresado a Roma por S. Tido a darle la bienvenida, pero talvez el gusto de hablarle - volvi ayer a S. Tido al mismo fin, y tambien le lle - Supe q. en Roma habia venido a un en S. Calisto en la mañana del Domingo pasado, y tampoco me hallo, lo que me disgustado no solamente por no haber sido tener el placer de verle sino tambien por que me hubiera valido de aquella o tunidad para entregarle la carta y ad/ante le incluyo para su impasman y gobiernos -
 Antes de yo dejar la Australia he yo recibido otra carta de Mary Ann Collins incluyendome una copia de ella. Duen con Mr. Stab, al cual suponía hallaba en mi sucesor - Yo le respondí que el dicho Sr. Stab no se hallaba en mi sucesor, y que yo no le conocía sabia en donde se hallaba - Pero me carta no le ha debido llegar por que volvi a escribirme y me la mandaron a qui desde Nueva eia y es la ad/ante - Por el ultimo vez pues, de la Australia, recibí la copia

Salvado (in Spanish) from S Calisto, Rome, to Griver, 13 October (perhaps) 1883, ACAP

dela Post-card dirigida a mi not
 y robriente y principios y desguar dirigida
 de intencamente al Pdo Mc Nab, co-
 no su tñma, puede ver - El P. Prior
 Dominguez me dice que la Post-card
 original la mando al muy Pdo Vica-
 rio General (M. Gibney) p.º 9.º se la man-
 do al Pdo de Rottneat al Pdo Mc Nab si es
 que era el individuo a quien la Post-card
 era dirigida, en lo q.º yo creo obrio por a-
 centuamente - Lo que habia sido al muy
 Pdo Vicario General yo no lo se -
 Advierto a su tñma que yo nada he
 dicho en Propaganda de la dirigida a
 Post-card dicha - Pero su tñma sabe
 bien que una Post-card no siendo cosa
 da y pudiendola leer quien quiera, vie-
 ne a ser una cosa publica; y el leer
 que en una Post-card una mujer llama
 y dice a un sacerdote "You are a repro-
 bate and a Cheat &c." no es la cosa
 mas edificante - y quien sabe cuan-
 tas otras Post-cards le seran dirigidas?
 Por todos cuenta yo puedo comprender
 aquella mujer esta rabiosamente deter-
 minada a vengarse del Pdo Mc Nab,
 sea este quien sea) y como no se conoce
 otro Pdo Duncan Mc Nab que el que se
 halla en la diocesis de su tñma, he creido
 mi deber de o.ªmidad informar a su tñma
 Esperando que su tñma se halla bueno
 y que siga sin novedad, se respeta de su
 tñma
 Rosendo Osborn
 + Rosendo Obpo de Port Victoria
 P. S. He cortado el papel que falta p.º 9.º la carta no
 para mas de lo ordinario -

Salvado (in Spanish) from S Calisto, Rome, to Griver, 13 October (perhabs) 1883, ACAP

13 October 1883 Salvado had written (in Spanish) from S Calisto, Rome, to Bishop Martin Griver:

Dear Lord,

As soon as I knew, last Saturday, that your Lordship had returned to Rome, I went to S Isidro to welcome you, but as your Lordship was absent when I called in, I did not have the pleasure to talk to you. . . . I would have availed myself of the opportunity to give you the letter enclosed for your information and administration.

Before leaving Australia I had received a letter from Mary Anne Collins. In the letter she enclosed another one for the Rev Duncan McNab, thinking that he was in my diocese. In my letter to her I told her that the Rev McNab was not in my diocese, that he was unknown to me and that I did not know his whereabouts. Apparently she did not receive my letter. She wrote to me again and her letter which you will find enclosed was sent to me here from new Norcia

On the last mail from Australia I received a copy of the Postcard addressed to me in an unsealed envelope and afterwards addressed entirely to the Rev Father McNab as your Lordship can see.

Father Prior Dominguez tells me that he sent the original postcard to the Vicar General, Matthew Gibney requesting him to forward it to Rottneat to the Rev Father McNab on the assumption that he was the person to whom the postcard was addressed. I think Father Prior acted prudently. I don't know what the Vicar-General did with it.

I assure your Lordship that I have not revealed the contents of the post-card to Propaganda. Your Lordship is aware of the fact that an unsealed postcard can be read by anyone, becoming thus public. For a woman to say of a priest that he is a reprobate and a cheat is not edifying reading. And who knows how many more postcards will be sent to him? As far as I can gather, that woman is violently determined to defend herself from the Rev McNab (whoever such a person may be).

As there is no other Rev McNab but the one in your diocese, I have thought it my duty out of friendship to inform your Lordship. Hoping that your Lordship is in good health and all is well with you,

Your very affectionate Brother,
 Rosendo Salvado, Bishop of Port Victoria.²⁶

Enclosed postcard and letter from Mary Anne Collins from 187 Street Detroit, 18 May (undated), to Rt Rev Brides and Salvado OSB, Catholic Bishop, Port Victoria

My Lord,

Will you please forward this to the Rev D McNab, Late of Airdrie Scotland.

Rev D McNab,

You are a reprobate and a cheat why do you not pay my money you broke my dear mother's heart.

God reward you – you blighted my life. I never recover the Scandal you gave. Oh! God help me to reach you,

Mary Anne Collins.

To Right Rev R Salvado, R C Bishop, Port Victoria:

My Lord,

On the 16th of February 1881 I wrote you but failed to send a stamped envelope and that may be where I have failed in eliciting a reply. I send one now and trust your Lordship will deem it right to favour me so much.

I shall be cousin to the Rev Duncan McNab late of Airdre Scotland. Now or lately labouring in your diocese. Owes me at least £500. It is 24 years since that debt was incurred and I am aware he can plead proscription yet never perhaps was there a harder case than mine for me McNab knew my claim and position well and he was not ignorant of the truth that my mother was blind and helpless and that she was dying by inches of hunger as indeed she did - one redeeming feature in his career during those 24 years is that in September of 1875 he sent me £7 which I accepted as part payment of the debt.

Comment is useless pray my Lord furnish me with his address, he wrote one from Sterling Scotland November 1879 pleading poverty. No words of mine can describe the terror (?) he displayed but he should meet fearing that I am anti religious I may state that the money he owes me was for my services while in his employment.

I agreed to let him retain it at interest and this he knows well I am so sorry for religion's sake that it is or ever was in my power to state this of any priest for I was much happier when I knew nothing against him and his conduct has been mean for I have not spared him in my letter and he has answered nothing and in his case I fear silence is no longer a virtue.

I have the honour to be your Lordship's very humble servant,

Mary Anne Collins.²⁷

3 November 1883

Father McNab wrote Care of H W Pead, Cossack, to Father M Gibney:

Rev dear Father,

I remained four weeks on the Gascoyne. Soon after my arrival I started up the river with the intention of going to Mount Dalgetty. I went up the river about forty miles. One of my horses became lame and I got sick myself but was soon recovered. By what I learned by enquiry from strangers from the Murchison and from Victoria, from strangers who passed near Dalgetty and from station managers who had extra exploring country for their own

occupation or selection and from Mr Carey through Mr Forrest, I came to the conclusion it was unnecessary to proceed farther. The Reserve at Dalgetty is stony, well grassed land without water and without Blacks except when on occasion some may pass by it. It is absolutely unfit for cultivation.

On the Native Reserve to the West of Kennedy Range there is a splendid fountain and about two acres of excellent land. Beyond that it is all stony ground. Taking these things into consideration together with Bishop Parry's claim to these reserves I thought it useless to proceed farther.

I believe that most of the Gascoyne natives to the West of the Kennedy Range are at Rottneest. I did not see more than about a dozen native adults as far as I went; almost to a man they were in the employment of settlers. I was told there are more in the ranges who are described as outlaws or desperate characters that take refuge there to escape the police. I had to deal with some such in Queensland and found little or nothing could be done with them. Mr Foss, the magistrate at Carnarvon told me he did not think the natives on the Gascoyne exceed two hundred. They all speak the Ingaraman language but are divided into different departments. The dominant or strongest clan is at Nebo, (Mr Marmion's Station). I think the most suitable place for a mission station on the Gascoyne is at Rocky Pool at Nebo because it is halfway between the coast and the Kennedy Range; the land is fit for pasturage and cultivation: there is a constant supply of water and fish and stone for building which I did not see anywhere else.

Having learned that there are six hundred young natives employed in the pearl fisheries in the North-West I came to Cossack on the first of this month, expecting to find in its vicinity a more suitable place for a mission station. It seems that the information I got relative to the number engaged in the pearl fishing is correct. The natives however do not all belong to this district but are taken up at different places from Champion Bay to the Kimberley. This however is a central position and its natives seem to be the principal source of labour supply to the fisheries, as they generally adopt their language. There are also natives attached to all the squatting stations. Many of them know more of English than those on the Gascoyne or in other parts to the northward. They are not however to be found in great numbers anywhere. The most I can hear of at one place is over 100 employed by Mr McKenzie Grant on the De Grey.

I learned from the Hon Mr Fraser that it is the intention of the Government to make only large reserves of unoccupied Crown Lands to be given to missionaries for the benefit of the natives. Should the Government follow the suggestion made to it, a great benefit would be conferred both on the natives and the missionaries.

The course they follow can be of little or no benefit to either for the Blacks frequent only those portions of the colony where there is water and the land along all the watercourses is already taken up by the colonists, many of whom are mere speculators and have no stock on it and as the rent is only 5/- for 1000 acres in this Northern District and there is no stocking clause in their lease, they can easily hold it for a lengthened period. Then the reserves for natives on Crown lands are necessarily in dry localities in stony ground unfit for cultivation

and at a great distance from the seaports and consequently subject to great expense for the carriage of supplies and produce. I understand that most of the squatters who have stations far inland have also some place near the coast whither they bring their sheep for shearing. In Queensland, reserves are made for natives on occupied squatting runs, six months' notice being given to the squatter and a proportionate reduction of rent.

I consider the reserves as made here of no benefit to the missionaries or natives. The one on the Murchison was made several years ago at the request of Bishop Parry yet he has never used it and I doubt not that it will be so also with those at Dalgetty and the Kennedy Range. The whole thing seems intended only for a name. In fact it would be much better for the missionaries to take up a run on the ordinary terms as they then might get one in a suitable locality and be enabled to borrow money on it, with which to help to stock it: which they could not do on a reserve. At all events the Government should make some native reserves on the watercourses on some of the stations forfeited for the non-payment of rent, where there is good soil and natives to be civilized and not too far from a seaport. The land carriage of supplies is very expensive, thus a ton of flour is said to cost £30 at the De Grey.

From the West Australian Newspaper I learn that there has been an auction of forfeited runs in the Northern District on the 31st of last month.

Possibly they may not all have been disposed of and if so I should like that you would secure for me before the return of the steamer one of 20,000 or 50,000 acres on some of the watercourses between the Ashburton and the De Grey, if possible within 80 or 90 miles of Roebourne which might serve as a head station for the mission and I would remit the rent, when the sum should be intimated to me. There will be no steamer for months thereafter. I also want a Directory for the Office of next year.

I intend to say Mass here next Sunday and I expect to say it at Roebourne the following Sunday. There are several Catholics here who have been married by the Protestant minister and to do any good to them I will need the faculty to absolve them from that reserved case and instructions how to deal with them. When may I look for Father Martelli?

I am told there is a native reserve some ninety miles from Roebourne but I do not see it marked on the map of the district. I will make further enquiry and try, if I can find it, to see it.

I remain, Your humble servant, D McNab²⁸

Father McNab's reports were placed before the Aboriginal Commission of 1883 and as a result two men were sent to instruct the prisoners at Rottneest in carpentry. The effort was half-hearted and short-lived, its failure adding further weight to the commissioner's summing up that 'experience of 50 years finds us at a point as if we had not begun...'

It would appear that positive suggestions contained in the Forrest Report concerning the rights of Aborigines as human beings were

initiated by McNab.

The first comprehensive attempt at educative content in a Commission of Inquiry was in 1883 to inquire into the treatment of Aboriginal prisoners and also into certain other matters concerning Aborigines. John Forrest as chairman and six other commissioners were all men in high government positions.²⁹

Specific issues, such as conditions at Rottneest Island prison, and possible improvements or extensions to the existing system, as well as the cost of implementing these, were to be dealt with. The final Report deals with Rottneest in relative detail, probably because of McNab's ideas, but it skims over other important points.

The Report contained negative statements such as:

*We have no hope that the Aboriginal native will ever be more than a servant of the white man ... our aim should be devoted to such instruction as will enable him to live usefully and happily among the white population.*³⁰

Instruction could, the Commission suggests, be provided even for Aborigines imprisoned at Rottneest. Readers are cautioned against expecting that anything much can or will be done for them, but assured that, while they last, "their usefulness to the pioneer settler can scarcely be over-estimated". Towards the end of 1883, while Father McNab assessed the situation further north, he knew his recommendations on vocation training to the 1883 Commission on Aborigines were only being implemented half-heartedly.

Sir John Forrest himself was not enthusiastic. In his explorations he found the natives of very little use to him; one of the reasons given by him being that in order to retain their services he would have had to use force, but he stated that in his opinion if it should be desirable or necessary to use wild natives to find water, it would be absolutely essential that they should be chained up or in some way detained.³¹

But, while all these events were taking place in 1883, at Sandy Point, near Beagle Bay, an Aborigine named Remi Balagai was born. He was one of 12 males baptized by Father Alphonse Tachon at Beagle Bay Mission 15 August 1896. Before he died, he told Father Francis Huegel SAC, the story of Felix, the song maker, who had met the early missionaries, and he could remember details about the early days of the Beagle Bay Mission.³²

Notes for Chapter 6

¹ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia, A History*, Thomas Nelson, West Melbourne, 1977, pp 272-3.

² *Western Australia An Atlas of Human Endeavour 1829-1979*, Produced for the Education Committee, WAY '79 by the Education and Lands and Surveys Departments of Western Australia, 1979, p 55.

³ Bishop Martin Griver, Apostolic Administrator 1862-1873, Bishop 1873-1886, Bishop Matthew Gibney, 1887-1925.

⁴ D F Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia 1829-1979*, Archdiocese of Perth, 1979, pp. 143-144.

⁵ *Western Australia, An Atlas of Human Endeavour*, p. 24.

⁶ Sarah Yu and Joyce Hudson, *Kimberley: Past and Present Resource Materials*, S E A Code No 9114, Nulungu Catholic College, Broome, 1988, p 9.

⁷ Eventually Yeeda would find its way into the possessions of Sir Sydney Kidman.

⁸ Irene Shackcloth, *The Call of the Kimberleys*, Melbourne, Hallcraft Publishing Company, 1950, pp. 24, 224, 262, 56, 69f, 41. (This book was based on the original records of Hamlet Cornish.)

⁹ Shackcloth, *The Call of the Kimberleys*, pp. 215-150.

¹⁰ McNab, Adelaide, to Gibney, Perth, 17 February 1883, Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth.

¹¹ Clifton, Registrar to Gibney, Perth, 19, 20 March 1883, ACAP.

¹² Fraser to Gibney, 31 March 1883, ACAP.

¹³ Gibney to Fraser, 2 April 1883, ACAP.

¹⁴ Fraser to Gibney 14 May 1883, ACAP.

¹⁵ Shackcloth, p. 259.

¹⁶ Shackcloth, p. 260 f.

¹⁷ P M Durack, 'Pioneering the East Kimberleys', *The West Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, vol 11, 1933, pt XIV, p 2.

¹⁸ Cornelius John Daly became a policeman in 1887 and in 1890 was a guide for Bishop Gibney and Abbot Ambrose as they looked for a suitable place for a mission. When he joined the Trappists he gave his share of the cattle to the mission.

¹⁹ Mary Durack, 'The Priest who rode away', *Westerly*, November 1962, pp 21-28

²⁰ McNab to the Governor of Western Australia, from Rottnest Island 11 May 1883, WA

²¹ McNab, Rottnest Island, to the Governor of Western Australia, *V & P of the Legislative Council 1883, Paper 16*. Letters from Rev Duncan McNab relative to the settlement and civilization of the Aborigines of Western Australia.

²² Susan Tod Woenne, 'The True State of Affairs': Commissions of Inquiry concerning Western Australian Aborigines', Ronald M Berndt and Catherine H Berndt, (eds) *Aborigines of the West*

Their Past and Their Present, Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press, 1979. p 329.

²³ Simeoni, Prefect Congregazione di Propagande Segreteria, Roma, to McNab, in Rottnest by Fremantle, Australia, 12 August 1883, (from Dr Quinn's translation) ACAP.

²⁴ Draft in Bishop Griver's handwriting to the Colonial Secretary, 27 August 1883. ACAP.

²⁵ Report of a Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor to inquire into the Treatment of Aboriginal Native prisoners of the Crown in this Colony. Perth, 1883. p 4.

²⁶ Salvado (in Spanish) from S Calisto, Rome, to Griver, 13 October (probably) 1883, ACAP.

²⁷ Enclosed postcard and letter from Mary Anne Collins 187 Street Detroit, 18 May (undated), to Rt Rev Brides and Salvado OSB, Catholic Bishop Port Victoria, from Harrison H, Portland St John, New Brunswick, 13 October 1883, ACAP.

²⁸ McNab from Cossack to Gibney, Perth, 3 November 1883, ACAP.

²⁹ Susan Tod Woenne, in *Aborigines of the West*, p.329.

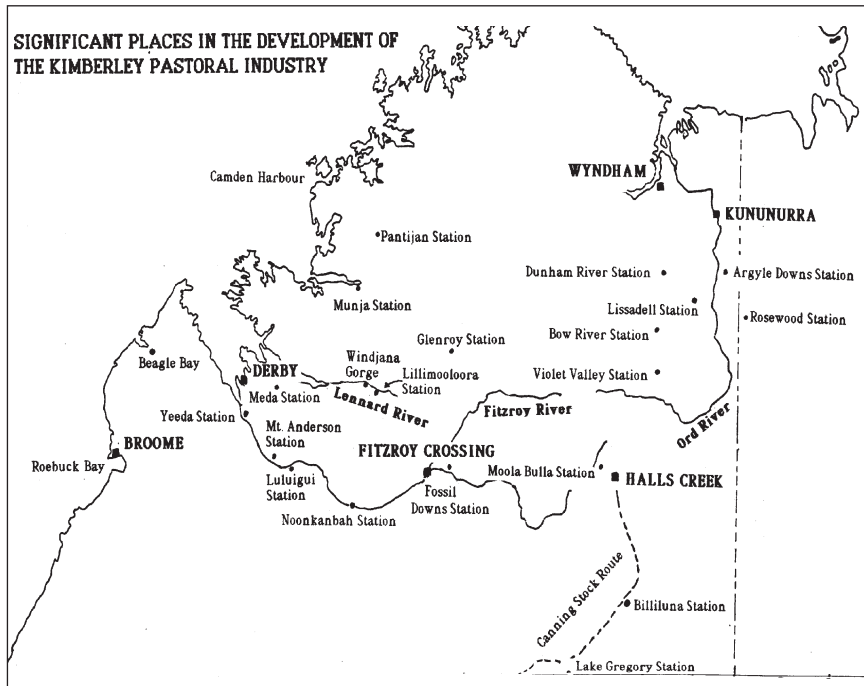
³⁰ *Aborigines of the West*, p 331.

³¹ *Aborigines of the West*, p 335.

³² *This is Your Place, Beagle Bay Mission 1890-1990*, pp-6-12.

Chapter 7

MISSIONARY APOSTOLIC¹ IN THE KIMBERLEY 1884-1887



*Kimberley: Past and Present Resource Materials
Compiled by Sarah Yu and Joyce Hudson,
Nulungu Catholic College Broome, 1988, p.8/*

Timeline of the Kimberley Pastoral Industry

In the early days of occupation of the Kimberley region there were really two settlements – one in the east and one in the west. The settlements had little in common.

The west Kimberley was occupied by men from the southwest of Western Australia who brought sheep up by sea and then moved along the fertile valleys. They were woolgrowers who practiced paddocking.

The east Kimberley was settled by overlanders from Queensland and New South Wales who brought over 10,000 head of cattle and who held to the 'open range' tradition of grazing.

1884-85 Three great overland treks brought the first cattle to the east Kimberley.

The Buchanans established Ord River Station. The Duracks established Lissadell, Rosewood and Argyle Downs Stations. The MacDonalds established Fossil Downs. These treks took over 2 years to complete.

Gold was discovered in Halls Creek area, bringing thousands of gold-seekers to the area. It provided a ready-made market for east Kimberley beef. Tracks were established between the goldfields and the Ports of Derby and Wyndham.

1886 Numerous attacks on stock at Lennard River and Lillimooloora Stations by Aborigines were reported.

It was initially thought that Aborigines would be valuable as a cheap source of labour to the pastoral industry. However, relations between Aborigines and pastoralists at this time were often not friendly. There was killing on both sides. As more land was taken up in pastoral leases more Aborigines were dispossessed of their traditional lands. They resisted. Cattle and sheep killing were common and a number of white settlers were killed.

Reprisals against Aborigines for both acts were extensive and it is impossible to estimate how many Aborigines were killed in the early days of settlement.

The police force in Derby organised patrols to capture stock spears. The general method they employed to capture Aborigines was to locate their camp and raid it at dawn.

Those suspected of killing stock, or useful witnesses, were chained around the neck and walked to Derby. After sentencing, prisoners remained in Derby and were used as a labour force. When in prison the Aborigines remained in chains the whole time – they worked, slept and

ate in chains. Sometimes they were flogged. However, many escaped and this prison system did not stop Aborigines killing cattle and sheep.

1884 Father McNab to the North-West

11 February 1884 Bishop Griver² wrote a letter to Father McNab, sending him to the Kimberley in the North-West

Rev Father McNab,

As I wish that a mission to the Aborigines may be founded at the North-West part of this Diocese, where they are said to be more numerous than in any other position thereof and as you came to this Diocese for said good purpose; I direct you to go by the steamship 'Ferret', which is advertised to leave Fremantle on the 19th of this month and to land at 'Cossack' to reside for the present in that town, or at Roebourne, to administer to the Catholics of that district and to inquire about the best place to found the mission to the Aborigines between the Beagle Bay and King Sound, or about the River Fitzroy, or in any other place where the Aborigines be more numerous and as far as practicable, remote from white settlers.

I expect from your zeal for the Christianising of the Aborigines that you will take great interest in this good work and report to me on the place, which, after diligent inquiry, you will deem most suitable for the object we have in view.

As soon as I will be able to dispose of another priest, I will send him to labour in the same district or mission. For the present I will give seven pounds (£7) every month towards your support or maintenance and whatever support you will receive from the white settlers.

I will give you a letter, in which I will state that I, their Bishop, sent you to afford them the consolations of our holy religion and exhort them to contribute to your support, as they are in duty bound.

I am willing to give you all the support that will be in my power towards the intended mission to the Aborigines.

May God bless and protect you.

+ Martin Griver
Bishop of Perth³

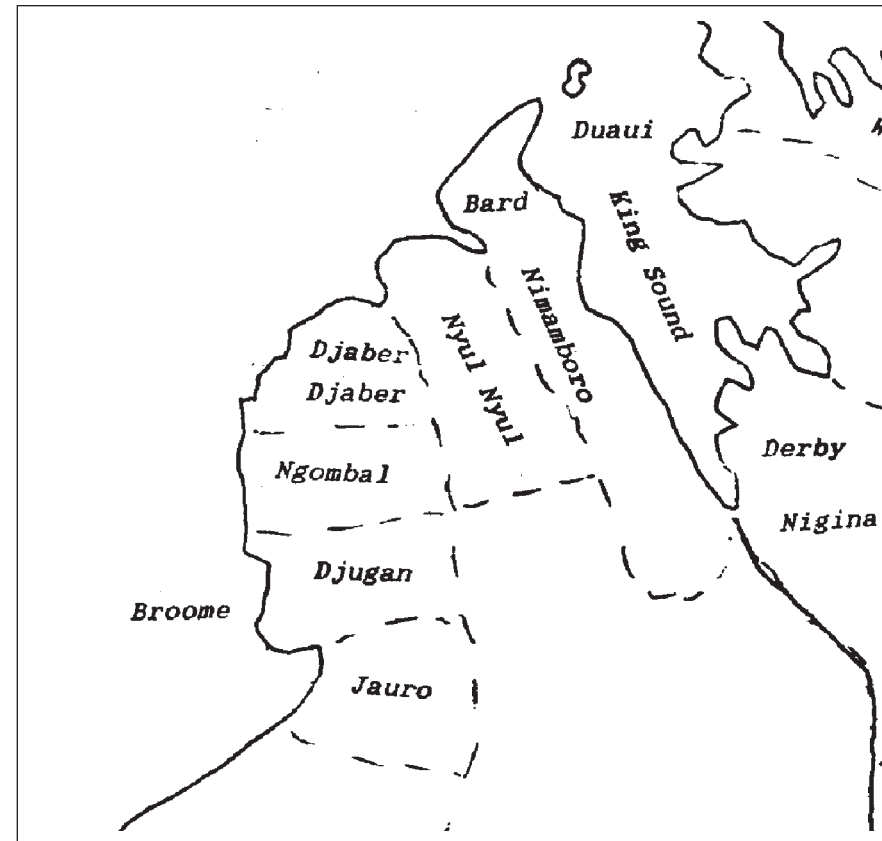
21 February 1884 Father McNab left Cossack for Derby, sailing on the steamship 'Ferret'. It was reported in the newspapers that his purpose was to establish a mission for the conversion of the natives, at a point about one hundred miles distant from Derby. He took with him six months provisions, tools, clothing, bedding, etc., the whole cost having been defrayed out of private funds.

26 February 1884 *The West Australian* stated:

Whatever opinion may be entertained as to the usefulness of their aims; it is impossible

to withhold respect and admiration from men who, risking life and health, sacrificing comfort and everything which makes life enjoyable, or even endurable, go forth for the purpose of serving their fellowmen, without hope of reward, save the consciousness that, according to their lights, they have done their duty in a labour of love, trying to rescue those whom they consider the fallen and the lost.

That much good, however, will result from the Rev Father's efforts seems scarcely probable. Judging by the papers upon native affairs prepared by him for the Government and laid last year before the Legislature, his ideas, we should say, were visionary – not characterized by the sound sense and business capacity with which Roman Catholic clerics appear, as a rule, to be gifted above other clerics.



A simple tribal map of the Dampier Peninsula

1 April 1884 Ships came into Derby with tides ranging from 8 to 11 metres and when the tide receded they settled on the mud of the King Sound. On arrival, with his horses still lame from hard travelling and in poor shape after a rough voyage, they had to plough their way through heavy tidal mud to Derby a frontier trading-post inhabited by a few business people, a contingent of police and an ever-changing gang of Aboriginal prisoners.

From the *S S Otway*, Father McNab wrote to Father Gibney:

Very Rev dear Father,

I am now in King Sound approaching Derby. So far – well. Yesterday was wet and boisterous: the day before extremely hot. I enclose Mr Marmion's account and also Mr Couther's. I told him you would send payment by the next steamer to the Gascoyne. Mr Flicker, the purser on the *Otway* will send your Mr Letty's and Mr McRae's.

As my intimation of the delayed departure of the steamer from Fremantle was given to Mr Letty's agent at the Gascoyne the horses had to be kept on the lighter at the mouth of the river from Thursday last till the arrival of the steamer, or rather till the following morning this day week. The bran for the horses was stowed away and was not got till we reached Cossack, and the oats will be got at only when the cargo is discharged. I was promised boxes for the horses, instead two stalls were put up which were occupied by sheep and swine, belonging I believe to the company, along with the horses. For want of oats and bran, the chaff was insufficient so I had to get a bill of chaff from Mr McRae at Cossack. Another gentleman on board the *Otway* has brought hither two horses from Fremantle for £12.10 each. The Gascoyne is about halfway. In the circumstances I think the company should make some deduction of the freight.

Mr Stock could not supply me with a cask at Cossack when the steamer left. But he is to send one with Captain O'Grady in about ten days. Mr Pead will send the account to you.

We have this afternoon arrived at the harbour at Derby. The landing is to be effected tomorrow morning. It is a difficult and uncertain matter how the stores can be removed from the landing place over the marsh to the township or to dry land.

The stores landed last November were immersed in the tide on the landing and the timber for the jetty was all washed away. The marsh was covered with water and the mud very deep. It is said that packhorses can bring only one hundredweight at a time. There is no chance of pulling a cart through at present. So I am told.

If a week of dry weather comes for the spring tides at full moon, things may be carted over the marsh. If not there is danger that they may be moved by the tide. Some of the jetty timber has either been left, or collected since the high tide at the landing and I expect that with a platform made from that, the stores will be kept out of the water.

I am well and feel grateful for the means supplied for the commencement of the native

mission. One of the Gascoyne natives whom I baptized at Rottneest is engaged to go with me on the survey party for six months and consents to remain with me thereafter. He is a very good man and I am happy to get him, as he is also glad to meet me again.

As we stayed at Cossack I said Mass at Mr Pead's and administered the sacraments to such as I could persuade to receive them.

3 April 1884 Father McNab continued his letter:

The horses are safely landed and the last punt with goods and luggage is going ashore. Mr Fairbairn (the Magistrate) came on board yesterday and received me kindly offering me use of his cottage for a few days and promising any assistance that he can render me by way of information. The Captain introduced me to him.

The police also who are nearly all Catholics are disposed to aid me. I have written the power of attorney to the Bishop. Excuse the notepaper because I could not get any large paper before leaving the steamer...

I give to the Right Reverend Martin Griver, Catholic Bishop of Perth in Western Australia the power of Attorney with reference to any cash that may be assigned to me by the Government.

Duncan McNab, 3rd April 1884, *S S Otway* at Derby.

Archd Watt, Witness.⁷

16 April 1884 The Inquirer reported:

Derby, April 3rd, The *'Mary Smith'* has landed Mr Gregory's sheep, provisions and station plant, etc., at Roebuck Bay (Broome) ... The *Otway* anchored off Derby on the evening of the 1st instant. She has a number of passengers on board, amongst whom we were glad to see our old friend Mr Poulton returning to his station, the Rev Father McNab, another gentleman and several ladies whose intentions are to form a native mission up the Fitzroy River and several other passengers, all of whom will find it very unpleasant work crossing the marsh just after the spring tides.

