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The Protectorship of John Walker

Suzanne M. Layton

Commencing from the early days of colonial settlement in South Australia only token and spasmodic compensation was given to Aborigines for the loss of their land and consequent reduction in their ability to find traditional supplies of food. Most of this compensation was in the form of food and clothing, provided by settlers in exchange for labour. With the appointment of the first Protector of Aborigines in 1837 the distribution of rations became more regular. From 1841, Governor Grey introduced a system of regular distribution which was aimed at the pacification of Aborigines; to stop attacks on settlers and their stock. New depots were established as the frontier was extended. By the 1850s, the giving of rations was restricted to the aged and infirm, with the able-bodied expected to work in exchange for food and clothing. In 1856, the Office of Protector of Aborigines was abolished and responsibility was transferred to the Crown Lands and Immigration Department. Most of the depots were subsequently closed and this had a serious effect on the health and well-being of Aborigines. By the time the Office had reopened in 1861 the motivation for providing rations had changed from one of pacifying ‘threatening’ Aborigines to that of easing the plight of what was seen as a dying race. Ration stations were again established but this time to alleviate hunger and disease. ¹ It would appear that the period was marked by a shift in government policy from a focus on Christianising and civilising Aborigines to one of social welfare under Chief Protector John Walker.

It could also be argued that, in the light of advances made in medical knowledge from the mid-19th century, little effort was put into dealing with the deteriorating health of Aborigines and the spread of disease. This was despite the fact that it was contact with Europeans which had led to major health difficulties. ² It would appear that when health issues were raised, a
degree of arrogance was demonstrated by colonists as to why they were arising and what were the causes. It took the efforts of an 1860 Select Committee of the Legislative Council and Chief Protector John Walker to better address the problems associated with the health of Aborigines.

There was little concern expressed with regard to the condition of the Aborigines in the years leading up to 1860. What had been of most concern was the increasing number of attacks on settlers by Aborigines as the frontier was extended. However, during 1860 there was a growing awareness of the increasing plight of Aborigines in various localities and by September these issues were raised in Parliament. The Legislative Council decided to establish a commission of enquiry to report on the ‘present state and condition of the Aborigines, and the efficiency of the system for their protection and support’.³

In the debate which led up to the appointment of a Select Committee, John Baker referred to situations where Aborigines faced dying of starvation and/or the effects of the cold, due to irregular supplies of rations and lack of blankets. Criticism was also made of George Taplin from Pt. McLeay who allegedly taught Aborigines to pray in order to satisfy the cravings of hunger, and George Mason who used land set aside for the benefit of Aborigines without payment of rent.⁴

Whilst several members expressed agreement with Baker, others defended the Government. Samuel Davenport, for example, was of the opinion that the settlers had, to the best of their ability, done more for the Aborigines in South Australia than had been done in any Australian colony. Similarly, George Fife Angas indicated that all previous attempts to help the Aborigines had failed and it would have been best if ‘the natives had been left to themselves and simply educated in the useful pursuits of life’.⁵ Both of these views were indicative of the general lack of concern held for what was considered a dying race. Nevertheless, a Select Committee was appointed on 4 September.⁶ The Committee’s Report on the condition of the Aborigines and suggestions for their amelioration was tabled in Parliament in mid-October 1860.⁷
In its six page report, the Select Committee clearly and succinctly set out the plight of the Aborigines within the colony. It indicated that all of the evidence proved that Aborigines had ‘lost much, and gained little or nothing, by their contact with Europeans as a result of the ‘forced occupation of their country’.\(^8\) Added to this was Aboriginal reliance on the government as a result of the deprivation of their means of subsistence, and changes in lifestyle resulting in declining health.

Specific reference was made to a number of factors which the Committee believed had led to a decline in the numbers of Aborigines as well as their poorer circumstances. These included disease, infanticide, the introduction by Europeans of a ‘more aggravated’ form of syphilis, the introduction of intoxicating liquor and its high levels of consumption, and sexual promiscuity.\(^9\) Whilst the Report was quite damning in itself, little reference was made to factors which have become more noticeable in hindsight, such as the general destruction of Aboriginal culture.

