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1917.

QUEENSLAND.

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ANNUAL REPORT

OF

THE CHIEF PROTECTOR OF ABORIGINALS

FOR

THE YEAR 1916.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND.

BRISBANE:

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ANNUAL REPORT, 1916.

TO THE UNDER SECRETARY, HOME SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT.

Office of Chief Protector of Aborigines,
South Brisbane, 20th April, 1917.

SIR,—I have the honour to report upon the working of this Department for the year ending 31st December, 1916.

During the year, in accordance with usual custom and regulations, I paid my annual visit of inspection to the Mission Stations and Settlements in the North, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in Torres Strait, also to a number of camps in the Cairns, Herberton, and Atherton districts, and near Cape York.

The Hon. the Minister also paid a visit to the principal islands of Torres Strait, and on his return journey inspected the Yarrabah Mission and Hull River Settlement, expressing his satisfaction at the evidences of progress.

A full account of the inspections was furnished to you, and a separate report on the progress of these stations is submitted herein.

EXHIBITION OF ABORIGINAL HANDIWORK.

The Aboriginal Court in the National Agricultural Association's Annual Show in August was again one of the exhibits of interest to a daily crowd of visitors.

Practically all the institutions displayed samples of native handiwork and industrial products, which called forth many expressions of admiration, especially of the sewing and fancy work done by the school children. A very fine recruiting poster in the shape of a crayon map of the Dardanelles, decorated with patriotic emblems and portraits of the leading generals, &c., is worthy of special mention. This was drawn by two half-castes, children of the Thursday Island Aboriginal School, and is a very creditable piece of work.

The usual certificates and money prizes were distributed where deserved, and are a great encouragement to the pupils.

LABOUR CONDITIONS ON LAND.

The demand for aboriginal labour has far exceeded the supply available, and as a consequence higher rates of wages than ever previously received have been readily paid by employers.

Early in the year instructions were issued to Protectors and Settlement officials that, in

districts where suitable white labour was available, aborigines were not to be engaged at rates which would allow them to unduly compete with such white workers. No difficulty, however, has occurred in this direction, for in the industries most suitable for natives, such as cattle station work, the supply of white labour, probably owing to the recruiting for the war, has been inadequate in most districts.

As a rule, the demand for aboriginal labour only arises where white labour is not available, as it is only in odd cases it is equal in value, so the above instructions are evidently a sufficient safeguard.

The State is now divided into sixty-four protectorates, and the returns show that agreements were entered into for 3,553 males and 623 females for terms up to twelve months, and permits were issued for 472 males and 74 females to engage casually, without agreement, for short terms. Arranging these engagements and superintending the payment of wages and fulfilment of the conditions of agreement has entailed considerable work, and it reflects much credit upon the police officers acting as Protectors, most of whom are burdened with numerous other duties, that only on very few occasions has it been necessary to invoke the aid of the law to enforce the regulations.

The Police Department has, as usual, employed a large number of intelligent married men as trackers, and two were sent to Victoria for service in a similar capacity.

LABOUR CONDITIONS ON BOATS.

Six hundred and sixty-nine aborigines were engaged during the year for employment on the fishing fleets in Torres Strait, an increase of 132 on the previous year's returns. To meet the great request for such labour, the local Protector recruited forty-two boys from the Kendall River, an entirely new field, but not more than half of them have settled down to the work. The remainder after deserting and being recaptured several times, have again cleared out, and five of them are believed to have been drowned in swimming from Entrance Island to the mainland. It is feared this will prejudicially affect further recruiting in this district.

The wages earned by mainland natives on these fleets was £1,162, which was all paid and expended under Government supervision. Torres Strait islanders earned £3,820.

As the Protectors of Somerset, Coen, and Cook districts have a coastline of nearly 900 miles to protect, and the only patrol boat is the "Melbidir," whose services are practically monopolised in Torres Strait, the fact that numerous complaints of abuses committed by alien recruiters are received is hardly to be wondered at. Natives have been, and no doubt still are, illegally employed on the reefs, and their women abused, the inducement being the grog supplied. One alien family, long suspected of illegal practices, has been prohibited from recruiting in any of the above districts.

