

WJG/MH

DWO. 71/403

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72/493

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (NORTHERN)

29th June, 1971

LARRAKEYAH - LAND RIGHTS CLAIM

The following is a summary written by Mr. A. Richards of a discussion he and Mr. Damaso had with Mr. Bobby Secretary and Mr. Norman Harris on the 23/6/71: -

"As requested I joined Mr. Damaso in discussions with Mr. Bobby Secretary and Mr. Norman Harris (Baral) on 23/6/71.

Bob Secretary described how as a child he used to go with his father on hunting trips in the Nightcliff area. They used to drink at a fresh water hole. Recently he and another Larrakia man went looking for the fresh water. They found it by poking a stick into the ground where the grass green even in the Dry. They found the ground to be soft, and hollowed out a fresh water soak.

The land around the soak is part of 'Kululuk' which spread from the hospital to Nightcliff. The soak itself is to the seaward of the Paspalis Drive In.

When asked if the area had sacred significance (was it corroboree ground) Mr. Secretary said "no". Mr. Harris said "yes".

When asked whether it would be alright to build on an old corroboree ground Mr. Harris said it would be o.k. This was an old meeting place. (We didn't press this line too far - there must be other areas already built on which would at one time have had tribal significance).

Mr. Harris wanted Mr. Secretary to tell us some point but he shook his head and said we would have to talk to Tommy Lyons, Waigait 1900 (who is at Delissaville). We said we would do that. Bob Secretary said he would come with us to help because the old man was deaf. Mr. Damaso said we could get him over by boat. Norman Harris said he was too old, that it was better to go to him. He volunteered to come along too. We told them the road was not too good for old men like us to travel and left the matter in abeyance. I am not sure how deeply we should become involved.

Mr. Secretary said it was his intention to get about the young people from the tribe together but so far they were not very interested.

They gave the name of Topsy (Drysdale) Gatamanak (Larrakia 1900) as the other person who, with Tommy Lyons, could tell about the area.

They gave the following names of people who have an interest in the area:

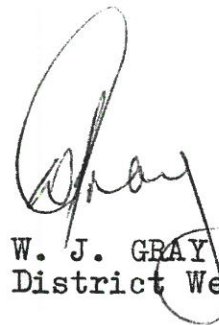
Topsy Secretary (Juninga) (1928)
Johnny Fejo (Wagait b. 1945)
Richard Rankin (Wagait b. 1950)
Gabriel Secretary (Larrakia b. 1941)"

Referring to the news item in the Northern Territory News dated 28/6/71, it can be seen that the general discussion revolving around Tommy Lyons and Topsy Drysdale could have led both Mr. Secretary and Mr. Harris to believe that they were going to Delissaville.

Mr. Richards has indicated, however, that he did not intend involving the Branch in any commitment to take either Mr. Secretary or Mr. Harris to Delissaville to interview Tommy Lyons or Topsy Drysdale.

For my own clarification I would appreciate some direction as to the way in which we should be handling this particular case. I am under the impression that the Assistant Administrator (Welfare) is asking at this stage only for discreet enquiries to be made and not a full scale investigation into the claims being made by Bobby Secretary. I am at this stage unclear as to the extent the Assistant Administrator (Welfare) wants the Division to become involved in this particular case, for it seems to me that if a meaningful investigation was to be conducted it would be necessary to interview persons other than those to be found in Darwin.

For your direction please.



W. J. GRAY
District Welfare Officer