

1941.

QUEENSLAND.

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.

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND.

BRISBANE:

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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, 1941.

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).

INEBRIATES 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, 1940.

Brisbane, B.7, 21st July, 1941.

SIR.—I have the honour to submit report under "*The Aborigines Preservation and Protection Act of 1939*" and "*The Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939*" for the year ended 31st December, 1940.

POPULATION.

The total aboriginal and half-blood population, as revealed by the census taken at the 30th June, 1940, was 15,149, of whom 8,254 were males and 6,895 were females. Full-blood aborigines numbered 8,985 and half-bloods 6,164. As a result of the Torres Strait Islanders Act, a separate census is taken of the people of the Torres Strait islands. This showed their total population to be 3,508, comprising 1,796 males and 1,712 females.

LABOUR CONDITIONS ON LAND.

The drain on white labour, through war recruitments, has increased the demand for aboriginal labour, particularly in the northern and far-western districts, where the demand exceeded the labour available. The total number employed was 1,982, of whom 1,484 were males and 492 females. Forty-one natives were engaged as police trackers.

Patrols aggregating 200 days were undertaken by country protectors, a distance of 6,910 miles being covered.

COMPENSATION.

Twenty claims totalling £1,248 17s. 4d. were allowed, the compensation granted being administered for the benefit of the claimants.

ABORIGINAL ACCOUNTS.

The number of bank accounts held for aborigines was 5,746, to which wages earned, totalling £86,450 13s. 2d., were deposited. The withdrawals from these accounts amounted to £84,272 6s. 10d.

The total amount held in trust throughout the State was £235,004 5s. 3d.

Unclaimed estates of deceased natives, amounting to £132 5s. 2d., and Savings Bank balances of missing natives, amounting to £14 7s. 10d., were credited to the Aboriginal Protection Property Account. The credit balance of this account was £3,847, of which £2,765 is invested.

Contributions by natives in employment towards the Aboriginal Provident Fund amounted to £2,420.

RELIEF AND BLANKETS.

All indigent natives in need of such, whether in country protectorates, settlements or missions, were supplied with blankets, the issue totalling 4,270. The cost of this supply, including hunting and fishing material, clothing and tobacco for bush blacks, was £2,344 10s. 2d. Permanent and casual rations for country camps cost £1,840 7s. and £433 6s. 1d., respectively.

CRIME AMONG ABORIGINES.

There were 105 convictions for offences by aborigines, of which 66 were for drunkenness. Fines totalling £24 were imposed.

OFFENCES AGAINST ABORIGINES.

Fourteen convictions for offences against aborigines resulted in the imposition of £27 in fines.

REMOVALS.

Removals of aborigines to settlements and missions where necessary for care and control numbered 114, as compared with 194 in the preceding year.

HEALTH.

From this point of view the year has been most satisfactory. In the Somerset district, beyond an outbreak of scabies, there was no serious illness. The vigilance of teachers and regular mass treatment for hookworm has kept the incidence of this disease down to a minimum. The appointment of a permanent medical officer at Thursday Island will enable health matters to be more effectively dealt with.

On the mission stations the health of the inmates has been the best for years, only mild epidemics of coughs, colds, scabies and influenza occurring.

With the exception of epidemics of measles at Cherbourg, measles and pneumonia at Palm Island, and influenza at Woorabinda, the health of the settlements has been good.

Nursing sisters of the Order of Our Lady Help of Christians took up duty at the leprosarium established at Fantome Island for aboriginal cases in the early part of the year.

In country districts natives receive hospital treatment at the nearest local hospital, the number so treated being 577. Throughout all protectorates only minor epidemics of coughs, colds and influenza had been experienced.

Aboriginal Hospital, Fantome Island.—During the year 162 patients were admitted for treatment; 184 were discharged cured, 34 died, and 198 were still under treatment at the end of the year. A new village was established for the old people at Wallaby Point, releasing the eastern end of the island for a site for the aboriginal leprosarium.

There has been a freedom from epidemics and no case of serious accident.

Conduct was generally good. A disturbing incident was the cyclone in February, which caused damage to nurses' quarters and a native dormitory.

Religious ministrations have been regularly maintained.

MARRIAGES.

Sixty-five marriages were recorded, and of these 61 were legal and 4 tribal; 49 of the legal unions were between couples of the same breed.

ORPHANS IN HOMES.

Fifty-three orphans were maintained at the expense of the Department in the Sacred Heart Mission, Thursday Island, the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Indooroopilly, the Salvation Army Girls' Home, Yeronga, and the Purga Industrial School. The total cost of such maintenance was £1,153 17s. 10d.

COUNTRY CAMPS.

Three new aboriginal reserves at Camooweal, Eulo and Coen were set aside during the year. All reserves and camping grounds were under the supervision of district protectors who, for the most part, reported satisfactorily of the conditions thereon.

HALF-BLOODS.

"*The Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939*" automatically exempted persons of not more than 50 per cent. aboriginal blood who no longer associated with aboriginals. Numbers who previously had received education and technical training when under the Department's care have taken their new place in the community better equipped to make good.

To assist them in the transition stages, villages have been built up at several places to improve housing conditions, special schools established to provide education, and plans are well forward for a voluntary training colony for half-bloods, to provide the young people, destined to take their place in the civilised community, with the right home environment and technical training to fit them to maintain themselves as citizens.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS AND SOMERSET DISTRICT.

(Protector of Aboriginals and Islanders, T. R. Pryor.)

ADMINISTRATION.

The year 1940 was actually the first year under the operation of "*The Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939.*" The islanders have appreciated the measure of home rule given to them under this Act, and the elected councils have shown gratifying keenness to carry out its intentions.

EDUCATION.

