

A YINJILLI LEAFLET

**SOCIAL SERVICES
FOR ABORIGINES**

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TO ABORIGINES

You have the same rights as other Australians to claim social service benefits.

TO TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

Although you are not mentioned in either the old or the new law, you are treated in much the same way as Aborigines. And throughout this leaflet, wherever you read the word 'Aborigine' this is meant to include you as well.

SOCIAL SERVICES:

WHO GIVES THEM?

Social services are handled by the Government Department of Social Services. People who are not Aborigines usually apply direct to this Department for their benefits. Many Aborigines have had trouble in getting the benefits due to them, particularly if they live in outback areas, because they've been told to apply to 'protectors' or Aboriginal Welfare Departments for these benefits.

If you wish to apply for benefits, you are advised to write direct to the nearest office of the Department of Social Services. If your application is made direct, in this way, it should be dealt with in the usual manner and you should not suffer any discrimination.

HOW TO APPLY

The best way is to write to the nearest office of the Department of Social Services, saying which benefit you wish to claim. Then they will send you application forms. These forms have to be filled-in. (Forms can also be picked up at any Post Office.) If you have any trouble filling-in the forms, go to someone who will help you. This is better than having a try and getting it wrong.

WHERE TO APPLY

The offices of the Department of Social Services are in the following towns:

N.S.W.: Armidale, Lismore, Lithgow, Newcastle, Orange, Wagga, Wollongong, and in Sydney (50 Carrington St.).

QUEENSLAND: Bundaberg, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville, and Brisbane (Prudential Building, 6 Queen Street).

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Port Pirie, and Adelaide (Churchill Building, 61 Gawler Place).

TASMANIA: Launceston, and Hobart (40 Macquarie Street).

VICTORIA: Ballarat, Bendigo, Dandenong, Geelong, Hamilton, Sale, Wangaratta, and Melbourne (Commonwealth Centre, Cnr. Spring and Latrobe Streets).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Perth (99 Wellington Street).

WHAT TO APPLY FOR

1. CHILD ENDOWMENT

Mothers are entitled to Child Endowment for all children under 16 years of age, at the following rates:

5/- per week for the first child

10/- per week for each other child

The endowment for each child should continue to be paid to the mother until the child is 16 years old (unless this child leaves her care before that age).

Where a child is not looked after by the mother, but is living with and is cared for by another person, this person is entitled to receive the endowment money.

The money can be paid straight into a bank account once every three months by the Department; or it can be paid by money orders, which can be cashed once a month at a Post Office or Bank.

2. MATERNITY ALLOWANCES

All Aboriginal mothers are eligible for a maternity allowance at the birth of each baby. The amount of the allowance depends on the number of children she has already.

£15 for a mother who has no other children under 16 years of age.

£16 for a mother who already has one or two children under 16 years of age.

£17/10/- for a mother who has three or more children under 16 years of age.

For twins an extra £5 is paid, and for triplets an extra £10.

It is possible to arrange for £10 of a maternity allowance to be paid one month before the baby is due to be born.

If a baby is born dead, or lives for less than 12 hours, the maternity allowance is still payable, on condition the mother has been carrying the baby for at least 5½ months before the birth.

Any claim for this allowance should be made within 6 months after the birth. (In some special cases this time may be extended.)

3. OLD AGE PENSION

Old age pensions are paid to men at 65 years, and to women at 60 years, unless they are earning more than £3/10/- a week. The full pension is £5/15/- a week for a single person; and £5/5/- each for married couples where both are old enough to be eligible. People can get this full pension even if they own their house and have no more than £200 in the bank.

How to prove your age. Many Aborigines are not included in official registers of births, so they will have to use other methods to prove to the Department of Social Services that they are old enough to get a pension. If you have this difficulty, read the next part carefully.

If you were born on a mission or Government settlement, it may be possible to get proof of your age from there. Some of these places have kept records for many years now.

If you know somebody who is not an Aborigine, who can help to prove your age, take this person (or a written statement from him) to the Social Services Department. This does not mean that the Department will only believe people who are not Aborigines. It is because they have proof of the age of these other people. So if an old person can remember you from a long time ago, it might help to prove your own age.

If there is no one who is likely to know your age, the Social Services Department might ask for a doctor to look at you. In such a case, it is a good idea for you to keep contacting the Department regularly—you might be kept waiting for quite a long time. It is important not to get downhearted. Be patient and keep trying.

4. UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Men between the ages of 16 and 65 years, who are out of work, can become eligible for an unemployment benefit.

