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# REPORT

UPON THE

## OPERATIONS OF THE SUB-DEPARTMENTS

OF

Native Affairs, Diamantina Hospital for Chronic Diseases (South Brisbane), Dunwich Benevolent Asylum, Inebriates Institution (Dunwich), Eventide Home (Charters Towers), Prisons Queensland Industrial Institution for the Blind, Westwood Sanatorium, and Licensing Commission.

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PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND.

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# Reports upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Department of Health and Home Affairs.

Department of Health and Home Affairs,  
Brisbane, 11th October, 1940.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit, for presentation to Parliament, the following information regarding the operations of the under-mentioned Sub-Departments of this Department.

C. E. CHUTER,  
Under Secretary.

DIRECTOR OF NATIVE AFFAIRS (J. W. Bleakley).

DIAMANTINA HOSPITAL FOR CHRONIC DISEASES, SOUTH BRISBANE (Acting Visiting Medical Officer, Dr. T. H. R. Mathewson; Superintendent, T. M. Daley).

DUNWICH BENEVOLENT ASYLUM (Manager and Medical Superintendent, Dr. F. C. Turnbull).

EVENTIDE HOME, CHARTERS TOWERS (Manager, W. H. Berry).

INEBRIATE INSTITUTION, DUNWICH (Manager and Medical Superintendent, Dr. F. C. Turnbull).

PRISONS (Comptroller-General, J. F. Whitney).

QUEENSLAND INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND, SOUTH BRISBANE (Manager, A. T. Fullagar).

WESTWOOD SANATORIUM (Superintendent, Dr. J. H. Blackburn).

LICENSING COMMISSION (T. A. Ferry (Chairman), R. H. Robinson, and F. P. Byrne, Commissioners; Secretary, F. P. Byrne).

## Director of Native Affairs—Information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December, 1939.

Brisbane, B.7, 20th August, 1940.

SIR,—In accordance with section 6 (2) of "The *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939*," I submit herewith the report of the administration of the above Act and its predecessor for the calendar year ending 31st December, 1939. The 1939 Act did not come into operation until 12th October of that year; consequently the administration before that date was under the earlier Act, now repealed.

Following this repeal, the natives of the islands of Torres Strait were legislated for as a separate race from the aboriginals of the mainland, under "The *Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939*," which also came into operation on 12th October, 1939.

The following report, however, deals with the joint administration of the above Acts under the Director of Native Affairs as from that date.

Under "The *Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939*" the natives of Torres Strait islands were given a new and improved status, by conferring upon them the powers and responsibilities of local government.

The main feature of "The *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939*" might be said to be the upliftment of the civilised half-castes, by automatically conferring freedom and full citizen rights where their circumstances and associations qualified them for such privilege. Other important features are provision to grant freedom to civilised full-bloods in exceptional cases, consolidation of powers for administration of native estates, for more effective government and development of aboriginal reserves, for control of native trust funds, &c. It is too early, after only a few weeks' operation, to report results; but with sympathetic guidance the preliminary stages are working satisfactorily.

The outbreak of war in the latter part of the year affected administrative machinery to some extent, several officers being called up for military or naval duty, but the staff have loyally done their best to meet the difficulties arising. The general conduct of the staff has been excellent.

### POPULATION.

The census taken by the Government Statistician on 30th June, 1939, revealed that the total aboriginal and half-caste population of the State was 18,808, of whom 10,154 were males and 8,654 females. Full-bloods comprised 12,030, and half-castes 6,778 of the above figure.

### LABOUR CONDITIONS ON LAND.

All natives experienced in stock work found regular employment, and there was also a good demand for general labourers. In the far northern protectorates, the demand for

able-bodied workers exceeded the supply, and in no place was there any serious unemployment. Forty-one natives were engaged as police trackers. The total number of aboriginals and half-castes employed in land occupations was 1,732 males and 571 females.

Patrols aggregating 377½ days were undertaken by country protectors, and a distance of 10,002 miles was covered.

