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VISIT TO WAVE HILL LEASE

(Statement by the Hon. W.C. Wentworth, M.P.,
Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs)

Last Monday I visited Wattie Creek, which is part of Wave Hill Lease in the Northern Territory. While I was there I had an opportunity of meeting representatives of the Gurindji people, some of them are camped in the area. Previous to my going there I had studied the reports of the Sessional Committee of the Northern Territory Legislative Council upon the situation.

The Gurindji told me of their desire to hold and develop a small area of some eight square miles as their own home area and of their plans for improving it. With them I inspected the area which they wanted. They also told me that if they had this headquarters, which would be available for the women and children and their elderly folk while they were away at work, they would be able to organise contract fencing and mustering and to support themselves. They said they planned to develop their own fruit and vegetable gardens and that the site was suitable for this.

In consequence I am now, as a matter of urgency, examining with all the interested parties the implications and the methods of resuming this area from the Wave Hill Lease, and making it available for the purpose for which it has been requested. This would, of course, require the payment of equitable compensation to the present lessees.

Should this area become available, it would be necessary to provide assistance on a self-help basis with fencing and building material, so that the Gurindji can develop their home area in the way which they have said they would do.

All these suggestions are in line with those made by the Sessional Committee of the Northern Territory Legislative Council.

CANBERRA.

Friday, 12th April, 1968.