

MINISTER DEFENDS TRANSFER OF ABO. CHILDREN

The Department of Interior, which administers native affairs and the Minister (Mr. Johnson), were fully cognisant of the facts concerning the return of 21 aboriginal children from Penrith to Alice Springs and Semaphore, it was stated officially yesterday.

An official said the children would have been returned months ago, but the Government had been dissatisfied with the accommodation offered and delayed their departure until it was improved.

The children were moved from Northern Australia to Penrith during the war when the North became a danger area. Those of the aborigines, who had secured jobs or had been absorbed into the community at Penrith were being allowed to remain.

The aborigines were reported to have protested strongly against being forced to leave Penrith. Some of them were reported to have been kicking and screaming in protest as they left Sydney by train.

A Government official said yesterday that the Commonwealth Director of Native Affairs (Mr. F. H. Moy) was the children's legal guardian and knew what was best for their welfare. The children were wards of the Commonwealth which had paid all their expenses since their transfer to Penrith.

Twelve of them are going to Alice Springs and nine to Semaphore, South Australia.