In 1837 Captain George Grey had described the Kimberley as "A most beautiful country that must be as well watered as any region in the world!" and he named Beagle Bay on the western side of the Dampier Peninsula after His Majesty's research ship, *'The Beagle'*.⁹ Father McNab's mission would be on the eastern side of the peninsula approached through King Sound. Derby was the base from which he launched his expedition.

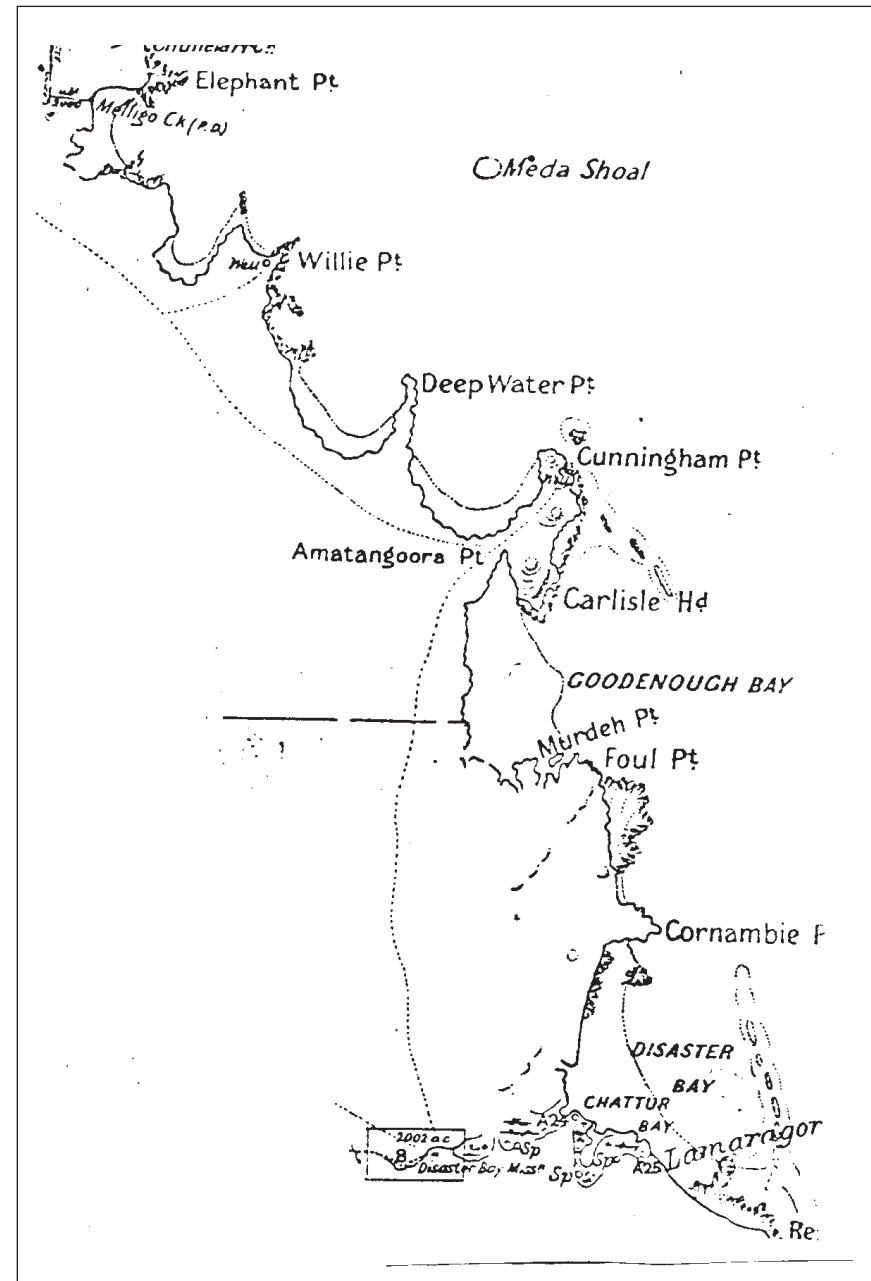
The *Westerly* contained Mary Durack's story of events:

As all likely country inland from Derby had been taken up, the priest proceeded to the Dampierland Peninsula with a police patrol investigating rumours of trouble. A bizarre collection of ships from stately 'mother schooners' and cutters to broken down luggers and flat bottomed tubs ranged the coast from Shark Bay to Darwin, with ever increasing activity around the North-West cape and Lacepede Islands. Roebuck Bay, where the port of Broome was shortly to be proclaimed, had already become popular as a 'lay-up' base, while crews operating from Cygnet Bay had begun braving the 8 knot tidal rips and 'heavy water' of King Sound, - the 'Graveyard' of many ships and the dark skinned men and women whose lives were cheap.

Father McNab had sympathy with the police in their efforts to distil semblance of the truth from the confused babble of charges and counter charges confronting them. Bodies were exhumed from sandy graves in an effort to establish foul play. Malays and Chinese supported European pearlmen in allegations against the Aborigines. Japanese gave evidence against Koepangars and Filipinos against Solonese and West Indians. Aborigines made statements of classic ambiguity. It was almost impossible at that stage to determine the time and manner of death from the remains unearthed, but though some were said to have been speared by blacks either for motives of theft or from sheer capriciousness, the pearlmen with the support of their nervous Asiatic divers alleged that the natives were hatching a plot to massacre all the crews on the peninsula and strongly urged a 'punitive expedition' to teach them a stern lesson.

The police having made a few arrests gave warning of the general tightening up of regulations concerning the employment of aborigines on the luggers, and announced that the use of native women was forbidden for any purpose other than as station domestics. Although it was clearly impossible for a small force stationed at Derby to police the widespread activities of the pearling fleets or to prevent the exploitation of the only women available, some of the pearlmen prudently signified their intention of applying for pastoral rights on the peninsula. A few had in fact run up timber shacks, sunk wells and with a few head of inferior stock dignified their lay-up bases with the name of cattle stations.

Father McNab found to his disappointment that most of the sheltered bays and inlets were occupied, and although no legal right had yet been established, he knew that he could get nowhere in competition with these tough pearlmen and their native and motley crews. Still, the fact that most of the tribes-people seemed anxious to resist corruption of the lay-up camps gave him hope, and further indicated the need for a place of refuge. By this time the police not particularly optimistic of his objectives had gained enough confidence in the priest to agree that something should be tried and that instruction of the natives in the white man's law might ease the heavy burdens of the Kimberley force. They had too many native prisoners to hold and organize. Long, embarrassing inquiries followed punitive expeditions.



Coastal Map of the East side of the Dampier Peninsula showing Goodenough Bay

April 1884 Father McNab settled alone at Goodenough Bay of King Sound. He felt that no one understood or wanted his mission.

27 July 1884 Father J F Corbett¹⁰ wrote from St Kilda, to Father D McNab, re marriage laws at the time (It would not be safe to follow doctrine expressed here, as the Church's law on affinity has been changed. They are included here to give the context of McNab's difficulties):

Dear Father McNab,

I take advantage of the first available moment to give you the information, which as well as I understand your letter, you desire.

By which law is affinity a diriment impediment to marriage?

I answer, firstly – According to the unanimous opinion it is certain that affinity in the collateral line is an impediment only by ecclesiastical law; and, according to the much more probable opinion, the same is true of affinity in the direct line except for affinity in the first degree arising out of lawful sexual intercourse.

But since affinity arising out of the sexual act (whether this act be lawful or unlawful) is a certain natural propinquity and, as it were, a mediated consanguinity, it follows that, whether it is an impediment by the natural law or not, it is nevertheless a diriment impediment for baptised persons, even though it was contracted before they were baptised (Koning's Theol. Mor. N 1591). This opinion of Koning's is confirmed by a declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, given on the 23rd August 1852 in response to the following queries-

1. An unbaptised man, while still unbaptised, has had unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman (baptised or unbaptised) either openly or secretly. Can such a man, after being baptised, contract a valid and lawful marriage with a blood-relative of the woman, if that blood-relative has been baptised either before or after the sexual intercourse aforementioned?

2. If the answer to this is affirmative (which seems very unlikely): Can this unbaptised man, if converted to the Faith after the death of his unbaptised but lawful wife, contract a marriage with a blood-relative (up to the 4th degree) of his dead wife, if that blood-relative has been baptised either before or after the wife's death?

The Sacred Congregation replied: To the 1st, negatively. To the 2nd, negatively." (See Gury Ed Rome 1873 vol 2, p 456).

Furthermore Koning says about the question by which law does affinity impede? " With regard to the first degree of affinity in the direct line the question is disputed. For the church, though often and urgently petitioned, has never been willing to grant a dispensation if the affinity arose from a legitimate marriage, as Benedict XIV bears witness (De Segn. Bk. IX c.xlIII: n.4). (Quia praeter gravissimi {omission here} irritum esse iure naturae), therefore if two

unbaptised persons, having contracted such a marriage, should be converted to the faith, it would not be safe to separate them without a dispensation from the Pope; unless perhaps such marriages between the unbaptised are nullified by a positive law. Though even in this case it would be safer, in my opinion, to have recourse to the Holy See, because of the opinion held by some authors, not without reason, that a civil legislator has no power to decree diriment impediments to marriage, even to the marriage of the unbaptised.¹¹

*Not infrequently the church has dispensed in the case of affinity arising from unlawful sexual intercourse: e.g. if a man marries a woman after having committed fornication with her daughter or mother; provided however that intercourse with the mother did not precede the birth of the daughter that there is no danger whatever that the daughter should be also the daughter of her husband, or as it is usually expressed in the faculties given to our bishops (in the United States): "Let there be no doubt whether one of the parties be the offspring of the other."

Can a civil legislator decree diriment impediments to the marriages of unbaptised persons?

I answer affirmatively, in agreement with the more common opinion. The reason is that marriage among the unbaptised is a civil contract. St Alphonsus seems to be of this opinion (Bk VI 956; it is certain 2 and n.951), though he is not dealing specifically with this question. Among more recent authors, however, Martin and Perrone take the negative view, relying on this reason that even among the unbaptised marriage is a sacred contract, not to be equated with secular contracts. Koning n.1574: "Therefore a marriage between two unbaptised persons cannot be considered void even after one or other of them has been converted; and the same is to be said of the first degree of affinity in the direct line arising out of marital intercourse, as can be gathered from the practice followed in old time by the Councils of Agathensis, Eporensis, Areliaensis 111. Nevertheless, because of the existing controversy about this first degree it seems that the Apostolic See should be consulted, as also for any degree of affinity, which the civil power has decreed to be a diriment impediment for its unbaptised subjects. After baptism the convert is bound by the impediment, even if the affinity arose in the time before his conversion, and this must be said also of affinity rising from unlawful intercourse." (See de Jur Mat n 380)

I trust these extracts will be sufficient to aid you in solving the difficulties you propose. And as the bishops in the United States have among other faculties received faculties which meet your case viz. " of granting to Catholics dispensations from the impediment of the first degree of affinity for (ten) cases, and from the public impediment of the first degree of affinity arising from unlawful intercourse either in the collateral line or even in the direct line for (thirty) cases, provided that, if it is in the direct line, there shall be no doubt as to whether one of the parties be the offspring of the other." The Bishop of Perth will no doubt ask that similar faculties be granted to him.

30 July 1884 G Phillips pro Colonial Secretary wrote to the Right Reverend Martin Griver DD, Episcopal Residence Perth from Perth:

My Lord,

I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st instant and to inform you in reply that His Excellency proposes to visit Kimberley in September next when having been able to ascertain the nature and results of the Reverend Father McNab's work he will be able to reply to your application for a grant.¹²

In Western Australia, a *Commission for Inquiry into Treatment of Aboriginal Native Prisoners in the Colony and into other matters relative to Aborigines* was held.¹³

12 September 1884 *The Report* was published. It was stated that:

In concluding this report we cannot but be aware that our inquiries have not produced any great result. On the face of the question, it is apparent that if good could easily have been done, it would have been done long ago.

Bishop Hale devoted his time and his means to the work for a quarter of a century in this Colony, but without doing any great and marked good. The New Norcia Mission, under Dr Salvado, has attempted and done more than any other institution, and has existed for about forty years; but at the present time there are only 84 natives (35 pure blood and 49 half-caste) at the mission, and there is no striking evidence of its good effects (outside of the Institution itself) in the neighbourhood or in the Colony.

It appears certain that any change from the natural way of living soon shows its injurious effects; and we cannot, in the face of such evidence, recommend any greater change from the natural habits of the natives, without feeling certain that it will result in harm to the race, and that we are accelerating their speedy removal from the earth.

Large revenues, nearly £100,000 a year, are now raised from the sale and lease of lands which were originally possessed by its native inhabitants; and therefore it seems but reasonable that some portion of this revenue should be devoted to the amelioration of their condition.

Fifty years of settlement by Europeans has had the effect in the "Home District" of causing the gradual disappearance of the native race. We fear that this will continue, and that the forces that have been at work in the past will in like manner work in the future. We would be glad to hope that such will not be the case, and that some means may yet be found to check these baneful influences, and thereby maintain, on the soil owned and trodden by their forefathers, the descendants of the aborigines of Australia.

20 November 1884 In Queensland a Trustees Report on Durundur Reserve mentioned that the disposition of the natives was not to settle upon or take heed of this reservation in any way whatsoever.¹⁴

21 November 1884 Bishop Griver's letter to Father McNab informed him that when the Governor returned from Derby, he reported to the

Bishop that McNab did not appear to have fixed on any place of operation.¹⁵

4 December 1884 Still hopeful, from Derby, Father McNab sent the names of potential missionaries with whom he had been in contact overseas.

My Lord,

In reply to your letter of the 21st November, I have to thank your Lordship for sending me the prayers, map and other things. They are not all landed yet, but I learned that they are on board the steamer.

Mr Marmion sent me the enclosed account. He said he could not send the washing machine till the next opportunity as it was not to be had at Fremantle.

I will expect a Directory for the Office as soon as possible.

Your Lordship once asked me to send you the addresses of the religious orders that in America professed their willingness to send missionaries to the Australian Aborigines. They were the Fathers of the Most Precious Blood. Their Provincial when last I heard of them was the Very Ven Henry Drees – Carthagena – Mercer Co., - Ohio. United States – America, via San Francisco. They promised to have them ready for the mission by 1882. Father Hennebery is of opinion that none of them would come and so am I for it was only when I insisted and in a manner shamed them, the then Provincial and his counselors that they made the promise. Their General in Rome was very willing that some of them should come but he could not order them hither without their consent. In Ohio they are American Germans.

The Passionist Fathers of Hoboken had several priests ready and willing to come if they had the consent of their general, which however was refused when applied for by them. They had however been offered with the consent of their General, who is a Cardinal, to Dr Cani when he was Pro Vicar of the Vicariate of the north of Queensland. It seems he did not want them as another order is appointed to that charge. The address of their Provincial when I visited them was the Very Rev Victor Carunchio, D P Provincial, Saint Michael's Monastery, West Hoboken, Hudson Co., W States, America. They were Irish and Americans mixed.

I suppose the most expeditious way of procuring their aid would be for your Lordship to write to the General at Rome or simultaneously to him and to their present Provincial at Hoboken.

Believe me, Your Lordship's humble servant, D McNab.

PS Mr John O'Reilly, whose order for payment could not be cashed in Perth, may be communicated with by a letter addressed to him Care of H B Daly¹⁶, Dunolly, Victoria.

I said the 50 Masses Your Lordship requested me to say, D McNab.¹⁷

Australia
Perth

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10 Feb. 85
Grivee M. Martino - Vesc. di
Perth chiede la Dispensa dei
vini emessi da Agnesi Kermec
leia profana ne le Sordelle S. No.
sta Signora della Misericordia
Tornare alla missione -
Chiede sia ammesso nel Colle-
gio Urbano un giovane della dis-
cesi -
Incontro N. 1.

29 marzo 1885

Se ne parli in Congresso

La nuova questione è di giungere da
vignetta favorevolmente a giudizio del quale
della mattinata per un certo
di giorno la Corte dei Notari della
soggetti a...

Lettera 16

Reg. 26 85

Memo - 10 February 1885, fol 27, SRC, Oceania, vol 15, 1885-1886.

10 February 1885 The Kimberley of Western Australia was faring no better. Bishop Griver, Perth, wrote to Cardinal Simeoni, in Latin.

The McNab mission on the north shore of this diocese goes slowly.

None of those missionaries that he expected from America and Australia followed him, and he remained alone. Meanwhile he learns the language and customs of the aborigines of those regions and cultivates their friendship. Bishop Griver does not know if any are sufficiently instructed in the mysteries of faith. There are few of them in that vast region.¹⁹

1 March 1885 Father McNab wrote to Bishop Griver:

Your Lordship mentioned that the answer of the governor on his return from Derby was that I did not appear to have fixed yet on any place of operation.

In my last letter I said nothing of this as I was pressed for time before the departure of the steamer.

I am not a little surprised at this answer, as he knows both my written statement to Mr Fairbairn, which he had in his possession and had perused, and my verbal assertion to himself that I considered Point Cunningham the most suitable locality for the native mission; and he has acted on the suggestion by proclaiming a native reserve there.

Of course I told him that the selection of the locality for the mission rested with Your Lordship but not with me, who was sent only to inspect and report. I had two long conversations with him on the subject. He said that I ought to attach myself to some community such as that of New Norcia. I replied that I was too old.²⁰

Then he said I should be under some Bishop. I told him I was completely subject to your Lordship and that I expected an associate. He remarked that I should at any rate require a lay brother. He also said, "You will want some help." To which I answered, "I want a grant of land and a boat." "The Government," he replied, "will give some, but cannot supply all." You should have the substance of some society". "Yes," I said, " when once the mission is established." He added, "As you want land you must send in a formal application." I told him the Bishop would do that. We spoke of the land at the estuary of the Robinson River and I remarked Mr McKenzie Grant leased it to Anderson, whereas Point Cunningham was not tenanted and there was reason to believe that a plant poisonous to horses grew along the coast, certainly at Beagle Bay and both seemed of the same description. He said it was necessary not to interfere with the rights of others and that at Point Cunningham I should be removed from others and interfere with no one.

I wrote to Father Gibney that he would likely find me on some part of the reserve when he should come by the steamer. After that, the great heat having set in, my eyes became so bad that I could not read at night and latterly, I could not read in the afternoon. It was with extreme difficulty that I managed to read Vespers about 12 o'clock. At one time I could not see the glass on the lamp, only the halo round the light. Sometimes my eyes were sore but not very often, but they discharged a quantity of serum. Now that the weather is cooler I see well again

although my eyes are not yet quite right. Towards the end of the dry season, I required a native guide to bring me to the waterholes on the way to the reserve. At the time there chanced to be some here employed by others who knew the way.

In December I was told a flood was to be expected in the Fitzroy any day, when I might be removed from my supplies and from communication with white settlements for months.

In the south of the colony it is difficult to form an idea of the extent of floods here. They cover many miles of country.

Mr Lavender is said to have lost 1200 by flood this year, but McDermott lost all. After heavy rain, parts of the country not discernible at other times, nor even then from other places become so soft that horses bog, so that they cannot extricate themselves. An instance has just occurred of the dangers to travelers in the case of Mr Morrison, Inspector of Sheep. He had gone up the Leonard towards the Leopold Range. Returning he found a tributary of the Leonard that he had lately crossed flooded and to get along, he had to follow the track that entered the bed of the river and returned to the same side. He stripped, put his clothes and provisions on one horse and drove the other before him. The hindmost horse would not swim and so was drowned. So he lost his clothes and supplies. Having landed naked, he was for two days exposed to the scorching heat of the sun and without food and being apprehensive that the plain he occupied would be soon submerged and that he might not have the third day strength enough to swim, he had then to cross the stream in order to reach Mr Lukin's Station. His second horse was nearly drowned this time.

He was all over blistered by the sun, except the face and hands and for days after arrival at the station could not walk as he says the muscles of his feet and legs were rendered rigid by the sun.

One of my horses does not swim. So before getting to the reserve I must wait till the river can be crossed without swimming which I expect will be soon, as the rains have nearly ceased.

Even if I got there I could do nothing by myself about the establishment of a mission such as is required, especially while, not the missionary, but the mission is inefficiently maintained, barely existing by the presence of the missionary. For the natives here require to be somewhat civilized before they can be instructed or converted; partly because they have no terms in their language fit to express our religious ideas and it is very difficult to get the language from the absolutely wild. Whoever is engaged in this mission requires a boat, at least one white man to take care of his place and do several kinds of work for the instruction of the blacks and a native and his family to look after the horses and do other menial work. Otherwise the missionary may get up with the light, but by the time he has said his prayers and Office and occasionally mass and spent one, two or three hours looking for his horses lest they stray too far, and then cooked and taken his breakfast, the heat of the day is come on when he can do little or nothing for some hours. And if in the afternoon he has to get wood and water, wash and mend, spend some time in digging, or fishing and watering his horses he will have but little time for learning or teaching. While, though his life may be safe, his goods

are apt to be purloined when he turns his back upon his house. Thus his mode of life must appear to the natives more irksome and laborious than their own so that they will not be inclined to follow his example or hearken to his teaching.

It is difficult to get a native here to remain with a settler. The young can do so only with the consent of the old and the adult married natives must spend some time with their wives and families. It is only now that they are beginning to have their families at the stations.

Even one or more of those with the police had to be run down at first and caught in the bed of a river.

It was different in Queensland. There, beside the station hands there were, near each cattle station, a number of somewhat civilized blacks either employed at piecework or living at large. I went out amongst them and instructed, baptized and married them till disabled by sunstrokes. Here as yet I have not been able to benefit the natives, only I am of opinion that the reserve would not have been made had I not been here when the Governor came.

I told Cardinal Simeoni I was not able then to do any mission duty among the Australian natives, yet he insisted on my returning to give the benefit of my experience to any missionaries that might come.

I also told Father Gibney that I was not fit to carry on the mission alone and I understood from him that another priest might be sent to the district within three months. Of course no one has come. Yet with such assistance as I had mentioned, if there is a prospect of a religious order or other missionaries being found, I would try to begin and continue the work till their arrival. Although I have managed a boat and done a little of many kinds of work and have weight and some experience, I have no more strength than a boy of fifteen or fourteen years of age.

For some time past I have been giving religious instructions to the native assistants of the police. They are comparatively slow of comprehension, but attentive and like to be instructed. One of them died, not suddenly, but to me unexpectedly before I commenced instruction. I gave him conditional baptism at the last, as he had attended Mass when first I arrived and I understood him to imply that he would adhere to me.²¹

4 April 1885

I got your Lordship's letter of the 20th of March on the 30th. As the steamer has gone to Cambridge Gulf I have plenty of time to reply. With thanks I acknowledge the receipt of the parcel with the Relics, Pastoral Regulation, Directory and cheque for £3.17.3.

I do not know what has become of Mr Marmion's last account and I suspect I must have enclosed it in my letter to Father Gibney, as Mr Marmion makes no mention of it in his present account. It was not much and if it hasn't been paid, Mr Marmion can no doubt supply a duplicate. I cannot know whether all he sent now is correct or not till the steamer returns from Cambridge Gulf.

I am sorry you did not write to either of the religious orders I mentioned in my last and

I suspect I have myself to blame for not having been sufficiently explicit in my last letter. . . .

I will try to get a few articles for transmission to the museum at Propaganda. It would be as easy for me to go to the Jesuits at Port Darwin as to go to Cossack to meet a priest. I can only go by steamer and would have to remain there more than a month, which would cost about as much as the passage. It would keep me away at a time when the natives are at home from the pearling. A priest coming here could return in a couple of days. The schoolrooms at Roebourne and Cossack are the most suitable places for Divine Service. Paddy has let his public house to a Catholic and built a brick cottage for himself but I do not think there is room in it for any of his family. He had another similar cottage that was let when I was there, that would answer well if unoccupied. I know of no other suitable place in Roebourne. At Cossack I was in Mr Pead's house that would be the most answerable place if Mr Pead still remains in Cossack.

I would be sorry that Your Lordship should have to abandon the mission for the natives here because it would have a very bad effect, worse than if no move had been made in Government to assist others, and leave the natives in their present miserable condition, what material I have brought here and the expense you have been at would be lost.

Besides I do not think we are likely to find a more suitable situation. I learn from pearlers working about Swan Point that natives are very numerous between it and Cunningham point especially inland and Mr Fairbairn told me that the stations at Lake Baroda are taken up for the purpose of kidnapping natives, a sure sign that they are numerous in the vicinity. I should not wish to begin among a great many. They would expect to be provided for and a few would be more manageable and the others would soon come to see how they progressed. There, many of the natives that have been pearling understand some English and have some knowledge of boating. The pearl fishing here is mostly in deep water where men have to use diving bells and it is the common opinion that therefore natives will not be in much demand – they are not serviceable in deep water. Then they could be profitably employed in other fishing and so have an occupation congenial to them and would likely be induced to cultivate a little.

The Darling Pea, the poisonous plant at Beagle Bay and elsewhere, does not affect cattle that are weak or overworked. I do not know if there be any on the reserve. Probably there is. There is more or less of poisonous herbs in many places here.

If I cannot get to Cunningham Point after the departure of the Otway, by land, I can go by sea, as a pearler from Port Darwin has kindly offered to bring me thither or thence once a month till Christmas as it is on his way to Swan Point. I had assisted him by lending him my horses; spring cart and some provisions after some of his boats had been wrecked by a storm.

I enclose a cheque for £3.0.0, being Sergeant P Troy's offering on the occasion of his marriage.

I also enclose Mr Marmion's present account. If I don't consume more than I did last year, I have, I think, now sufficient provisions for twelve months. I should need another case

of altar wine in June and would like some olive oil and a bottle of Hockins Seidlitz powder.

Asking Your Lordship's blessings and prayers,

I remain, your humble servant, D McNab.²²

11 June 1885 The *Catholic Record* reported:

The Rev J Duff was a passenger by the steamer Otway, which sailed yesterday for the northern districts. Father Duff will proceed, in the first instance, to Derby, where it is arranged he will meet Father McNab. Returning by the same vessel and disembarking at Cossack, he will remain in the Nicol Bay district for some weeks, so as to afford the Catholics of the locality an opportunity of profiting by the services of religion.

Father Duff hoped to reach Perth again in the course of about three months.²³

27 June 1885 Father McNab continued his letters to Father M Gibney:

My dear Father,

Soon after dispatching my letter to the Bishop I got a native guide from Ida²⁴ station to lead me to Point Cunningham. On coming into Derby, he fell sick of measles, so I should have to wait for his recovery and would not then use him for fear of infecting the natives on the reserve with the disease.

I got a chance of going with a boat to the far end of Cygnet Bay, where I expected to find Captain Denis, a pearler from Port Darwin who had promised to bring me once a month to and from Point Cunningham till Christmas time and I availed myself of it.

I missed him on the way and his men's time being expired returned to Port Darwin. I was landed at Swan Bay as the pearlers call it on the entrance of Cygnet Bay as marked on the charts, some thirty or forty miles by land and about 50 by sea beyond the reserve. I remained there on the sand on the shore for a month awaiting an opportunity of getting to the reserve or back to Derby to meet the steamer in May. She came earlier than was expected and departed before I could return. Consequently I sent no reply till now to your letter.

On the feast of the Apparition of St Michael, one of my special protectors, I believe, at any rate I often invoke his aid, a native whom I had asked for and was told he was two days journey away came to me and I engaged him as an associate and kind of interpreter as he understood some English.

After that several parties of natives visited me every day commonly by eight or ten or perhaps twelve at a time while I remained there. I told them the object of my mission and they seemed highly pleased.

They told me they would work if they got flour and expressed their willingness to settle down to catch and cure fish, to cultivate gardens and send their children to school

With one or two exceptions they were or have been all employed by pearlers. They stole some flour from me, not when I had got least, but when I had got a supply from the pearling

boats. They could have taken the whole but did not and left me a supply for the time I was to remain. I left on a Tuesday afternoon with my native associate who wished to get a written agreement as my servant and return with me overland to the reserve. On the forenoon of the Friday following the same natives murdered Captain Richardson and his mate Shenton, wounded the Chinese cook and plundered the schooner.²⁵ A party of police had gone in pursuit of them. Of all this you get an account from the newspapers.

Returning to Derby I landed at Point Cunningham but had not time to see much of the country. I sailed along the coast of Goodenough Bay, but to fix on a place best suitable for settlement one must go with horses overland: which I mean to do, Deo Volente, after the steamer leaves which brought Father Duff. On my return to Derby I bought a boat such as Captain O'Grady had recommended: but I want an anchor of about 50 pounds weight. The glass of my pocket compass is broken. It was my best guide through the country. Now I cannot well use it. I want another sufficiently large to enable me to see the index and directions without having each time to put on my spectacles.

If you will please send them by the next steamer I will pay for them. I enclose an account from Messrs Marmion and Co. I will return October stocks by Father Duff.

I need not repeat what I said in my last to his Lordship regarding the need of assistance. Much is not wanted at first, not many hands to commence a fishing station – some stock should be put on the reserve. I should think it better also to put no great stock on in the beginning and rather increase and multiply than incur much debt. If funds are scarce couldn't money be borrowed and the interest paid by the Propagation of the Faith or other Societies for a few years till the place would pay itself. My opinion is that Dr Salvado is not likely to underrate a new mission on account of the Governor's praise, as I believe he is so far advanced in years as to have his judgement formed independently of such a motive and not to be changed, but perhaps you know better. In any case I desire to know definitely whether or not our Bishop will carry on this mission. If not I do not see the use of my feeble efforts. If so I am willing to do all I can. With fond hopes of his Lordship's speedy recovery and my best wishes to yourself and all the clergy and religious,

I am, your humble servant, D McNab.

PS I cannot employ and give flour to natives without some means. You promised to have a collection made in the churches of the Diocese for the Blacks' mission. Might it not be made now? D McNab.²⁶

3 August 1885 Father McNab to Father Gibney (This letter is about his need for money, the description of the land and the people, and thanks for assistance given):

Very Reverend Father,

With thanks the receipt of the boxes addressed to Father Duff that he told me were from you for me and contained wine and whisky. I have got them since the departure of the steamer and I am very much obliged to you for sending them. I got the compass also and the Captain

told me the anchor is come. The sooner the collection in the churches for the native mission is made the better. I am at a loss to know how to answer the rest of your letter.

