

1943.
QUEENSLAND.

REPORT

UPON THE

OPERATIONS OF THE SUB-DEPARTMENTS

OF

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

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, 21st September, 1943.

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.

R. H. ROBINSON,
Acting Under Secretary.

NATIVE AFFAIRS (Director, C. O'Leary).

JUBILEE HOSPITAL FOR CHRONIC DISEASES, DALBY (Superintendent, T. M. Daly).

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

EVENTIDE HOME, CHARTERS TOWERS (Manager, E. P. Kelleher).

INSTITUTION FOR INEBRIATES, DUNWICH (Superintendent, Dr. F. C. Turnbull).

QUEENSLAND INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND, SOUTH BRISBANE (Manager, J. E. Townsley).

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

Native Affairs—Information contained in Report of Director of Native Affairs for the Twelve Months ended 30th June, 1943.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit report under "The *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939*" and "The *Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939*," as at the 30th June, 1943.

Population.—Due to the international situation the usual census of aboriginals was not taken by the Bureau of Industry, but there is no reason to assume that the figures of the 30th June, 1941, being the date of last census, have materially altered; the population then was aboriginals, 8,977; half-castes, 6,451; Torres Strait Islanders, 3,675.

Use of Aboriginals under War Conditions.—The Department's organisation set up last year to provide the maximum amount of aboriginal labour for employment under essential primary industries functioned very satisfactorily.

Aboriginal gangs were instrumental in harvesting the maize crop at Atherton, the peanut crop at Kingaroy, and the arrowroot crop at Coomera. They also assisted materially with the cotton crop in the Callide Valley and in canecutting at Ingham and Bundaberg.

Expressions of appreciation of the efforts of these men and their conduct generally have been forthcoming.

All labour is employed under award conditions and is supervised by Departmental officers.

At present the following gangs are employed:—

Canecutting.—100 men from Cherbourg and Woorabinda Settlements, at Bundaberg. 50 men from Yarrabah Mission and local Protectors, in the Cairns and Babinda districts. 120 men from Palm Island Settlement, at Ingham.

Maize Harvesting.—90 men from Palm Island and Yarrabah Mission, at Atherton.

Arrowroot Digging.—80 men from Woorabinda Settlement, at Coomera.

Cotton-picking and General Farm Work.—80 men from Cherbourg and Woorabinda Settlements employed adjacent to these settlements.

In addition to the foregoing every man suitable for employment in the pastoral industry has been recruited for such work from church missions and Government settlements. Including men employed in the essential primary industries, there are approximately 2,800 aboriginals, male and female, employed in Queensland, the majority being in occupations essential to the war effort.

Government Settlements and Church Missions.—Despite the depletion of man-power for essential work outside settlements and church missions, these institutions have concentrated on

greater production of essential food crops with commendable results, and thus their peoples generally are not suffering to any appreciable degree because of the shortage of seasonable vegetables.

At Yarrabah Mission it was possible to dispose of surplus vegetables to the Military Authorities at Cairns.

At Cherbourg Settlement the irrigation plant installed a few years ago was instrumental in excess production of vegetables to such extent that 20 tons were transferred to Woorabinda Settlement, Dunwich, and other State Institution Homes.

Cattle-raising at Woorabinda and Cherbourg Settlements has been systematically developed, and stock to the value of £2,416 was sold. Beef requirements for these settlements are met from home-grown supplies.

At Cherbourg Settlement 14 native cottages were erected, and at Woorabinda Settlement a new village was established for the accommodation of Cape Bedford aboriginals evacuated there by order of the Military Authorities. In both cases settlement-milled timber was utilised, and all the work performed by aboriginal tradesmen.

On church missions in the Gulf of Carpentaria aboriginal labour under the direction of mission superintendents has actively co-operated with the Military Authorities, and while records of the work performed by these aboriginals are not available, there is the assurance that their efforts have been of considerable assistance. From these missions, also, labour is employed in C.C.C. work, and favourable reports of their industry and conduct have been received.

Clothing Requirements.—The shortage of clothing for aboriginals, which prevailed in the early portion of the year, has been overcome by special releases which are now being distributed, and which will relieve, for the time being at least, any hardship caused through inability to obtain clothing, particularly in the far Northern missions and distant Western areas.

Special sewing rooms have been established on the three Government settlements in which women's and men's clothing will be made up from materials obtained. Thus the shortage of ready-made clothing will not adversely affect Queensland aboriginals.

In lieu of blankets, the supply of which is limited, Government settlements have concentrated on the making of waggas, and 1,200 were distributed last year to needy aboriginals.