To combat a practice growing amongst certain boatowners of exceeding the limits of the permits granted, instructions have been issued to all the coastal Protectors that no officers are to grant permission to recruit in another's district without his sanction, and all strict inquiries are to be made as to the recruit's past records and district to which he belongs, with a view to discovering and punishing offences.

Owing to the demand for aboriginal labour for fishing fleets, some agitation has from time to time arisen for the opening of the Gulf Mission Reserves to recruiters. The Missions in occupation, owing to the insufficient means at their command, are unable to receive and profitably occupy more than a portion of the natives on the area, and the recruiters, seeing in the unoccupied portion of this "labour" a source of supply for their own needs, are clamouring for the abolition of what they call "a dog-in-the-manger" policy. But to the missionary and his work the intrusion of the recruiter threatens so many obstacles and dangers that he seems justified in deciding that the two systems cannot work side by side. Apart from the unsettling effects of life on the fleets, the dangers of contracting and introducing vices and diseases to his family and other inmates are not compensated for by the few shillings earned. If any social progress is to be made by the aboriginal, he will have to be zealously protected from the type of alien usually met with in fishing fleets, and any unbiassed person will admit that the welfare of the aboriginal will be better assured when he can be trained and profitably occupied in pursuits which will not have as their inevitable result the undermining of his moral and physical health and the disintegration of his family life.

As it is on the East Coast, where recruiting has been permitted for many years, that practically all the abuses complained of are practised, I would again urge the early establishment of a Government recruiting depôt to superintend this recruiting and the disbursement of the wages earned, an institution which, if conducted on business lines, should be practically self-maintained.

INSURANCE AND COMPENSATION.

On 1st July, 1916, "*The Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Act of 1916*" came into force, and as aboriginal workers are eligible for its benefits, steps were immediately taken to inform all employers in this State of their liability to insure their servants, whether male or female. By the courtesy of the Insurance Commissioner, who with his staff has most obligingly helped and met this Department in

every way, arrangements were immediately made for efficient supervision of aboriginals' claims and control of compensation granted, and all Protectors and officers were furnished with printed instructions for the guidance of themselves and all employers.

A question arose as to the position of insured aboriginal workers who were employed under agreement which entitled them to medical attention and maintenance, while sick or incapacitated through accident, at the employer's expense, for the usual rate of compensation allowed was less than the value of such benefits, and employers claimed that compulsory insurance relieved them of this liability. The Crown Solicitor, however, ruled that such insurance did not relieve the employer of any liability under his agreement, but that the worker could not claim an aggregation of wages and compensation in excess of the wages accruing.

The position of aboriginal workers on Mission Stations was also considered, as the institutions are not employers in the ordinary sense, but are really conducting relief and industrial instruction work among the natives under Government supervision and assistance. On the recommendation of the Commissioner, the Treasurer approved of regarding them as Government workers for the purpose of insurance. Up to the end of December, compensation was granted to eight aboriginal claimants, and paid on their behalf to the Protector of the district.

ABORIGINAL TRUST ACCOUNTS.

The returns of operations upon the Savings Bank accounts show that 862 new accounts were opened, the total number now in trust being 5,823, or about 34 per cent. of the total aboriginal population, showing that a very gratifying percentage of them are wage-earners and more or less self-supporting.

The balance to credit, which is now £72,829, shows an increase of £15,974 for the year, and averages £12 10s. per head. Some Protectors boast of having individual accounts with over £100 to credit. Of the wages collected and deposited fully 60 per cent. was returned to the earners in withdrawals for clothing, property, relief, or amusement. The majority of native workers have now settled down contentedly to the system of having portion of their earnings paid to the Protector and banked, and recognise the advantage of such a provident fund. Some dissatisfaction is at times expressed by natives employed at stations long distances from the banking centre, because of the difficulty of withdrawing their money when wanted, or because—and this grievance is usually suggested by a disappointed employer, with an eye to the profit to be made—this checks them from spending it all, as fast as it is earned, in the station store.