### COMPENSATION.

Fifty-three claims were allowed, and the sum of £818 16s. 7d. was received as compensation and administered for the benefit of the claimants.

### ABORIGINAL ACCOUNTS.

Wages deposits to the 5,786 native accounts totalled £70,043 7s. 2d., and withdrawals amounting to £77,766 0s. 2d. were made.

The total amount held in trust for the natives throughout the State was £241,466 11s. 11d.

The *Aboriginal Protection Property Account* was credited with £784 4s. 6d. and £133 19s. 10d., representing the unclaimed estates of deceased and Savings Bank balances of missing aboriginals.

The *Aboriginal Provident Fund*, used for the relief of indigent natives, was in credit to the extent of £1,350 6s. 6d.

### RELIEF AND BLANKETS.

All old and indigent natives were supplied with rations and blankets, clothing, tobacco, &c. The cost of the blankets was £1,867 11s. 5d., and of the other relief £1,845 18s. 7d., exclusive of freight. Blankets issued totalled 1,900.

Where necessary, casual relief was granted at a cost of £343 16s. 11d.

### CRIME AMONG ABORIGINALS.

The number of convictions for offences by aboriginals was 68, and of these 54 were for drunkenness. Fines totalling £7 6s. were imposed.

### OFFENCES AGAINST ABORIGINALS.

The fourteen convictions for offences against aboriginals were punished by the imposition of £111 6s. in fines.

### REMOVALS.

Removals of aboriginals to settlements showed an appreciable decrease on those of the preceding year, 194 being removed, as compared with 250.

### HEALTH.

An extensive medical survey of all the mainland settlements and missions and some of the Torres Strait islands was carried out on behalf of the National Health and Medical Research Council. The survey was, in the main, an investigation into the incidence of leprosy, and to enable an effective check to be kept on all leper contacts.

Health conditions in the Somerset district were not satisfactory, although, generally, with the exception of an outbreak of malaria at Poid Island, the epidemics were not as severe as those which prevailed in 1938.

Tuberculosis is still the greatest menace to the existence of the people. Regular issues of dugong oil to children and ailing adults have done much to keep the disease in check; but the number of deaths towards which this disease is a contributing factor is still a matter for concern. However, it is hoped that the recent survey will do much to assist measures for increasing resistance to this complaint.

In the main, the health of the missions was good, the following illnesses occurring:—Scurvy at Doomadgee; mild malaria at Lockhart River, Mitchell River, and Moa Island; trachoma at Mornington Island; sore eyes at Weipa; influenza at Purga and Yarrabah; and measles at Monamona.

The reports of country protectors revealed that, on the whole, aborigines in their districts had enjoyed very good health. With the exception of unusual epidemics at Malanda of measles, influenza, pneumonia, and pleurisy, the country protectorates were troubled only by minor outbreaks of coughs, colds, and influenza.

In districts to which hospitals were attached natives were given treatment, and 671 patients received attention.

So far as the Government settlements were concerned, the outstanding feature, from a health point of view, was the establishment of a leper lazaret at Fantome Island, and the transfer there of all aboriginal patients from Peel Island.

Cherbourg and Woorabinda settlements were visited by epidemics of influenza, the outbreak at the latter settlement being of a serious nature; and at Palm Island outbreaks of mumps and whooping cough occurred.

### MARRIAGES.

Sixty-one marriages were celebrated, and of these fifty-six were legal and five tribal; forty-seven of the legal unions were between couples of the same breed.

### ORPHANS IN HOMES.

The Sacred Heart Mission, Thursday Island, the Salvation Army Girls' Home, Yeronga, the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Indooroopilly, and the Purga Industrial School maintained fifty-four orphans at the expense of the Department. The total cost of such maintenance was £1,080.

### COUNTRY CAMPS.

Throughout the country protectorates there are twenty-five areas set aside as aboriginal reserves, and of these seventeen are in regular use. In addition to these proclaimed areas, a number of recognised camping grounds exist. All reserves and most camps are under the supervision of local protectors, who advise that sanitary conditions were generally satisfactory.