It is difficult to give an approximate statement of the number of natives near the proposed mission stations. I have asked Sergeant Troy for his estimate (he has had better opportunities than I can have for a long time of forming an estimate). He reckons there are between two and three hundred between Swan Point and Beagle Bay and Cunningham Point and about two hundred more between Cunningham Point and Beagle Bay and Roebuck Bay. The Queensland Government with their long-standing Native Police Force cannot tell the numbers of the natives in the north. I only tell the truth, but I cannot tell that till I know. When the Bishop appointed me to Roebourne he told me how much a year he would give me – that he will help this mission as far as he can gives me no definite information. I thought I had come to something practical when I wrote to the Bishop of what assistance I required to carry on the mission here for a time but it seems I failed in the attempt and can only refer you to Father Duff for a fuller and abler explanation of my views. I am glad to hear of his Lordship's health. I enclose the amount of the tribute to the Pope from the Kimberley.

Patrick Troy £1; Thos Lavender £1; T Gibbons £1; T Lane £1; Holinslego £1; D McNab £1; Denis King 5/-; Jas Eliot 2/6; McGuire 5/-; Constable Sherry 10/-,

I remain in haste, (pray for me) yours truly, D McNab.²⁷

4 October 1885 Father McNab to Father Gibney (This letter is a plea for personnel and means to operate a mission. In it Fr. McNab holds out little hope for assistance from the Synods of Sydney or Melbourne.):

My Dear Father,

Your letter of the 25th September is more definite in one respect than its predecessors that are so far satisfactory, yet not sufficient. I am especially in need of personal assistance both lay and clerical.

I fear the Sydney Synod will do no more for the Aborigines than the Synod of Melbourne. I expect a pathetic appeal in their behalf and but little more. I speak from past experience. I have already given to you and His lordship the Bishop all the information required on the subject as far as I know.

Finding that half the beef I got in casks from Cossack grew bad before I used it, I have bought salt, beef and fresh mutton and fish and oatmeal from the butcher to the extent of £5/10.0. A cheque to that amount would be very acceptable. I have had and have to provide for more natives than I anticipated in April and will consequently have to apply to Mr Marmion for additional supplies. I am in good health.

I have made several applications to the Captains of ships and large boats (hitherto ineffectually) even to Point Cunningham. To bring the cart by land is, I am told by the police, impractical till a way is cut through the Cape's wood or brush land inland in some places and the water supply is too far distant to allow of that being done in the course of the first journey.

I hope to manage it, if not otherwise, by taking the spring cart to pieces and using my own boat.

You conclude your letter by telling me to hope on for a while. It is not easy for me to do so. For ten years I have hoped for associates on the mission to the Australian Aborigines relying on the promises of priests and a bishop and have been disappointed.

However, if I cannot hope I will work all I can for some time to come if God grants it to me. Believe me, yours truly, D McNab.²⁸

Towards the end of 1885, a 'cockeye' wrecked the lugger that was bringing supplies, floods blocked the overland route and Father McNab had intermittent fever as well as the infected bites of mosquitoes and sand flies. His eyes were so bad that there were times when he could not read. Though Governor Broome, who met Father McNab in Derby gave a disparaging report of his activity on his return to Perth, on application by the Bishop, following the advice of Father McNab, the land chosen by him was set aside as a Reserve. The priest claimed that if he had not been there when the Governor came, the land would not have been granted.²⁹

During 1885, Bishop Griver had been quite ill after an accident in April, but he had recovered sufficiently to attend the Australian Plenary Synod where the Australasian Hierarchy discussed the mission to the Kimberley. At this Synod, it was suggested that Derby should be constituted as the center of a new Vicariate Apostolic.³⁰

Land Regulations

At the time, land regulations provided that "the price of the fee simple in rural sections of not less than 200 acres should be 10/- per acre. A bonus of 500 acres in fee simple was offered to the person or company producing tropical or semi-tropical products, with an additional 500 acres to the first two persons who earned the bonus.

The minimum areas of pastoral leases were to extend to the end of 1893. Rent was to be 10/- per 1000 acres, on condition that before the expiry of two years from the date of the lease each 1000 acres was to be stocked with two head of cattle or twenty sheep.³¹

Later on the limit of two years for stocking, in comparatively remote Kimberley district was increased to three years.

John Forrest was very strongly of opinion that the small selector should not be allowed to hamper the large leaseholder by taking up small fee-simple locations all over the large runs in spots where there was good water. He advocated more protection and longer leases if necessary for the agriculturist.³²

A New Vicariate

The translation from the Latin of the relevant paragraph in *Sexta Congregatio Privata* reads as follows:

The question was put as to whether the Kimberley Region should be established as a Vicariate Apostolic with its see in the town of Derby for the black Aboriginal people of Western Australia: 16 Fathers agreed, one disagreed and one had reservations.³³

A decision was also made to make an annual collection in favour of the Aboriginal Missions. "To finance these missions until they can be self supporting, an annual collection will be taken up on a set day in all churches of Australian dioceses.³⁴

For two years Father McNab laboured patiently with little success.

(Copy)

Western Australia
Perth 6th January 1886

Memo on the prospects for a Mission to the Aborigines of W.A.

- 1 The Commission appointed by the Governor in Council in 1883 to report and make suggestions relative to the condition and settlement of the natives in Western Australia, recommended large Reserves to be made and given to missionaries who would occupy themselves with improving the condition of the natives.
- 2 A Reserve of 50,000 acres had previously been made between the Murchison and Gascoigne rivers at Mount Dalgetti; There are also two small Reserves at the Gascoigne near the Remirdy Range. The latter is at present occupied by a Protestant Missionary.
- 3 Last year the Governor proclaimed a Reserve of six hundred thousand acres on the West side of Kings Sound to be given to any well organised body of missionaries, who would exert themselves for the benefit of the blacks. This Reserve extends from Deep Water Bay to close on the Fraser River stretching to the westward as far as Lake Louisa as shown on accompanying chart. It is a 'puidan' or woodland well grassed particularly towards the southern end and fit to support great flocks especially of cattle. It is indented by numerous bays and tidal creeks terminating in marshes beyond which are springs of fresh water. The soil is sandy with some black earth at the springs and some of the valleys.
- 4 The Sound, bays, and creeks abound with fish of various kinds such as mullet, whiting stingery, sole, turtle, dugong and mother of pearl shell fish.

Application for Mission Land on the Dampier Peninsula where Father McNab had his mission at Goodenough Bay.

- 5 The licence for pearl shell fishing is £ 1 per annum and there is a duty of £ 4 per ton for its export. Hitherto it has sold for about £ 100 per ton. The diving is performed almost exclusively by natives under the direction of white men.
- 6 The range of a mission opened on this Reserve might extend from 18 deg to 17 deg 40 min South latitude i.e. from Roebuck Bay to Swan point and thence by the Western shore of King Sound to the estuary of the Fitzroy river near the said 18th degree.
- 7 The number of natives on this promontory is estimated at about 400-- At Saddle hill on the east side of the Sound there is good land, and several tribes easily accessible; that next to the Stokes Bay tribe numbers about 30 or 40.
- 8 The Census Report of 1881 gives the total number employed in the service of settlers in the Northern District - males 944, females 323 total 1,267.
- 9 The natives are tall and well built intelligent and tractable and profess their willingness to settle down to work for flour to cultivate gardens, to catch and cure fish, and send their children to school. Most of the young men have been employed by pearlers and some few by squatters. - They have hitherto kept their women and children in the forest removed from the access of pearlers, and only recently begun to admit them to Derby and squatting stations.
- 10 The natives mainly subsist on fish, game and esculent roots which are plentiful. They also use honey and fruit particularly the 'claimbo' or fruit of the beab tree.
- 11 But a very small portion of the Northern District has been referred to. Comparatively little except along the coast has been explored northward from the 26th deg. of latitude. Whenever explorers or travellers have gone, they have met with natives and found them most numerous along the coast and in the mountain ranges. Matthew Gibney - Vicar General

Application for Mission Land on the Dampier Peninsula where Father McNab had his mission at Goodenough Bay.

18 February 1886 A small paragraph in the *Catholic Record*:

At a conference of the diocesan clergy held last month, it was resolved to provide an assistant for the Rev D McNab in his pioneer work of establishing a mission among the blacks of the Kimberley district.

The selection, which was made by lot,³⁵ fell upon Father Treacy at present stationed at Fremantle. It was first intended that Father McNab and his confrere should leave for the scene of their proposed work, by the S S Otway, which sailed for Derby on Tuesday last. But the

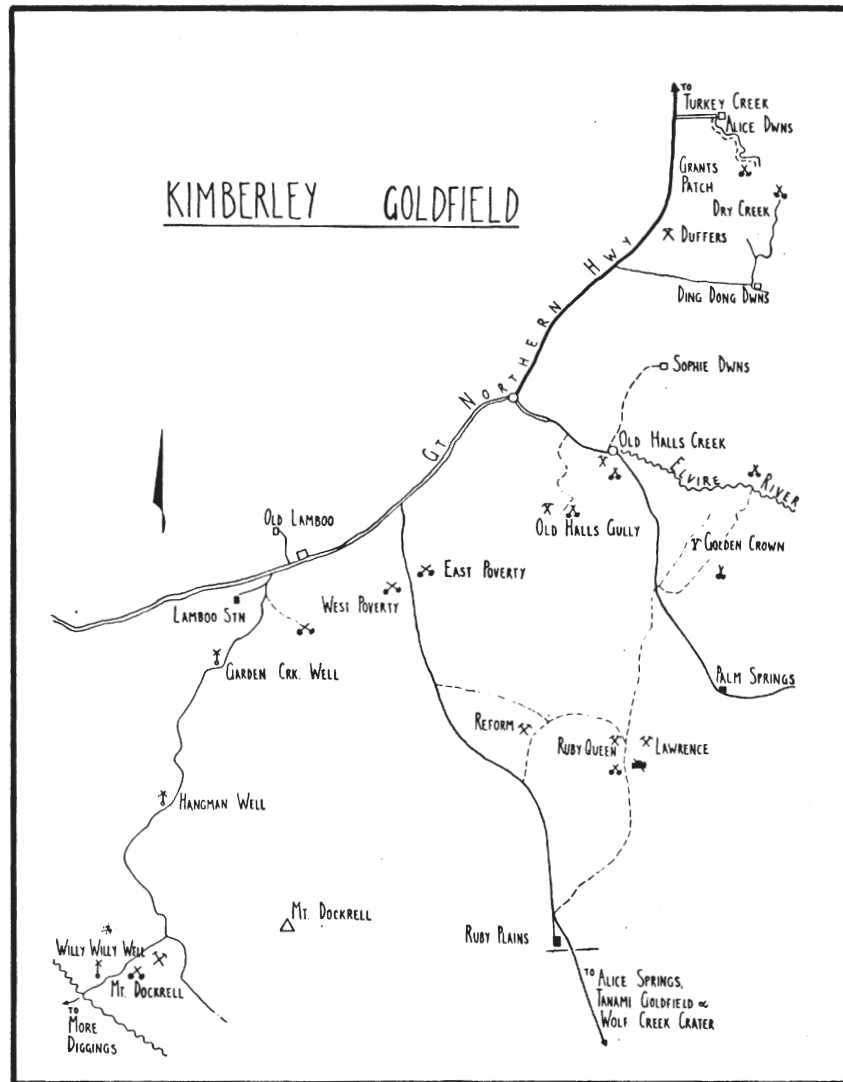
preparations, necessary to be made for the arduous work in hand, occupying more time than was anticipated, their departure had to be deferred until the sailing of the steamer leaving in a month hence. Should there be a sailing vessel, however, going in the meantime and their preparations be complete, it is not improbable that they may avail themselves of the opportunity thus offered for reaching their destination. Father Treacy who had now been over a year resident at the Port has gained the good will and respect of the congregation in whose midst he has laboured. His departure will be to many a subject of regret- of regret, however, tempered by the thought of the important character of the work for the performance of which, he is called elsewhere.³⁶

30 March 1886 A draft of a letter in Father Gibney's handwriting records:

As the Rev W Treacy who held the appointment as chaplain at the prison has been told off to assist the Rev D McNab at the Kimberley for an indefinite term, I will with your approval nominate the Rev J Dooley to fill his place. Owing to the Bishop's illness I deferred till now the appointment, not knowing exactly what to do.³⁷

April 1886 Father William Treacy joined Father McNab at Goodenough Bay. He brought a small boat, a quantity of stores, a spring cart and some building and farm equipment. The two priests, with erratic help from a young native called Knife, and a few others, quickly erected a small church and a house of timber with Spinifex thatch. They fenced a garden plot, ploughed it and sowed some seed. As it was now possible to offer some inducement, the natives began to camp around the mission and would sometimes gather at the doorway of the little church during mass and Benediction. The two priests started building and offering a ritual life. More Aborigines started to gather. They would sometimes gather at the doorway of the little church. The religious aspect made no more sense to them than the missionaries' practical activities. They showed some enthusiasm for learning hymns and listened to the Christian message with every appearance of respect and interest, though they were loath to admit that the whites' teaching had anything to offer them. No doubt they had in mind the legend of the teacher Galagang who had preached a good and simple life that proved too difficult for mere men and so had been destroyed. Now he was a dark shade in the Milky Way, he would never return to earth and his story was remembered only as proof of man's affiliation with cult heroes of magic and sorcery.

5 July 1886 Bishop Griver sent to Cardinal Simeoni in Rome asking for the appointment of a Coadjutor Bishop and expressing the need for members of some religious order for the mission.³⁸



Map of Halls Creek Goldfields
* Courtesy Hesperian Press

August 1886

When Father McNab left on a business trip to Derby 4 months later, he was diverted by news from Halls Creek, 300 miles east, where prospectors were said to be dying in hundreds by the roadside or in their lonely camps. Father McNab was moved by a heart-rending story of men calling in vain for a priest, or asking for letters to be written to their relatives. He felt it his immediate duty to ride to the diggings and give what help he could.

When he returned to Derby he was told that Father Treacy, in delirium of fever, had been brought in by lugger and sent back to Perth. The mission buildings were burned to the ground, the equipment destroyed, the garden returning to scrub.

Some declared that when Father Treacy left, the local Nimambor Tribe ransacked the store and set it alight. Others said it was a bushfire and others insisted that 'lugger blacks' had done the damage at the instigation of their boss.

According to the older natives of the peninsula:

The boy Knife heard Father McNab calling out and found him lying weak and ill among the ruins. Fearing he was about to die the natives returned to help and comfort him, offering to build up the mission again. They found food for him, but as soon as he was strong again he mustered up his horses and rode away.

They watched him disappear into the scrub 'poor old Father Maca-Nab' in his worn Khaki suit, battered straw hat, and broken glasses, a pitiable failure of a man in retreat from his dream. Young Knife followed him to the first camp. By daylight next morning he had a fire lit and the horses ready and from there on he rode bareback until a saddle was got for him from a nearby station.

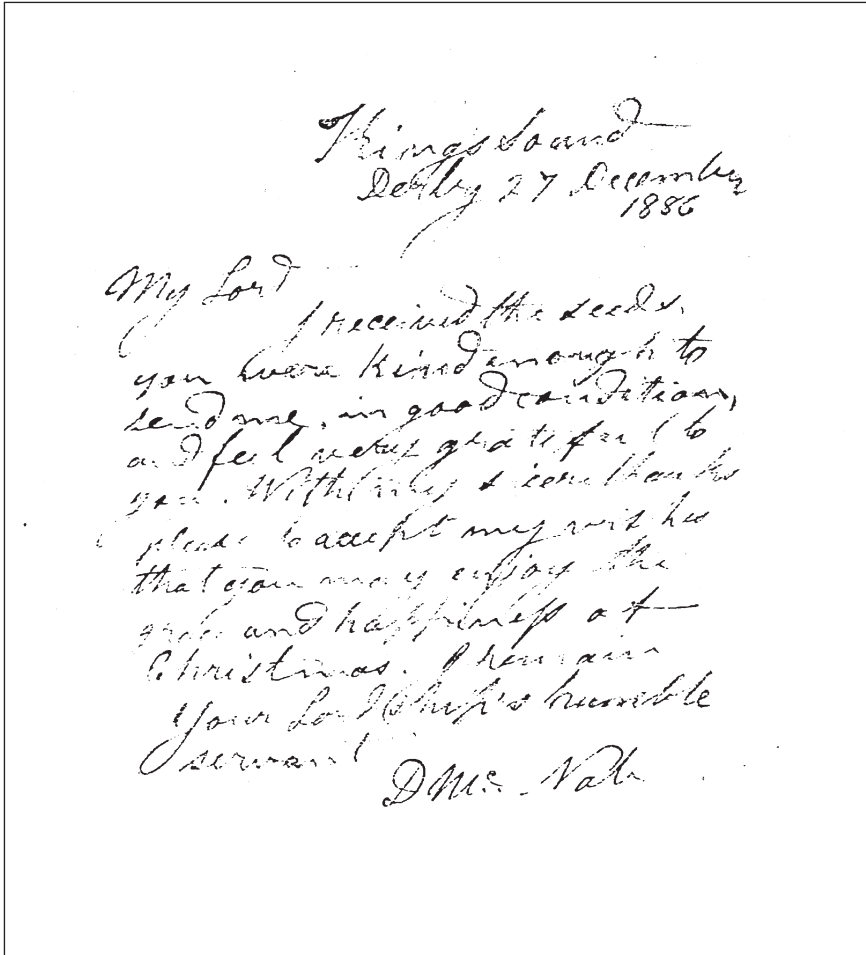
Mary Durack says that the story that the priest and the native rode 1400 miles to Perth, and then another 300 to Albany seems far-fetched:

"I cannot vouch for it, for old people of the Bard tribe at the Lombadina mission heard it so often from Knife before his death that they can still draw a ground map of the route he described to them. Nobody could explain why the priest had not sold his horses and taken a ship, for knife had asked no questions. He had simply gone along because 'his heart was sore' for the brave old priest who had tried to help his people. After Father McNab sailed from Albany, Knife, they had said had ridden back to his tribe on the Dampierland coast.

According to the oral tradition of the local Aborigines who based their tales on those of Knife who went with Father McNab, they rode to Perth and then on to Albany. Knife made his way back alone."

Father McNab never had the satisfaction of christening his faithful companion in the name of his patron St Michael as he had hoped. Except for a few natives baptised at the point of death, he claimed no Christians

in the Kimberley and probably thought his work completely fruitless. He was not to know that all the tribes of the peninsula would cherish his memory and when Bishop Gibney arrived with two Trappist Monks in 1890, the police could assure them that there had been little trouble with the natives since his sojourn there. Timid at first of the strangers in their hooded robes, the people, on learning that they were 'brothers belonga Father MacNab', had brought gifts of food, led them to the ruins of the abandoned mission, and thence across the peninsula to the fertile springs of Beagle Bay.³⁹



Father McNab from King Sound, Derby to Bishop Salvado, New Norcia, 27 December 1886
By Courtesy of New Norcia Monastery, Western Australia.

27 December 1886 from King Sound, Derby, Father McNab sent a letter to Bishop Salvado at New Norcia:

My Lord,

I received the seeds you were kind enough to send me, in good condition and feel very grateful to you. With my sincere thanks, please do accept my wishes that you may enjoy grace and happiness at Christmas.

I remain, your Lordship's humble servant, D McNab.⁴⁰

1887

In 1887 Father McNab visited the Jesuit mission station at Rapid Creek. Despite the legends he will surely have travelled to Melbourne from Derby by sea. He certainly sailed to Port Darwin from Western Australia. The Jesuits themselves always travelled to and from Palmerston by sea, except when visiting the Daly River mission, and even then they sometimes did so. In those days to travel the overland route from South Australia still required a carefully prepared expedition.

Father Strele SJ was of the opinion that McNab was content that missionaries were coming at last and he could withdraw.⁴¹

The annual letter to the Father General SJ from the Northern Territory mission was probably written by Father Strele, superior of that mission in 1887:

This year our station at Rapid Creek had a visit from the Rev Father McNab, who worked for many years among the natives in the colony of Queensland, by whom he is gratefully remembered, and also for a time in the colony of West Australia. Because of his advanced age and the difficulty of learning new languages, but most of all because he saw that at last the work for the Aborigines' salvation was being seriously undertaken, he gave up labouring as a missionary to become a fellow-worker with us (Jesuits) in a Melbourne parish. He had landed at Port Darwin from a ship from West Australia, and while waiting for another ship to take him south he stayed with us for some days at the station. He was very glad to see what we have been able to do so far, and praised us for it; alas, it is not much! Whatever he had (the price of horses he had sold in Western Australia) he gave to our mission, and with it not a few church furnishings.⁴²

29 November 1887 The *West Australian* recorded:

Kimberley has been fortunate so far, in having no itinerant missionary fooling round among the natives. There is a Roman Catholic Mission somewhere on the coast, but the principal, the Rev Father McNab is liked and respected by both blacks and whites. There are a few minor evils that are felt, such as fever and ague and mosquitoes, both of which can be mitigated to a certain degree.

In short, there are worse places in the world than Kimberley to live in, and as a field of investment for young men having any capital and any brains, at all, it is worth trying, all that is wanted besides capital being a strong constitution and a certain proportion of energy and intelligence.

Without doubt, horses occasionally die of some poisonous plant, but as a rule, the poison seems confined to certain localities. As yet no one is able to say with certainty which plant does this mischief . . .

Another matter, but one that concerns the settlers themselves, is the necessity of combined action in getting rid of native dogs and eaglehawks. Both these pests are numerous and are the cause of heavy losses among sheep.

Melons, pumpkins, and tomatoes flourish and can be easily grown, but with a few exceptions, no one seems to have troubled much about trying to raise vegetables . . .

Notes for Chapter 7

¹ Duncan McNab was known to sign M. A. after his name. Father Aldo Rebeschini thought it meant Missionary Apostolic, and signified that he had obligations to Propaganda, though under the local Bishop, and could not be sent away, for example, without reference to Propaganda. Letter to Brigida Nailon, from Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine worship, Vatican City State, 4 July 1981.

² Church Authorities: Pope Leo XIII 1878-1903;

Archbishops of Sydney, Roger Bede Vaughan OSB, 1877- 1883; Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, 1884-1911; Bishops of Perth, Martin Griver, Apostolic Administrator 1862-1873; Bishop of Perth 1873-1886; Matthew Gibney, 1887-1925. Abbot Ambrose Janny, Cistercian Abbot from Sept Fons Monastery, Lyons.

³ Bishop Griver to D McNab, 11 February 1884, ACAP.

⁴ *Catholic Record*, 26 February 1884.

⁵ 'Vigilance at Andral', *The West Australian*, 26 February 1884, p. 29.

⁶ D McNab to Matthew Gibney, Perth, 1 April 1884, ACAP.

⁷ D McNab to Matthew Gibney, Perth, 3 April 1884, ACAP.

⁸ *The Inquirer*, 16 April 1884, p. 5e.

⁹ *Western Australia, An Atlas of Human Endeavour*, Produced for the Education Committee, Way 79 by the Education and Lands and Surveys Departments of WA, 1979. p. 24.

¹⁰ J F Corbett to D McNab, 12 July 1884, SAA.

When Father F J Dennett SJ wrote (Dennett to Nailon, 12 July 1982) about his translation of the contents of this letter, he wrote that it would not be safe to follow the doctrine expressed in these documents, as the Church's law on affinity has been changed since they were written.

¹¹ Can a civil legislator decree diriment impediments to the marriages of unbaptised persons?

¹² Geo. Philp, Pro Colonial Secretary Perth, to Bishop Griver, Perth. 30 July 1884, ACAP.

¹³ *Report of a Commission to inquire into the Treatment of Aboriginal native Prisoners of the Crown in this Colony: and also into certain other matters relative to Aboriginal Natives*. Presented to the Legislative Council, Perth, 1884, Batty Library, Perth.

¹⁴ Trustees Report, 20 November 1884

¹⁵ This letter of 21 November 1884 is mentioned in that of D McNab to Bishop Griver, 4 December 1884.

¹⁶ Brother Xavier Daly's father was Herbert O'Brien Daly, Dunolly. John Cornelius Daly had become a policeman at Derby before he became Brother Xavier. With the consent of his parents he left for the new country of the Kimberley in 1883 – to become a farmer on leased land. Because of finance he was forced to give this dream up and became a policeman in 1887. In 1890 he went with the Trappists to found the mission for the Blacks at Beagle Bay. He joined them to become a friar. When the Mission was transferred to the Pallottines in 1901, he went to Palestine to the monastery of El Latroun. Passport of Cornelius John Daly, Documents from the Trappist Abbey of Sept Fons,

France. AOB.

¹⁷ D McNab, Derby, to Bishop M Griver, Perth, 4 December 1884, ACAP.

¹⁸ Moran to Propaganda, 23 January 1885: SRC, Oceania, 15, f.11, P A. (In Endicott, p 55

¹⁹ SRC, Oceania, vol. 15, 1885-1886:

10 February 1885, Griver, Perth, to Cardinal Simeoni, in Latin, re. McNab.

²⁰ In 1870 when McNab applied to enter New Norcia he was rejected because of his age.

²¹ D McNab, Derby to Bishop M Griver, Perth, 1 March 1885, ACAP.

²² D McNab, Derby to Matthew Gibney, Perth, 4 April 1885. ACAP.

²³ *Catholic Record*, 11 June 1885, p 7, a.

²⁴ Editor's note: Fr. McNab wrote 'Ida Station'. Some Aborigines pronounce 'Yeeda' as 'Eeda', which could be written 'Ida'.

²⁵ Mary Durack, *Westerly*:

The spearing had happened at Cygnet Bay, just north of Cunningham Point. The motive was said to have been to loot the lugger. The Chinese cook with a spear in his leg had quickly up-anchored and sailed to report to the police in Derby. About the same time a pearler named Kelly was murdered off Cape Londonderry by his native crew who made off with the loot in a dinghy down the coast for 400 miles. They performed an incredible feat of endurance and seamanship but collided with the police party at Cygnet Bay.

The force, under fire for brutal tactics against the defenceless natives, taunted in the district for failure to protect a handful of struggling pioneers against the savage hordes, had in this case decided to placate their critics close at hand. A wounded native struggled into Father McNab's camp with a story that they had rounded up all the tribes people around Cygnet Bay and Swan Point, pushed aside the women and children and shot down all the adult male. As Father dressed his wounds the boy told him how he had shammed dead and sneaked into the scrub while the police were preparing a mass grave. The police had returned to Derby and all the bush natives, including those in his own area, had gone into smoke.

The silence, broken only by the screaming of the sea birds and the wash of the tides, pressed heavily on his spirits. He knew that as yet not one of any colour in this crude and Godless land really understood or wanted his mission.

²⁶ D McNab, Derby, to Matthew Gibney, Perth, 27 June 1885. ACAP.

²⁷ D Mc Nab, Derby, to Matthew Gibney, Perth, 3 August 1885, ACAP.

²⁸ D McNab, Derby, to Matthew Gibney, Perth, 4 October 1885, ACAP.

²⁹ Mary Durack, *Westerly*

³⁰ D F Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, p 144, p 156, *Acta et Decreta Concilii Plenarii Australasiae*, 1885, Sydney 1887, pp XXIX, 66, 68.

³¹ J S Batty, *History of Western Australia*, Oxford, 1924, p 318.

³² P M Durack, 'Pioneering the East Kimberleys', *The West Australian Historical Society*

Journal and Proceedings, vol 11, 1933, pt XIV, p 2.

³³D F Bourke, CM, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia, 1829-1979*, Perth, 1979, pp 144, 156.

³⁴Ex Actis et decretis concilii Plenarii Australasiae, habiti Apud Sydney, A D 1885.

³⁵There were only 9 priests available at the time and they all volunteered.

³⁶*Catholic Record*, 18 February 1886, p 3 d.

³⁷Draft of a letter in Matthew Gibney's handwriting, Perth, 30 March 1886, ACAP.

³⁸Bishop M Griver, Perth, to Cardinal Simeoni, Rome, 5 July 1886, ACAP.

³⁹Mary Durack, 'The Priest Who Rode Away', *Westerly*, November 1962, pp 21-28.

⁴⁰D McNab, Derby to Bishop Salvado, New Norcia, 27 December 1886, New Norcia Archives.

⁴¹Anton Strele S J to the General of the Jesuits, 1887. Jesuit Archives, Power Street, Hawthorn, Melbourne.

⁴²F J Dennett SJ, to Brigida Nailon 30 October 1979. It may be noted that though Father Strele reports these remarks of McNab's along with his visit to Sevenhill, they would appear to be extracts from letters written by him either before or after the visit; but the originals of the letters have not survived.

When the Austrian Jesuits were preparing to found their mission in the Northern Territory, in 1881, Father McNab had paid a visit to Sevenhill. Father Anton Strele SJ reported in his *Historia Missionis* 'When Father Strele asked him (McNab):

What help can be expected from the civil Government? he replied "I cannot depend on the Protestant Governments of the colonies aiding the conversion of the Blacks to Christianity. The most I can expect from them is that they will make reserves for them, and give them their rights as British subjects. The late Queensland Government promised land, agricultural implements, cattle and industrial managers, and put £500 on the estimates for the experiment of civilising them; but the minister of lands failed to carry out the measure, except in two instances, and even in these imperfectly. The Government of Western Australia has made a reserve for the Blacks at the head of the Murchison of over 50,000 acres and gives to missionaries the privilege of being guardians of those on the reserve and of any children that may be consigned to them by their natural guardians. The Blacks do not understand the principles of our civilisation and have no idea that they can possess property like white men. When they are explained to them, the young in contact with civilisation become anxious to acquire it and to contract a regular marriage, so that they may transmit it to their posterity the tribal bond must be broken and the family compact supplied instead. For this purpose they must be able to provide themselves with the means of living as civilised men. The greatest impediment to this change arises from the action of the aged, who are afraid of destitution and depend on the labours of the young, and from the idle who wish to live by the labours of others and intimidate those willing to be civilised. If the aged were provided for they withdraw their opposition; the idle must be restrained from menace and violence by law. The nomad habits of the Blacks are a great hindrance to their civilisation,

but they can be gradually removed. They hate being singular and wish to live either as Blacks or Whites.'

Questions were put to Father McNab:

Which are commonly the greatest obstacles to grace on the side of the natives? What do they like or dislike generally?

