

THE JACKIE BECKET STORY

There was another anecdote from around this time when a person by the name of F.C. Cox who had horse stables at Hendra applied for 3 boys to be taken out to work. Consent of the parents was not necessary and even if the parents expressed disapproval this was ignored. The boys were to be paid 2 shillings per week which considering that they cost the state 10 shillings and 10 pence per month to keep, was considered a good proposition in the interest of sound economic management.

Mr George Becket and his wife Brinda had lost a child when the child was about 3 months of age. The couple had an older boy, Jack who had been sent out to the Hendra stables of F.C. Cox to work. After the death of the younger child, Mr and Mrs Becket became fretful and wanted Jack back living with them.

A number of heart rending letters were sent to the Chief Protector of Aborigines. They received no reply. There is a letter on file obviously written on their behalf by a compassionate person at the mission. Eventually the Chief Protector condescended to send to Mr Becket a memorandum stating in a very patronising tone:

"I received the letter written for you this morning. I can assure you that your boy will be well cared for by this employer, and possibly the person who wrote the letter for you is very kind in doing so but he or she should have explained to you that the Chief Protector is responsible by Act of Parliament for the welfare and happiness of your boy amongst many others. If Jack Becket were my own son, I would not ask different treatment for him and if you only knew it he was chosen as the best of the four from Deebing Creek to go to Sydney with Mr Cox.

Yourself and his mother may think you know what is best for the boy but I can assure you that you do not and this is why the Chief Protector is charged with the very great responsibility of protecting Aborigines -mothers, fathers and children in the dealings with the white man."

The Chief Protector wrote back to Mr and Mrs Becket a couple of weeks after this and said that they would send photographs.

Mrs Becket then wrote back saying that she was very sick, nearly unto death and that she did not want her son Jack so far away in case anything should happen to him.

By rights the boy should not have been taken out of the State of Queensland to Sydney and the Becket's were aware of this. The irony is that the Chief Protector was not truthful about where the boy was situated in that the Chief Protector had written to F.C. Cox at Mt Tyson near Pittsworth. The Chief Protector wrote to the Superintendent of Deebing Creek in February of 1908 saying that the boy was well and contented and he did not want to encourage any correspondence between his parents and himself likely to make himself feel discontented.

Reverend Robertson also wrote to the Chief Protector confirming that Mrs Becket was very ill and asking if the boy could be allowed to visit.

Again this request was treated unsympathetically. All the family had ever received in the 15 months since the initial request for contact was made was a photograph of the boy and a letter.

Unfortunately, there is no indication in the records about whether the matter was resolved or what happened to Mrs Becket.