In one or two cases also, employers have felt aggrieved because, after such money has been banked, their request for the whole or large sums of it to be returned, usually to pay for a horse sold by them to the boy, or some other unauthorised or equally unnecessary expenditure incurred, has been refused. It is often difficult for a Protector, perhaps 200 miles away, to discriminate between reasonable and unreasonable

requests for money, and in his zeal to protect his charge from imposition or extravagance, he may err a little on the side of carefulness.

But, as a general rule, reasonable requests for withdrawals are granted where such are shown to the Protector's satisfaction to be in keeping with the objects for which the system was established.

An erroneous idea prevails in some quarters that these funds are devoted to upkeep of Missions, but every opportunity is taken to explain this to depositors, and, further, that in the event of death every effort is made to trace relatives or dependents, who should be entitled to the estate, before it is transferred to the property account to be utilised for benefit of aboriginals generally.

AUXILIARY KETCH "MELBIDIR."

In the earlier part of the year the vessel was in Brisbane undergoing her periodical overhaul, but returned to Torres Strait in time to convey portion of the Minister's party on his visit to the Strait to inspect the Papuan Industries Station. She afterwards conveyed the Chief Protector on a visit to the Missions in the Gulf and on Mornington Island. Practically all her time was occupied from then till the end of the year in acting as a patrol boat and tender for the Torres Strait Island schools, and no opportunity could be made for much-needed inspection of the camps on the East Coast.

At the end of the year Captain Malcolm Smith, who had occupied the position of master of the ketch for five years, retired to enjoy a well-earned pension due to him as an officer of the Police Department. To his ability as a mariner and care of his vessel as a master can be attributed the immunity from accident and splendid condition generally of the vessel and her engine, although both master and vessel were frequently called upon to show their mettle on long journeys to sea under anything but favourable weather conditions.

Captain Smith was succeeded by Captain F. G. Graham, from the Harbours and Rivers Department, who took up his duties with the New Year.

CERTIFICATES OF EXEMPTION.

Certificates of exemption from the provisions of the *Aboriginals Protection Acts* were granted to 66 half castes—53 males and 13 females. The strictest inquiry was made into each case before submitting it to the Minister, to ensure that only such as were legally eligible, and by their intelligence and habits were otherwise entitled to their freedom, should be released. A number of applications were refused, the inquiries showing that the nationality or character of the applicant was an obstacle, the request frequently having plainly arisen from a desire on the part of the employer to evade the Department's supervision of the wages dealings with the natives.

Three certificates were withdrawn—viz., Rob Davis for intemperance and procuring liquor for aboriginals, Maimie Williams for immoral conduct, and Tommy Duncan for being incapable of protecting himself.

REMOVALS AND RECOGNIZANCES.

Permits were granted in terms of section 17 of "*The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts, 1897 to 1901*," to 112 employers to remove servants to other districts, and in 110 cases bonds were entered into for their return to their own districts. It was not found necessary in any case to take action to estreat.

FOOD AND OTHER RELIEF.

The following are the centres from which regular relief rations were issued during the year, and the average monthly expenditure incurred:—

Station.	Amount per month.		
	£	s.	d.
Annandale	5	0	0
Ayr	2	0	0
Bedourie	3	2	9
Betoota	4	0	0
Birdsville	5	5	6
Boulia	5	0	0
Bowen	1	0	0
Buckingham Downs	2	0	0
Cape Bedford	7	0	0
Chatsworth Station	3	6	8
Childers	1	0	0
Cloncurry	1	10	0
Coen	3	0	0
Cooktown—Bald Hills	2	0	0
Croydon	10	0	0
Davenport Downs	5	10	0
Ebagoolah	2	0	0
Georgetown	2	10	0
Glengyle	2	10	0
Keeroongooloo	3	6	8
Laura	3	13	6
Maytown	4	0	0
McDonnell	3	10	0
Moreton	1	0	0
Musgrave	0	7	0
Normanton	2	0	0
Thargomindah—Durham Downs	11	0	0
Thornborough	2	10	0
Tinenburra	5	0	0
Townsville	2	0	0
Urandangi	3	0	0

Eleven centres were closed where the need for the issue lapsed, and two new centres were opened.

BLANKETS.

