

Mullewa Hospital Ward.

Natives of the district are contributing one shilling a week towards the expense of erecting a special ward for native patients at the Mullewa Hospital, said the Rev. F. C. Dixon, formerly secretary of the Mullewa Hospital Board, on Thursday. Mr. Dixon, who is in Perth for a few days before sailing on the Koolinda for the North-West, where he will work at the Forrest River Mission of the Anglican Church, said that the arrangement was unique in the history of West Australian, if not Australian, hospitals. The large number of native patients being received at the hospital, which was nearly always crowded, influenced the board to approach the Health Department for an additional subsidy, but only the usual amount of 50 per cent of the cost was forthcoming. Mr. R. W. Fremlin, of Mergoo station, then proposed to the Mullewa Hospital Board that the natives themselves would be prepared to help. Those on his own stations, at Mergoo and Mt. Narryer, agreed to pay 1/ a week towards the building. One native gave a straight-out donation and, with the exception of a contribution of £5 and the Government subsidy, all the money for the erection of the ward would be found by the natives themselves. Mr. Dixon said that he hoped other station owners would interest their native employees in the contribution scheme.

The building was being erected by Crooks and Brooker, Ltd., of Geraldton, continued Mr. Dixon, and payment was being made as the contributions came in. The chairman of the Mullewa Hospital Board (the Rev. Dean Hawes), a qualified architect, had designed the structure, which would be particularly fitted for the climatic conditions. It consisted of a male and a female ward under one roof and the eaves were overhanging to give ample shade. The sides were built in up to about four feet and topped with fly wire to the roof. Blinds, well fastened to prevent flapping would be attached inside behind the wire screens. A bathroom would occupy the centre of the building and the flooring was of cement. The whole structure made a separate hospital unit some distance from the main building. When the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Mr. A. O. Neville) visited Mullewa he expressed keen appreciation of the scheme.

Mr. Dixon said that the Mullewa hospital had been overcrowded ever since its opening in November and, now that a start had been made with the native ward, the immediate need was a sleep-out and sitting-room for the nursing staff. The climatic conditions were so bad that it was difficult to keep a full permanent staff and the board incurred heavy expenditure in the employment of temporary nurses. The board hoped, therefore, that the Lotteries Commission would appreciate the need for the addition mentioned and would make a straight-out grant to enable it to be erected. The Mullewa hospital was one of the few completed during the depression period and was today suffering from the effects of the rust in district crops.