Women between the ages of 16 and 60 years, who are out of work, can become eligible for an unemployment benefit.

There are several conditions, as follows:

- The unemployment must not be due to the person taking part in a strike.
- The person applying for a benefit must be capable of working and willing to take a job.
- The person must have made reasonable efforts to find work (this includes registering with the Commonwealth Employment Service for work).

Things to remember

If you become unemployed, give your name to the employment office straight away. And apply for unemployment benefits. If you are out in the bush, write to them.

It is important to claim immediately. Benefits begin 7 days after you put your name down as unemployed.

You have to be able to show the employment office that you *have* tried to find work. If you can't prove it, they might stop your unemployment benefits. Every week you must put in a return. On the back of the return *always put down the names and addresses of one or two people that you have asked for work.* If there are only a few people to ask, go back and ask them again.

Write on the back of the form: "I have tried to get work from these people, but I have not been able to get a job."

Whenever you do casual work, let the Department know the amount, and the name and address of your employer. This is important, if you want to receive benefits.

When you leave a job, make sure you have the name and address of your employer. If you can't write, get him to write it for you. If his name is difficult, make sure you have it spelt correctly before you leave.

The unemployment benefit rates are:

- £4/2/6 a week for an adult over 21 years old, also for a married person under 21.
£3/-/- extra for a wife if she doesn't work and her husband supports her.
15/- extra for each child under 16 years.

- £1/15/- a week for unmarried persons aged 16-17 years.
£2/7/6 a week for unmarried persons of 18-20 years.

5. SICKNESS BENEFITS AND INVALID PENSIONS

Sickness benefits are for people who have not been able to go to work, or earn wages, because of sickness or accident. It is important to claim as soon as possible after becoming sick.

A doctor's certificate has to be produced with any claim. If you have difficulty in getting one, you should send in your claim just the same. The medical certificate can be sent afterwards. But if you do not put the claim in straight away, you might lose some of the benefit money when it is paid later on.

If you are too sick to make the claim yourself, ask a relative or friend to do it for you.

The amount paid for sickness benefit is the same as for unemployment benefit.

Invalid Pensions are paid to people over 16 years of age, who cannot ever work because of sickness, or disability, or blindness. The rates are:

£5/15/- a week for a single person.

£5/5/- a week for a married man, plus—

£3/-/- a week extra for a wife (if she does not already receive a pension of her own).

15/- a week extra for each child under 16 years.

Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. Special assistance may be given to people who cannot work because of some physical handicap, or people who have given up their work because of sickness or injury. This service offers people special medical care. It also offers them training for suitable jobs, etc. Enquire from the Social Services Department about this.

6. WIDOWS AND DESERTED WIVES—PENSIONS

Widows' Pensions are paid to widows (and to women who permanently lived with one man) who have lost their means of support by the death or desertion of their husbands. The widows and others covered by these provisions are divided into several classes:

Class A A widow of any age with one or more children under 16 years of age in her care.

Class B A widow of 50 years and over, who has no children in her care.

Class C A widow of under 50 years, who has no children in her care, and who has no means of support for the 26 weeks following her husband's death.

Widows' pension rates are as follows:

Class A £8/10/- a week plus 15/- for each child except the first.

Class B } £5/2/6 a week.

Class C }

These pensions can also apply to deserted wives, divorced women, women whose husbands have been in prison for at least 6 months, women whose husbands are in mental hospitals, and 'dependent' women. To be classed as a 'dependent female', a woman must have lived with one man—though not legally married to him—on a permanent domestic basis. She must have been maintained by him for at least 3 years.

Note: a divorced woman, or a deserted wife, who wants a widow's pension, must be able to prove she has taken action to obtain a maintenance allowance from her husband (or former husband).

A widow is allowed to earn £3/10/- a week in addition to her pension.

8. TUBERCULOSIS ALLOWANCE

TB Allowances do not come under the same law as other Social Service benefits. Discrimination against Aborigines is still common. In 1961 the Department of Health published a booklet called *Scheme of Tuberculosis Allowances* which quotes the Tuberculosis Act (1948) section 9, paragraph 53:

"Except to the extent determined by the Director General of Health in an unusual individual case, the tuberculosis allowance is not payable to . . . (f) Aborigines or people of mixed blood who, prior to their illness, did not support themselves and their dependents (if any) from their earnings."

7. FUNERAL BENEFITS

A funeral benefit of £10 can be claimed by a person who has to pay for the funeral of an Age or Invalid Pensioner.

This leaflet is intended as a general guide. For further details, apply to your nearest office of the Department of Social Services.