In accordance with the new arrangements approved by the Minister, the control of the allotment of aboriginal blankets was this year taken over completely by this office. At the outset, the Government Storekeeper advised that he was unable to procure more than about 800 rugs, but, to save the recipients the disappointment and hardship the deprivation of this gift would cause them, inquiries were made at all centres with a view to purchasing some serviceable articles locally. This was accomplished with much less trouble than was expected, and, by ascertaining from each centre its actual requirements, restricting the supply to such natives as were actually in need and entitled to the relief, or granting other articles such as clothing or fishing and hunting implements where such were more serviceable, it was found possible to satisfactorily supply all needs. The bush rugs and blankets bought in this way, though somewhat mixed in pattern, were warm, serviceable articles, in most cases much superior in quality to those ordinarily supplied, though, of course, more expensive.

The advantage of the present system will be evident from the facts that, allowing for a balance of 472 blankets carried over from the previous year, a reduction of 1,492 issues was effected, and, despite the higher prices paid owing to the war, a saving of £387 in cost, including £26 6s. 5d. allowed in discount.

The total number of blankets and rugs purchased was 3,714, at a cost of £1,748, and other goods in lieu, such as clothing or hunting and fishing tackle to the value of £71, which with the balance of 472 blankets from previous year, were issued to 1,386 men, 1,394 women, 992 children, and 48 unspecified, a balance of 188 rugs being still on hand. The cost of carriage amounted to £67.

OFFENCES AGAINST ABORIGINALS— ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT, DRINK, OPIUM, Etc.

The returns of prosecutions under this heading still show a fairly satisfactory state of things generally, the most serious offence—of supplying opium to aboriginals—showing a marked decrease in last year's figures. The prosecutions for the equally pernicious offence of supplying drink show a slight increase. The number of convictions for unlawful possession of opium, sale of opium and poisons, employment and harbouring of aboriginals, when we consider the difficulties of obtaining evidence owing to the frequent hostility of the aboriginal as a witness, show that the police officers are not in any way relaxing their usual vigilance. To the same cause may again be attributed the small number of arrests of aboriginals for drunkenness:—

	1915.	1916.	Fines, &c., 1916. £
Supplying opium ..	39	15	305
Sale of poison ..	—	1	10
Possession of opium ..	68	73	815
Supplying drink ..	25	30	670
Illegally employing ..	16	19	100
Harbouring ..	25	5	17

Practically all the foregoing figures, indicating the detected offences, refer to those committed near the centres of civilisation, where official interference is readily at hand. Much more difficult to detect and punish are the crimes committed against the poor wretches in places like the coasts of Somerset, Coen, and Cook districts, where, being less civilised and further from the protection provided, they are more at the mercy of the unscrupulous.

The presence of venereal diseases in most of the camps, and the complaints from many recruiters that no one without ample supplies of grog can obtain labour, is indisputable evidence of the abuses prevailing. Not the least serious is the wholesale employment of them—men, women, and children—on the reefs, for which their only reward is often the grog supplied as an inducement and the diseases and miseries introduced among them.

The deplorable conditions which for years prevailed amongst the natives of the Johnstone River districts have been to a large extent improved by the establishment of the Hull River Settlement in their midst. Although considerable local hostility has been experienced from both white and alien, who have resented this

curtailment of the profitable traffic in drugs and prostitution so long enjoyed by them, the Settlement's influence for good has developed most satisfactorily, many of those natives who, when first removed, deserted back to their old haunts and vices, having since voluntarily rejoined the institution, recognising the benefits of the protection and help afforded them there.

Attention has frequently been drawn to the frauds practised upon less intelligent natives in their trading transactions, especially by dishonest buyers of marsupial skins, travelling hawkers, and some employers in districts where regular supervision, owing to long distances, is difficult. Power is provided in the new Bill drafted to more effectively deal with this difficulty.

OFFENCES BY ABORIGINALS.

