

he has reached agreement with the Civil Service Association on the increased marginal allowances payable on and from January 13, 1960. Also, as a result of the quarterly declaration of the Court of Arbitration in Western Australia, the basic rates payable have been increased on and from January 31, 1961. All the increases, together with arrears, will be paid in the pay period ending March 9.

TREE'S IDENTITY STILL A MYSTERY

In January a local newspaper published an item referring to the washing ashore of a giant 70 ft. tree at North Point, 30 miles east of Albany. This report was brought to our notice by Dr. D.L. Serventy, of the Wildlife Survey Section, C.S.I.R.O., who pointed out that, if the tree could be identified and its point of entry into the sea established, it would be of considerable scientific value. It could, he said, give us a better understanding of the movements of oceanic currents. Subsequently, Inspector J. Traynor, who was then relieving at Albany, obtained some pieces of the tree for identification with the assistance of a local fisherman and Mr. T. Herlihy of the Department of Agriculture, Albany. The party found that the tree had been washed ashore on the eastern side of North Point, just east of Two People Bay. This is 15 miles as the crow flies from Albany, but about 30 by road. Sections of the tree were obtained and after Mr. Herlihy had established that they were free of unwanted pests, such as syrex wasps, Mr. Traynor brought them to Perth whence they were air-freighted to Professor H.N. Barber, of the Botany Department of the University of Tasmania. Mr. Traynor said that the tree was 75 feet in length from the butt to the topmost branches. The latter had been broken off where they were about 6 inches in diameter. The tree was 9 feet in circumference at the butt and 20 feet from the roots was 7 ft. 6 ins. in circumference. The root system was described as being very large, similar to that of a Moreton Bay fig. It had apparently been twisted around as if the tree had been torn out of the ground by a cyclone. He estimated that the tree would have stood about 100 feet when it was intact.

Professor Barber has been carrying out interesting work into the origin of drifting trees and logs for some time. He told us that he had recently obtained further specimens of South American trees on Macquarie Island and, what is more strange, a piece of what he said was almost certainly an Australian Epacrid on South Georgia. (Epacrids vary in size from small plants 2 to 3 inches tall, to woody bushes of 4 to 5 feet in height). So far Professor Barber has not identified the tree, but will write us again when he has more data.