He replied, The greatest obstacles to grace among the semi-civilised are wine and women, or rather wine and men; among the savages, their superstitions. They dislike ridicule and compulsory control.

Chapter 8

FATHER McNAB BACK IN MELBOURNE - LINK WITH WESTERN AUSTRALIA



29 August 1887 Father McNab wrote to Cardinal Moran from Victoria.

The information in this letter was intended for missionaries to Australian Aborigines. He explains that after the conversion of some Aborigines, the bigots assailed the Secretary for Lands in Parliament and the Secretary would help no further for fear of the selectors:

In accordance with your request I transmit to Your Eminence a copy of my letters to the government of Western Australia on the settlement of the Aborigines and a transcript of the sketch I gave to the right Rev Dr Gibney of my method of civilizing them, with such additional reflections as my experience suggested to facilitate their conversion to Christianity.

The Australian Natives are clans or groups of families related to each other, and occupying each about sixty square miles of territory. They have a right to their country, and will not reside out of it. As a rule individuals possess nothing but their arms and their name. They have no chiefs, but are mostly guided by the aged, who have a right to call out the youth to war, and to corrobories, and to send them messages. Among the aged those most remarkable for prudence and prowess, the doctors have most influence. They are communists, and some are polygamists. They are nomads, and share alike the spoils of the chase.

To civilize them

1. their social system must be changed.
2. They must be induced to adopt the principles of our civilization.
3. They must be left the means of leading a civilized life and be aided to commence it.

To attain these ends I try to make myself known to them, by sending my photograph (as I travel) before me with intelligence of my object. Then I pitch my tent about two or three hundred yards from their encampment, and to gain their goodwill I make them some trifling presents, tell them of my good will, and of the kindly disposition of the Government to help them to ameliorate their condition. I tell them that when they were alone in the country, their system was very good, but that now Whites having come, they must adopt another, unless they

would die out, that they can and ought to possess property like white men, and transmit it to their children. I then explain to them the value of labour, and of money, and the rights and use of property and how to acquire it, and exhort them to do so. I teach them to work, and letters, and then the laws of morality and the principle truths of Christianity.

I have found all this readily approved of by the young i.e. by men under thirty years of age. It is opposed by the old (who depend on the young for their subsistence) through fear of want, in case of a change of system; and by the idle, who wish to live by the labour of others. The old withdraw their opposition, if provided for as paupers, when they become decrepit. This provision I expect from the government. The indolent I leave to shift for themselves as formerly and require them to be restrained by law and punishment from injuring or molesting those who wish to settle down as civilized men. They should be made to understand that if they threaten them they will be imprisoned, if they injure them, they will be put to hard work, and if they kill them, they will be hanged.

To entice them to work I should like to have them paid at first in kind, and subsequently in cash, and taught to transact their own business. In California at St Francisco the American Indians lost their sheep, and cattle and lands, at the advent of the Whites, who expelled the missionaries; because they had everything in common, the monks doing business for them, as no one could claim any thing in particular as his own, nor show a legal title to it. I then endeavour to get them settled, in district families, on good land in fee simple in their own country. Their houses should be contiguous, as their habits are social. The arable land should be divided between the different families, and the pasture land in common, each having a right to stock it in proportion to what he pays for herding. The titles should contain a clause against alienation for twenty years; and one of residence such as is prescribed for selectors in Queensland; unless the owner be in the employment of Whites: also one of improvements however slight. Should the family become extinct the land should pass to the next of kin. Should it be abandoned, it ought to revert to the crown, if granted by Government.

In justice to the Natives I expect such grants from the Government, and also some aid in the commencement of settlement, of implements and rations. Should any Natives not desire to reside on the reserve they should be encouraged to engage in the employment of Europeans, or white Settlers, and some arrangements should be made to secure adequate remuneration for their labour. It would be well were there some law securing the validity of their contracts, and one admitting their evidence in courts of justice. Pure natives may be better subjects for civilization: but those in contact with it are more accessible and in a manner necessary for the acquisition of their language, and therefore I think the proper place for the commencement of a mission to the Aborigines should be at some not great distance from a colonial station, where the Natives are intelligent, and not too numerous.

I should also desire the priest in charge to be empowered to act as guardian of orphan children including all the half castes in the district, not provided for by their white fathers, and of others entrusted to him by their natural guardians. I need an associate priest, a station for the mission, and a manager fit to teach the Natives farming and the management of stock.

This much I wrote for the information of the bishop of Perth, when only one or two missionaries could be sent to the Aborigines. Now I wish to add other useful observations.

Of course a knowledge of the Natives' languages to some extent is necessary, and when considerable has a most powerful influence on the Aborigines. It can only be acquired by hearing, as they have none written. My defective memory from age was to me a great impediment to its acquisition. A clerical habit with glaring colours and a crucifix is useful. In Queensland the bishop allowed me to use my discretion in the adoption of a costume, and I vested as shown by my photograph while instructing them, at night in front of a great fire in the wood; and they venerated me as a father and a priest. In Western Australia I was forbidden to use it, and the Natives considered me only as an old man and a master. The Dominican Father Williams had a better mode of teaching the Indians in California, for he built brush churches where the converts met for prayers after his departure.

The assistance of the civil government is also a great advantage, which I think, I have secured for the missionaries in Queensland and in Western Australia. When I asked the bishop of Brisbane how I should proceed with the mission, he told me he could give me no direction; as if he had to engage in the same work, he should like me feel his way. I commenced by getting land for them to settle on; and went from station to station promising land to such as would support themselves by industry.

Where I got land nearly the whole tribe became Christians and continued such. Elsewhere my success was not so great, although everywhere I taught some became converts. I intended to have spent a year or two in civilizing and settling them and thereafter instructing them. But the bishop said there was no fruit from my labours and that I was a tool of the Government. Then I commenced giving instructions and after the conversion of some the bigots assailed the Secretary for Lands in parliament, and he would help no farther for fear of the selectors. Such Natives as would not reside on a reserve or homestead should be encouraged to enter the service of the colonists. It would be better to have them kept separate, but as that cannot be completely done, we must take men as we find them, and try to fortify them against error and temptation as best we can. After instruction they could lead Christian lives in their normal state.

Besides a central station for the missionaries, some kind of a church and residence should be erected in a suitable position for each tribe (as they will not reside permanently out of their own country) to be visited frequently by the missionaries. Since in many places young men cannot easily get wives, on account of the polygamy of the aged, an extrinsic help for their conversion is the teaching them that by contracting a regular marriage they will have control over their wives and acquire a right of transmitting to their children any property they may acquire.

Missionaries ought to beware of the common error of believing the Australian adult Natives the lowest of the human race, and incapable of instruction or improvement. They are full of curiosity and willing to learn. The adults must be instructed differently from children. The latter may be taught prayers and the catechism: but the former must be reasoned with,

and each point of doctrine clearly explained to them. I divided my instructions into ten lessons (besides the *pater Ave and Credo*, the Commandments and the definition of the Sacraments, which they learned by heart) and illustrated them with pictures or engravings. These lessons were:

- 1 The Creation, the Fall of Man & the Trinity.
- 2 The History of Noah to remove their superstition relative to the rainbow.
- 3 The history of Joseph.
- 4 Moses.
- 5 The private life of Christ.
- 6 His miracles.
- 7 His parables.
- 8 His Sufferings.
- 9 The glorious mysteries.
10. The great work of Christ on earth, i.e. the foundation of his church, showing the appointment of St Peter to be her head and the series of his successors and the connection between him and the bishops and priests.

The Natives are very reticent regarding their beliefs and superstitions, and will not speak of them to anyone till they have confidence in him, and find out that he has some knowledge of them. If they be directly attacked they will defend them and adhere to them. If they be simply indicated and the opposite truth exposed they will spontaneously abandon them. They believe in evil spirits, in the immortality of the soul and in god, whom they call by different names. Of course their idea of God is not complete or perfect: but they know him to be good, creator, and supreme.

They closely observe every word and action of the missionary and are easily scandalized, and hence the necessity of his watchfulness and patience. I need scarcely mention that a missionary to the Aborigines must be always ready for death, as at any moment some one of the savages may take offence and kill him. Should he show any sign of timidity they will surely bounce or brow beat him.

If the missionaries be full of great zeal for their conversion, and by prayer obtain grace for them and edify them by good example, their labours will surely be crowned with success.

Missionaries will find some directions for their guidance with relation to the marriages of Aborigines in the work of Benedict XIV in his work *De Synodo Diocesana* Vol 11. Lib. XI11 Cap.XXI – I (subjoin?)

Copies of papers sent to Dr Quinn Bishop of Brisbane from Propaganda, and of the right Rev Dr Corbett's letter to me.

No 3 from J Masotti in Italian.

No 4 Copia Dal Palazzo del S. Offizio li 27 August 1880 from A Jacobini

No 5 Breve di Benedetto XIV

No 6 Copy of Dr Corbett's letter.¹

29 August 1887 A remnant of a letter in English from Duncan McNab to His Eminence shows Father McNab still negotiating re dispensation from Church Law for Aboriginal marriages:

As it is part of the Native Australian system of marriage that, without the consent of the principal, either of the married couple may have connection with the nearest Lateral (?) Relative of the other, and without consent, it is considered a light offence, the faculty of dispensing from the impediment of affinity should not be limited to a special number of cases.

In conclusion trusting that some of these reflections may be useful to the missionaries; I have the honour to subscribe myself

Your Eminence' Humble and grateful servant, D McNab.

Victoria, St Kilda, Burnett Street, Wynwould.²

Land for an Aboriginal Mission in the West

A series of press reports collated by the Advocate indicates that public opinion was confused with regard to land given for an Aboriginal mission.

2 September 1887

In Sydney, there was a reference to a cable message that claimed that there was no record in the Colonial Secretary's Office of any offer of land having been made by that Government or any previous Government. It was thought that statement probably referred to some action of the Imperial Government with reference to land in Western Australia, which, being a Crown colony would be open to such an offer on the part of the Home Government.

3 September 1887

Press Reports indicate confused public opinion, for example *The Advocate* (p 19, Col. 12) recorded Reuter's Messages from Rome 26 August:

His Holiness the Pope has announced that in response to the offers made by the Government of N S W, Propaganda is enlisting a number of priests, mostly Irish Trappists, to undertake mission work among the Aborigines of that colony.

26 August, *Argus* Messages, London, noted:

With reference to the Papal mission to the Aborigines of N S W, His Holiness the Pope urges Propaganda to forestall the Protestant Churches, and accept the offer made by the Colonial Government of 300,000 acres of land to anybody that will undertake the mission of civilizing the Aborigines of the colony.

27 August, *The Daily Telegraph* blamed:

the Church of England authorities for their supineness in allowing the Church of Rome to take the initiative in sending a mission to the Aborigines of NSW.

13 September 1887 The *West Australian* recorded:

The curious telegrams given among the week's cable items - says the *Catholic Record*, referring to a large grant of land in Australia for the benefit of an Aboriginal mission - seems to have its origin in a notice of the grant of 600,000 acres in the Kimberley District about three years ago by the West Australian Government. Taking advantage of this concession our late Bishop sent two priests to found a mission in that lonely region rather forcibly described in some of the newspapers as - a howling wilderness. It is to be regretfully admitted that the present prospects of the mission are discouraging. One of the priests Father Treacy, who had been sent there, was driven away by fever and ague. The veteran Father McNab, his companion, held on longer but even he had lately to retire in very much broken health.

In Western Australia it was regretfully admitted that future prospects

for the mission were discouraging. Father Treacy had left, struck down with fever and Father McNab had retired to Melbourne broken down in health but hoping to recruit for the mission, unsure that he would ever return to his mission on the reserve near Derby.³

18 September 1887

The *Advocate* reported that in the House of Commons, Sir Henry Holland had said that the statement telegraphed to Australia on 26 August 1887, that an offer had been made by the NSW Government for establishing a mission to the Aborigines was incorrect.⁴

TO
MORAN

29 Sept. 1887.

Victoria, Richmond, St. Ignatius' Rectory

Eminence.

While writing to Your Eminence for the information of the missionaries to the Aborigines I overlooked an important subject, to which I desire now to draw your attention. It is the necessity of their being amply supplied with funds (unless they have the gifts of languages and numbers) especially at the commencement, for the success of their enterprise.

They have a first to clothe and feed not only themselves, but also the children and the working Blacks. The want of proper nourishment so weakens their constitutions as to render them unfit to bear the severity of the climate. They, like children, are impatient for whatever is promised them and require to be brought quickly to civilised state. The missionaries need many tradesmen to teach the Blacks handicrafts and how to work, and leave themselves time to teach religion and school; as otherwise they would be engaged in manual labour. They should also need a small boat for fishing with nets, and a large decked boat with a portable dingy for bringing supplies from town to their distant stations on the coast, likewise a couple of draft horses for carting and ploughing. There is left in Kimberley are articles for riding and packing.

Part of a second letter sent to Cardinal Moran from Father McNab 29 September 1887 with information for Missionaries. Location unknown.

17 December 1887 Father McNab gave lectures on Australian Aborigines to members of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary at St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne.

Kimberley Church Officially Established in 1887

So it was that after McNab's failure in Queensland, his faith carried him to the lonely outpost of Goodenough Bay, King Sound in the north of Western Australia. Here, as Mary Durack has shown, 'poor old Father Mac-a-Nab pioneered the way for subsequent missionaries to that isolated peninsula.⁵ Father McNab had planted the seed. It is officially recorded that the Church was established in 1887.⁶

In Melbourne the *Advocate* reported that Father McNab, worn out by the privations and hardships he had endured was back in Melbourne.

Parish Work in Richmond Victoria

10 September 1887 – 5 January 1896

Father McNab lived in a Jesuit house at Richmond and worked quietly in the parish. It was almost thirty years since, at the age of 47, he had set sail from Liverpool, England, on board the 'S S Chariot of Fame' of 1,730 tons with Bishop Polding.⁷ In the Richmond Baptismal Registrar, there are entries for persons baptised by him from 16 September 1887 until 5 January 1896. The severe sunstroke he had in Northern Queensland ultimately caused his death. He never properly recovered from its effect and afterwards had recurrent fainting fits.⁸

29 September 1887 Father McNab wrote another letter to Cardinal Moran containing information for missionaries from St Ignatius' Presbytery, Richmond:

Eminence,

While writing to Your Eminence for the information of missionaries to the Aborigines I overlooked an important subject, to which I desire now to draw your attention. It is the necessity of their being amply supplied with funds (unless they have the gifts of languages and numaries) especially at the commencement, for the success of their enterprise.

They have first to clothe and feed not only themselves, but also the children and the working Blacks, the want of proper nourishment so weakens their constitutions as to render them unfit to bear the severity of the climate. They, like children, are impatient for whatever is promised them and require to be brought quickly to civilised state. The missionaries need many tradesmen to teach the Blacks handicrafts and how to work, and leave themselves time to teach religion and school; as otherwise they would be engaged in manual labour. They should also need a small boat for fishing with nets, and a large decked boat with a portable dingy for bringing supplies from town to their distant stations on the coast, likewise a couple

of draft horses for carting and plowing. Those I left in Kimberley are suited for riding and packing...

(Much of the rest of this letter is abridged or omitted, as the photocopy was illegible.)

If religious were come for the Native missions, ... should desire my assistance, I have now so far recovered my health and ... I think I will accompany them from April to October, but during the rest of the year I know that because of the weather it is difficult to work there. In the mean time I have asked the Archbishop of Melbourne to assign to me some pastoral duty.

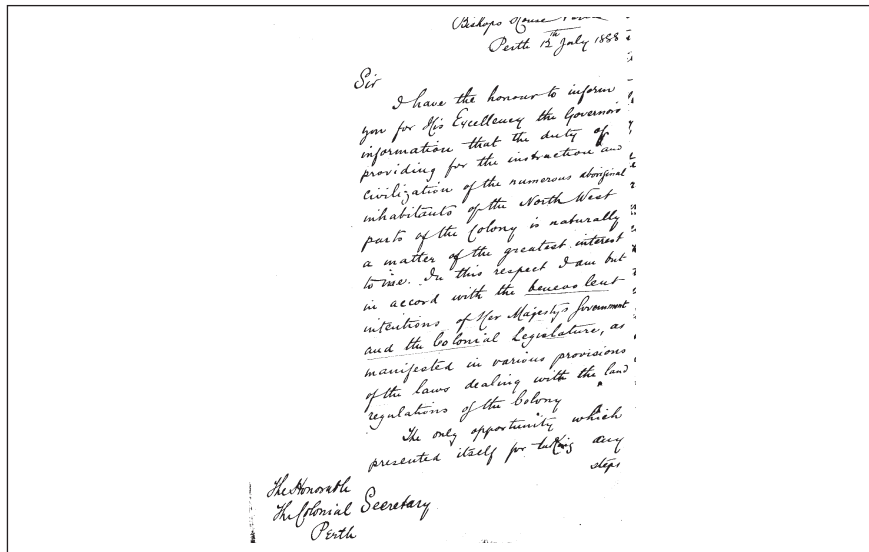
He wrote to me that he had no suitable place for me. I applied to the Bishops of Ballarat and Bathurst and they replied that all their missions are amply supplied with priests. So I expect I shall have to look to Your Eminence for some appointment. From Western Australia I have lately received papers intimating my appointment as a Protector of Aborigines and a copy of the Aborigines Protection Act. I transmit them to you believing they contain information that may be useful to missionaries in charge of Natives of Western Australia.

I remain

Your Eminence' humble servant, Duncan McNab⁹

1888 Happenings In Perth

23 January 1888 The ceremony of the consecration of Bishop Gibney took place in the Perth Cathedral with Bishop Salvado of New Norcia and Bishop Reynolds assisting Cardinal Moran.



A portion of a letter written by Bishop Gibney to the Colonial Secretary, Perth, 12 July 1888.

12 July 1888

Bishop Gibney wrote to the Colonial Secretary:

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you for the information of his Excellency the Governor that the duty of providing for the instruction and civilization of the numerous Aboriginal inhabitants of the northwest parts of the colony is naturally a matter of the greatest interest to me. In this respect I am but in accord with the benevolent intentions of Her Majesty's Government and the Colonial Legislature as manifested in various provisions of the Laws dealing with land regulations of the colony. The only opportunity that presented itself for taking any steps on behalf of the Natives was when the zealous missionary, Rev D McNab opened a mission on the Native reserve and laboured to the best of his power there for some time. Unfortunately the mission had to be relinquished for want of supplies, both of men and means and the failure of Father McNab's devoted labours convinces me that it will not be possible for any single individual or even for any party of men however zealous to achieve a work that will be lastingly effective for the welfare of the Natives.

This can only be done by a strong staff of missionaries or a numerous community working on some such plan as is followed at the highly successful mission at New Norcia which affords the only instance in perhaps all Australia of the complete education of the Natives in more than solitary instances to the ways and habits of a civilized community life.

I beg to assure for His Excellency's consideration, that a very hopeful opportunity of something being done on behalf of the Natives of the northwest is afforded by the present visit of Cardinal Moran to Europe. His Eminence takes much interest in the welfare of the Aborigines and he acquainted me with an intention he has formed of trying to get a religious community of missionaries to take upon themselves the charge of an institution devoted exclusively to the conversion of the Natives of the north of the colony.

Notwithstanding the Cardinal's great interest it is not expected that he will be able to succeed unless he is able to furnish the superiors of whatever religious body he may apply to with reliable facts as to the means that will be available through the liberality of the Government or otherwise for the successful working of the mission.

With a view to obtaining such definite and reliable data and trusting in the Governor's approval of what is likely to result in good towards the Aboriginal races I would suggest that His Excellency be pleased to sanction in favour of a Native mission at the northwest the following concessions which I hope would, when submitted in an authentic form, probably incline a religious body to undertake the task with possibility of success and also would be an evidence of the good will and interest of the Government limited by such restrictions as are reasonable in the proposed concessions.

1. Lease of Native reserve of 600,000 acres on the northeast coast of the northwest cape for stated periods, say of 21 years, renewable while the objects of the mission required it.
2. The fee simple of 10,000 acres wherever the missionaries should select within the area

for the support of the community provided that a party of 10 missionaries be introduced and provided they bring a capital of £5000.

- 3. The fee simple of 100 acres of the reserve to each married Aborigine as soon as the Natives become civilized and capable of settling upon and utilising the land, such grant to be given at the instance of the superior of the mission and upon such conditions as he may deem most advisable.

Should his Excellency the Governor be pleased to sanction these concessions it will enable me to forward to Cardinal Moran tentative data. Furnished with these definite ends and reliable details the Cardinal will, I trust, be successful in inducing some religious body to undertake a mission to the northwest, a mission which, if not begun with adequate resources must ever result in failure as to any great and lasting good to the Native population.

+ M Gibney.

A personal reply to this letter came immediately from the Governor:

Dear Bishop,

Having considered your application for land for a mission for the Natives I wish to let you know (you will receive the letter in due time) that I can offer you a lease under the pastoral clause of 100,000 acres of the King's Sound Native reserve, with a fee simple grant in trust for the use of a Native mission of 10,000 acres of the reserve as soon as the mission shall have expended £5000 on improvements.

The reserve is not pastoral land of the first quality, but I have never heard that sheep or cattle could not live on it.

F Napier Broome.

A private copy of the above has the addition of this extra paragraph:

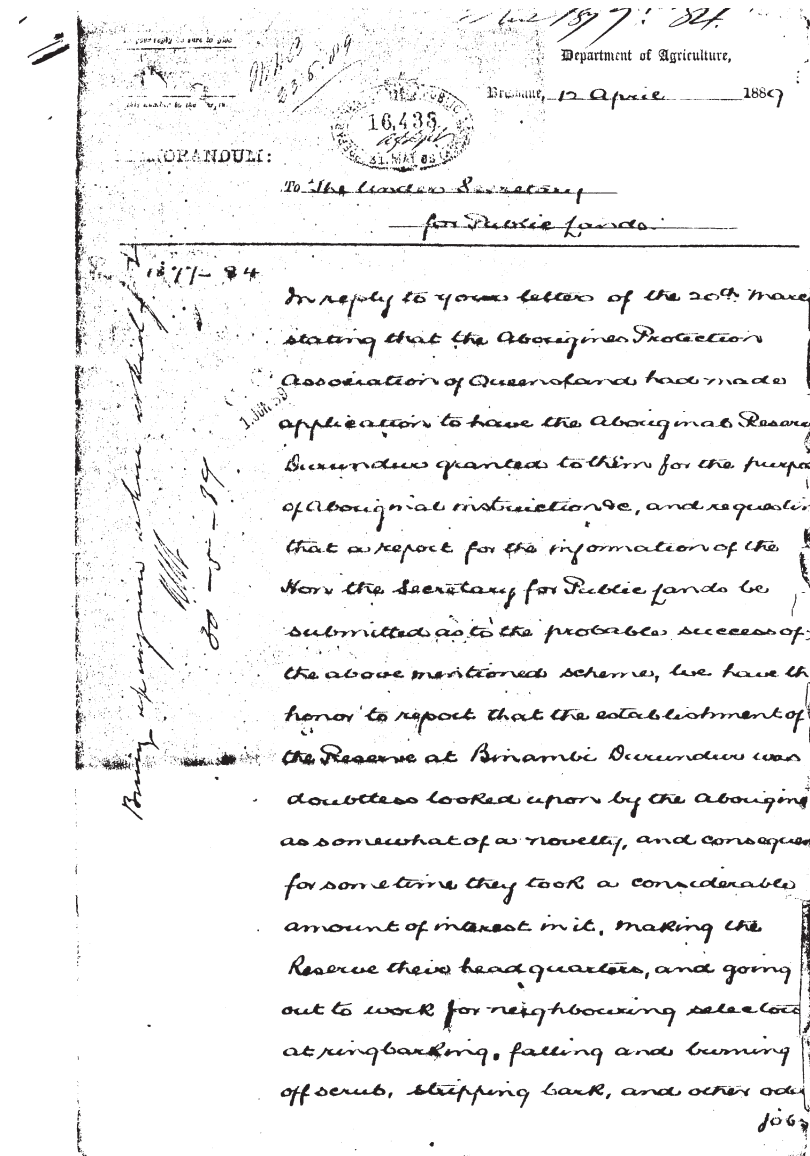
If what I offer is somewhat less than you ask, you must not think I was not doing my best to assist you. We live in times when concessions to religious bodies are watched with jealousy.

F Napier Broome.¹⁰

Events In Rome

At Propaganda Fide in Rome, Cardinal Moran presented Bishop Gibney's request to have Benedictine monks sent to the Kimberley and on Pope Leo XIII's name day, in the presence of the Abbot of Sept Fons, Lyons and other dignitaries, the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda placed the request. At the time, the Abbot declined the invitation, but approximately two years later, when Abbot Ambrose Janny was in Rome to arrange for the closure of the Trappist Mission in New Caledonia, he was asked to take charge of the mission.

Durundur Reserve in Queensland



Peter McLean and Henry Woods, Report on Durundur Aboriginal Reserve 12 April 1889, Department of Agriculture, Queensland State Archives. p.1

jobs.

16,438
31 MAY 89

The Bunya season possessing a special attraction, visits were made to the Bunya Scrubs, and when the season was over the blacks returned to the Reserve, but gradually the novelty of a fixed home wore off, the natives returned to their old wandering habits, and practically abandoned the Reserve. Upon this taking place the Trustees could not see that any thing was to be gained by retaining control of the land, consequently in November 1884, we recommended that the reservation of land should revert to the Government, the Trusteeship to be abolished, and a monetary trust be appointed who should receive from the Government a sum of £60 per annum, to be spent in conjunction with a sum of money in the Bank of New South Wales to the credit of the Trust in supplying the old men and girls with rations whilst sick and unable to find their food, and to provide warm clothing during the cold weather.

In May 1885 Henry Cornell Wood and Peter McLean were gazetted as Trustees for the relief of the Aborigines, and in February 1886 the Trustees were relieved of their Trust with respect to the Reserve.

Although a distinct promise was made that £60 a year would be placed at the disposal of the monetary trust, we regret to state that no money has yet been voted by the Legislature for the relief of

of the Aborigines.

16,438
31 MAY 89

When we submitted our Report in 1882, the number of natives in the district was about 140, having an equal proportion of sexes, since then a number have died, and there cannot now be more than 15 with a few young people chiefly half castes. To attempt to instruct the few natives in this district in any of the useful phases of civilization is we fear a hopeless task.

There cannot be a doubt but that the Aborigines of Australia are doomed to extinction, and all that can be done is to alleviate their condition as far as possible. This is the course that we have followed so far as the means at our disposal have enabled us.

If the parents were willing to part with their children, they might be boarded out with respectable families, as is done with children from the Orphanage, and this we believe would be the proper plan to adopt in this District.

If the Aborigines Protection Association purpose gathering in natives from different districts and forming a settlement we consider that the attempt should be made at a greater distance from close European settlement, thereby avoiding many of the contaminating influences of our civilization

Peter McLean
Henry Woods.

12 April 1889 Henry Woods and Peter Mc Lean reported on Aboriginal Durundur Association of Queensland to the Under Secretary for Public Lands:

1877-1884

In reply to your letter of the 20th March stating that the Aborigines Protection Association of Queensland had made application to have the Aboriginal Reserve Durundur granted to them for the purpose of Aboriginal instruction, etc, and requesting that a report for the information of the Secretary for Public Lands be submitted as to the probable success of the above mentioned scheme, we have the honor to report that the establishment of the reserve at Binambi Durundur was doubtless looked upon by the Aborigines as somewhat of a novelty, and consequently for some time they took a considerable amount of interest in it, making the reserve their headquarters, and going out to work for neighboring selectors at ring barking, felling and burning off scrub, stripping bark, and other odd jobs.

The Bunya season possessing a special attraction, visits were made to the Bunya Scrubs, and when the Season was over the Blacks returned to the reserve, but gradually the novelty of a fixed hoe wore off, the Natives returned to their old wandering habits, and practically abandoned the reserve. Upon this taking place the Trustees could not see that anything was to be gained by retaining control of the land, consequently in November 1884, we recommended that the reservation of land should revert to the Government, the trusteeship to be abolished, and a monetary trust be appointed who should receive from the Government a sum of £60 per annum, to be spent in conjunction with a sum of money in the bank of New South Wales to the credit of the Trust in supplying the old men and gins with rations whilst sick and unable to find their food, and to provide warm clothing during the cold weather.

In May 1885 Henry Connell Wood and Peter McLean were gazetted as Trustees for the relief of the Aborigines, and in February 1886 the Trustees were relieved of their trust with respect to the reserve.

Although a distinct promise was made that £60 a year would be placed at the disposal of the monetary trust, we regret to state that no money has yet been voted by the Legislature for the relief of the Aborigines.

When we submitted our Report in 1882, the number of Natives in the district was about 40, having an equal proportion of sexes, since then a number have died, and there cannot now be more than 15 with a few young people chiefly half castes. To attempt to instruct the few Natives in this district in any of the useful phases of civilization is we fear a hopeless task.

There cannot be a doubt but that the Aborigines of Australia are doomed to extinction, and all that can be done is to alleviate their condition as far as possible. This is the course that we have followed so far as the means at our disposal have enabled us.

If the parents were willing to part with their children, they might be boarded out with respectable families, as is done with children from the Orphanage, and this we believe would be the proper plan to adopt in this District.

If the Aborigines protection Association purpose gathering in Natives from different districts and forming a settlement we consider that the attempt should be made at a greater distance from close European settlement, thereby avoiding many of the contaminating influences of our civilization.

Peter McLean, Henry Woods.¹¹

McNab 3:9 | 17
Queensland
Rockhampton
Dear Sir
your welcome letter reached
me only yesterday in consequence
of Feather Millhalls
and my leaving come hither
and my leaving come hither
to get cured of Rheumatism
in a warmer climate than that
of Melbourne. We are now
mean. l. well and exhibit a...