The Committee also observed the ‘almost entire absence of any system for the protection and support of Aborigines’, or for their management.\(^10\) This prompted the Committee to recommend the appointment of a Chief Protector of Aborigines with clear accountability to the government and with the necessary powers and resources to carry out his duties. This was to include judicial powers and the requirement to visit all sub-protectorates, depots and tribes, and regularly report on the disposition of Aborigines in all localities.\(^11\)

The Committee also made reference to the need to regularly vote funds to provide assistance to Aborigines. Income derived from the use of Aboriginal reserves and other lands was to help benefit the Aboriginal people. In making this recommendation it is interesting to note that the Committee itself believed that the Aborigines were already a dying race and therefore any lands devoted to them would in the course of time revert to the Crown, thus indicating that any arrangements made would only be temporary.\(^12\) Whilst applauding the
No action was taken on the Report until late May 1861, when the Hon. George

for the plight of Aboriginal people.

sign, one of mind, mentality and the general lack of concern felt at the time
their own resources and suffering; This letter was indicative of the poor
higher qualities and sober demeanour, and that the Aborigines should be left to
enjoy the fruits of race that interior races were enjoying. Everywhere giving place to races of
people was mainly their own fault, not that of the Europeans. The writer went
However, a letter to the editor of the Aderishe in late October referred to the

Published by the Select Committee with the Chronicle in the

applied through 'Generous medical assistance and relief,

Given to Aborigines for the cessation of their lands and exsusive benefits
This included the adequate provision of dedicated Aboriginal lands, benefits
Resident Commissioner in 1836 at the time of the foundation of the colony.
point out that earlier governments and indeed the colonists themselves had

previous work of a few missionary groups, the Select Committee was quick to
Aborigines to which the Chief Secretary replied that it was the government’s intention to do so and that the Estimates Committee had been advised.\textsuperscript{17}

The proposed appointment of a Chief Protector drew varied responses. In June a letter to the editor of the \textit{Adelaide Observer} from a ‘Friend of the Natives’ called for a man ‘who will not shrink or be intimidated by the sarcasm of the world’ and who should operate as friend, protector and guardian of the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{18} This contrasted with another letter published on the same day which claimed that the £400 set aside for the Protector’s salary would be better spent on actual relief provisions, while the Police Commissioner, through his own network, could do a far better job of protection (of the settlers) and improving the behaviour of the Aborigines.\textsuperscript{19}

The newspapers also printed reports of the increased suffering of Aborigines. It was reported that Aborigines had been kept without blankets until the middle of July.\textsuperscript{20} Aborigines at Wellington had suffered from severe colds due to insufficient clothing and the non-arrival of blankets for the winter period, while daily rations and medicines were still only being distributed to those Aborigines who were near the station at the time.\textsuperscript{21}

Past Protector and Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration, Matthew Moorhouse, suggested that the new Chief Protector needed to be a doctor because of the great extent of sickness in the South-Eastern part of the colony.\textsuperscript{22} This may have had some bearing on the appointment of Dr. John Walker as Protector of Aborigines.\textsuperscript{23} Walker, one of ten applicants for the position, had indicated in his application of 25 October 1861 that he was a legally qualified medical practitioner and Resident Magistrate of Strathalbyn.\textsuperscript{24}
Map 1. Places mentioned in the text.
Walker, as required at the time of his appointment, travelled throughout the colony. Following his visit to Franklin Harbour in early 1862 he was reported as being well satisfied with the condition of the Aborigines and the present supply of rations, medicines and blankets. He did however indicate that there would be a need for additional blankets for winter. At Poonindie, Walker reported pulmonary and liver disease among the Aborigines. Requested to report on the native institution at Pt. McLeay, Walker indicated that the residents were content and in excellent health. He reported that the children’s rations included meat, that their schooling and religious instruction was good and effective, and the Aborigines had advanced towards civilisation. Furthermore, with the help of the Aboriginal Friends’ Association the mission was becoming self-supporting and deserved support from the Government.

During the same year occasional questions were raised in Parliament indicating that there were still problems in providing rations and support. Thomas Magarey asked why no relief was given to the sick and destitute in the South-East and was told that the problem had not been reported. A month later, at the end of winter, Magarey reported that despite assurances given, blankets had still not been sent to Mosquito Plains. The explanation was that blankets were in short supply and larger ones had been ordered (from England) and had not yet been supplied. In the meantime the Aborigines suffered.