The following comparative statement of offences for which aboriginals have been punished speaks for itself:—

	1915.	1916.
Drunkenness	57	58
Desertion from hired service	44	2
Desertion from ship	—	20
Illegally on premises	2	2
Unsound mind	2	—
Stealing	8	13
Murder	1	2
Manslaughter	1	—
Arson	1	1
Indecent exposure	—	1
Assault	7	3
Receiving stolen property ..	2	—
Wilful destruction of property	—	1
Obscene language	5	10
Creating disturbance	1	—
Refusing duty	—	1
Absconding from reserve ..	—	11

The following natives were also removed to the reserves, by Minister's order, for disciplinary reasons or for their relief and protection:—

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
<i>Settlements—</i>				
Barambah ..	77	49	32	158
Taroom ..	16	7	12	35
Hull River ..	52	22	8	82
<i>Missions—</i>				
Monamona ..	35	32	..	67
Yarrabah ..	20	14	..	34
Cape Bedford ..	1	1
Mapoon	3	..	3
	201	127	52	380

Although often some outcry was made at the removal of these natives, mostly by persons to whom they had been useful as cheap labour, the reports from the reserves show that invariably they discover long-lost relatives, more or less distant, and quickly settle down in the new home. In a little time the regular, wholesome food, medical attendance, steady occupation, and protection from abuses shows its beneficial effect in a marked physical improvement. A gratifying account also is received, from the superintendents, of the general conduct of

inmates, serious crime being practically unknown. The usual small tribal and family quarrels occur, but are in most cases satisfactorily settled by the officials, and seldom require the assistance of the police court.

In the islands of Torres Strait the usual minor offences and disputes were dealt with by the native courts, under the guidance of the teacher, and there was nothing serious enough to require a remand to Thursday Island.

HEALTH.

The reports from all quarters show that the health of the natives generally has been good. The district Protectors report 124 deaths among the camp natives, of which 32 were from senile decay, 2 were from suicide, and 2 were murders. A further 237 received hospital treatment, the complaints principally being venereal 25, accidents 22, phthisis 8, bronchial 9. There were also 4 cases of beri-beri, and 1 case of elephantiasis. From the Torres Strait Islands, 36 deaths are reported, of which 4 were from beri-beri, and 1 from phthisis. In addition, 258 cases were treated at the Torres Strait Hospital, of which 53 were beri-beri, 27 venereal, 29 accidents, and 1 phthisis. From the Peninsula and Gulf Missions 44 deaths are reported, of which 4 were from ankylostomiasis, and 20 were caused amongst the primitive people of Mornington Island by a very severe epidemic of influenza and pneumonia. At all these institutions regular daily treatment has been supplied to inmates and visitors for usual epidemic complaints, such as slight fever and colds, and eye-blight, and the usual stomach and infantile troubles. To assist these institutions where medical advice was not procurable, a carefully worded instruction as to treatment of certain malignant complaints was prepared and supplied to them.

On the Settlements at Barambah, Taroom, and Hull River, 96 deaths occurred, of which 16 were from senile decay, 14 from venereal, 11 from tuberculosis, 5 from pneumonia, and 1 from elephantiasis. At the Barambah Aboriginal Hospital, the medical officer paid 54 visits, and, in addition to 494 in-patients received and treated, 1,062 cases received treatment as out-patients.

Good work of a similar nature has also been done under difficult conditions at the Settlements at Taroom and Hull River.

The dread venereal disease is still prevalent in the Peninsula and Gulf districts, and a few cases are reported from Roma, Mitchell, and Winton. The Superintendent of Hull River Settlement speaks of the difficulty of coping with this disease, which is very prevalent amongst the natives of that district, and is found on them in all stages when first received into the institution. This also applies to the equally deadly tubercular complaints. Patient treatment and firm insistence on the improvement of living conditions are resulting in a marked decrease in the death rate, but he urges the early establishment of the proposed Lock Hospital on Fitzroy Island, to enable the treatment with isolation—the only effective measure—to be carried out.

Nearly all coastal districts from Townsville to Cooktown complain of more or less severe epidemics of malaria or coastal fever, affecting

both whites and blacks. On the reserves, this appeared to take a much milder form than prevailed amongst the Europeans in the neighbourhood, and at Yarrabah seemed to be confined to new arrivals. Epidemics of gulf fever and also influenza appeared in the Gulf districts, and a severe form of the latter took heavy toll on Mornington Island.