Health.—Generally the health of the aboriginals has been satisfactory. The only serious epidemic occurred at Lockhart

River Mission where 25 deaths resulted from an outbreak of measles with complications. Here, as elsewhere, the Military Authorities readily acceded to a request from the Department for medical officers.

Education.—Steady progress has been recorded from all primary schools. In the far North, war conditions militated for a time against regular education, but the general improvement has now resulted in all schools operating on the basis of pre-war days. The number of aboriginal children attending primary schools throughout the State is 2,266.

The manual training classes at Cherbourg Settlement, which are established to provide tuition in woodwork, leather work, and sheet-metal work for aboriginal boys on Government settlements, have recorded satisfactory progress, and several of the pupils are now apprenticed to aboriginal tradesmen.

Arrangements have been made with the Church of England authorities to take at All Souls' School, Charters Towers, up to 8 selected aboriginal boys for secondary education. This innovation it is hoped will produce student teachers for aboriginal schools or assistants in stores, offices, and other administrative undertakings. The financial assistance rendered by the State Government to the Anglican Church for this purpose has been gratefully acknowledged by His Grace Archbishop Wand.

Aboriginal Accounts.—The total amount held in trust in the savings bank accounts of aboriginals is £274,713. Every facility is provided for aboriginals to withdraw within reason against their savings bank accounts. In the case of deceased aboriginals, immediately following death being reported, action is taken to distribute the estate amongst the next of kin.

Torres Strait Islanders.—With the outbreak of hostilities with Japan all the larger vessels of the Torres Strait fleet were taken over for Defence purposes and the smaller ones were immobilised.

All physically capable Islanders, approximating 800, joined the armed forces as sailors or soldiers, and they have attained a high reputation as such with the Authorities.

In May, 1943, at the direction of the Hon. the Minister, the Public Service Commissioner and the Director of Native Affairs visited Torres Strait for the purpose of investigating the living conditions of these people in the war zone and necessary action to reinstitute effective administration where such had failed to function. Every inhabited island of Torres Strait was visited.

In March, 1942, the civil population, including the Protector of Islanders and his staff, was compulsorily evacuated from Thursday Island, and the local administration was

carried on by the manager, Island Industries, Badu Island, Mr. W. C. Curtis. As part of the reorganisation of administration Mr. Curtis has been appointed Acting Protector of Islanders, Thursday Island, and has been given sufficient staff to enable a renewal of the control and direction of the Islanders and which they earnestly sought during the visit. Ample supplies of foodstuffs and clothing are going forward to Torres Strait.

The Torres Strait Island people are rendering excellent service in the war effort, and apart from the men in the armed forces, every man or woman and most of the children are engaged in some wartime activity. The efforts of the women in providing comforts for their menfolk through the Red Cross are an excellent example of what organised efforts in this direction can attain.

Visit by His Excellency the Governor.—The visit of His Excellency the Governor to Torres Strait was keenly appreciated by the Department and the Torres Strait people. Such visit has brought home to them the maintained interest in their welfare, and the suggestions made by His Excellency, following such visit, will be of assistance in formulating a post-war policy for the advancement of the Torres Strait race.

Wartime Evacuation.—With the outbreak of war with Japan, the evacuation of coloured people from the far North was necessary. The State Government arranged for the provision of accommodation for Roman Catholic sisters and 90 coloured people from Hammond Island at Cooyar. Similar provision was made for Church of England missionaries and Papuan orphan evacuees to Scarborough. The evacuation of Cape Bedford Mission at the request of the Military Authorities was undertaken and all such aboriginals established at Woorabinda Settlement. Approximately 200 coloured citizens from Thursday Island were temporarily accommodated at Cherbourg Settlement pending their being absorbed in rural industries.

Scouting.—The Boy Scout movement in Torres Strait has virtually lapsed due to the absence of all able-bodied men in the armed forces. At Palm Island Settlement the Boy Scout troops are particularly active and the influence of the movement on the boys generally is of considerable assistance in maintaining discipline.

Appreciation.—It is desired to express gratitude to the staff of head office, Government Settlements, Police Protectors of Aboriginals, medical officers and hospitals for the care and assistance which they have rendered to aboriginals. Likewise to Church missionaries for their self-sacrificing efforts under particularly trying conditions, the thanks of the Department are tendered.

Native Affairs - Information contained in Report of Director of Native Affairs for the Twelve months ended 30th June 1943

Corporate Author: Queensland, Director of Native Affairs
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