In March 1863, Walker provided what was probably the first comprehensive report relating to the condition of Aborigines since the Select Committee Report of 1860. He indicated that owing to the distribution of Aborigines over a vast area he had seen less than one fifth of the 5046 Aborigines counted in the 1861 Census. This was, he felt, sufficient to come to the conclusion that the condition of Aborigines had greatly improved. Walker wrote that the Aboriginal people were now well clothed, had plenty of food and despite their unhygienic circumstances, their health was ‘wonderfully good’. Despite this he believed that there was considerable room for improvement, much of which could be brought about through a wider and more appropriate distribution of
rations and clothing, particularly in areas where Aborigines had been deprived of opportunities for traditional hunting and gathering. He made particular reference to the need to supply goods at traditional Aboriginal meeting places and to discourage indolence.\textsuperscript{32}

With respect to health matters, Walker made it quite clear as to the causes and effects of the various diseases to which Aborigines were becoming increasingly subjected. He outlined causes such as smoking, tuberculosis and liver complaints in addition to those set out in the Select Committee Report. He also found that many of the females were sterile and had become prostitutes, often from a very early age. Infanticide was common and it was considered that Aboriginal women needed to be persuaded against the practice. Walker stressed the need to reduce mortality and the importance of continued Government support towards this end. He suggested that the type of rations needed to be changed. The unbalanced rations of flour, sugar and tea should be expanded to include meat for the sick and infirm. No mention was made of vegetable foods which presumably were gathered from traditional sources. Walker had also indicated that more stringent efforts should be made to punish the suppliers and drinkers of alcohol. He referred to the need for Aboriginal wood-reserves for winter firewood and the distribution of sufficient blankets at the approach to winter. He also strongly advocated the improved supply of medicines at depots and the attendance of salaried doctors located in the well-settled areas.\textsuperscript{33}

There is little evidence to indicate how well Walker’s comments and suggestions were received. In November 1863, the \textit{Observer} reported that the Government used data compiled by Florence Nightingale to test the ‘trustworthiness’ of such reports. Miss Nightingale claimed that in South Australia disease was the cause of the decline in the native population and that in order to ameliorate of the condition of the Aborigines, greater attention needed to be given to their physical health.\textsuperscript{34} Shortly afterwards, however, a long letter to the editor outlined the writer’s belief that the Aboriginal situation was hopeless.\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{Adelaide Almanac} recorded that the number of Aboriginal
children was ‘remarkably small’ and that the incidence of sickness was highest in those Aborigines closest to civilisation. Information on health issues was at last being publicly canvassed.

In January 1864, Walker was criticised in the Observer over his ability to adequately carry out his duty as Protector throughout the whole of the colony. The Far North had not been visited, the scattered northern Aborigines had been deprived of government rations and supplies, and there was considerable violence and attacks on settlers’ stock and property. From this time on, Walker was subjected to increasing criticism of his management of Aboriginal issues, especially in the North. In 1864 the colony was affected by what was to become a prolonged drought and this added to the problems Aborigines had in finding food and water. The drought was particularly severe in the Far North where it continued until 1870.

The importance of health issues was stressed on several occasions during 1864. Walker had drawn up a list of duties for a proposed Protector for the Northern Territory of South Australia and suggested that being a doctor was an ‘indispensable qualification for the position’, referring to the importance of the alleviation and prevention of disease as well as the results of contact with European settlement.

Walker’s Quarterly Report at the end of September 1864 was similar to his previous reports. It outlined health problems, scarcity of supplies, population decline and continued conflict with settlers, particularly in the South-East. Reference was made to three Aboriginal women remaining at the station following the birth of their children. This was noteworthy as in past years every child at the location had been destroyed immediately after birth.

Despite his continued reports, Walker received criticism of his and the government’s work with Aborigines. In August 1864, Walker was condemned for apparently concentrating his efforts on the southern districts. Two months later it was reported that there were rumours that those living in the South-East
were being neglected, although they were not ‘altogether miserable’. 42 Whether or not it was in response to these allegations, Walker commented in his Report that it was impossible for a Protector located in Adelaide to properly supervise the Far North. At the same time he referred to the recommendation of the 1860 Select Committee that Sub-Protectors were a necessary part of any system which would assist in the amelioration process. 43

In 1865 a number of issues brought Aboriginal matters to a head. Walker was still largely acting on his own initiative and reported that he found it difficult to visit all sections of the colony. He was again criticised for neglecting the Far North, despite reports of general good health and that a need for immediate rations existed only at Angipena. Meanwhile, at Tarpeena, there were reports of many deaths attributed to the effects of alcohol as well as to fighting, pleurisy and phthisis. 44 Regular reports were sent to Walker from all depots and this to some extent overcame the need for excessive travel. For example, the urgent need for suitable canoes was reported from Wellington and the Coorong. The canoes were needed for fishing and travel.

