



Terry Doolan and George Fernando.



Mrs Peggy Barton with Keith and Frank Dennis.

WALGETT'S PAINFUL TRANSITION

“If you took the Aborigines out of Walgett the place would collapse” says Phillip Hall. “This place is sitting pretty compared to Goodooga and Brewarrina”.

These two statements, however, reflect the ambiguous position of the Aboriginal people in Walgett. The pace of change over recent years has resulted in an improved but uneasy relationship between the towns black and white populations.

The most blatant forms of discrimination have by and large been defeated. But “discrimination is still in the air”, as someone observed.

The present situation is a result of a combination of the vigorous activities of local people who have broken down many of the barriers and the reluctance of their opponents to abandon completely old attitudes.

Another important factor has been the town's acknowledgement of its dependence on the black



Harry Hall at work as manager of the foundation.

population. This is unavoidable when not much less than half of Walgett's total population of about 2,200 is Aboriginal.

The Good and the Bad

On the positive side are such things as over half the people having houses in town; Aborigines dominating local sports; the purchasing power alone of the Aboriginal people having broken down most discrimination in clubs and hotels (“The hotels would go broke if they didn't serve Aboriginal people”, it was said); four students sitting for the Higher School Certificate last year; about one-third of the young men driving cars etc.

But there is an underside to all of this. There is an acute housing shortage with people living in camps on the Namoi Reserve and on the southern