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Lake Tyers Children Died from Malnutrition—Report

THE manager of the Lake Tyers aboriginal settlement told a committee which investigated the settlement recently that three of its children had perished from malnutrition or similar illnesses, the committee reported last night.

The three-man committee set up by the Trades Hall Council, said the manager, Mr. Miles, said the children had died in his car on the way to hospital.

A full State Government inquiry into the settlement was demanded by the Trades Hall Council on the committee's recommendation.

The committee, which was headed by the T.H.C. president (Mr. U. Innes) made five other major recommendations in its report.

'Gave Food Away'

Discussing the alleged deaths by malnutrition, one committee member, Mr. A. Bonser, said Mr. Miles told them the 80 people of the 12 families remaining at Lake Tyers felt obliged to give their food away to aboriginal visitors and "hangers on" at the settlement.

Mr. Bonser said the aborigines Welfare Board had ruled that the settlement's management should inspect the aborigines' cottages twice a week.

However Mr. Miles had refused to tell the committee the time since the last inspection.

He said the timetable had not been maintained because of a staff shortage.

Management

The Lake Tyers management, the report said, comprised four people — Mr. Miles, his wife, who is a qualified nurse, an assistant manager and the foreman of the farm.

Mr. Bonser told the T.H.C. the committee had found strong resentment by the aborigines against the management. This was reciprocated to a certain amount.

Apart from a Government inquiry, the committee recommended:—

- Aboriginal assimilation into the white population was desirable in the interest of the aborigine and should be encouraged — with steps to train the aborigine to take his place in outside industry so that he might not be at a disadvantage in obtaining employment.

Co-operative

- Assimilation should in no circumstances be enforced.
- An aboriginal settlement be retained, if not at Lake Tyers, then at a more suitable location where an

ample supply of water was available. This should be open to all aborigines unable to be assimilated.

- Full investigation be made of a proposal by the Lake Tyers aborigines to establish a co-operative at the settlement — the co-operative to be under the control of a board, predominantly aboriginal, which should have the responsibility for the conduct of all phases of life in the settlement.

- The State Government should immediately authorise the Aborigines Welfare Board to appoint additional welfare officers and take steps to investigate all aspects of aboriginal welfare, particularly the future of the younger generation and the position of the approximate 500 aborigines at present at a loose end in the community.

Other Complaints

The T.H.C. committee also visited assimilated aborigines at Nowa Nowa, Orbost, Lakes Entrance, Bruthen and Bairnsdale.

They were accompanied by a member of the Aborigines Welfare Board, Mr. H. Davies.

Other complaints referred to the T.H.C. were: Lack of water; poor washing facilities; faulty electricity supplies; no sick pay; slow food deliveries; clothing store delays; low wages (maximum £2/10/ a week); few entertainment amenities; alleged management discouragement of sport; and use of child endowment payments being controlled by the management.

The report said cost of running the settlement was £24,000 a year — averaging £40 a week for each family.