Aboriginal news was often reported in the press. The Chronicle reported in March 1865 that there was little interest in Aboriginal matters, but that their plight needed to be noted. It further exhorted the government to at least provide relief for ‘the prolongation of the lives of the Aborigines . . . and more especially as they will not much longer be burden upon us’. 45 In August, the Observer attacked Walker for not visiting the Far North and the government for failing to adhere to the recommendations of the 1860 Select Committee. Further reference was made to its failure to supply Sub-Protectors with a sufficient supply of food, blankets and other necessities. 46

Shortly after this Walker visited the Far North to investigate claims of destitution in the region. He subsequently advised that the whole area was suffering from a prolonged drought, with game animals and plant foods being very scarce. 47 Immediate relief was required. Walker reported that stores destined for the Far North were held up at Port Augusta because of transport
difficulties. He also advised that the level of sickness and destitution increased as he went further north and that more ration depots and regular deliveries of supplies were needed to deal with the problems.48

Walker was advised that increased numbers of Aborigines had been forced into Port Augusta by the prolonged drought.49 During this time the suffering and destitution in the Far North, the despatch of temporary relief rations and the need for a Sub-Protector for the District was again brought to the attention of the Parliament.50

Despite criticism to the contrary, the Protector was more active in 1865 than had been the case in previous years. This is evident in the Protector’s Quarterly Report which were published in the Government Gazette. This provided information on visits undertaken, the levels of births and deaths as well as the general condition and number of Aborigines in the various districts. Reports from different districts were also published. George Taplin from Point McLeay, for example, reported that the numbers of Aborigines there had dropped from 110 to 60 in a period of six years. Most had died of consumption and the average age of those who died was 18-19 years. Most areas reported a general improvement in health but again the level of rations needed to improve.51

In the latter part of the year a further report was tabled in Parliament indicating increased hostility towards Europeans in the Far North.52 This prompted further questioning of the government as to what it was doing to alleviate the suffering of Aborigines in that area. Matters were brought to a head in a prolonged debate led by Thomas Elder, a pastoralist with extensive holdings in the Far North. He directed the Council’s attention to a previously presented petition seeking aid for Aborigines affected by the drought.53 He expressed disgust at the government’s inaction during a time when there were considerable funds available for the relief of the Aborigines.54 Elder restated much of what Walker had reported during his last visit to the Far North, but particularly criticised the government’s failure, yet again, to appoint a resident
Protector for the area. The same debate also saw Walker criticised for his alleged failure to investigate the interests of the Aborigines, particularly in the Far North, claiming that it was his duty to travel and he failed to do so. It was also claimed that he was badly advised. While much criticism was directed at Walker, there appeared to be little or no understanding of his duties other than visiting tribes and depots, and writing reports.

Mr. J. P. Buttfield was appointed to the position of resident Sub-Protector for the Far North from 1 January 1866. Walker informed the new Sub-Protector of his duties which included the need to fully acquaint himself as to the health, means of subsistence, wants and necessities of life of the Aborigines. Specific instructions were given to visit all eleven ration stations as well as to make suggestions as to how relief can be better provided, collect data and provide general reports. The next period certainly indicated that Buttfield took his instructions seriously.

The appointment of Buttfield did not end the criticism. In the Observer, ‘An Australian’ wrote that in the North, every police officer should be a sub-protector and all police stations be provided with supplies and medicines to aid the Aborigines. A month later another writer asked why Dr. Walker could not ensure that sufficient stores were provided and implied that his duties as Protector had been compromised:

If the Protector finds that the duties of his profession occupy the greater portion of his time, why does he not resign from an office for which he receives an annual stipend, and the duties of which he is unable to perform.