### HALF-CASTES.

By the passing of the new "*Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939*," the term "half-caste" was changed to "half-blood." Under this Act persons with 50 per cent. or less aboriginal blood, who do not live with or habitually associate with aborigines, are not subject to departmental control unless directly declared by a judge or magistrate to be in need of such care. This provided an incentive to ambition.

Insufficient time has elapsed, however, since this Act came into operation in October for reliable observations as to the results.

### EXEMPTIONS.

Exemption certificates were issued to sixty-one males and fifteen females. In future, this privilege can be extended to deserving full-bloods.

### TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS—SOMERSET DISTRICT.

(Protector of Aboriginals and Islanders, C. O'Leary.)

#### ADMINISTRATION.

The most outstanding feature was the passing of "*The Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939*" and "*The Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939*." These Acts placed the Torres Strait Island communities in a unique position, in that they now have a constitution giving them a system of self-government, more comprehensive and progressive than is enjoyed by any other native race of similar circumstances.

#### EDUCATION.

Good progress was again in evidence. Every effort is being made to develop a system of education to meet the steady intellectual advance of the people.

The total enrolment at the fifteen primary schools was 1,076. Nine of these schools were in charge of European teachers and the remainder were controlled by trained Torres Strait islanders.

#### POPULATION.

It is pleasing to report that there was an increase of fifty-two in the total population, from 3,435 to 3,487. The percentage of births per 1,000 was 33.8, and of deaths 20.6.

#### COWAL CREEK SETTLEMENT.

This settlement continued to make steady progress. Old and indigent people, without relatives to support them, were maintained, and the young and able-bodied men were able to engage in constant employment in the marine industry, principally on boats of the Torres Strait islands.

#### LABOUR CONDITIONS ON LAND.

There was the usual steady demand for station hands, bush workers, and female domestics; 179 males and 24 females being employed under agreement. Goldmining on Lockhart River Mission and the working of wolfram deposits on St. Paul's Mission, Moa Island, provided remunerative employment for some of the workers of these missions.

#### LABOUR CONDITIONS IN THE MARINE INDUSTRY.

The marine industry provided employment for 510 men. At the beginning of the year prospects in this industry were particularly bad, due principally to the difficulty in satisfactorily marketing trochus or mother-of-pearl shell. As a consequence, it was necessary to approach the Government to continue the financial assistance granted in 1938. However, towards the end of the year, the position had improved to such an extent that it was possible for an increase in wages to be paid.

#### "COMPANY" BOATS.

The number employed on the twenty-six "company" boats owned by the islanders was 378. One hundred and ninety-four tons of marine produce were won, and 600 gallons of dugong oil were extracted. The total value of this produce was £16,818 17s. 6d.

#### ISLAND FUNDS.

The total amount standing to the credit of the island funds of all islands was £3,274 15s. 1d. The system of taxation was altered in the new Islanders Act to give the councillors of each island full power to assess the taxes to be collected for their particular island.

#### ISLAND IMPROVEMENTS.

The drainage of the swamp at Saibai Island was completed, and similar work was also undertaken at Poid and Yam Islands. Preliminary work for improving the island's water supply was undertaken at Badu Island. House-building, village-cleaning, garden-making, &c., provided daily occupation on all islands.

#### Q.G.K. "MELBIDIR."

The Department's auxiliary ketch "Melbidir" performed excellent service. In addition to the usual patrol work, this vessel is utilised for carrying cargo between the island industries store at Badu Island and the various branch stores. She also conveyed the medical investigator during his survey of the Gulf missions and Torres Strait islands. The vessel was at sea for 228 days, and patrolled a distance of 8,591 miles.

#### ISLAND INDUSTRIES BOARD.

The turnover for the year was £27,009, including £13,662 at branch stores.

The Badu Island workshop effected the building of fourteen dinghies and the refitting, repairing and recoppering of fifteen vessels, in addition to carpentry and plumbing work.