Segments of a letter from Rockhampton Queensland, written by Father McNab, 3 September 1889
Battye Library, Perth

to return to Richmond. For my
cure I have used friction, salt
and fresh hot water baths,
and lately an ointment com-
posed of vinegar, turpentine,
spirits of wine, oil of cloves,
opium, and camphor.
I have to thank your Lordship

for the W.A. Records sent me.
Father Mulhall will acknowledge
the receipt of your book.
I remain Your Lordship's
humble servant
Duncan McNab
3rd September 1889

Segments of a letter from Rockhampton Queensland, written by Father McNab, 3 September 1889
Ballye Library, Perth

3 September 1889 McNab wrote from Rockhampton:

My Lord,

Your welcome letter reached me only yesterday in consequence of Father Mulhall's and my having come hither to get cured of rheumatism in a warmer climate than that of Melbourne. We are now nearly well and expect soon to return to Richmond. For my cure I have used friction, salt and hot water baths, and lately an ointment composed of vinegar, turpentine, spirit of wine, oil of cloves, opium and camphor.

I have to thank your Lordship for the W A Records sent me.

Father Mulhall will acknowledge the receipt of your book.

I remain, Your Lordship's humble servant, Duncan Mc Nab.

1890

At the beginning of 1890, Abbot Ambrose Janny from New Caledonia was in Rome with Father Alphonse Tachon who was on his way back to Sept Fons Monastery from the mission they were closing in New Caledonia. He told him about the mission they were planning to open for Aborigines in Australia.

The Abbot wrote to his brother, Father Felix Janny, Prior of Sept-Fons monastery of his concern for the other religious returning from New Caledonia where they had closed the mission. He and Father Alphonse planned to start their journey to Australia about the 27th February and would go straight to Cardinal Moran in Sydney. Father Alphonse wrote home that he was eager to start learning English.

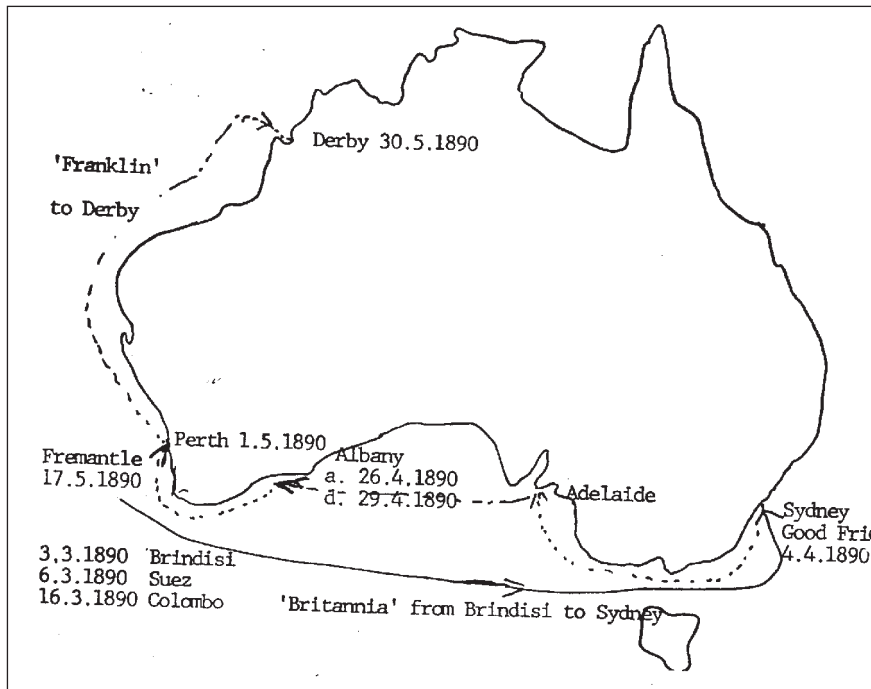
Two Missionaries to Australia

The train trip took 20 hours from Rome to Brindisi, the departure port. They sailed on the 'Britannia', a four masted sailing ship more than 150 metres long. Both were seasick in the Adriatic Sea but the boat was comfortable. They said Mass each day and spent all spare time learning English. Even while on the boat they kept to a monastic timetable. The Abbot had a troublesome tooth pulled out.

In Australia, Sydney and Perth

4 April 1890

When they arrived in Sydney, it was 10 am on Good Friday and the Marist Fathers who offered them hospitality welcomed them. They were taken straight to the Cathedral where Cardinal Moran was presiding at the Adoration of the Cross. He welcomed them and they gave him letters from Cardinal Simeoni and the Abbot of Sept-Fons Monastery. The Cardinal spoke in halting French telling them he wanted the foundation of the mission for the evangelisation of Native people of the Kimberley.



In 1890, the first of the missionaries came from the Cistercian Abbey of Sept Fons in France. They reported to Cardinal Moran in Sydney, then to Bishop Gibney in Perth. After that they sailed to Derby and travelled across the King Sound to Goodenough Bay where Father McNab had started his mission.

The government wanted at least 10 men in the beginning. The expectation was that it would be difficult to get the nomadic people to settle. Then he gave them £100 for travelling expenses. Father Alphonse Tachon was mourning the death of a brother and wrote to his surviving brother, Louis Tachon, "Here we are, only two of us and so far away from each other."

They left Sydney 14 April, and by the 28th they had booked on a little steamship, the 'Rob Roy' to travel from Albany to Fremantle. It took an hour to go by train to Perth. It was the feast of St Robert, the founder of their order. Bishop Gibney was 'kindness itself' and a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated after they had given him the official letters.

Cardinal Moran had promised the missionaries 12,500 francs each year for the first five or six years in addition to the 2,500 francs already given from the Sydney Province. Bishop Gibney was going to pay the 600 francs for each passage to Derby.

The very afternoon on the day they arrived, they went with Bishop Gibney to Subiaco, 10 minutes by train from Perth. Here he suggested they establish a monastery and when the religious were numerous and the monastery prospering then they would go to the Kimberley. The two Trappists modestly observed that this was not what was first asked.

To the Dampier Peninsula in the Northwest

After Mass the next day the Bishop agreed with the decision to move straight to the northwest. He suggested that while he arranged things with the Government they should visit New Norcia. Father Martelli, the Italian Vicar General lived at Fremantle but could act as interpreter. It was arranged that the rest of the religious party from France would come via Colombo, Singapore and Derby.

Once at New Norcia, the two missionaries would willingly have stayed for some months, but the Bishop had taken the new plan for the mission to heart and there were only two days to prepare. He was going to accompany them to meet the Catholics around Derby and stay some months. Shopping at Fremantle included three hammocks and 2 tents.

Two things were worrying Abbot Ambrose Janny, first, 'The arrangement with the Government about the land and security of tenure, and second, the Bishop's wish for them to exercise a ministry with the European Catholics around Derby to ensure some income while at the same time saving souls.' But the Abbot of Sept-Fons Monastery in France, had asked them to put themselves at the disposal of the Episcopal authority, so he went along with the Bishop Gibney's wishes.

He wrote to Sept Fons in France, mentioning the type of men needed for the community and expressing his hope that Father Hilary and his brother, Father Jean Marie Janny would be among them, but he did not want anyone to come until he gave the word.

17 May-13 September 1890

Bishop Gibney wrote a diary in a little sixpenny notebook. Daisy Bates edited it for publication in the *Sunday Times*, Perth, in 1927. In it he told the story of how they traversed the Dampier Peninsula looking for a suitable place for the new mission. Eventually Beagle Bay encampment was chosen. From his movements and policies the hand of Duncan McNab can be seen as the bishop was guided by previous correspondence. The little party anchored in Beagle Bay 27 May and reached Derby 28 May.

28 May: Reached Derby. Met Mr. Emmanuel of Liveringa Station, Mr. Martin of Lilmooloora Station and Mr. Gilbert Lodge, R.M. A saddle horse was got for Fr. Ambrose, who had never mounted a horse in his life, and for Constable Daly, and a Native policeman. Mr. Morley gave me a horse, and two pack horses were obtained.

I saw twenty-six Native prisoners at Derby, eighteen road making, and eight loading drays. They looked well fed and healthy, the only thing that looked harsh about their treatment was the manner in which they were chained to each other or to their barrow. The chains were passed round their necks, and locked on the ankle: a cloth was round the ankle irons, and the deep shirt collar round their necks kept the hot chains off their skin. All were sheep stealers. Four who had arrived the previous day, had never seen a white man till they saw the policeman who arrested them.

3 June: All hands are busy preparing for the 'expedition' to the Mission Reserve. Mr. Daly takes the catering in hand, three weeks' supplies, Mr. Lodge giving them every assistance. He tells me it will take a week to go to the Reserve, a week to explore it, and a week to return, but I add another week to it. Fr. Alphonse is left in Derby in care of a constable, and in that part of Derby where most of the Catholics were together. Fr. Ambrose, Daly, the Native guide, and three packhorses started for the mission site. Halted at Monkejarra. Had for my portion, 'inter alia', a full quart of tea.

Reached Yeeda Station at 7.30 p.m. Mr. Rose, the manager was most hospitable. He gave me a good report of the ground seven miles out from Beagle Bay. Our Native went down with malaria, and we had to remain and wait on him. Mr. Rose's brother came in the evening, an equally nice man. Gave Native pain killer and castor oil.

FITZROY RIVER

6 June: Fr. Ambrose unwell, Native cheerful. Camped on Fitzroy for dinner, and waded through the crossing. Since our departure from Fremantle we have said Mass every morning, each serving the other.¹² Intended to reach 'Bungania', but failed. Native guide sick or sulky, pressed him to take us to water, reached some late, but found it brackish. Had no water, therefore no supper. My first night in the bush. We travelled west by south, and then west by north. Frequent showers during the night, and mosquitoes troublesome.

7 June: At 4 a.m. we went in search of the horses. In the afternoon, travelling along a ridge, we got a glimpse of the marsh on the west coast of King Sound.

Travelling north-west we came on a great flat. Eventually we were delighted to find a small pool of water sufficient for horses and men. We camped here. Threatening rain as we laid down to rest. Native still complaining, would have no supper. Gave him quinine. I was troubled with cramp in the legs last night after the wetting.

FRASER RIVER

8 June: Fitted up an altar in the gully, protected by rugs. Offered Mass and served Fr. Ambrose. Threatening rain. Travelled north for four hours, and struck Fraser River, but knew it not. It was just dark when we reached the spot where our Native wished us to camp, although there was better water one and a half miles nearer to the sea.

Here, however, when morning came and I had time to look around, I found a tree marked W/36, and back further towards the shore, about one and a half miles, found F/67. This latter gave us our position as shown on the chart to be near the mouth of the Fraser River. Travelled today twelve miles.

THE RESERVE

9 June: Feast of my wandering countryman, St. Columba. Said Mass, served Fr. Ambrose and reminded our Saint how there was still a greater wanderer, and did not know where I was at the time I was talking to him. God granted the knowledge soon after when, on going back along the river for about a mile and a half, I found Mr. Forrest's mark. Started at 12.39 to reach Bunjanagut Pool. We took a circuitous route to note what kind of country is reserved for the Natives in this section.

When we struck the Dry Stream our Native guide said he did not know on which side Beagle Bay lay. So after consulting our chart, we decided to ride on.

19 June: We were ready to start as the day dawned, and in two hours' time we were beside a pool of good fresh water, not in the river, but on one side of it. The pool is not large, a yellow claypan, about four foot of water. There are many pools as deep around without water. Nothing to warrant that there will be water here in four months' time. This ground is evidently much flooded.

THE CAMP

A camp like ours is my first experience. As I have time, I purpose to make a pencil sketch of it. The waterhole with its invaluable supply of fresh water, is the chief attraction. Besides this being a day of rest, it is also a day of preparation for further journeying. All our things are washed and spread out; everything is under the directing hand of our experienced caterer;

Mr. Daly, but I believe the sight would drive a housekeeper crazy. I spent a miserable night until 2 a.m. It began to rain, and to keep the spot we were to lie on dry, we rolled ourselves in our rugs. I could not sleep closed up in the rug, so sat up, and at 2 a.m., when the rain ceased, I had a sleep.

Met only one Native in our journey after crossing Fitzroy. At our present camp we saw tracks of a family of seven. They seem to have shifted just before we came. We were sorry for this as we wished to meet them. We had no fresh meat since Tuesday. By some blunder, our caterer only took one week's supply!

EAST COAST

12 June: Started at 9.30 a.m. After a ride of eight miles by the coast, our guide brought us to another Native well called 'Gabba', south of 'Nimbalong'. a small swamp, with palms, has fresh water, about five miles north from the marsh edge. After another ride of an hour we reached 'Mullegra', another Native well standing within the marsh.

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

13 June: *Feast of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus.*

Fr. Ambrose said Mass, 'ante lucem'. I followed. Thanks to the Sacred Heart for the consolation granted before and during Mass. Daly went out for the horses. Our mission horses were brought in at 3.30 p.m., too late to venture on. 'Mallebra' is on the west end of the marsh, opposite the well marked F65. Although we saw no Natives yet, there were several who went round our camp after we went to sleep. There were several fresh tracks in the morning, as Fr. Ambrose noticed.

LAKE FLORA

14 June: *Anniversary of my ordination. Heard and said Mass after confession. After an hour and a quarter's ride, we came to a Native well, 'Gabbarunny' near a creek. Passing on from this well we met the first Native we saw on the Reserve. He is the father of our guide. He was all of a tremble, his only attire a string round and under his haunches, a snake and a goanna stuck in it, and his tomahawk stuck in the back of the string. His Native name, 'Billarno', and his white name Jerry'.*

Another hour brought us to another well, which our guide called 'Nullugala' and marked F63. The bark had grown over the letter F and the figure 3. We carefully removed it. We had to make our way through a good deal of thick country. Pindan, our guide called it. Fr. Ambrose was unseated, but he said he was not hurt. This well, with palm trees and tall swamp-like grass, is a pretty spot. While we were camping for dinner the Native we met at

the last well came up with a fine boy of about 13, his youngest child. The boy was quite at ease with us. Rode west at 2 p.m., and after an hour and a half's ride, came on the bed of a lake, which we took to be Lake Flora, perfectly dry. In less than an hour after, we came to a swamp, about an acre, high grass and tall canes growing within, all standing in good fresh water. A few hundred yards further on, we came on a beautiful pool of water. Before reaching this we saw another pool of salt water in the same brook. Mangroves are growing by this well, and probably high tides sometimes come up here. We camped at this fresh water brook.

Fr. Ambrose unwell. Feverish. No medical comforts.

Good coarse grass all round the country from 'Nullugala'.

A bitter sharp wind blew cold all night. I had a sharp pain under my shoulder.¹³ Got up at 1 or 2 a.m., and made a big fire, and lay as near the fire as the Native with my back to it. Rose well in the morning.

While we were settling our horses for the night, Daly and I were startled by something which gave a sudden rush in the grass quite close to us. I stood and asked, 'What is that?' 'That is like the noise an alligator makes!' We made tracks as fast as we were able, and resolved to have no night work like this again. We searched for marked trees, but could find none. The Native called the swamp 'Longtimulla' and the pool 'Lerewan'.

15 June: *Poor Fr. Ambrose unable to rise, and lay still all day. We made a tent over him with our rugs. He had a sharp attack of fever. Towards night he told us the fever had left him.*

30 May 1890

From Derby, Abbot Ambrose wrote to France that they had disembarked, expressing his anxiety because there was no means of transport and their luggage had to be left at the jetty. Father Alphonse was to stay in Derby, as he could not ride a horse. The Bishop, Abbot Ambrose Janny, a policeman and a Native guide were to leave with three weeks provisions and seven horses. At the order of the Magistrate the police had made supplies available.

Father Alphonse wrote home to his parents that it was in Derby, the principal town of the Kimberley that they had met their first novice, a young Irishman from a good family living near Melbourne. He was a policeman, a gentle and humble worker who knew a little of the Native tongue besides English, and he had given the mission some bullocks.¹⁴

3 June 1890

Bishop Gibney wrote:

Reached Yeeda station at 7.30 pm. Mr Rose, manager, most hospitable. He gave me a

good report of the ground seven miles out from Beagle Bay. The station is owned by an Englishman named Carne of Newcastle-on-Tyne. There are 14,000 sheep and 2,300 cattle, all very fat, water and feed plentiful. Natives do all the laborious work and Mr Rose tells me they become more confiding and attached to the station when not assigned. They like to feel free. They shore 6,000 sheep and did all teamster work. All kinds of vegetables can grow, even potatoes

The party made their camping place at Goodenough Bay as they explored across the Dampier Peninsula and eventually moved their stores and goods to Beagle Bay.

YEEDA STATION

3 July: We met Mr. Rose at the station and arranged with him to get up a bullock team. He promised to let us have six bullocks broken into harness and yoke and team as reasonably as he could. Mr. Daly gives two bullocks, eight in all.

DERBY

4 July: Reached Derby at 1.30 p.m. Wrote a note to the magistrate thanking him for services and notifying our return. He called in to see us and welcomed us back. Dined with him...

5 July: Applied for 100,000 acres of land at Beagle Bay. paid Mr. Lodge £25.00.¹⁵

A letter from Abbot Ambrose to Sept Fons, written in French, and dated 5 July 1890, explains that the place which had been chosen was not on the Reserve, but was a pastoral lease. The plan was to buy 499 hectares at 500 francs each year for 20 years. All agricultural equipment was to be purchased in Europe by Fr. Hilary and sent out.¹⁶

6 July: Sunday. Mass at both ends of Derby.

7 July: Getting goods on board the police cutter.

8 July: Fr. Ambrose and Daly left for Yeeda at noon with two horses and a foal. The police spring cart was lent to convey things to the bullock team at Yeeda Station.

TO GOODENOUGH BAY

In the afternoon we completed the loading of the police cutter. Mr. Lodge, Mr. Morley, and Messrs. Johnson and Yates, P.C.'s, worked hard together, and we were on board at 5.45 p.m. We also took a quarter ton of flour. We floated with the receding tide first close in, then we directed our course to Point Torment, where we anchored at 11 p.m. as the tide began to return. We hoped to have an easterly breeze which would bring us on the returning tide to Goodenough Bay. We had a coloured man and a Native on Board.

1 September 1890

Bishop Gibney was surprised when Abbot Ambrose Janny told him that he did not know whether they would remain on this mission. He had written fully to their Abbot at Sept-Fons and it would depend on his

answer.

2 September 1890

Bishop Gibney continued in his diary:

I told the Fathers today I must have their final answer at once whether or not they will accept on behalf of the Trappist community the proposal made by the Government. I told them that my object in coming and travelling about so much was to make the best selection out of the reserve. "I am not sorry," I added, "for coming. I know the territory now and I know where there is abundance of good land. If you will not accept I will get other religious men to take it up. I know the place and can speak confidently."

On my return from Bunguaduck the Abbot told me they came here to establish themselves and if I thought it was the will of God they would do so. My belief was fixed so we early settled the matter. He expressed his fears about the means of support until the ground began to produce. My answer was, "God will provide and I will not see you hungry."

10 September 1890

Preparing to start for Roebuck Bay (Broome). Started at 8 am with Daly, after giving the missionaries my blessing and words of encouragement. The Abbot thanked me in the name of the Trappist order. We had a long ride.

11 September 1890

Going to rest. I felt the night would be a test night for me. Had the pain increased I could never get on, but thank God I could draw a full breath in the morning. On one side I had a breakwind of bark and on the other side the log fire. Travelled through the thick scrub for five miles, then open country three miles, passing a palm spring, then travelling on marsh outside Carnot Bay, observed tracks of wild cattle at the thicket in which our Black said there was water. This marsh took us three hours to travel over. Climbed sand hills, travelled by sea coast about seven miles. Camped by a sea creek soakage of fresh water.

12 September 1890

We had to travel behind the sea hills, the tide being in. Scrub thick and thorny. When tide began to recede took to shore travelling, with difficulty, over rocks. Made repeated fruitless searches for water. Camped beside marsh.

13 September 1890

Got to Roebuck Bay (Broome) at 6.30. The cable company gave me the shelter of their house and board until Wednesday, when I came on board the 'Meda'¹⁷.

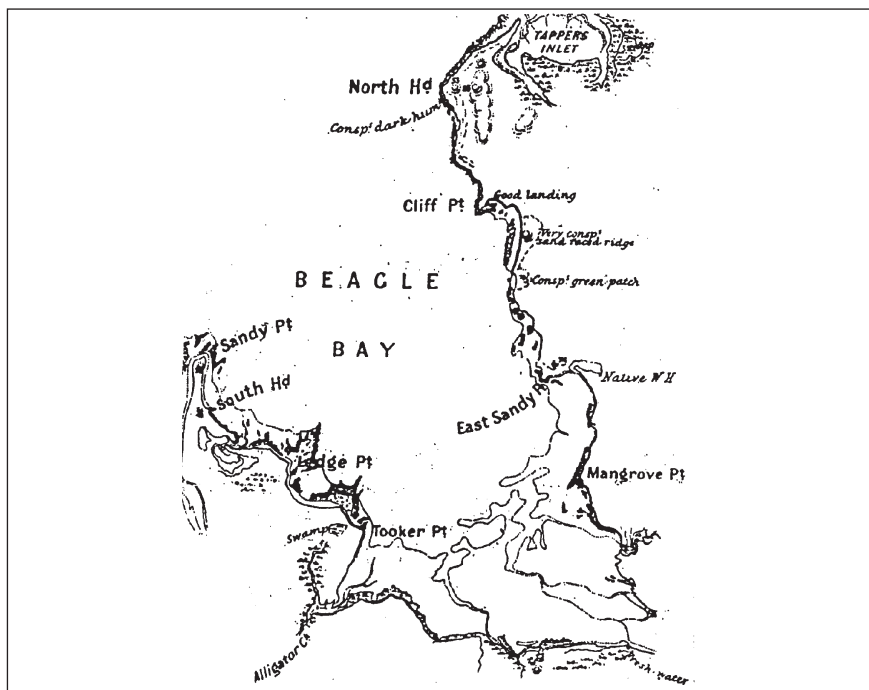
1891

Consciousness of social issues arising out of the industrial revolution inspired Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on social questions, 'Rerum Novarum'¹⁸. It attempted to persuade Catholics to concentrate more on social issues. Pope Leo claimed that:

The Church intervened directly in the interest of the poor, by setting on foot and keeping up many things that it sees to be efficacious in the relief of poverty. It had established congregations of religious and other institutions for help and mercy, so that there might be hardly any kind of suffering which was not visited and relieved.¹⁹

This ideology was the thrust of Pope Leo XIII's patronage of the missions when he had personally requested Cistercians from Sept Fons Monastery in Lyons, France, to staff a mission on the Dampier Peninsula where Father McNab had laboured alone.²⁰

16 April 1895



After exploring the Dampier Peninsula on horseback for some months with Bishop Gibney, 100,000 acres was chosen as the site for the mission near Beagle Bay on the Western side of the Peninsula. Bishop Gibney paid rent for the lease in the beginning.

Father Alphonse Tachon OC, the French Cistercian at Beagle Bay, wrote to Father McNab asking for advice about the Aborigines he was preparing for Baptism in the Kimberley at Beagle Bay Mission.

Reverend and dear Father,

Our Father Abbot has just returned from France, and directs me to thank you for the very useful book 'Australian Directory' that you kindly sent to us at Captain O'Grady's suggestion. The Right Reverend Abbot Ambrose that had been doomed by the physician at home, not to return to Beagle Bay, on account of a very severe illness was accompanied by four priests, a young father and (?) novice brothers so that we are now 19 of which 8 are priests.

As for our poor Natives, very few and very little are the consolation they hitherto gave to us

(At this point some of the letter has been omitted. On page three, Father Alphonse asked for Father McNab's opinion about certain problems he found in the situation in Beagle Bay):

1. Is it good to keep as workingmen at the mission, young fellows who refused to abandon their boy wives?
2. Is it good to employ as workingmen at the mission, old men refusing to abandon polygamy?
3. Would it be good to send away and not to admit for working everyone who does not assist at prayer and instructions, himself and his wife or wives?
4. Is it good to leave the little boys remain in the camp where they become acquainted with superstitions and other practices?
5. And if we are bound to detain them permanently at the mission, what do you think would be the proper way for inducing children to leave the camp and for their parents to abandon their offspring into the authority of the fathers?
6. What about circumcision, eating blood, great corroborees and night singing?

I would like to know too how the Jesuits proceed in the Northern Territory, what obstacles they have there and how they succeed, but in detail. As you have, I believe, a relative amongst them I take the liberty of asking these details from you – But I am doubtless too indiscreet and abuse of your kindness. Excuse me and continue praying for me.

Your unworthy brother in the Sacred Heart,

Father M Alphonse Tachon, Mission, Beagle Bay.²¹

20 July 1895 Father McNab sent a copy of the letter to his cousin Donald MacKillop,²² a Jesuit at Rapid River. He asked that Father Alphonse Tachon be sent early and complete answers, under the headings suggested, for the salvation of souls and the greater glory of

God.

My dear cousin,

I send you a copy of a letter addressed to me by the Rev M Alphonse Tachon, one of the Trappist missionaries in Western Australia. I have answered it as far as I could, and told him that I requested you to tell him how to act with the children and parents (questions 4 and 5) and what he wants to know of the Jesuit mission at the Daly River, as I could not do so properly, not having sufficient knowledge nor experience in these matters. I hope you will send him an early and complete answer on these heads, for the salvation of souls and the greater glory of God,

Your affectionate cousin,

D McNab.²³

22 July 1895 Father McNab from Melbourne replied with a long letter to Father Alphonse Tachon OSCO, at Beagle Bay (NB See Fr Dennett's note, p 221, endnote 24):

Victoria, Richmond, Church Street

St Ignatius' Presbytery 22 July 1895,

Rev Dear Father,

When you wrote to me regarding the disorders and customs prevalent among the Aborigines of the Kimberley, I suppose that you thought I was aware of them, and experience mentioned: for reasons, which I will state before concluding. In compliance with your request, I will tell you what seems to me the best remedies for those horrid vices.

I gave religious instructions to the Blacks only along the coasts of Queensland, and in the Native Prison at Rottneest in Western Australia. The Queensland Blacks are the best, the most intelligent and docile of the Native race. They had superstitions, which they readily abandoned, when their folly was explained to them. They also had traditional laws and customs, and amongst them the Bora, corrobories and also communism; and to a limited extent polygamy and polyandry; but by no means comparable to the shocking immoralities practiced in the Kimberley. The Bora dignifies the initiation of young men arriving at puberty into the traditions and customs of the tribe, and their establishment as hunters, warriors and men, so that they may marry if they like.

There is no circumcision, nor any mutilation of the person beyond removing two front teeth: but trial is made of their courage, fortitude, and patient endurance of pain. Wherever I gave instructions some of the Natives became Christians, giving up their superstitions and vices. They listened attentively to the history of the creation, and the fall of man; but when I proposed belief in the Trinity or other mystery, they said they did not see it. Then I told them I did not see it altogether either, but only as far as it had pleased God to reveal it; and that we should see it all when we should get to heaven. Then they said: "Go on we will hear the rest."

At any point they did not understand, they said – "Too deep, try it another way." They require to be thoroughly convinced before admitting any dogma.

I think it necessary to state how I overcame the difficulties above mentioned; for although Cardinal Simeoni insisted on my return to Australia, even in bad health, that I might tell missionaries to the Blacks how to deal with them; Cardinal Moran at Sydney made me write those instructions, and send them to him, and he promised to give them to the missionaries. I sent him also engravings of Scripture illustrations, by which in nine or ten lessons I more firmly impressed my explanations on the minds of the Natives. On applying to the Cardinal in Sydney, you should get those instructions and illustrations. I taught the Blacks not only the Christian doctrine, but also the principles of our civilization. These I think the most necessary instructions for those in the Kimberley, in order to help to remove the difficulties you have to contend with; they must be made to understand the rights of individual property, the use of labour, and of money, the benefit of Christian civil law, and the advantages of a regular lawful marriage.

All the mischief arises from the influence of the old men over the young; and that you must subvert, and in a manner destroy, if you would succeed in your enterprise. It is true, as you say, that the Blacks are very material, yet they have sense enough to see that the Whites are better off than they; and if you show them how they can acquire and possess property and transmit it to their posterity, they will desire it, and endeavour to secure it.

To prepare them for such an instruction, you must make the young men see and understand how they are plundered and enslaved by the old men; who teach them that everything is common, and not belonging to each or any individual: and yet they urge the young to work for Whites, and appropriate their earnings to themselves, and deprive the young of the use of the choicest diet, such as emu, turtle, etc. Because game is common, they see no harm in stealing sheep or cattle, if they can escape punishment; but when told that the Whites have the sheep and cattle branded and paddocked or shepherded, and under their control; and that if they had kangaroos or other animals so disposed of, no one else would have a right to appropriate them, or meddle with them, they see the difference. In like manner the wages they earn by work belong only to the workers. If they work they can get money, and with money land, stock etc. When I was in the Kimberley land was sold at 10/- per acre. The mission might get small plots of land for deserving individuals for cultivation in the first instance, and increase them as the means of using them increase.

As you say, what is still worse the old men are polygamists, and so deprive the young men of having wives. They circumcise and mutilate the young, and cause them to commit unnatural crimes. Elsewhere some of the chiefs, and some of those in contact with Whites have a plurality of wives; but their law is monogamy and polygamy is by them considered illegal. In Queensland when they heard the Christian commandments, they said, "All right, and the first wife the only right one." The old like all others are sensitive to ridicule, and therefore I told them that only dogs, cats and other beasts and bad men tempted by the Devil had promiscuous intercourse. This is useful; but for those of the Kimberley would not be sufficient.

Polygamy is against the law of the land, and should be punished, as well as sheep stealing. Find out the form of marriage among the Blacks, and then select an old man, who has in the same way contracted marriage with another woman during the life of his first wife, and prosecute him for bigamy. Do so secretly by means of some of the Police, in order not to excite the aversion of the Natives against the missionaries. Circumcision is not common among the Australian Blacks. It prevails mostly along the North West coast and was probably introduced by the Mohammedan Malays who fishing trepang had frequent communication with the Natives: the savages seem to have improved upon it by adding horrid mutilation. Now assault and mutilation are prohibited by our civil law, and old men who circumcise and mutilate the youth should be prosecuted and punished. If the Blacks had any religious belief relative to circumcision, judges might hesitate to condemn them; but there can be no doubt that whether or not, they have no right to mutilate as they do.

You cannot hope to make young men give up their boy wives, unless they be provided with females. You must teach them that they are not bound to remain unmarried till they are thirty years of age: that they are free to marry after they come to the age of puberty, with the consent of their parents, and even without that consent, when they are twenty one years, not only according to ecclesiastical, but also civil law; and tell the girls that only the first one alive is the wife of an old man; and that the rest are free to marry young men: and that after a regular marriage they are during life mutually bound to each other; so that should anyone seduce them, he is liable to be punished; and also that by a regular marriage the parents are entitled to transmit to their children any property they may have acquired, whereas without such a marriage they should not have the right of so disposing of their effects.