Letters such as these cannot be regarded as fair judgements of how well Protectors managed, protected or aided Aborigines. However, Walker had been known to combine his medical and governmental duties, such as in the vaccination of Taplin’s children and others from 1863. In late 1866, Taplin complained that he had been unable to get his own children vaccinated and there were about twenty unvaccinated ‘blacks’ and ‘half-castes’ who needed the Protector’s attention.
On his return from a visit to the Far North, Walker presented his report on the
colony for the six months to the end of March, 1866. The Protector reported
that those Aborigines he had seen on the stations appeared to be well fed and
in good health and that reports as to their destitute state appeared to be
exaggerated. However, because of the prolonged drought about 90 Aborigines
were dependent on government rations at Port Augusta.\textsuperscript{62} In other areas,
Taplin had reported that large numbers of Aborigines had moved to Pt.
McLeay for relief and this had increased the number of aged and infirm. At
Tarpeena there had been much sickness and a continuing problem with alcohol
abuse. Buttfield had reported that the Western District was badly affected by
drought, there had been much lung disease and that rations and medicines
were needed to ‘make the passage to the grave less rugged’.\textsuperscript{63} In this and
previous reports there appeared to be contradictions. While the Aborigines
were said to be in good or even excellent health, there were constant
references to illnesses caused by exposure to the elements and constant calls
for more rations, blankets and other supplies. It was also not uncommon for
the Protector to claim that reports of destitution were often overstated.

Buttfield regularly reported to Walker, recording the extent of his travels in
the district, the condition of the land and his efforts at ameliorating the distress
of the Aborigines. A typical report indicated the prevalence of sickness such
as severe chest infections, the spitting of blood, catarrh and colds due to
exceedingly cold weather.\textsuperscript{64} He similarly reported that much of his district
remained affected by the drought and that he could not keep up with the
demand for rations, blankets and clothing. In many places he considered that
the Aboriginal population had declined due to infanticide, unsuitable diet and
prostitution. He expressed concern for the welfare of children, including part-
Aboriginal children, and sought the legal removal of young girls from the
‘wurley life’ as he claimed they were often sexually abused. Buttfield added
that he was appalled by the magnitude of the tasks which lay ahead of him.\textsuperscript{65}

Three months later, Buttfield complained to Walker that he considered his
district too large and that as a result his visits were ‘brief, intermittent and
imperfect’ although ‘the poor creatures are ever thankful for any attention I could give them’. He reported having treated many cases of ophthalmia, dropsy, syphilis and chest infections. At the same time, Buttfield complained that the quality of the flour ration was ‘of the worst description’, the land was greatly affected by the continued drought and extra rations would therefore be needed before the heat of summer brought further hardship.

John Walker visited the South-East again in mid-year and found that the ill, aged and infirm continued to need help. He expressed some concern as to whether the Aborigines in the district were starving or whether they were simply hungry as a result of not being willing to hunt or work for food. With regard to the ongoing problems of alcohol consumption among the Aborigines, Walker expressed his disgust at the alleged practice of withholding rations to intoxicated natives at Penola. He recommended the appointment of a Sub-Protector for the South-Eastern District. At Lacepede Bay he had found considerable suffering due to unusually cold and variable weather and there had been many cases of severe colds and rheumatism.

By September 1866, Walker’s health had suffered to the extent that on medical advice he requested eighteen months leave of absence to travel to Europe. The criticism and increased pressure of work had obviously taken its toll. On 13 December, E. B. Scott was appointed Acting Protector of Aborigines.

During late 1866, Parliament called for a number of returns, indicating some interest in the cost of relief to the Aborigines. A report listing all Aboriginal Reserves, their lessees and annual rent, also indicated that all rent formed part of General Revenue. In December, the House of Assembly sought a return which was to include the entire cost of the Aborigines Department, a detailed list of reports received, instructions given to the Protector of Aborigines, the number and locality of depots, quantities of rations and other related matters. This return related to the period 1860 until the end of September 1866 and was provided by E. B. Scott as Acting Protector of Aborigines.
It is interesting to note the fluctuations of income and expenditure during this six year period. In the two years following the Select Committee Report of 1860, the cost of medicines, provisions, clothing, sundries and allowances to institutions was reduced.\(^75\) However, by the end of the period the amount being spent by the colonial government on Aborigines had increased. The cost of medical attendance rose from £9.19.0 to £186.10.6 during the six years; medicines increased marginally and the cost of provisions and clothing doubled. Revenue from Aboriginal Reserves on the other hand increased in 1861 and then steadily decreased.\(^76\) Copies of the Letters of Instruction from the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration to Walker, and from Walker to Buttfield were also tabled. Both made specific reference to the need to become quite familiar with the Aboriginal situation on the broadest possible basis with particular emphasis to be given to matters such as distress and health. Similarly, clear instructions were given that rations were only to be given to those who were ‘old and infirm, orphan children, and women with infants under the age of twelve months’ and to able-bodied in times of obvious want.\(^77\)