Clothing for the Northern protectorates and Gulf missions was manufactured in the workrooms of the Badu Island store.

#### WIRELESS.

The Department's radio service to all missions, Torres Strait Islands, Iron Range, and Batavia goldfields (the latter a private set working through the Department's mother station) has proved again a wonderful assistance to the administration generally, the people, individually, in outlying centres, and, not the least, to the defence services of the country.

#### GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENTS.

The population of the three Government settlements, including the 70 inmates of the lazaret, was 3,174. Conduct and discipline were very satisfactory at each place.

Aboriginal labour was in greater demand than in the previous year. The number employed under agreement was 455, and those under casual permit numbered 331.

Unfavourable weather conditions resulted in a decrease in the production of vegetable and farm products.

The total number of cattle at Cherbourg was 1,597, at Palm Island 483, and at Woorabinda 2,762 head.

Industrial operations at all settlements were maintained at a satisfactory standard. Native tradesmen, farm hands, stockmen, fencers, builders, sawmill attendants, and village

cleansing and improvement gangs all did good work. Other natives employed in school, hospital, police and domestic duties gave equally good service.

Revenue collections at Cherbourg were £4,610, at Palm Island £4,758, and at Woorabinda £6,402.

The retail store turnover, including cash sales, bank orders and free issues, were as follows:—Cherbourg £3,813, Palm Island £8,067, and Woorabinda £5,504.

#### EDUCATION.

Exclusive of the Torres Strait teaching service, already dealt with, educational facilities were provided by means of native schools on Government settlements and missions, and provisional schools in districts with large native populations.

The enrolments at the Cherbourg, Palm Island and Woorabinda settlements' schools were 237, 182, and 117 respectively. Instructions were given in academic, domestic and rural school subjects. Epidemics hampered the usual routine at Palm Island and Woorabinda, but at Cherbourg a particularly good year was recorded.

Mission schools were attended by 798 children, and progress, both in academical and technical education, was satisfactory.

Children, numbering 136, received instruction in the provisional schools at Gaydah, Mitchell, Myora and Thursday Island.

Some children in isolated centres were educated through the State Correspondence School, whilst others, resident in districts in which State schools were established, attended there.

#### RECREATION.

In a successful community life both work and play must have their place. All work and no play does not make for a progressive and enlightened people, and this fact is realised fully by settlement and mission authorities alike.

Practically all institutions, such as settlements or missions, found recreation in such games as football, boxing, cricket, rounders, or vigoro. Fishing, swimming, hunting, bush

“walkabout,” and practice with native weapons were all popular, and young and old enjoyed the native corroborees, which are always encouraged. Even European dancing was enjoyed by the more civilised element, at which they usually become quite efficient.

Christmas festivities were observed by the usual enjoyments, gifts and special issues.

#### MISSIONS.

There are fourteen missions throughout the State, controlled by the following religious denominations:—Church of England, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Lutheran, Salvation Army, and Brethren. The interest shown in and the attendances at religious services were very satisfactory.

Conduct and discipline, for the most part, were good, and a spirit of industry was manifested by the majority of inmates.

Lack of skilled assistance retarded building progress at some of the missions, but at those at which it was available good work was accomplished.

Farm and stock operations were carried on successfully.

Mission natives not occupied in productive or development work in their own communities found employment outside as domestics, station workers and seamen. The demand for such labour was somewhat irregular.

All missions expressed appreciation of the sympathetic assistance of the Department.

#### APPRECIATION.

Grateful appreciation is expressed of the kindly assistance received from the Minister and officers of the Health and Home Affairs Department and all other Departments in the service. The loyal work of the Deputy Director and officers of the Department of Native Affairs and its institutions, the officers of police acting as district protectors, and of all mission and school officers has been the main support in the task of carrying on under difficult circumstances.

**Report upon the Operations of certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department - Aboriginal Department, Information contained in Report for the year ended 31st December 1939**

Corporate Author: Queensland Home Secretary's Department

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