The total enrolment at the 13 primary schools, excluding St. Paul's Mission, Moa Island, and Hammond Island Mission, was 947. Six of the larger schools are in charge of European teachers with native assistants, the remaining 7 being in charge of trained natives. One pleasing feature was the diligence displayed by the 54 native teachers and assistants employed in this service.

It was also gratifying to note that the standard of education was satisfactorily maintained.

COWAL CREEK SETTLEMENT.

The efforts of this self-controlled community to maintain itself must receive praise. A high standard of industry and cleanliness was maintained. The extensive gardens produced good crops of fruit and vegetables, and a goat herd provided milk and meat regularly to the people, and this was added to by organised hunting for wild cattle and fish.

LABOUR CONDITIONS ON LAND.

During the year, 192 males and 26 females were employed under agreement. The demand for stockmen on cattle stations continued very steadily.

Employment was available, in many instances, under award conditions, in the wolfram and gold-mining industries, especially at Poid Island and Lockhart River Mission.

LABOUR CONDITIONS IN THE MARINE INDUSTRY.

Approximately 500 men were employed in this industry. The pearl-shell market at first showed little improvement, but trochus-shell offered better prospects. However, this shortly after deteriorated, and it was necessary to provide Government assistance, by financing the working of the vessels, to keep the men employed until the shell held could be sold.

ISLAND BOATS.

Twenty-five island boats, owned by islanders, employed about 300 men. Total marine produce won was 221 tons. Owing to accumulation of stocks of dugong oil, this product was not worked extensively.

The total value of produce won was £19,154 1s. 1d.

ISLAND FUNDS.

With the introduction of the Torres Strait Islanders Act and the budget system, as from the 1st January, 1940, each council fixed its own taxes according to its budget. The island fund balances as at the 31st December, 1939, were not operated on except where specially approved, and at the end of the year any resultant surplus or deficit was transferred to the accumulated fund.

The total amount standing to the credit of island funds of all islands was £2,622 12s. 4d.

ISLAND IMPROVEMENTS.

Among the improvements carried out were the extension of the drainage of the swamp at Saibai Island, also of the reticulation scheme at Badu Island, re-designing and renovation of a shower-house and water tank at Darnley Island, putting down a new well at Yorke Island, and the improvement of the water supply at Boigu Island.

Q.G.K. "MELBIDIR."

This vessel, while available, gave excellent service, but patrol work was seriously hampered by two slippings for repairs and trouble in running, through engine faults due to the difficulty in securing the services of a competent engineer.

The vessel was at sea for 105 days and patrolled a distance of 6,059 miles.

ISLAND INDUSTRIES BOARD, BADU ISLAND.

The turnover for the year ended 31st March, 1941, was £29,541, including £15,557 at branch stores.

Improved slipping facilities increased the output, enabling 13 new dinghies to be turned out. In addition, carpentering, plumbing, blacksmithing and the training of apprentices were undertaken.

The dressmaking department was kept busy supplying the increasing demand for various lines of clothing and fancy goods.

WIRELESS.

The wireless network, working through the mother station at Thursday Island, again gave unflinching service to the 14 out-stations and the Q.G.K. "Melbidir." The volume of traffic was well maintained, and many cases of sickness received prompt assistance as a result.

GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENTS.

The population of the settlements was 3,195, including 74 inmates of the lazaret at Fantome Island.

Conduct at each settlement was satisfactory; most of the inmates were law-abiding and contented.

The demand for aboriginal labour greatly exceeded the amount available. The number employed under agreement was 373, and under casual permit 174.

Productive activities occupied those not engaged in outside employment, and other inmates assisted in the teaching and medical services. Native police helped to maintain law and order.

A cyclone at Palm Island in the early part of the year caused considerable damage to the administrative buildings and native houses in the village.

Despite unfavourable weather conditions, good results were obtained from the cultivation of vegetable and farm products.

At Cherbourg, cattle numbered 592 and horses 26. Owing to drought 623 head of cattle were transferred to Woorabinda for agistment. Stock at Palm Island numbered—cattle 483, horses 38; at Woorabinda—cattle 3,313 (including Cherbourg transfers), horses 81; and at Fantome Island—cattle 24, horses 5.

Revenue collections were:—Cherbourg, £4,394 6s. 8d.; Palm Island, £9,111 2s. 4d.; Woorabinda, £6,518 5s. 5d.

Turnover at the retail stores, including cash sales, bank orders, and free issues, was as follows:—Cherbourg, £3,004 6s. 1d.; Palm Island, £7,993 13s. 4d.; Woorabinda, £5,936 19s. 10d.

EDUCATION.

The number of children attending settlement schools was—Cherbourg, 238; Palm Island, 209; Woorabinda, 113.

A satisfactory standard was maintained in academical subjects, and also good progress was made in manual training and domestic science subjects, particularly at Cherbourg and Palm Island, which are the most advanced.

RECREATION.

All forms of recreation, particularly outdoor sport, were encouraged, and added enjoyment was obtained from wireless, picture shows, and native and European dancing. Corroborees and practice with native weapons, hunting, and fishing were always popular.

MISSIONS.

Appreciation must be expressed of the self-sacrificing work of the superintendents and officers of the various missions under very difficult conditions in their work of raising the primitive races to an understanding and interest in home and community life.

Despite climatic and other difficulties, agricultural and industrial operations showed good results. To meet the demand for aboriginal labour from outside sources, provided it did not handicap mission activity, several missions allowed some of the young men to go to station and farm employment.

APPRECIATION.

It is desired to express gratitude to the staff of head office, and of this sub-department, the police protectors, medical officers, hospitals, and all other departments, who have afforded valuable assistance during the past year.

Report upon the Operations of certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department - Director of Native Affairs, Information contained in Report for the year ended 31st December 1940

Corporate Author: Queensland Home Secretary's Department

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