Protectors’ reports during 1867 were similar to those of the previous year and the Acting Protector and his staff were urged to visit and report on all localities on a regular basis.\(^78\) Buttfield had always reported the great distances he had travelled in his Quarterly Reports. This no doubt helped to quash criticism that Protectors did not have first-hand knowledge of the condition of the Aborigines. Scott reported that he had travelled 2,355 miles and Buttfield over 2,000 miles in a six month period.\(^79\) He added that there were 58 depots in the colony which distributed stores and rations to ensure that ‘the wants of these people during times of scarcity of food and sickness are met, and whenever it is possible and necessary, medical practitioners are employed to attend upon the sick’.\(^80\)

Both Scott and Buttfield reported that the health of the Aborigines they saw was generally good, but the usual pulmonary sicknesses remained prevalent.
There were now seventeen depots in the Northern District and the Sub-
Protector had ensured that provisions had been distributed with care and only
to those in true need. 81 Buttfield had treated skin infections and a ‘smallpox
like’ disease at Port Lincoln. 82 Taplin reported continued drunkenness and
bemoaned an increase in the number of births as a result of prostitution; ‘I
cannot think what is to be done with the bad white men who corrupt the native
girls’. 83 Scott had reprimanded Taplin earlier in the year. Taplin, in order to
discourage indolence among the Aborigines had wanted to force the able-
bodied to work for their rations and winter issues of blankets and clothes.
Scott disagreed; unemployed able-bodied natives in want were to receive
rations and it would be cruel, he wrote, to deprive ‘the poor natives’ of their
usual winter supplies. 84

In early December 1867, Scott reported that during his period in office 1511
Aborigines had received rations from 61 depots throughout the colony. Six
institutions were also provided with aid from the government. 85 Despite this he
was under continued pressure to provide further assistance. For example, Mrs
Smith’s Mt. Gambier School needed extra housing because of the increasing
number of girls in her care, while Mt. Burr was recommended as a site for a
new depot as it was said to be frequented by Aborigines on holiday. 86

In August 1867, Walker wrote from Glasgow that his health had been restored
and he wanted to return to his duties. 87 The precise date of his return is not
clear but he had certainly visited the South East in early 1868. There he
reported that the Aborigines were generally in good to excellent health despite
the usual chest complaints, stores appeared to be of a good quality except at
MacDonnell Bay, relief rations would probably be needed at Pt. McLeay due
to the failure of crops, and the Aborigines were generally well behaved. 88

By the time he wrote his report for the first half of 1868, Walker had also
visited the Murray District and Yorke Peninsula where he reported that
Aboriginal health was good. The Aborigines at the Point Pearce institution
were also reported in good health and were well behaved. Walker also
received routine reports from other areas. Reports from Milang, Lacepede Bay and Guichen Bay were all provided by police troopers, each of whom indicated few problems except for low employment. Drunkenness was reported at Mt. Gambier and very severe cold at Tarpeena. Whooping cough was prevalent in the Western District. Butfield had reported that as the northern areas were still very dry, rations would need to be continued, and a new depot was needed at Ooteowie. The recommended closure of some depots would not adversely affect the Aborigines and would be a saving to the government. The Sub-Protector again complained of the vastness of the area he had to cover in order to adequately perform his duties. Although he had travelled over 600 miles during the last quarter, he claimed that in order just to visit all the depots over 6,000 miles of travel was required. This half-yearly Protector’s report is notable for the fact that for the first time Walker made it quite clear where he had visited and that he had travelled about 1,800 miles in the process. He also appended statistical tables which included information on offences committed by Aboriginal people, accounts of sickness and summaries of births and deaths. There were twice as many deaths than births in the colony which appeared to confirm the prediction that the Aboriginal race was doomed to extinction. The issue of rations and provisions would make the downward path a little easier for the Aborigines.