Two cases of granuloma pudenda were sent from the Gulf Mission reserves to the Tropical Diseases Hospital at Townsville, for experimental treatment, with very successful results on at least one case.

An outbreak of ankylostomiasis amongst some new arrivals at Yarrabah Mission in the early part of the year was successfully eradicated. Isolated cases of beri-beri also appeared at Bowen, Hughenden, Richmond, and Rockhampton, and, as shown above, 53 cases of this complaint were treated at the Thursday Island Hospital, mostly of seamen engaged on the fleets.

Much help has been given by country hospitals, in some of which the staff show commendable kindness and sympathy; more particularly can this be said of the Brisbane General Hospital, which has always held open doors to our patients from all parts of the State.

YOUNG WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

As shown already, 127 women and 52 children were removed from the unhealthy surroundings of camps and towns to institutions where they could be properly cared for and protected. Of course, in some cases the whole family were removed together, as owing to poverty and laziness the parents were not properly caring or providing for the children. These people soon establish a new home on the Settlement, and, as the father is induced to work for the benefit of his family, the children are ensured better conditions than often fell to their lot previously.

The number of orphan children now maintained in Industrial Schools and Homes, other than Government Settlements, are—Sacred Heart Mission, Thursday Island, 16; Salvation Army Industrial School for Girls, Yeronga, 16; Salvation Army Industrial School for Boys, Riverview, 4; Aboriginal Industrial Home, Mapoon, 3; Aboriginal Industrial Home, Purga, 14.

The total cost of the maintenance of the above children was £527 7s. 10d. Owing to the tribal custom of promising and giving young girls, often while still mere children, to men many years older than themselves, in marriage, it is often found necessary, as much for their protection as for any other reason, to find suitable domestic employment for them until they reach marriageable age. As the girls in this way receive useful training, this system would be excellent but for two grave dangers, first, that the girls will in time fall a prey to unscrupulous men and increase the already predominating number of half-castes, and again that they will develop a taste for town life and conditions that will unfit them for their only legitimate future—marriage with men of their own race. Until their men folk can be raised to a social level which will enable them to meet their future

wives on more even terms, the present system of training in domestic service, though good in intention, can only prove an injustice. All will agree that the welfare of the girls as part of a race is the first consideration, and if they can be profitably and congenially occupied in domestic industries in their own communities, they will be far more contented and of more value to the State, as clean healthy wives of men, than as a doubtful solution of the domestic servant difficulty.

Permission was given for 8 girls to marry men of other nationalities, of which 4 were Pacific Islanders, 1 Filipino, 1 Malay, and 2 Europeans. The policy of encouraging legal marriage to their own countrymen is proving successful, as in 28 cases the husbands chosen were aboriginals or half-castes. Thirteen other girls were granted exemption from the provisions of the Acts, inquiries showing that they were either quadroons or otherwise eligible and fitted for freedom. Four quadroon children, almost white in colour, were transferred from Taroom Settlement to the charge of the State Children Department, to be brought up as Europeans. There are a few such children at Mapoon and Yarrabah, but the difficulty is the mothers, who are better class half-castes and will not agree to part with them.

A large number of half-caste women benefited by the Commonwealth maternity bonus, and, as far as possible, the submission of the claims and disbursement of the money in the directions intended has been supervised by the Department.

The number of girls now in service from the Brisbane office is 162, being half-castes 131, full-bloods 31. Of these only 47 are employed in the city or suburbs, the balance, 115, being in country situations, where it is found the conditions are more suitable and healthy. These were all employed under agreement, and there has been very little difficulty in collecting the wages due.

The total wages so collected were £1,719 4s. 8d., and of this £1,601 0s. 3d. was withdrawn by the girls for clothing and other needs. The number of accounts now in operation is 147, with a total amount to credit of £3,341 2s. 1d., averaging £22 14s. 7d. per head. A few of the girls have their accounts at Barambah Settlement or belong to other districts. The work of supervising the engagement and employment of these girls is considerable, necessitating many interviews with applicants, servants, and mistresses, and much correspondence. Orders were also issued for the purchase of 1,259 outfits of clothing, &c., most of which were personally selected by the female Protectors.