I have found the knowledge of these things powerfully to dispose the Queensland Blacks to embrace the Christian religion in order to be able to contract a regular marriage. If you have any Aborigines at the Mission, who knew me at Derby or Caramel, tell them that I wish them to hear your instructions, and to do what you tell them. Of course you make known to those who have boy-wives that they sin against the law of nature and of God, and the terrible punishment of sodomy by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. If this is not sufficient to correct them, enforce the civil law for the punishment of sodomy. At first do not proceed by law against all delinquents, but only against a few of each kind as an example and terrorize the rest. As they are British subjects and the West Australian Government is favourably disposed to the Natives, and provides certain rations for the decrepit, there is no occasion for the tyranny of the old men, and it would likely enforce the punishment of sodomy and bigamy; especially if you stated the case to the Right Rev Bishop Gibney, and requested him to use his influence with the Government for the suppression of those disorders.

I should think that the most effectual means of enticing the children to leave the Camp and reside on the mission would be to provide them with food and amusement. In Queensland I had no occasion to seek their removal, nor to prevent Corrobories, or night singing, which there were not worse than balls and concerts among Whites. Of course some rare times disorders occurred. With you the case may be different. In any case the Jesuit Fathers at the Daly River can give you better information as to the removal and appropriation of children;

and how to obtain the consent of their parents. I have sent a copy of your letter to the Rev Father MacKillop, and requested him to send you the information you desire, especially relative to the children and their parents.

It is not the eating of blood, which is permitted to Christians, that you have to prohibit to the Blacks, but cannibalism, or the eating of human flesh and blood, a crime against nature, to which they are universally addicted, and of which they become ashamed when for some time in contact with Whites.

Unquestionably they must be taught to avoid bad companions whether pearlers, or others. "Corrumpunt bonos mores colloquia prava."

I think that bigamists and sodomites may be hired and paid, or rewarded for the work they do by time, or by piece, but not domiciled and supported as belonging to the mission. All good and bad should be admitted to instructions and prayers, as these are the principal, or only means of procuring the grace of their conversion. When you have a great many converts, and one of them gives great public scandal, then he might be punished by exclusion for a time from prayers and instructions; but that will not answer when the converts are only a few. Although bigamists and sodomites may be admitted to prayers and instructions, I think it would be good to exclude them from attendance on Mass; as it would excite their curiosity, and tend to inspire them with respect for the sacred mysteries: for their own old men or doctors have secrets, which the others revere.

At Rottneest, where I instructed and baptised more than twenty Aborigines, there were no women, nor any of the customs you have had to contend with. The Principal difficulty there arose from four different languages spoken by the prisoners; but among them I found, as on the stations in Queensland, some whom I employed as interpreters; and then I wrote and read to each in his own language the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Commandments, and the definition of the Sacraments. In the Kimberley I did not find any fit to be interpreters: and by age my memory was so far impaired that although I wrote sixty or seventy words of the Native language in a day, next morning I could scarcely remember three or four. I am now seventy-five years old. I got a young priest to help me; but he fell sick of ague fever and left me after three months. Thereafter I became so weak and ill that the Resident Magistrate at Derby, who was a Doctor, told me I could not live any length of time if I remained any longer there. In fact he did not think me safe for three days.

So, I left; and I am glad to learn that I am succeeded by many and able missionaries. I told the Blacks that others would come after me. In those circumstances I could give no religious instructions to the Natives, beyond reciting some prayers with the children. With the help of men from Manila I tried to teach the Blacks the use of tools, how to work, to dig and plow, to build houses of bark, of brushwood and of slabs, to fish with nets, and so to catch and cure fish by salting and pressing it for a night and drying it in the sun.

I have now to the best of my ability answered most of your questions, and asked the Jesuit Father Donald MacKillop at the Daly River to send you directions relative to parents and

children, and the other information you desire, transmitting to him a copy of your letter to me.

In order to procure the benefit of a better judgement than my own, I have proposed your questions to a conference of the Archbishop and clergy of Melbourne, and anything different or better than I have said, I will let you know.

I send you a chart of the coast in your vicinity, and a pamphlet containing some account of the Blacks attended by Jesuits in the Northern Territory of South Australia. I hope your venerable Abbot is continuing in good health. Praying God to bless and prosper your efforts for the conversion and salvation of the Aborigines I earnestly commend myself to your prayers especially as I do not expect to live long.

Yours truly Duncan McNab CC²⁴

7 October 1895 From St Ignatius' Presbytery, Richmond, Father McNab wrote:

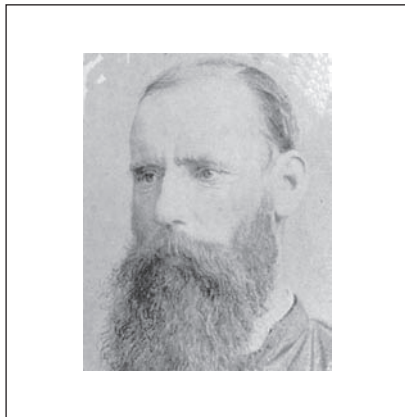
Rev Dear Father,

My application to the Conferences of the Archbishop and Clergy of Melbourne elicited no answer to your queries, and therefore, I cannot send to you any directions from them.

I hope you got my former letter and the chart and pamphlet sent along with it.

Again commending myself to your pious prayers, I remain, yours truly, Duncan McNab.²⁵

(There do not seem to be any existing documents, which show that Father Donald MacKillop SJ answered McNab's queries, but he may have done so).



Father Donald MacKillop SJ

Father McNab wrote to the Rapid River Mission in the Northern Territory to him, after Father Alphonse Tachon wrote asking advice about baptising Aborigines at Beagle Bay Mission.

November 1895 Cardinal Moran opened another Plenary Council in Sydney, a decade after that of 1885. A general review of Catholicism was undertaken²⁶ but the Kimberley was not a Vicariate and therefore the findings were not very relevant.

Undated Letter From Beagle Bay came a reply from Father Tachon to Father McNab:

Very Dear and Reverend Father,

I am ashamed for having been so long in replying to your so kind and precious letter. But, pray, excuse me, our boat, 'the Jessie' goes seldom to Roebuck Bay –

The letter, the map and the pamphlet, all reached me in good state. I cannot, dear Father, express to you my thankfulness for having so wisely, so accurately replied to all my difficulties.

Unfortunately I can hardly hope from the government the help you speak to me of in your letter. They leave the Natives to their tribal customs, and if I do not mistake, even murder has been forgiven on this account . . .

I thank you for having taken the trouble of sending a copy of my letter to the Rev Father MacKillop. I did not receive anything from him –

The little pamphlet was very interesting. I would have been glad to get some answer from the synod of Melbourne but that was not necessary. Your instructions were clear, numerous and supported by the experience.

Our Rev Abbot has returned very sick from Perth.

It is already --- days that he can hardly move himself.

Pray for him, pray also for me, dear and venerable Father.

Alas, if the poor Natives remain obstinate, it is perhaps owing to my numerous infidelities.

I remain, Reverend Father,

Yours truly,

F M Alphonse Tachon

23 February 1896 Father McNab to Father Tachon, Beagle Bay Mission:

Rev Dear Father,

I was very sorry to learn from your last letter that your good and venerable Abbot was so ill. I hope he is now well.

I do not think that you should despair of obtaining from the government the assistance I advised you to seek: for I got both the Queensland and Western Australian Governments to grant such treatment to the Aborigines as I asked for.

In Queensland I interviewed several members of parliament to gain my purpose and my suggestions to the Western Australian Government were printed by its authority for the information of the legislature; and approved of, and to a considerable extent acted on.

Just as I was obliged by sickness and about to leave the Kimberley I was empowered by the Government to see that all contracts between the Natives and others were fair and just, and duly executed, and if not to cancel them: and also to give a certain amount of relief to destitute Natives.

In Queensland the Government used to spend yearly about £6000 on shooting down the Aborigines and I had to complain to the Colonial Secretary in London and thereafter several dispatches were sent to the Governor to lay the whole question before the cabinet and to do justice to the Natives.

Consequently the Government tried to conciliate them, and offered to make reserves for them wherever I asked for them; and even offered Police protection to missionaries, which I did not want.

Should the local government not comply with your application, I am convinced that Mr Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, who is very favourably inclined towards the Aborigines, would insist on compliance with your demands, if you appealed to him. There can be no harm, in asking what you want first from the Western Australian Government, and in case of its inaction from the colonial Secretary. You have at least a chance of success.

Commending myself to your prayers, I remain, Yours truly, D McNab.²⁷

21 April 1896 A letter from Father Tachon noted that Bishop Gibney had had long negotiations with a former Colonial Secretary, Sir Rippon, to his advantage. This letter has been abridged:

Rev dear Father,

Our Rev Father Abbot, who is now pretty well, thanks God, was very thankful for the kind words you conveyed to his address in your last letter.

I thank you for the great interest you take in favour of our poor Natives.

The Right Rev bishop Gibney has the same opinion as you about the Western Australian Government and the Colonial Secretary . . .

He undertook long negotiations with Sir Rippon, the then Colonial Secretary

. . . Mr Cornelius Daly that you saw at Derby when he was a policeman and who joined the mission from its starting has been appointed a Native protector . . .

There is the Industrial School's Act enacted under Governor Weld, that would be very favourable to us for the keeping of children if wholly executed, but without this police protection that you did not want in Queensland this act would be almost useless here. For that and for other reasons, Father Martelli, after having visited a Protestant institution erected

under this act, (and that he qualified as the most miserable little thing he ever saw), deterred us from placing our school under the protection of this act. The good Father advises us to try by ourselves, what we can without craving for the assistance of the Government . . .

For my part, considering that the Council of Sydney 1885 wishes that the Natives be totally sequestered from white people, I conclude that they must be a fortiori sequestered from coloured pearlers and even from the Manila men who hitherto have been, I believe, the worst of all in morals. Am I wrong in interpreting so the meaning of the Council?

I would be glad to know of the conduct of the Jesuits in the North – But I did not receive anything from MacKillop. In 1891, in reply to some letter of J Strele, I asked him some questions, he did not reply – Pray for me dear father and for the poor Natives. God only can change their hearts. Renewing the expression of my thankfulness,

I remain, Rev dear Father, Yours truly , Father A Tachon.²⁸

28 July 1896 Father McNab wrote to Father Tachon from St Ignatius Presbytery:

Rev Dear Father,

I should have answered your letter of the 21st of April 1896 some time ago but I feel sure that you will excuse me, when I tell you that I have been very ill nearly since the beginning of June. In fact I was expiring and received the last sacraments, and I am not yet recovered sufficiently to say Mass.

You ask several questions, which I will briefly answer to the best of my ability – What may be done in Tonga is no rule for you.

Whoever refuses to avoid the mutilation which in the Kimberley is called circumcision, or the eating of human blood, which is cannibalism, is unfit for Baptism.

If a Native is well instructed, and knows that he would become worse and more criminal by being baptised and continuing such practices; and that he promises to renounce them, and you believe him to be sincere he may and should be baptised.

The grace of Baptism might enable him to keep his resolution and promise.

Should he afterwards prevaricate, he must give proof of his repentance and be tried and then absolved. He must not attend any pagan feasts at any time. Whether your Spanish Father did well or ill depends on the amount of instruction he gave the Natives, and his knowledge of their dispositions.

I baptised and married several Natives whose language I did not know. But first with the aid of some young Native, employed at some station who know some English translated into the Native language and in it read to them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Commandments of God and of the Church and the definition of the Sacraments and made them learn it by heart, and satisfied myself that they understood and believed and were sufficiently instructed for the reception of the Sacraments I conferred on them.

As a rule it is best and easiest to keep the Blacks good when completely separated from the Whites. But I have found the presence of White good Catholics a help to establish the Blacks in habits of industry and virtue.

I do not attach much importance to the expressions in the Synod of Sydney because with the exception of Dr Salvado none of the Bishops had experience with the mission to the Blacks and their promises of support have signified next to nothing.

Of the Manila men, some are Infidels, some Protestants, some dissolute Catholics in consequence of want of religious exercises and the sacraments, and all these are of course bad companions for the Blacks. Such of them however as are reformed and practical Christians might be an advantage to the (.?) and to the Native. As to their intermarriage with the Aborigines (.?) that to their own selection of both be Catholics.

I have now stated all that occurs to me at present on these subjects and I conclude by praying the blessing of God to attend the holy and fervent efforts of the missionaries at Beagle Bay.

Yours sincerely,

D McNab

P S I have sent a letter to Sir John Forrest, of which enclosed is a copy. DMCN²⁹

As a rule McNab had respect for authoritative statements, for example in early letters written in Scotland, and to the Melbourne Cathedral from Portland, 30 May 1868,³⁰ as also from representations to Cardinal Vaughan regarding the urgency to give scope to the missionary to exercise wider faculties for dispensing from impediments to marriage to those who wanted admission into the church.³¹

28 July 1896 Because of a reference to the Industrial School's Act enacted under Governor Weld, Father McNab wrote to Sir John Forrest interceding for the proper implementation of the law:

Sir,

I have to request that you would please to the missionaries at Beagle Bay to suppress cannibalism, sodomy and bigamy by enforcing the laws against these vices on the Natives as British subjects. You know how much the Native population of East India was humanized and improved by the judicial suppression of the murders (by the ...) of Juggernaut and the burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pile.

The favour with which my suggestions for the settlement and civilization of the Aborigines, while I was engaged at Bathurst and in the Kimberley, by the Western Australian Government of which you were then a member, and your known just and favourable disposition towards the Aborigines, encourages me to make this application to you, believing that you still remember me.

If Governor Weld's Industrial School Act were completely carried out with Native protection, it would truly also considerably improve the condition of the Native children.

Although on account of my age and impaired health I am unable to be with the Aborigines, still I feel a great interest in their welfare.

I am,

Your humble servant,

Duncan McNab CC³²

Death of Father McNab

19 September 1896 Father McNab died 11 September 1896 and at his funeral, Doctor Thomas J Carr, the Archbishop of Melbourne, said:

"In the death of Father McNab we have lost a zealous and holy priest, whose whole life had been given up to God. God alone knew of the untold good effected by his labours as the seed of the Gospel spread by the deceased priest would go on fructifying amongst the Aborigines."

In 1867 Father McNab commenced his duties in Portland. Shortly afterwards he was appointed to Bendigo. He had charge of the Woodstock church, which is served from St Kilian's pro-Cathedral and many of the residents of that farming district will regret to hear of his demise.

The reverend gentleman was a Gaelic scholar who delivered a lecture in Edinburgh on the birthplace of St Patrick. The lecture was afterwards published in pamphlet form and had a fair circulation, a considerable number of copies being disposed of in Sandhurst. Finding his health giving way, Father McNab abandoned the idea of spending his days amongst the Aboriginal tribes, and paid a visit to Bendigo for the purpose of raising funds for others to carry on the missionary work in Northern Queensland. He delivered several sermons in St Kilian's pro-Cathedral in furtherance of the object, and spoke in praiseworthy terms of the high moral standard, which obtained amongst the Aborigines. The last years of the reverend gentleman's life have been spent with the Jesuit Fathers in Richmond. The remains were placed in the church, and were visited by the congregation and the school children to whom he had endeared himself by his genial nature."

The carriage of the Archbishop and of Mgr O Hea preceded the hearse to the General Cemetery,³³ where the burial service was read in the presence of about thirty priests.

The Scots would say that Father McNab was 'thrawn' that is, 'determined'. With clear vision,³⁴ he saw what he could do to alleviate the condition of the Aborigines.

Priests of McNab's day acted either 'mensa paterfamilias' or 'mensa

diocesi'. He signed himself M Ap ('Missionary Apostolic') when he wrote to Bishop Salvado in 1870. McNab's curious mixture of Celtic mysticism and Scottish common sense antagonized many, but his proposals for Native welfare may, if adopted, have saved distress.

Father McNab's name is still revered in tribal traditions of the northwest.³⁵

Notes for Chapter 8

¹ McNab to Moran, 29 August 1887. Ms SMA, and P J O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, 1969, pp 127-128.

² McNab to Moran 29 August 1887, Ms. SMA.

Most of this letter has been published in P O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian History*, vol. 2, 1884-1968, Chapman, London/ Melbourne, 1969, p 125.

³ *The West Australian*, 13 September 1887, p 3, col.1.

⁴ *The Advocate* 18 September, p 18, Col.1.

⁵ Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, p xii, and pp 33-34.

⁶ *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*, 1973, p 173.

⁷ Passenger list for the 'Chariot of Fame' July 1867, Public Record Office, Melbourne.

⁸ *The Advocate*, 19 September 1896, p 15, Columns 2,3,4.

⁹ McNab wrote to Moran with more information for missionaries from Victoria, Richmond, St Ignatius' Presbytery, 29 September 1887.

Author's Note: This letter was transcribed from a photocopy, perhaps it is in AJH.

¹⁰ Gibney to Colonial Secretary, 12 July 1888;

Broome to Gibney, ACAP.

Also CSO file 2014/88, B L.

¹¹ Henry Woods and Peter McLean, 'Report on Aboriginal Durundur Association of Queensland to the Under Secretary for Public Lands, 12 April 1889' QSA..

¹² Editor's Note: This practice was continued on the land journey.

¹³ Editor's Note: The Bishop suffered from lung trouble all his priestly life.

¹⁴ Copies of letters from the Archives of the Trappist Abbey of Sept-Fons (TASF), in Archives in the Diocese of Broome (ADB).

¹⁵ Daisy Bates, Ed. 'Mission Work in West Australia: Notes from a Bishop's Diary - With Aborigines in the North', *Sunday Times*, Perth. 27 November 1927; 4 December 1927; 11 December 1927.

¹⁶ A, Janny to Sept Fons, 5 July 1980, TASF.

¹⁷ Daisy Bates' edited version of Bishop Gibney's Diary, *Sunday Times*, Perth, 1927.

¹⁸ Catholic social teaching begins with the person and message of Jesus who offered no specific economic message but proclaimed the advent of the kingdom of God and the redemption of people from sin.

¹⁹ David O' Brien and Thomas Shannon, (eds), *Catholic Social Thought The Documentary Heritage*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1992, 'Rerum Novarum', par. 23, p. 25.

²⁰ The order recalled its men by the turn of the century.

²¹ Tachon to McNab from Beagle Bay Mission, 16 April 1895 Jesuit Archives Hawthorn Victoria.

²²“Donald was the seventh child and third youngest son of Alexander and Flora MacKillop. There is no record of his birth or baptism but Mary was the eldest. Probably with the assistance of Father Julian Tenison Woods, Donald had his senior school education at St Aloysius College, Sevenhill, in the Clare Valley of South Australia. He was a pupil there from 1867 to 1871, between the ages of 14 to 18.

From 1887-1889 he worked at the Rapid Creek Station, near Palmerston, on the Daly River, which flows into Anson Bay on the north West Coast of the Northern Territory.”

Vic Feehan to Brigida Nailon, 18 August 1981.

²³McNab to his cousin, MacKillop, S J, at the Northern Territory Mission, from Richmond, Victoria, 20 July 1895, JAH.

²⁴McNab to Tachon, from Richmond, Victoria, 22 July 1895, JAH

This copy of the letter was accompanied by a short note,

“Dear Sister Brigida, I enclose the copy I promised you of Father McNab’s long letter to Father Tachon. Please excuse the blots. I have retained Father McNab’s spelling, punctuation etc., and have crossed out his own corrections in such a way as to leave his original versions legible. Hoping that this will be of some use to you, and wishing you every blessing on your work, Yours sincerely in our Lord, F J Denmett S J, Archivist, 18 March 1980.”

²⁵McNab to Tachon, from Richmond, Victoria, 7 October 1895. JAH.

²⁶Once ‘Irishism’ determined the character of the Queensland Vicariate’s Catholicism, structural and administrative factors militated against the successful ministry to other cultures in a way that was almost inevitable. Endicott, p 169.

²⁷McNab to Tachon, Beagle Bay Mission, 23 February 1896.

²⁸Tachon to McNab from Beagle Bay Mission, 21 April 1896, JAH.

²⁹McNab to Tachon, from Richmond, Victoria, 28 July 1896, JAH.

His statement, “Care must be taken that mission reserves are spacious and that Whites are forbidden entry,” reflects practical common sense if those within the reserve were to have sufficient liberty.

³⁰McNab to Fitzpatrick, from Portland, 30 May 1868, Melbourne Historical Commission.

³¹*Australian Catholic Record*, Vol. LVI, October 1979, no 4, p 431.

³²McNab to Forrest from Richmond, Victoria, 28 July 1896, JAH.

³³*Advocate*, 19 September 1896, p 15, Columns 2,3,4.

³⁴Bourke CM to Brigida Nailon, 28 January 1980, about some documents,

“These are important if one is writing his biography, since they reveal his mentality, his determination and his interests – But they also show a tragic lack of self-knowledge, and lack of understanding of his own position and prospects. He was really beating his head against a wall but wouldn’t stand back to assess his own position.

1. His health had deteriorated with advancing years, and when he did eventually

reach the North West, he could stay only two or three years, and was then compelled by a weak heart, to retire.

2. His excellent intentions were well known, but he was, after all, only an enthusiastic theorist. -

There was nothing to show for his work in Queensland and when it comes to allotting men and money, you cannot blame authorities for giving him no support. They knew Father McNab well, and they had some knowledge of the local conditions.

The only practical success with the Aborigines up to that date, had been at New Norcia, and Father McNab was going counter to that hard-won experience. You will find a summing up of this in some of the reports of Bishop Gibney to the Government of W A – some of this is to be found in my book, and his own judgement on Father McNab’s efforts. All the same, Father McNab was invited to Perth by Bishop Griver, and did spend some time in the North, but again, with very meagre results. . . .”

³⁵H J Gibney, *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 5, 1851-1890, Melbourne University Press. p 192.

Sources quoted: P F Moran, *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia* (Sydney 1895); J E Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland* (Cork, 1947); M Durack, *The Rock and the Sand* (London 1971); V&P (LA Qld), 3. 161, 1878, 2. 66 (LC WA), 1883, 2nd S (16);

M Durack, “The Priest Who Rode Away”, *Westerly*, November 1962.

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION - THE MINISTRY OF MISSION



“The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground”¹

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann of Daly River, a teacher who grew up on a mission, described mission process by using a bougainvillea metaphor. The straggly plant for her represented a nomadic lifestyle demanding much labor and effort to survive. Aborigines were the plant for Aboriginal people don't work to set programs, but they work steadily and get their jobs done when they have understanding guidance. Changed circumstances on a mission became a sedentary lifestyle also difficult to survive and missionaries were the three and a half foot fence supporting the plant.²

Aboriginal Ministry in Queensland

So, what happened to the seed scattered in Queensland with particular Aboriginal peoples. Habitual segregation practised by Aboriginal tribes increased difficulty of mission because an Aboriginal hunter, dependent on game and plants in his territory, regarded strangers in his country as poachers. Territorial concern for land was based on religious grounds where increase ceremonies were regularly practiced. When natural resources of food were denied because of advancing settlement, poverty and hunger became inevitable. Employment with settlers often resulted in influenza, measles, small pox, or venereal disease.

McNab remained with the Blacks at Scrubby Creek, not far from MacKay, until 16 March 1876. Frank Bridgman had begun the reserve with the hope of saving and civilizing the Natives but the venture had ended with their dispersal or death. The planters had used it as a labor pool. It was used by the Queensland Government as a cover for its reprisal policies. It had been discarded when it no longer fulfilled these

functions. The Aborigines, bewildered, defenceless and without bargaining power could make no effective protest. The small group of Whites sincerely dedicated to Aboriginal welfare found that, despite their commitment, their abilities and achievements, they were also essentially powerless. What the government had given, it could now take away, free from both electoral rebuke and Imperial reprimand.

With the Mackay reserve Frank Bridgman had accomplished what few in the Colony had either the desire or the talent to do. Then he had watched the operation being gradually undermined and finally shattered. The only strong words of protest recorded, however, had come from Duncan McNab. Where McNab was ready to fight and rage, Bridgman was the quiet toiler, always amenable, never argumentative. He was a respectable landowner, a paid Government officer and a gentleman who did not quibble. Father McNab, by comparison was that ‘certain notorious person’³ subsisting by ‘fishing and begging’⁴ a strangely messianic figure wandering among the Blacks. He assumed the role of iconoclast while Bridgman remained the patient mediator, who believed that some arrangement equally beneficial to both Europeans and Aborigines was conceivable, when the grim reality was retaliatory slaughter and rapid degeneration. McNab had the simplicity of a visionary who saw the Aborigines surviving as black Christian labourers, secure and healthy like their white neighbours.⁵

In Father McNab’s time, the white population in Queensland had consisted largely of mining communities. These had less reason for conflict with Aborigines than graziers and farmers. But by 1884, after McNab left Queensland, the ‘Native Mounted Police Force’ had grown. There were forty European officers and 105 Aboriginal troopers.

Catholic Mission to the Northern Territory

The Austrian Jesuits in South Australia had long wished to work among Aborigines, but their General did not encourage their beginning such a venture until their manpower situation improved. It was due to Father McNab that this Jesuit mission began. He was extremely agitated at the plight of the Aborigine, and was also concerned that the Catholic Church had only one mission to the Aborigines, New Norcia, and this had been the only one since the 1840’s. Compared to the Protestant Churches, the Catholics were quite neglectful of this sphere. McNab wrote the submission to Propaganda Fide in 1878 sending it through Archbishop Vaughan. He sent it again through Cardinal Manning when he visited Rome in 1879-1880 and met with Pope Leo XIII, with whom he urged strongly the need for another Catholic Mission. His words moved

the Pope who immediately commissioned the Jesuit General to have such a work undertaken. The letter of the General appointing the Austrian Jesuits in South Australia to the task reached Sevenhill on 21 February 1881 and the first band of Jesuits opened a station just outside of modern Darwin in October 1882. The Austrian Jesuit Mission in the Northern Territory lasted from 1882-1899.⁷

Father Strele, the first superior of the venture, communicated with Father McNab. The second superior was Father Donald MacKillop, S J, Mother Mary's brother. Strele wrote a history of the mission in Latin after illness forced his return south. In 1882, before the first group left Sevenhill, McNab visited that place to share his experience with the missionaries. He visited the Palmerston station in 1884 and was greeted as an old friend.⁸

Catholic Mission to the Kimberley

According to Duncan McNab missionaries would provide stability needed for a sedentary lifestyle. 'Ethnocentricity' assumed that it would be good to make the Aborigines into Catholics like the missionaries with similar work habits and a European lifestyle. If missionary communities were to survive it was necessary to set up gardens and provide food. This created an expectancy that the missionary would feed, clothe and shelter new Christians leading ultimately to a dangerous dependency, and an increasing burden for the missionaries. The mission effort, a voluntary donating of personnel and money, supplemented by some Government aid, was never fully appreciated by Australians.

Duncan McNab believed that the gospel seed had its own inherent dynamism that would take root in the culture. But individuals had to work at the practical implications and communities succeeded only when they based their message on Jesus in the Scriptures and practiced self-denial. The reality of mission perhaps could only relate to a 'faith communion' rather than a 'communion of peoples' as most missions were authoritarian and without gender equality it was possible to have only a partial communion of peoples.⁹

Father McNab believed in working through both Church and Government to implement his agenda. He founded a mission which lasted until 1877 at Goodenough Bay on the borders of King Sound on the Dampier Peninsula. Then Cistercians from Sept Fons Monastery in France, with the help of Bishop Gibney of Perth, founded 'Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur' monastery at Beagle Bay in 1890.

From 1901 for 100 years German and Australian Pallottines laboured to build up resources so that the renamed 'Sacred Heart Mission' of

Beagle Bay and extensions in Disaster Bay and Lombadina might be independent and self-supporting. Over a century they founded many other missions throughout Australia. The Sisters of St John of God had joined them in 1907.

Spanish Benedictines laboured at Drysdale River Mission, later called Kalumburu, from 1906 until 1981. Spanish Benedictine Sisters worked at Kalumburu Mission from 1931; St John of God Sisters came in 1907 and over the years many other religious orders joined them. Among these were the Christian Brothers. The Redemptorist Order in Perth was sent to administer Kimberley missions during World War 1 until 1922 when Italian Salesians came to evangelise from 1923 to 1927.

Most missionaries brought the baggage of European cultural traditions, liturgies and languages. Some made a determined attempt to utilize elements of Aboriginal Culture into the liturgy, but on the whole, an apostolate of prayer and labour, of liturgy and the plough similar to the process that marked missionary efforts in Germany and Northern Europe was implemented:

*"Each mission post was a small monastery with several priests and a half dozen or more brothers. Joined to it was a small community of Sisters. The beauty of the life was not simply in its material productiveness but in the fact that all this was centered on the Church and found its fullest culminating expression in the great liturgical feasts."*¹⁰

The Kimberley Vicariate became the Diocese of Broome in 1966.¹¹

Conclusion

Father McNab swam against the current but respected the church structure in which he laboured. Compromise was a bitter pill for McNab to swallow. Amongst the Aborigines he laboured with a patient endurance. He was convinced that the Church could embrace Aborigines as members. He set about marrying Aboriginal couples. He also composed long lists of their names, which he forwarded to government departments. He believed that through the sacraments Aborigines could embrace the Catholic faith. This, along with the lists, constituted a way of 'registering' in an administrative sense, the existence of the Aborigines as individual human beings. It was a step, which he took towards integrating them within colonial law. But where he attempted to draw the Aborigines in, society resisted and pushed them out.

In his campaign for social justice for Aborigines, McNab canvassed issues, some of which are still contentious, divisive and unrealised aspirations in Australian society. In his time there was no colonial consensus for Aboriginal policy.