On 26 September 1868, shortly after completing his August report, Walker died of apoplexy. A widower with no surviving children, Walker received brief obituaries in the various Adelaide papers but there was negligible reference to his work. With hindsight it is difficult to measure exactly what he achieved as he appeared to maintain a low profile in the fulfilment of his duties and the positions of Protector and Sub-Protector received much criticism and little praise. The number of depots, and quantities of rations, provisions and medicines increased under Walker’s administration. Many of the reports indicated that at various times the level of health had improved but whether this actually was the case is difficult to determine. What was clear was that regular supplies of rations and clothing were important to the amelioration of the Aborigines’ health particularly where they were deprived
of their traditional resources. The pressure to provide relief in the Northern District came mainly from people other than Walker.

Following Walker’s death the position of Chief Protector was not regarded as sufficiently important for a full-time replacement to be appointed for a number of years. In fact, there was comment that the position was mainly of a clerical nature. By 1891 there were moves to have the Protector’s Office abolished. In the meantime, the system established during Walker’s Protectorship continued much as before.

Endnotes

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6 ibid., p. 745.
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10 ibid.
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12 ibid., p. 5.
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15 South Australian Advertiser, 31 October 1860, p. 3.
16 SAPD, 28 May 1861, p. 106.
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SAGG, 28 December 1865.
GRG 35/1/1866/66.
Adelaide Observer, 27 January 1866, p. 3.
ibid., 24 February 1866, p. 7.
Jenkin, op. cit., p. 124.
GRG 52/1/1866/263.
SAGG, 26 July 1866 p. 718.
ibid., p. 718.
GRG 52/1/1866/76.
GRG 52/1/1866/115.
GRG 52/1/1866/182.
ibid.
GRG 35/1/1866/2212.
GRG 35/1/1866/2674.
GRG 52/7/1866/99.
SAGG, 13 December 1866, p. 1258.
SAPP, no. 24, 1666-67, ‘Cost of Relief of Aborigines’.
ibid., no 86, 1866-67, ‘Area, Locality, etc., of Aboriginal Reserves’.
ibid., no. 198, 1866-67, ‘Aborigines Department Return’.
ibid., p. 2. ‘Sundries included such items as fishing tackle, needles, tomahawks, axes, cooking utensils, boats, and burial costs’.
ibid. Cost of provisions rose from £1183.3.6 to £2217.17.7; clothing from £421.2.7 to £993.6.6, sundries from £189.6.2 to £390.14.0 while revenue fell from a 1861 high of £1108.2.0 to £610.1.6. Poonindie had received no Government revenue after 1861 because of self-sufficiency and the Aborigines Home at Mt Gambier assistance was reduced to nil in 1865 but was allocated £25.10.8 in 1866.

ibid., p. 4.
GRG 52/1/1867/245.
SAGG, 1 July 1866, Report for the six months ending 30 June 1867, p. 664-65.
ibid., p. 665.
ibid., p. 664.

In his Quarterly Report to 31 March 1867, (GRG 52/1/1867/138) Buttfield reported a form of mange which resembled smallpox in the North. He thought the infection was caught from the Aborigines’ dogs.
SAGG, 1 July 1867, p. 664.
GRG 52/1/1867/33.
GRG 35/1/1867/1324. Total quantities of rations included, 190,400lbs of flour, 21,834 lbs of sugar, 4,086 lbs of tea, 2,806lbs. of rice and 1,759 blankets. The six institutions listed were Kopperamanna, Kadina, Lacepede Bay School, the Mt. Gambier School, Point McLeay and Poonindie.
GRG 35/1/1867/285.
GRG 35/1/1867/1134.
GRG 35/1/1868/263.
SAGG, 20 August 1868, Report for the six months ended June 30, 1868, pp. 1144-45.
ibid., pp. 1144-47.

Sources indicate three different years for when the next Protector, E. L. Hamilton was appointed. Foster suggests 1880, Kwan, 1888 and Woolmer, 1891. R. Foster, ‘Chronology of key events’, in South Australian Aboriginal History: Course Booklet, 1995, p. 19; E. Kwan, Living in South
Australia: A Social History, Netley, 1987, p. 158; G. A. Woolmer, A
Chronology of Aboriginal South Australia, 1986.

a Adelaide Observer, 29 March, 1879, p. 11.
b ibid., May 28, 1881, p. 941.