Five years after McNab's death, Australia was in a state of political change. But this time there was an agreement about the Aboriginal Peoples. In January 1901 the *Constitution of the Commonwealth* was adopted. Though the *Constitution of the United States of America* and the *Constitution of the Dominion of Canada* had been consulted for guidance, they had not affected legislation with regard to the care of the indigenous population of Australia. In the United States and Canada, this was an issue, which would come under Federal legislation. In Australia, *Section 51* precluded the Federal parliament from legislating on behalf of the Aboriginal race, and *Section 127* excluded Aborigines from being counted in the population figures of the Commonwealth or of a State.¹⁷ This legislation directly affected the newly baptised Aboriginal Catholics of the Kimberley, and the growth of the Catholic Church there. The majority of its adherents were Filipinos or Aborigines. The former were considered aliens, and the latter were not counted as citizens.¹³

On one hand McNab had been a radical and outspoken campaigner for Aboriginal rights to land, equality under the law, and freedom from violent persecution, on the other, in Queensland he had supported the squatters.

During his last years, before his death, it seemed that McNab's credentials were acknowledged when Father Alphonse Tachon of Beagle Bay Western Australia deferred to him, and Cardinal Moran called on him to share his experiences for a new wave of Catholic missionaries.

In 1979, Jack Davis, an Aboriginal author wrote:

It must be remembered that the parliamentary system of the late 1800's was different from today, inasmuch that MPs were not paid for their services, but would quite often be rewarded by some land grant. In those years the emphasis in terms of new land was on the Kimberley area of Western Australia. The premier at the time was Sir John Forrest:

What better arrangement than to have a brother who would discover tracts of country suitable for pastoral purposes, then notify his brother, the Premier, who in turn parcelled out areas of land to those in government, or those who had connections with members of cabinet? The biggest pest to the land-grabbers at the time was the Aboriginal.

Although the Governor of the day was given orders by Queen Victoria herself, to guard the interests of Aborigines, this was ignored. The Governor himself gave permission for permits to be issued to shoot troublesome Blacks on pastoral holdings, their only crime being to linger by water holes and occasionally kill stock. The cost of these permits was one shilling, as decreed by parliament.¹⁴

There is very little doubt that, if it had not been for the early missionaries, the genocidal programmes inflicted upon Aborigines would

have succeeded. Mission ground was the only place left as a haven from the murderous onslaught of white settlers.¹⁵

For all his single-mindedness and his longing for other men with whom to share his vision of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ for Aborigines, Father McNab had been destined to plant the seed that would grow silently.¹⁶

Beverly Treacy, a tribal woman from the East Kimberley, worked as a pastoral assistant at Derby, 1984. She put a gospel parable into language more compatible with the Kriol being used for catechesis in the East Kimberley:

*“God's place is like a seed growing from the ground.
When a man throws it on the ground, it grows,
night and day while he is sleeping,
when he wakes up, the seed is coming up and growing,
he doesn't know how this happens,
the land brings the plant up,
the plant comes up
makes fruit until it is ready,
when it is ready the man starts to reap.” Mark 4:26-29*

Beverly is married to Tony Treacy, a lay missionary who looked after the hostel in Derby and taught at Holy Rosary School. He is now the Principal at St Mary's in Broome.

Notes for Chapter 9

¹ Mark 4:26 *Harper Collins Study Bible* New Revised Standard Version, 1989.

² Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, 'Teaching (And Being Taught)', *Nelen Yubu*, no. 9, (1981), pp. 37-38.

³ Registrar-General to Attorney General, 1 July 1877, in Hoskin, Ch 4, p 26.

⁴ Durack, Report of Father McNab to Bishop Griver, 1885.

⁵ Evans, p 11.

⁶ Endicott, p 172.

⁷ G J, O'Kelly, SJ 'The Jesuit Mission Stations in the Northern Territory, 1882-1899: A dissertation submitted in partial requirement for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts' Honours in History, Monash University, 1967.

⁸ O'Kelly to Linane, Bungaree, 7 June 1972.

⁹ In the 1930's, the 'Half Caste Women of Broome' made a failed attempt to get a female Aboriginal Protector. Public Records Office, 993, 55/1935, Alexandra Library, Perth Cultural Centre.

¹⁰ Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe*, Sheldon Press, London, 1976, pp 147-153.

¹¹ Daphne C Nailon, 'Encounter between Catholicism and Aboriginal peoples in the Kimberley region of Western Australia with Special Emphasis on the Experience of Women on both sides of the Encounter. 1884-1990'.

Thesis submitted for the Degree, Doctor of Philosophy, School of Archaeological and Historical Studies, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia, 24 December 1997.

¹² P Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens : The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898-1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973, p.52.

¹³ At the outbreak of the war in 1939, Thomas Puertollano, who had arrived before the turn of the century, was still registered as an Alien. For Example, see the Certificate of Registration of Alien (For Alien resident in Commonwealth and for Alien Passenger entering Commonwealth in Overseas vessel). Held by C Puertollano, Beagle Bay.

¹⁴ Jack Davis, 'The first 150 Years', *Aborigines of the West*, p 57.

¹⁵ Jack Davis, 'The First 150 Years', *Aborigines of the West*, p 59.

¹⁶ Mark 4:26-29.

Chapter 10

APPENDIX



Cardinal Moran published *A History of the Catholic Church in Australasia from Authentic Sources* in 1896. He recorded details from Rev Duncan McNab's Diary.

Section A: Cardinal Moran's Account of Father McNab

In 1896, Cardinal Moran published *A History of the Catholic Church in Australasia from Authentic Sources*. He decided that the Rev Duncan McNab's labors amongst the Native tribes merited particular mention and recorded some details from McNab's Diary:

Christmas, 1875

Father McNab was at Mackay, where he found Father Bucas, a Breton priest who had laboured among the Maories in New Zealand for three years, and had come to Queensland to devote himself to the Blacks. Ill health had, however, prevented Bucas from carrying out his design, and he was now in charge of the district of Mackay attending to the spiritual wants of a considerable white population. Father McNab describes him as a very good priest, "being candid, upright, extremely charitable, affable hospitable, a practical worker, a musician and universally liked." McNab remained at the reserve station for the Blacks at Scrubby Creek, not far from Mackay, for three months "The Blacks there were perfectly naked, and knew very little English. The manager, Mr Bridgman would not allow me or any other missionary to give them religious instruction. I told them I was there to learn their language, and would afterwards teach them what they should do to go to heaven."

April 1876

Struck down with fever, McNab returned to Brisbane. In a lengthy correspondence with the Queensland Government, he endeavoured to secure fixed habitations and allotments of land or at least homesteads leased for the various Native tribes. For a time there was a gleam of hope that he would be successful, but eventually all his prospects failed. He thus speaks in general of the treatment and the dispositions of the Queensland Blacks:

"According to the statement of the public press, the Aborigines have been too frequently and still are occasionally subjected to an indiscriminate slaughter, the guilty and the innocent alike. The Government maintains a standing army of Native police for the protection of the colonists by the destruction of the Aborigines. Their misery is greatly increased, and I may say completed by their physical and moral corruption and degradation derived from their intercourse with Europeans. With reference to their dispositions, I must say that they are quick of apprehension, and susceptible of instruction and training, and many tribes have expressed to me their desire of being civilized and their inclination to give a fair hearing to the exposition of Christian Doctrine. Their nomad habits, savage usages, their superstitions, and imperfect knowledge of our language, and the want of abstract terms in their own language, are great impediments to their improvement."

1877

Father McNab set out on a tour of instruction among the tribes. At Mooroochie, about seventy miles from Brisbane, they listened to him patiently for a time but when he spoke to them of the mysteries of religion, they said they could not understand what he preached, and left him.

At Durundar, where there was a reserve of 2400 acres, he met with more success:

“In the midst of the forest they came every morning to morning prayer, and, before a great fire, attended catechetical instructions at night. By day I divided them into hunting, fishing and working parties, and inspected and directed the operations of the workmen engaged in collecting materials, or in the construction of their houses. Hitherto they had no houses, but were sheltered at night only by boughs of trees or a few sheets of bark rudely put together. I availed myself of the services of the young, who understood English best, to instruct the old, what I had learned of the Native tongue at Port MacKay being of no use to me here, for to them it was quite unintelligible. They listened to me for six whole weeks before they expressed any opinion on what I taught them. They then said they wished to go to heaven and not down to hell. They received the religion as good and true, and they promised to remain on the reserve, and to make it their home. At the end of two months I baptised twenty-seven of them and married nine couples. An emissary had been sent by King Tidy of Sampson Vale, to disperse them, but, he became a convert and was the first baptised and named ‘Paul Wanbabu’.”

A few months later Father McNab passed to Bribie Island:

“There being some children there of age for school, I taught them by day their letters. For the rest, however, I married one couple, and left six catechumens, with a promise that I would see them, recommending them in the meantime to learn as much as they could from the manager’s wife, who was a Roman Catholic. The Blacks do not like long instructions, they want the bare idea to be given them quickly, and they pay more attention and learn better at intervals than continually.”

From Bribie Island he returned to Durundar, and remained there for two months completing their instructions and administering the Sacraments. He remarked:

“During my absence, they have behaved on the whole very well, worked diligently, and kept remarkably sober, even though a publican had brought drink to the reserve, there was no sign of any disposition to apostatise. They were proud of wearing the little crosses I had given them, and one who had lost his was much distressed, and made me promise to send him another from Brisbane.”

From Durundar he proceeded to Kilcoy “to teach the Blacks there the truths of Christianity at their own request and remained with them some time.” He did not, however receive any of them into the church, partly

because the king was a bigamist, and partly because there were some Whites among them who were a disgrace to the Christian name. He gives the instance of one of the Blacks who “walked eighteen miles to learn from me how he could get land, then went off to get work by which he could earn enough to secure it, and subsequently came to me at a distance of seventy miles from where we first met, in order to get his instructions in the Christian doctrine completed and himself baptised.”

From Kilcoy he passed on to Collington, where he found only a few Blacks, the others being away in the mountains, the bunya being then in season. Those few he instructed, but could not admit into the church on account of their marriage difficulties.

Early in the year 1878

He again set out from Brisbane to proceed to Broad Sound to perfect himself there in the dialect, which he had begun to learn at Mackay, which would be most useful throughout the whole of the northern Vicariate.

At Bellai Creek he gave instructions for a time. “As elsewhere, some of the Blacks would not listen to me, and others listening would not believe. Eight believed and were baptised, and two were married.”

At Kenilworth there were but few Blacks, yet he received one family of five members into the Church. On his way to Imbil he revisited Bellai Creek, where he found that an impostor had been deluding them during his absence and pretending to be a Catholic priest. He met there a mob of about a hundred coast Blacks mustering for a fight against the inland Burnet Blacks. “Bent upon such a purpose they would not then listen to religious instruction.”

At Imbil he found but three Blacks, one of whom he baptised the other two being already baptised. “The rest had gone to the muster for the fight, as all from Gympie to Caboolture had been summoned to attend. They had regular couriers on foot to give accurate information of the gradual approach of their foes.”

He stopped for some time at Maryborough. Between Maryborough, Frazer Island, and the surrounding country the Blacks number about 1000. They are very much corrupted by their intercourse with the whites, and begging and jobbing and drinking in the town, and, in consequence of the former residence of a Protestant missionary among them, they expected to be supplied with food for listening to instruction.”

A Native from Bribie who had there known Father McNab, introduced him to these Blacks and sixteen were after a time prepared for baptism.

On the eve of the day appointed for receiving them into the church, a Protestant brought spirits to the camp and remained drinking with them all night. Nine of the catechumens resisted the temptation to drink and were baptised. Two of the others subsequently repented of their drunkenness, and were baptised and married in the Catholic church of Maryborough.

"Here all the Blacks told me that they and all to the northward had believed in the existence of God before any Whites came among them. They call him Biral, that is, the High One. They could not say the Most High, for there are no degrees of comparison in their language. At Kilcoy and Mount Brisbane some called Him Munbal, that is, Thunder."

June, 1878

Father McNab returned to Brisbane, worn out with constant journeying, and being in his 59th year. There ends the diary from which the above extracts have been taken.

Regarding the language of the Queensland Blacks, he observed:

"Although the dialects are numerous and different they are intelligible over a great extent of country, and the languages are comparatively few. Every little tribe between Brisbane and Rockhampton has what they call a language of their own, but which is only a dialect and intelligible to all, at any rate, as far as Bundaberg, if not to Rockhampton and all over the Burnet district. The language is different at Port Mackay, but there it extends from Board Sound to Townsville, and probably from Rockhampton to Cardwell. The language of the Barcoo is also different.

*The Blacks have been thought stupid by those who did not know them, or who judged them when addressed in a language almost unknown to them and in which they could express their sentiments only by halves. They are not only fit to receive Christian instruction, but they have also a clear perception and a strong sense of moral obligation when once it is explained to them and their conscience is aroused. They have no prejudices against the truth. Their superstitions are easily removed and replaced by Catholic belief. They are generally disposed to listen to instructions when once convinced that their instructor is in earnest for their temporal and eternal welfare. But they like to get it in a few words, and not to be kept long at a time. I have written of the semi-civilized Blacks only in the occupied districts of the colony, because my experience is with them. I am told that the others, totally removed from intercourse with Europeans, are far more tractable and docile, because more simple and less vicious where they are not hostile. In the northern vicariate they are mostly hostile, and at present inaccessible or unapproachable except towards Cardwell."*¹

Section B: Reference to Father McNab's Activities collected by Father Linane from *The Advocate* 1868 to 1890

Working in Portland and Heywood Father McNab established 'The Society of Christian Brethren' and presided at colourful Benedictions and Processions.

He called for tenders for the Portland Church.

He attended a requiem at St Patrick's Cathedral for Archdeacon Downing of Geelong.

He was summoned to Clullagh Station, near Harrow, about 100 miles from Portland, to hear a dying Highlander's Confession.² For eight years Father McNab did parish work in Geelong, Portland and Bendigo.

1869

13 March, Death of King Billy in Tasmania, 20 March, Mutilation of the body, p 12.

8 May, Pastoral Letter from Synod.

14 August, 1834 Aborigines in Victoria.

17 November, Royal Assent to *Aboriginal Natives Protection Bill*, p 6.

1870

4 June, mention of attack on pioneers of Glenrowan, p 10.

29 October, Death of King Jerry, the last monarch of the Dan-Dan-Roc tribe near Geelong, p 14.

3 November, Father McNab delivered a lecture on Acoustics to more than 200 persons in the Roman Catholic schoolroom.

20 December, the Christmas procession of the Christian Doctrine Society took place at All Saints Church. The brethren, who numbered up to 60, marched around the church with lighted candles. In front were the children headed by the Cross Bearer and Acolytes, followed by Father McNab at the rear.

1871

7 January, Fourteen years ago (1857), 30 or 40 of the Dan-Dan-Roc tribe gave spear throwing exhibitions – now only one remains alive, p 11.

21 January, Father McNab actively involved with the Sandhurst Christian Doctrine Society.

15 May, Confirmation yesterday in the R C Church after the 11 o'clock Mass which was celebrated by Father McNab. Bishop Goold administered Confirmation to more than 40 postulants. In the evening, the Bishop preached on Prayer.

26 June, Rev Father McNab delivered his farewell sermon on Sunday last. After the eleven o'clock Mass the whole of his flock waited on him in the vestry to induce him, if possible, to stay. He, however, declined, as arrangements had already been made, and he did not like to interfere.

2 July, In the school, after evening devotions, the congregation assembled to bid farewell to Father McNab with an address on parchment and a purse of sovereigns. At the conclusion of proceedings, all knelt and the Reverend Father gave them his blessing.

19 September, Dr Goold, Bishop of Melbourne visited Castlemaine with the Vicar General and Father McNab.

1872

9 March – 18 May 1872 Father McNab was reported as being with Dr Backhaus on several occasions.

6 January, Baptism and marriage between Jacky King and Kitty, Aborigines in NSW, p 6.

1 June, there was a send-off for Father McNab to Geelong.

1 June, more about King Billy, p 5.

24 August, the old Queen never used tobacco or alcohol, p 16.

17 August, last of the Campaspe tribe, p 16.

7 September, numbers in Victoria, p 19.

7 September, death of old Queen of the Loddon tribe, p 14.

1874

21 February, Father Tenison Woods is praised for his public condemnation of treatment of Queensland Blacks. Total extermination of Blacks seems official intention, pp 8-11,

9 May, death of Billy, last of Yarra tribe, p 11.

14 November, Last of Burbank and Ballarat tribe, p 16.

1875

13 May, Last of Tasmanian Aborigines, p 9.

13 May, Mr Brough Smythe is permitted to complete the work on Aborigines on which he has been engaged for some time, p 13, cf. 3 June, p 9.

2 September, Report of board of Inquiry re Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, (cf. 1879 1 November, p 16), p 9.

September, Father McNab was at St Kilda until he went to Brisbane.³

1877

2 February, Royal Commission Gazetted: appointees were named, p 12.

28 May, Death of King Peter (Rockhampton). Dignified person, had been presented to the Governor of Queensland, and also at the local police court. p 16.

1878

18 May, Skipton: Death of Happy Lilly, the last female of a once numerous tribe, of alcohol and exposure, p16.

1879

11 January, Whites exploit Natives. Father Gibney, V G, thinks they could be taught Christianity, p 10.

15 November, Very high mortality rate: only about 800 Aborigines left in Victoria. p 10.

1880

14 February, Death of last male of Wharparilla (Echuca tribe), p 18.

5 June, NSW: The Minister of Education had authorized the establishment of a provisional school for Aborigines at Warangesda. p 16.

1881

7 May, Census figures (Victoria), In the 10 years since the 1871 census, the number of Aborigines has decreased from 1330 to 768, p 9.

4 June, Census figures: 770 Aborigines in Victoria, p 9.

18 June, South Australia, 5628 (plus 718 in Northern Territory), deaths exceed births by 110, the increase since 1876 is 1,675. p 16.

25 June, Father McNab speaks of his efforts to evangelize the Natives of Queensland and of his ill health and dangers in so doing. He states: "A promise had been made that more missionaries will be dispatched from the Old Country in March next." p 7.

23 July, NSW Aborigines ask for the reservation of Crown lands since their tribal lands having been stolen from them, leaving insufficient food for their young and infirm. p 10.

17 September, J W Walsh, Irish envoy visits the Aboriginal station at Ramahyuck on the Avon, able to draw a contrast from the neat and substantial houses of the Blacks with the Irish peasantry in Connemara, etc." p 14.

24 September, A welcome change is noted in the conduct of Whites towards the Queensland Blacks, p 10.

29 October, Brisbane: The Government are arresting half-caste children of Aborigines and sending them to the industrial schools p 19.

24 December, South Australian Jesuits intended to open a mission at Port Darwin next march: 4 Fathers and 1 lay brother: 2 of the missionaries spoke the dialect of the Northern tribes, p 16.

1882

5 August, *Townsville Herald* with a highly complimentary article on Father Duncan McNab's work in the Northern Territory, p 16.

2 September, South Australia: The last Aboriginal of the Gawler tribe died from lung disease at Port Pirie 28th, p 20.

16 December, Religious Belief of the Australian Aborigines, pp 17-18.

30 December, pp 7-8, Ditto.

1883

2 February, Reference is made to a paper on Australian Aborigines by John Fraser of Maitland and published in *Maitland Mercury*. It has excited some interest in Paris and the French society of Ethnology has awarded credit. p 16.

21 July, *West Australian* charges the administration with prevarication and deceit re cruelty to Natives at Gascoyne. p 11.

6 October, Jesuits in North Australian Mission give encouraging report of the Natives, e.g. they are very honest, p 17.

27 October, *Northern Territory Times* gave a glowing account of the infant mission. p 19.

3 November, Statistics: Census of 1882: Only 780 Aborigines are enumerated in Victoria as against 1330 at the former census, and it was probable that there were now not 1000 Aborigines in the colony. p 20.

In the Australian colonies generally 75,797 Aborigines were enumerated.

1884

26 January, Dean O'Keefe built a special school room for Aboriginal children at Yass Guardians appointed for them are entitled to supply each child attending school with a half ration and clothing. About 18 are at the school. p 16 and 8 March p 16.

1885

2 January, Method of obtaining Western Australian Blacks for slavery as pearl-fishers, p 20.

12 December, Cardinal's address at Plenary Council praised the work of Benedictines at New Norcia re Aborigines. p 9.

1886

12 June, Rev J B Gribble C/E missionary at Gascoyne, exposed cruelty of settlers towards the Aborigines in Western Australia, p 19, 17 July, pp 12,19, Ditto cf. 24 July p 11.

14 August, Dean Kenny's History of the Church in Australia (Vol.1) has "an appendix ... giving a short account of the Aborigines of Australia and an interesting narrative of the efforts made by the R C church to evangelise them." p 7.

31 July, Queensland: "the census gives only 12000 but the Registrar General has estimated 20,000 as about the number in Queensland, p 19.

1887

17 May, *Short History of a Victorian Aboriginal Station* description of Coranderrk, p 18.

23 July, Ditto Framlingham Station, p 19.

21 May Re 640,000 acres of poor land offered by Western Australian Government to any organization who would use it as an Aboriginal mission: both Catholic and Protestant bodies refused the offer, p 19, 28 May p 20, 2 July, p 19,

2 September, pp 11,12,19, 10 September p 18.

22 October, 96 Aborigines at Lake Condah Aboriginal Mission Station near Hamilton, p 9.

1888

28 January, pp 20, 21, An Aboriginal met Lord Carrington (interesting narrative),

28 July, editorial note on Protestant versus Catholic missions for Aborigines, p 12.

8 September, a few Black men and the drink problem. p 17.

1889

16 March, A visit to Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station. pp 8-9.

21 September, The annual meeting of the British Association of the Promotion of Science (London), Mr Wauholtz reads a paper on the Aborigines of north East Queensland, he contended they were cannibals, p 18.

22 November and 30 November, Augustinians of Northern Queensland have been given charge of the Aboriginal Missions in the

Northern Territory at the request of the Fathers of the National Synod (Sydney), a collection was taken up at Sandhurst, pp 16-17.

23 November, "Hobart: Fanny Smith is said to be the last Aboriginal in the colony, though some doubts were expressed on this point. She was voted 300 acres of land by the Assembly on Tuesday last." p 18.

1890

21 June, Western Australian Record claims that the Catholics were doing most of the work educating the Aborigines of Western Australia. p 17.

Section C: Lands Office Records re Durundur

7 July 1910

Durundur gazetted as Woodford Police Paddock.⁴

21 September 1932

Land offered for Freehold Title.⁵

Section D: Archival Records from Jesuit Archives Hawthorn and Propaganda Fide

PROVINCIAL RESIDENCE
S. J.
AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE 91-1336

130 POWER STREET.
HAWTHORN. ■■■■■
VICTORIA, 3122

July 12th 1982

Sister Brigida Nailon C.S.B.
Beagle Bay
Via Broome 6725

Dear Sister,

You set me a difficult task, but I have performed it as well as I could. The chief difficulties arose from Fr.McNab's handwriting and, in some places, from the dimness of the photocopy. I think I have nevertheless made out the meaning clearly enough except in two places. In the first of these Fr.McNab seems to have omitted something - the Latin as it stands makes no sort of sense. I conjecture that he skipped a whole line - easy enough to do when transcribing. I have left the original as it stands, but in brackets. The second is the word "getto" which occurs in the Italian. The only meanings I know for this word (a fountain, shoot, sprout, throw etc) do not fit the context, which clearly signifies a building of some sort. Here too I have left the original untranslated in brackets. In this case the general sense is clear enough.

The word "stragiudizialmente", which literally means "extra-judicially", I have translated "informally". It implies doing something without going through all the legal formalities.

I should add that it would not be safe to follow the doctrine expressed in these documents, as the Church's law on affinity has been changed since they were written.

Best wishes for success in your work.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

F.J. Dennett S.J.

F.J.Dennett S.J.

Archivist

When Father F J Dennett SJ wrote about his translation of the contents of this letter, he wrote that it would not be safe to follow the doctrine expressed in these documents, as the church's law on affinity has been changed since they were written.

Copy of Father Corbett's letter.

St. Kilda July 27th 1884.

Dear Fr. McNab

I take advantage at the first available moment to give you the information, which as well as I understand your letter, you desire.

Quo iure dirimatur affinitas? Presp. 10. Ex certa omnium sententia dirimunt solo Ecclesiae iure in linea collateralis, et multo probabilius etiam in linea recta, si forte primum gradum, ex copula licita exicipias.

Cum vero affinitas ratione copulae, unde licite, vel illicite provenit sit quaedam naturalis propinquitas ac veluti consanguinitas mediata, licet sine dirimatur iure naturali sine non, est tamen quoad baptizatos in impedimentum dirimens, quavis in infidelitate contracta. (Koning's Theol. Mor. n. 1591.)

Hanc sententiam Koningus confirmat in declaratione S. Cong. de Prop. Fide sub die 26. Augusti 1852. Propositionis enim subis: "1. Vir infidelis, qui adhuc in infidelitate persistit cognovit sine publica, sine privata, illicita tamen, mulierem quandam sine fidelem sine infidelem, postea factum baptismum susceptum valide et licite matrimonium contrahere cum consanguinea ejusdem copulae mulieris si ista consanguinitas baptismum suscepisset sine licite sine facta copulae, de qua agitur?"

2. Et quibus affirmativis (de qua valde dubitandum)

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Copy of a letter from Fr. J. P. Corbett to Fr. D. McNab. Original in the archdiocesan archives, Sydney

Dear Fr. McNab,

St. Kilda July 27th. 1884

I take advantage of the first available moment to give you the information, which as well as I understand your letter, you desire.

By which law is affinity a diriment impediment to marriage?

I answer, firstly - According to the unanimous opinion it is certain that affinity in the collateral line is an impediment only by ecclesiastical law; and, according to the much more probable opinion, the same is true of affinity in the direct line except for affinity in the first degree arising out of lawful sexual intercourse.

But since affinity arising out of the sexual act (whether this act be lawful or unlawful) is a certain natural propinquity and, as it were, a mediated consanguinity, it follows that, whether it is an impediment by the natural law or not, it is nevertheless a diriment impediment for baptized persons, even though it was contracted before they were baptized. (Koning's Theol. Mor. n. 1591) This opinion of Koning's is confirmed by a declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, given on the 23rd. August 1852 in response to the following queries:-

"1. An unbaptized man, while still unbaptized, has had unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman (baptized or unbaptized) either openly or secretly. Can such a man, after being baptized, contract a valid and lawful marriage with a blood-relative of the woman, if that blood-relative has been baptized either before or after the sexual intercourse aforementioned?

2. If the answer to this is affirmative (which seems very unlikely): Can this unbaptized man, if converted to the Faith after the death of his unbaptized but lawful wife, contract a marriage with a blood-relative (up to the 4th. degree) of his dead wife, if that blood-relative has been baptized either before or after the wife's death?

The Sacred Congregation replied:- To the 1st., negatively. To the 2nd., negatively.

(See Gury Ed. Rome 1873 vol. 2, p. 456)

Furthermore Koning says about the question By which law does affinity impede? "With regard to the first degree of affinity in the direct line the question is disputed. For the Church, though often and urgently petitioned, has never been willing to grant a dispensation if the affinity arose from a legitimate marriage, as Benedict XIV bears witness (De Segn. Rk. IX c. xlll: n. 4). (Quia praeter gravissimum irritum esse iure naturae), therefore if two unbaptized

omission here

persons, having contracted such a marriage, should be converted to the Faith, it would not be safe to separate them without a dispensation from the Pope; unless perhaps such marriages between the unbaptized are nullified by a positive law. Though even in this case it would be safer, in my opinion, to have recourse to the Holy See, because ^{of} the opinion held by some authors, not without reason, that a civil legislator has no power to decree diriment impediments to marriage even to the marriage of the unbaptized.*

Not infrequently the Church has dispensed in the case of affinity arising from unlawful sexual intercourse: e.g. if a man marries a woman after having committed fornication with her daughter or mother; provided however that intercourse with the mother did not precede the birth of the daughter - which condition is customarily stipulated in the dispensation. But this condition is to be judged sufficiently fulfilled if the act of intercourse with the mother took place at such a time before the birth of the daughter that there is no danger whatever that the daughter should be also the daughter of her husband, as it is usually expressed in the faculties given to our Bishops (in the United States): "let there be no doubt whether one of the parties be the offspring of the other".

*Can a civil legislator decree diriment impediments to the marriages of unbaptized persons?

I answer affirmatively, in agreement with the more common opinion. The reason is that marriage among the unbaptized is a civil contract. St. Alphonsus seems to be of this opinion (Bk. VI. 956; it is certain 2 and n. 951), though he is not dealing specifically with this question. Among more recent authors, however, Martin and Perrone take the negative view, relying on this reason, that even among the unbaptized marriage is a sacred contract, not to be equated with secular contracts. Koning n. 1574:- "Therefore a marriage between two unbaptized persons cannot be considered void even after one or other of them has been converted; and the same is to be said of the first degree of affinity in the direct line arising out of marital intercourse, as can be gathered from the practice followed in old time by the Councils of Agathensis, Eporensis, Aurelianensis III. Nevertheless, because of the existing controversy about this first degree it seems that the Apostolic See should be consulted, as also for any degree of affinity which the civil power has decreed to be a diriment impediment for its unbaptized subjects. After baptism the convert is bound to the impediment, even if the affinity arose in the time before his conversion, and this must be said also of affinity arising from unlawful intercourse."

(See de Jur. Mat. n. 380)

Translation of the rest of the letter from Father J F Corbett to Father D McNab, 27 July 1884, and sent on to Cardinal Moran in 1887. Original in Sydney Archdiocesan Archives. p2

I trust these extracts will be sufficient to aid you in solving the difficulties you propose. And as the Bishops in the United States have among other faculties received faculties which meet your case viz. "of granting to Catholics dispensations from the impediment of the first degree of affinity for ~~ten~~ (ten) cases, and from the public impediment of the first degree of affinity arising from unlawful intercourse either in the collateral line or even in the direct line for (thirty) cases, provided that, if it is in the direct line, there shall be no doubt as to whether one of the parties be the offspring of the other". The Bishop of Perth will no doubt ask that similar faculties be granted to him.

A letter from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to Dr. Quinn, Bishop of Brisbane, 30th. September 1880.

Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord,
The priest Duncan MacNab, a missionary who has been commissioned to study the possibility of establishing a new mission among the Australian savages, before he left Rome submitted certain doubts and questions to the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office. Their Eminences the Inquisitors having decided that the relevant answers should be communicated to him through Your Lordship, I therefore send you a copy of the same, that you may be so good as to carry out this decision. For your guidance, the last letter that I received from the aforesaid missionary is addressed from Sydney St. John's College.

I take this occasion of wishing Your Lordship every prosperity from the Holy See, Rome, from the (?), 30th. September 1880.

Your Lordship's in all fraternity

John Cardinal Simeoni Prefect.

Mgr. James Quinn

Bishop of Brisbane

J. Masotti, Secretary.

Copy

From the Palace of the Holy Office the 27th. August 1880.

The doubt and the questions submitted by the priest Duncan MacNab, missionary for the Australian Aborigines in the diocese of Brisbane, which were the subject of two dispatches from Your Most Illustrious Lordship, one dated the 29th. February of the current year N.S., the other the 8th. May N. 27, were taken under examination by the Most Eminent Inquisitor-General in their meeting of Wednesday the 18th. instant, and were given by them the following answers.

To the doubt, whether the Australian Aborigines may be permitted to eat reptiles on days of abstinence, the reply is in the affirmative.

Translation of the rest of the letter from Father J F Corbett to Father D McNab, 27 July 1884, and sent on to Cardinal Moran in 1887. Original in Sydney Archdiocesan Archives. p3

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With regard to the faculty of dispensing from the summoning of the unbaptized spouse it was decreed as follows:- Let the Rev. Lord Bishop of Brisbane be given power to subdelegate missionary and other faculties according to the Brief of Benedict XIV of the 16th. January 1749, with the instruction thereto annexed. For this end let a copy of the said instruction be enclosed herewith.

Finally, with regard to the particular case of George MacKenzie and Sara Danber, the Most Eminent Inquisitors-General have decreed that the Ordinary should be written to "ad mentem".

The "ad mentem" means the following. If the man to whom the aforesaid Sara was married while unbaptized is still unbaptized, and if he cannot be summonsed even summarily and informally, or (supposing he were to be summonsed) it is foreseen that he would give a negative answer, let the Ordinary dispense from the summoning. If, however, it is uncertain whether he can be summonsed or whether the summons would turn out to be useless, let the Ordinary summons him and if there should be some other difficulty let him re-open the case. ~~But~~ But if the man has been baptized, let the case be started all over again, the man stating when he has ~~received~~ received baptism.

The Holy Father having deigned to grant a dispensation from the summoning of the unbaptized spouse according to the mind of the Most Eminent Fathers, the undersigned assessor of the Holy Office gladly brings it to Your Lordship's notice, at the same time taking occasion to renew the affirmation of his great respect.
A. Jacobini.

An instruction relating to the Brief of Benedict XIV on the dispensation from Summoning. ~~#####~~ Omitted etc.

It has been thought opportune to point out briefly in what cases one can make use of the faculty of dispensing from summoning, and also on the other hand, in what manner summonses should be executed when they are necessary. In all those cases, then, in which the dwelling-place of the unbaptized spouse is certain and he can easily be cited, he must always be summonsed in person; a time being allowed, according to the distances between places, long enough for him to be able to manifest his will.

When, however, the dwelling-place is certain, but the unbaptized spouse hides himself, or flees in all haste from the messenger so as not to receive the summons in person - in such cases, all opportune diligence being used according to the legal formalities of the ~~the~~ local courts, the summons can be executed at the house which is his usual dwelling, and if perchance he has not a fixed

Translation of the rest of the letter from Father J F Corbett to Father D McNab, 27 July 1884, and sent on to Cardinal Moran in 1887. Original in Sydney Archdiocesan Archives. p4

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JESUIT RESIDENCE.
P.O. BOX 149.
HAWTHORN,
VICTORIA, 3122
26/11/79

Dear Sister Brigida,

Herewith the translation of Fr. McNab's "Memoria". I feel doubtful whether it was ever presented to Propaganda - it certainly was not presented in this form. I should be interested if you come across the document, if any, which he did submit.

with every good wish for the success of your "enterprise", as McN. would say,
Yours sincerely in the Lord,

F. J. Dennett SJ.

*F J Dennett, SJ, to Brigida Nailon CSB
26 November 1979.*

Memoria

Fr.D.McNab's "Memoria"

Translator's notes:- From internal evidence it appears that this document was written in Rome. It seems also to be only a draft - at any rate it cannot have been submitted to the Congregation De Propaganda Fide in its present form. This is clear from the confusion of the numbering, and also from some peculiar constructions and ill-made sentences, hardly intelligible at times, which would surely have been corrected in the final fair copy. I have translated it exactly as it stands.

The phrase "propria religione" I have rendered as "religion of their own"; but McNab may have been thinking in English terms and have intended "proper" or "real" religion.

The word "selvaggi" has been translated "savages", but in Italian it does not imply anything more than "wildness", like the French "sauvage". McNab seems to mean by the "selvaggi" those natives who have had little or no contact with Europeans.

The words "communism" and "Communistic", as used by McNab, do not of course mean communism in the modern sense, but refer to the communal or tribal manner of nomadic living which the aborigines followed as distinct from the individual and permanent dwellings of Europeans.

F.J.Dennett S.J.
26/11/79

Having already given an account of what I have been able to do for the civilisation and the conversion to the holy faith of the Australian Aborigines of the Brisbane diocese, in my letter written on the 10th July 1878 for the information of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and sent to the Most Rev. R.B.Vaughan, Archbishop of Sydney, and thinking that he will have sent it to Rome, it seems to me inexpedient to repeat it here, and that it will be enough for me to add what has happened since then, and to single out certain facts and works, the knowledge of which will, I believe, be useful or necessary to the Sacred Congregation in its holy enterprise of converting the Australian "savages" to Christianity.

Narration.) I continued as best I could working for the natives, with more or less success, in every place where I stopped to instruct them, although I was very unfit for the undertaking on account of my diminished strength, my inability to sing well, and my ignorance of the language of the country, and especially my defective memory which hinders me from learning it. Then I saw that to have much good success in the work of their conversion, at least as long as I did not know their language, it was necessary to be able to give them some assistance in freeing themselves from their communistic way of living and becoming housed and settled like civilised men.

In October 1878 I went North to instruct those who were living in the various territories reserved by the Government for the use of the natives. Arrived at Fort Mackay, I began again to learn more of their language, as they did not know enough English to be able to learn in it the Christian doctrine.

There, just when I was wanting to instruct those of the native children who were attending the school at Scrubby Creek, the bishop forbade me, under pain of withdrawing the faculties he had given me, to teach Christian doctrine to the young natives attending that school, or any other school established by the "Commissioners for the Savages".

Then, being no longer able with a good conscience to concur in the establishment of such schools, I was forced to send to the Government my resignation from the position of Commissioner for the natives. In consequence, the Anglican Bishop and two other Protestants are the only remaining Commissioners, who dispose of almost everything that the Government grants for the benefit of the natives. Hence it can easily happen, as in Victoria, that all the rest of the natives will remain under the direction and instruction of the Protestants.

Then I continued with my study of the language until through the weakness of my heart and several heat strokes I became unable to walk or to speak at any length without fainting, and my doctor declared that I must leave Queensland, and no longer stay in a tropical climate in summer time. Thus ended my labours in Australia. Nevertheless I still have the consolation of thinking that almost everything that I proposed and hoped to achieve by my own labours has come to pass: that is, it has been proved that the conversion of the Queensland savages is practicable, and some knowledge of the native languages has been acquired, which can make the enterprise easier for other younger and more active missionaries who may be my successors. It is a still greater comfort to me that I have not abandoned the mission out of weariness or fear, but by the disposition of divine providence, which has also left me strength enough to come, through great perils by land and sea, to Rome, to beg from the Holy Father and the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda active missionaries, furnished with the means necessary for the conversion of these savages, so that those few who have become Christians may not perish, and the benefit of the faith may be extended to others.

Observations. 1. The natives are numerous on the East coast and the adjacent islands, and also in the interior of North Queensland, as they are also in South and West Australia.

2. At present this people can be civilised and saved; if not they will soon perish.
3. Any European who speaks their language has a sort of supreme authority among them. They have no prejudice against the truth, not having any proper religion of their own, and the young people in the parts occupied by Europeans want to be civilised and willingly listen to the truth of the Gospel, where they are not under the influence of the Protestants. In many places to which I was not able to go they were waiting for me expectantly.
4. The enterprise of converting them is not an easy one, because the missionaries will have to accommodate themselves, up to a point, to their manner of living, go and seek them out in little groups, and help them to free themselves from communistic living and take up permanent dwelling-places, but
5. it is possible, and the necessary land can be acquired either gratis or at a small price.
6. There are also various works in which the natives can be gainfully employed, besides in the service of Europeans, for example, the fishing of the Dugong and of the tortoise in the sea, the collection of fibres etc.
7. At present the Parliaments in Brisbane and Adelaide are ready to assign tracts of land to the aborigines for the sustentation of those who will dwell there.
8. There are now two good Catholics in the Brisbane cabinet.
9. In a short time there will be no land to be given, since it will all be occupied by European colonists.
10. In the beginning it is not enough to found one single mission, as the Spanish Benedictines did in West Australia; because the benefit of such a mission is necessarily restricted to a few hundred, whereas the problem is to save a numerous and widely scattered people: and so one must make felt everywhere the voice and the beneficent power of the church of Jesus Christ.
11. It is therefore desirable that several missions should be started among them by religious communities and secular priests, as was done among the American Indians. The field is big enough for all.
12. At present in Queensland it would be well to open missions at Cardwell to help the natives on whom the European colonists of the Palmer are making war, at Barcoo, at the station of the Catholic Sir John O'Shaughnessy, where there are 500 natives, on the Diamantina in the interior, at Frazer Island, or in the region of south Queensland where some natives have already been converted. Perhaps the Bishop of Adelaide might suggest various places more suitable for missions in the regions subject to his jurisdiction. If not, it is not hard to find them. The natives may wish to live like Blacks or like Whites; or they may be given individual holdings of land; in this way it is easier to convert many than a few. Let them instruct one another, and with a sufficient number of missionaries the desire will more easily spread among them of being civilised and instructed in the faith.

(Translator's note:- At this point McNab changes his numbering, though there is no break in the manuscript -) it looks as though he has incorporated here a portion of an earlier draft of the "Memoria".)

7. Here I must add that in the North of Australia there are in some places very many pagan Chinese, ten times more numerous than the Europeans, and also many Kanakas, the Blacks of the Pacific islands, whose conversion and salvation no one is trying to secure. I hope that the Sacred Congregation will provide missionaries for them too. Some of the fathers of the Society of Jesus who have worked in the Chinese missions, like father Cahill of Melbourne, and other Marist fathers who have charge of the Catholics in the Pacific islands, would be more suitable for these, as they know their languages.

8. For the missions to succeed, the missionaries must be spotless in their lives and exemplary in their habits, for the smallest fault will be observed and will be an occasion of scandal to the savages. Furthermore, they need to be sound in mind and body, neither too old nor too young, two by two, furnished with the necessary requisites (spiritual faculties, sacred furniture and pictures, and funds with which to begin the mission). English-speaking priests are more suitable for missionary work in the areas settled by the colonists, where the young natives know a little English, and some such priests, British subjects, are almost necessary for dealing with the Governments; and Irishmen would be better for making collections for the missions. In the interior, where the natives are entirely savage, Frenchmen or others could be equally or perhaps more effective missionaries. If they have a good knowledge of music, so much the better. It would be useful also to have a distinctive form of dress, a matter to which the natives pay great attention, and which would also serve to protect them. Such missionaries if they can also if they have confidence in the one who directs them, know what they have to do, and are compensated for their labours. "No one fights at his own charges."

9. But they must be sent by the S.C. of Propaganda, for they cannot be hoped for from the Catholic Bishops of Australia. These, though they have done much for religion among the colonists, and desire the conversion of the unbelievers, yet will not apply themselves to it, thinking they have enough to do with the Catholic colonists. I have heard also that one of them holds the theory that God wishes to save the savages through the natural law alone. Others say that the natives are not of their dioceses, and all of them declared publicly, after the Provincial Synod of Melbourne, they have neither the means nor the men for such an undertaking, and they think they fulfil their obligations towards the natives when they help, according to their promise to the Holy Father, a Society of religious men commissioned by him to convert the savages. One of them has such a reputation among outsiders that missionaries are unwilling to submit themselves to his jurisdiction. For these and for other reasons I think it necessary that the missionaries should not only be sent by the Supreme Pontiff but also that they should remain directly subject to him. The other reasons are that I have found it easier to rouse a Protestant Government to come to the aid of the poor natives than the Catholic Bishops of Australia; that for two years after ~~several~~ repeated requests I have not been able to obtain from them the faculties needed to dispense from certain matrimonial impediments among the savages (and in consequence several of them, though accepting our faith, cannot yet be received into the church); that I cannot trust the words or promises of some of them, especially with regard to the natives, nor the due application of the funds that come into their hands.

9. Where are such missionaries and funds to be found? I think that the missionaries can be found partly in the Religious Orders, partly in the secular clergy, some in Australia, others in England or Ireland, at least for some years, and especially in Brittany and Belgium. The funds can be had from the Society of the Holy Childhood and from that of the Propagation of the Faith, and from the Australian dioceses, if the Bishops ordain collections for this purpose not much will be obtained, but if one or two make them once a year in the different dioceses they will easily collect in each as much as will suffice to obtain one or more missionaries. One might also make a collection in America for the first establishment of the missions.

Now that I have stated to the S.C. what I ought to say on this matter, I am going to England to seek for these poor Aborigines of Australia the protection of the laws and their civil rights.

D McNab

Enc.:

169-172 Duncan MacNab: Memorial, Rome, 15.9.79. Ital.

23
In his letter of 10.7.78 (sent through Fr. B. Vaughan to Prop.) he gave what account he could of civilisation and conversion of Australian abos of Brisb. di. Confines himself here to events since and to some points of interest.

There follows the memorial, which seems to be an exact copy of the document transd. for you by Fr. Dennett, except that there are no numbers in the APF copy. Duncan was not an Italian stylist; his Italian was always a direct translation from the Eng. in wh. he obviously thought, and his phrasing at times presents difficulties. However, Fr Dennett's trans. is quite accurate. I make a few points:

8. The missionaries, such as † Brady and † Salvado, always use selvaggi, meaning aborigines, or natives.

f. 169r: dal loro comunismo, ed accasarsi o stabilirsi come uomini civilizzati - purely Eng. construction.

169v: compi di sole - rather, "sun-strokes" ?
after "practicable", he says, "and the mode of achieving it has been found" (è si è trovato il modo di assicurarla), then, "and some knowledge, etc."

170r: atti Missionari - "able", or "suitable", rather than "active" ?

170v: After "European colonists" (No. 9 in Dennett's numbering), there is a par.: "When the native converts are housed and in possession of farms, they can easily keep a cow per family, for support of their priest; (and) that ought to be a good income for the clergy. In 5 years or less they ought to be able to sustain their pastors". (Continue: no.10) "In the beginning, etc".
(no.12)"... at Fraser Island, or in (some) other part of S. Qsld. where there are already native converts. . ."

171r: "The natives wish to live as blacks or as whites, and hate to be singular; ~~tho~~ it is easier to convert many. . ."
(no.7) Cahil (sic)

171v: (no. 8) ". . . to protect them. Such missionaries are available" (Salii Missionari si possono avere).
Quis militat suis stipendiis?

(At end) (Sgd.) Duncan MacNab, Roma, 15 Sett. 1879.

As P.S. he gives excerpt from Acta et Decreta Concilii 1^{mi} Provin.^a(e) Australiensis: "De Indigenarum Conversione", on committing to a religious community the conversion of abos.

Notes from Father John J Silke on translation of the 1979 Memoria.

Memoria

169

8 a

Avendo già data una relazione di quanto ho potuto fare per la civilizzazione e la conversione alla santa fede degli Aborigeni Australiani della diocesi di Brisbane. Alla mia lettera, scritta il dì 10^{mo} di Luglio 1878 per l'informazione della Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, e trasmessa al Revmo R. B. Naughtan Arcivescovo di Sydney, e pensando che egli l'abbia rimessa a Roma, mi pare che non sia expediente di ripeterla qui, e che basti aggiungere quanto è avvenuta d'allora, ed accennare brevemente alcune cose ed osservazioni la cognizione delle quali, credo, essere utile o necessaria alla Sacra Congregazione nella sua santa impresa di convertire gli Australiani Selvaggi al Cristianesimo.

Come meglio poteva io continuai a lavorare a pro degli indigeni con più o meno successo quantunque in ogni luogo ove mi fermai per istruirli, quantunque fossi assai inabile all'impresa per ragione delle mie forze diminuite, della mia incapacità di ben parlare della mia ignoranza della lingua del paese e specialmente per difetto di memoria, che mi impediva di impararla. Allora viddi che per avere molto e buon successo nell'opera della loro conversione, almeno quando non conosceva la loro lingua, era necessario di essere in condizione di prestare loro qualche aiuto per liberarsi dal loro comunismo, ed accasarsi; o stabilirsi come uomini civilizzati. In Ottobre 1878 andai alle parti del Nord

Memoria Presented in Rome in 1879 fol 169-172, SRC Oceania, vol 13 1880-1881, 13 September 1879 or 15 September 1879, p1.

Arrivato a ¹ Mackay ricominciai ad
imparare più della loro lingua, perchè essi non sapendo
abbastanza l'Inglese per imparare in essa la dottrina
Cristiana. Sub appu lo quando io voleva istruire i
fanciulli nativi, i quali frequentavano la scuola a
Scrubby Creek, il vescovo, sotto pena della sottrazione
delle facoltà date mi da lui, mi proibì di
insegnare la dottrina Cristiana alla gioventù nativa
frequentante quella scuola, e qualunque altra scuola
pubblica dai Commissari dei selvaggi.

Allora non potendo più concorrere tutta
coscientia allo stabilimento di tali scuole fui
costretto di mandare al Governo le mie dimissioni
dal posto di Commissario per gli indigeni. In con-
seguenza il vescovo Anglicano e altri altri Protestanti
ebbero i soli Commissari rimasti, dai quali si dispone
ne di quasi tutto ^{il} ^{beneficio} ^{di} ^{quel} ^{posto} ^{che} ^{il} ^{Governo} ^{ha} ^{beneficiato} ^{di} ^{gli} ^{indigeni}.
Onde facilmente può avvenire, come in
Victoria, che tutto il rimanente dei nativi resti sotto
la direzione ed istruzione dei Protestanti.

Di poi io perseguì lo studio della lingua
fino a tanto che per debolezza di cuore e ripetute
colpi di sole non poteva più senza svenire, o comminare
o parlare lungamente ed il mio medico dichiarò che
era necessario che ^{partissi} ^{per} ^{il} ^{Queensland}, e che non ci stesi
più in tempo d'estate nei climi tropici. Così finirono
i miei lavori nell'Australia.

Ora, ristrette mi resta la consolazione di
pensare che quasi tutto quanto mi proposi e sperai
dalle mie proprie fatiche ^{è stato} conseguito: cioè, si è provato
che la conversione dei Selvaggi di Queensland è
praticabile, e si è trovato il modo di assicurarla,
e si è acquistata qualche notizia di diverse lingue

native il che può facilitare l'impresa ad altri più
giovani ed atti, fiduciosi che mi succedano. Mi
di ancora maggiore conforto si pensare di non aver
abbandonata la missione per fastidio o timore, ma
per disposizione della Divina Provvidenza, che pure
mi ha lasciato forze sufficienti per venire, tra i molti
pericoli per mare per terra a Roma, per chiedere
dal Santo Padre, e dalla Sacra Congregazione di
Propaganda alle Missionari forniti del meglio ne-
cessari per la conversione di quei selvaggi, acciò
quei pochi già fatti Cristiani non periscano, ed il
beneficio della fede si estenda ad altri.

I nativi sono numerosi sulle coste orientali, e
nelle adiacenti isole ed anche nelle parti interiori al
Nord di Queensland ^{nell'Australia} come pure del Sud e dell'Occidente.

Adesso questo popolo può esser civilizzato e
salvato, e se non lo è, tutto perirà.

Qualunque Europeo che parla la lingua loro
tiene fra di loro quasi somma autorità. Non hanno
preconcetto contra la verità, non avendo alcuna propria
religione ed i giovani nelle parti occupate dagli Europei
desiderano d'essere civilizzati e volentieri accettano la verità
del Evangelo, ove non sono sotto l'influenza dei Protestanti.
In diverse parti ove non ho potuto andare mi aspettava-
no. L'impresa di convertirli non è facile perchè i missionari
debbono fino ad un certo segno accomodarsi al loro mo-
do di vivere, andare a cercarli in piccoli Adamari,
ed aiutarli a scorgersi dal comunismo, e a mantenersi
in permanenti abitazioni. Ma è praticabile, ed il lavoro
può acquistarsi o gratuitamente, o a poco prezzo. Vi sono anche
diverse opere in cui con guadagno si possono impiegare

i selvaggi, oltre il servizio degli Europei, come la pesca
della dugong e della tartaruga di mare, la
collezione di fibre etc. Adesso il Parlamento di
Brisbane e quello di Adelaide sono disposti ad asse-
gnare contadi agli Aborigeni per sostentamento di coloro
che li abitassero. Vi sono ora nel ministero di Bris-
bane due buoni Missionari. Dopo qualche breve tempo
non vi saranno senonchè che si possono dare loro,
perchè veranno tutti occupati dai Coloni Europei.

Quando i nativi convertiti saranno accasati ed
in possessione di poderi potranno facilmente mante-
nere una vacca per famiglia per il mantenimento dei
loro preti; il che dovrebbe essere una buona entrata
pel Clero. In cinque anni o meno dovrebbero essere
abili a sostentare i loro pastori.

Non basta nel principio fondare una sola
missione come fecero i Benedetti in Spagna e nell'
Australia Occidentale; perchè il beneficio di tale
missione necessariamente si restringe a poche conti-
naie di persone, laddove si tratta di salvare un
gran popolo disperso; però si deve fare sentire da
per tutto la voce e la benefica potenza della Chiesa
di Gesù Cristo. Per questo è da desiderarsi che si
cominciano presso di loro diverse missioni da
Comunità religiose e da preti secolari come fu fatto
colli Indiani dell'America. C'è campo largo per tutto

Adesso in Queensland si potrebbe bene aprire missioni
a Cardwell per dare asilo agli indigeni a cui fanno
guerra i Coloni Europei del Palmer, al Barcoo alla
stazione del Caravani Cattolico Giovanni O'Shaugh-
nessy ove sono 500 indigeni nella Diamantina nella
parte interiore, a Fraser Island o altra parte
del sud di Queensland ove sono i nativi già convertiti.
Forse il Vescovo di Adelaide potrebbe indicare i di-

per i luoghi più convenienti per incominciare mis-
sioni in quelle parti soggette alla sua giurisdizione. Le re, non
difficili il trovarli.

Ma non vogliono vivere da Neri o da Bianchi, odiano
di essere si oggitaro per questo è più facile combatterli
molto che pochi. Si istruiscono l'un l'altro e con un
competente numero di Missionari si diffonderà fra
loro più facilmente il desiderio di esser civilizzati e
istruiti nella fede.

Si è detto agguincare che nel Nord dell'Australia
vi sono molti nomi pagani Anesi in alcune parti
dieci per uno di più degli Europei, ed anche molti
Kanaka o neri dalle isole del Mare Pacifico, la cui
conversione e salute nessuno cerca di procurare.
Spero che la Sacra Congregazione provvederà mis-
sionari anche per essi. Alcuni padri della Compagnia
di Gesù che hanno lavorato nelle missioni cinesi
come il Padre Cahil a Melbourne ed altri padri
Maristi che hanno cura dei Cattolici nelle isole
del Pacifico sarebbero, sapendo le lingue, i più atti
Missionari per questi.

Pel buon esito delle missioni è necessario che i mis-
sionari siano di vita illibata e di costumi esemplari
perchè la menoma colpa sarebbe osservata ed un'
occasione di scandalo ai selvaggi. Inoltre si
richiede che siano mente et corpore sani non troppo
vecchi né tutti troppo giovani, due insieme, forniti
dei requisiti necessari, facoltà Spirituali, arredi
laeri, immagini e fondi per cominciare le mis-
sioni. Si ricordate che parlino Inglese sono più a
dattati all'opera delle missioni nelle parti occupa-
te dai Coloni, ove i giovani nativi anche sanno
un poco di Inglese; ed alcuni tali, Sudditi Britannici
sono quasi necessari per trattare coi governi; ed
Irlandesi sarebbero i migliori per fare Collette per

Chiese) che non si può di quelle parole e promesse
di alcuni di loro che si sono ugnati di malafede
e della dovuta applicazione di quelle che capiti
nel loro potere.

8 f.

Dove si possono trovare tali Missionarii e
fratelli?

Credo che i Missionarii si possono trovare in parte
dagli Ordini Religiosi in parte fra i preti Secolari; al-
cuni nell'Australia, altri in Inghilterra e Irlanda
almeno per alcuni anni, e spacialmente nella Bre-
tagna minore e nel Belgio. In quanto ai fradelli si
possono avere dalla Società della Sacra Infanzia,
la quella della Propagazione della fede, e dalle
Società Anziane. Se i vescovi ordinano collette per
questo fine non si otterrà molto, ma se uno o due
preti le fanno una volta l'anno nelle diverse
Diocesi facilmente raccogliammo da ciascuna
quanto basta per mantenere uno o più missionarii.
Si potrebbe anche fare una colletta nella America
sul primo stabilimento delle Missioni. Ora che ho
esposta alla S. C. quanto doveva dire di questa
materia vado nell'Inghilterra per cercare a quei
poveri aborigeni dell'Australia la protezione delle
leggi e di loro diritti civili.

Duncan Mac Kask

Roma 15 Sett. 1879

De Indigenarum Confusione

Litteras S. C. de Prop. Fidei de cetera Indigenarum seu
silvestrium hominum in hac regione degentium salute suscipienda
Patres in Synodo prolegenda curarunt et S. S. Apostolicas ut
per pat. illis ad idem administrati collatis in hoc Consilio se graviter
in hoc negotio deliberarunt. Porro re malis pensis in eorum de-
venerunt et levitiam et hoc opus aliam Sacrosancti et Congregationis
religiosae Comm. dicitur. Itaque ad primum hunc obsequium dicitur
ad aliam Societas minorum Belgica et Patres unanimi voce respon-
derunt a consilio auctoritate et opera omni auxiliium praeferre

7

fare ad in le missioni. Nella parte interiore
nati. Al tutti selvaggi, Francesi o altri protestanti
e in egualmente di più, i casi Missionari
hanno, e ora conoscenza della musica sarà tanto
meglio sarebbe alia anche un abito distinto
chi badano molto i selvaggi e che servirebbe
loro anche di protezione. Tali Missionarii si posso-
no avere se hanno confidenza in chi li dirige, e
quello che hanno da fare sono compensati per le loro
fatiche, quis militat suis temporibus?

Ma bisogna che li manda la S. C. P. P.
perchè non si possono sperare dai vescovi cattolici
della Australia quantunque essi abbiano fatto molto
per la religione fra i Coloni, desiderano la conversione
degli infideli e pure non vi si applicano, credendo che
hanno abbastanza da fare coi Coloni cattolici. Ho
inteso anche che di loro uno tiene la teoria che i selvaggi
vuole salvarli i selvaggi per sola legge naturale.
Altri dicono che i nativi non sono delle loro Diocesi
e tutti pubblicarono dopo il Concilio provinciale di Mel-
bourne che non hanno né meriti né uomini per tale im-
presa e che dono che compiamo i loro obblighi verso
gli indigeni quando avramo agitato secondo la pro-
messa fatta al S. Padre una Società di uomini re-
ligiosi mandata da lui per convertire i selvaggi. Qual-
cuno di loro ha tale fama presso gli esteri che i Mis-
sionarii non vogliono sottomettersi alla sua giurisdiz-
ione. Per queste ed altre ragioni mi pare necessario
che i Missionarii siano non solamente mandati
dal Sommo Pontefice ma ancorache restino di fatto
soggetti a Lui. Queste altre ragioni sono che ho
trovato qui per fare un governo protestante che
i vescovi cattolici hanno a traverso i secoli e che
poveri in ogni - che per due anni dopo di tale
istanza non ho potuto ottenere per loro le giurisdiz-
ioni necessarie a dispensare in certi tempi in tali mi-
nisteri fra i selvaggi, (ed in conseguenza dico di loro
tenendo la nostra fede non si possono ricevere nella

Notes for Chapter 10

¹Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, *A History of the Catholic Church in Australasia. From Authentic Sources*. Sydney, Frank Coffee and Company, 1896, pp. 421-423.

²Father Coughlin's notes in Diocesan files in Ballarat were sent to Father Linane.

³Father T J Linane's research from the 'Advocate' gives information about McNab's itinerary in Victoria until 1875

⁴Lands Office Res 77-84 r 685.7 July 1910, QSA.

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APF	Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, Propaganda Fide, Rome
SRC, Oceania	Scritti Riferiti ai Congressi, Oceania,
AJH	Archives Society of Jesus, Hawthorn
JOL	John Oxley Library, Brisbane
MHC	Melbourne Historical Commission
NNA	New Norcia Archives
SA	Scottish Archives
ACAB	Archives Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane
ACAS	Archives Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
SAA	(also known as Sydney Archdiocesan Archives)
AMMNS	Mary MacKillop Archives, North Sydney
V&P of LCWA	Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of Western Australia
V&P of QLA	Votes and Proceedings of the Queensland Legislative Assembly
V&P of SALA	Votes and Proceedings of the South Australian Legislative Assembly

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In 1980 she moved into Aboriginal Education with Hyllus Maris in a Pilot Scheme for an Aboriginal Community School at Yarrambat Victoria. While there she wrote a research paper on Duncan McNab for a B Theol. It was this nucleus which has been developed into a book.

In 1981 Brigida taught a grade 6 class in Derby WA.

Bishop J Jobst then gave her the opportunity to research Kimberley Church History.

In 1985 she again worked with Hyllus on a culture program for Worawa College Healesville and began a pilot scheme in Mooroopna/Shepparton for the Hyllus Maris Aboriginal Community School at Ardmona.

In 1992, in the Northern Territory, Brigida was employed at Nungalinga College for some time, then with Bachelor College where she helped train Aboriginal teachers at Maningrida.

When she retired at the end of 1996 she became a volunteer at Kyriat Yearim in Israel for 8 months. On the way home she had the opportunity of visiting Propaganda Fide Archives in Rome.

Brigida currently lives in Echuca.

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