The visiting inspector visited 260 girls in situations in the following districts:—Brisbane, Blackall, Cunnamulla, Charleville, Duaringa, Emerald, Longreach, Maryborough, Mount Morgan, Nanango, Rolleston, Rockhampton, Roma, Springsure, Stanthorpe, Toowoomba, and Warwick. It was only found necessary in twenty cases to report adversely, the causes of dissatisfaction being principally insufficient clothing and unsuitable sleeping accommodation. There is little doubt the regular inspection, without

notice, of these situations, proves its importance in greatly improved conditions. The Salvation Army Homes found accommodation for 95 of these girls while in Brisbane waiting for, or passing through from, employment.

Seven girls were also admitted to the Salvation Army Maternity Home for confinement, and 5 illegitimate children were born, one of which subsequently died. Four girls were also sent to Barambah in the same condition.

There are now 4 young infants in the Breakfast Creek Home and 12 at Yeronga. Towards the support of these children £16 was collected from the putative fathers, and £48 contributed by the mothers in service.

These Homes were all periodically inspected and reported upon most favourably.

TORRES STRAIT ISLAND.

The following is taken from the report of the Protector at Thursday Island, Mr. C. J. Handley:—

“The death of Mr. William Lee-Bryce, Protector of Aborigines in the Somerset district, on 2nd December, came as a severe shock to, and was greatly regretted by, all classes in Torres Strait. To his energy and genius for organisation were due the strides made by the Islanders during his period of office as Protector.

“*Population.*—This year's census shows the total population of the Torres Strait Islands to be 2,422, an increase of 12 on the figures for 1915. Eighty-six births, equivalent to 35.5 per 1,000, and 36 deaths, equivalent to 14.86 per 1,000, were recorded. The corresponding rates for 1915 were 46.47 and 13.73 respectively. The figures, male and female, were as follows:—Births, 44 and 42; deaths, 22 and 14.

“The mainland population has this year been estimated at 2,620, and the total population for the district is shown as 5,042, as compared with 5,060 last year.

“*Health.*—With the exception of an epidemic of colds and fever at Darnley Island in November and December, the general health on the islands has been very good.

“The teachers still experience considerable difficulty in persuading the natives to come to Thursday Island for medical treatment. They even go so far as to conceal sickness, and prefer to adopt native cures, with the result that in the majority of cases they aggravate the trouble. The death of a boy in the hospital will often undo the work of months. In spite of these drawbacks they are, however, gradually gaining confidence, and will in time come to see the benefit of receiving proper medical treatment. It is very satisfactory to note that there is a decrease in the number of deaths of children during 1916.

“The old style of houses, built on or close to the ground, which were in many instances open to the inroads of the sea at high tides, are gradually giving way to larger and more airy structures, built on piles from 18 inches to 3 feet high.

“ Three cases of dysentery were reported, but none of them resulted fatally. Owing to improved sanitary arrangements and the enforcement of new laws regarding houses, a recurrence of this dread disease is not to be as greatly feared as in past years.

“ *Schools.*—Suitable schools are required at Darnley, Yam, and Saibai. At the former place school is held in the church, a practice which does not find favour with the natives and cannot be recommended. Instructions have been given for the erection of a grass school, and this will serve the purpose until a schoolhouse is built.

“ The quarterly returns show that attendance has been regular, and, by the teachers' reports, satisfactory progress has been made.

“ Provision has been made on the Estimates for additional teachers at Badu and Murray Islands; this is a very wise step, as they will gain experience which will fit them to take up duties when required.

“ It is most difficult for a new-comer to the Strait to get immediately in touch with and gain the confidence of the people, unless he had the opportunity of studying them and learning some of their characteristics before being left to his own resources.

“ The native teachers at Adam and Coconut are doing well. Aragu, the teacher at Coconut, is deserving of praise for the work he has done, especially as he had not had the benefit of a Government teacher's supervision or assistance, as the children are bright and have taken kindly to the school work.

“ At Yam, Badu, Yorke, and Mabuiag the elder girls are taught sewing, cooking, and house-work; they show keen interest in their work, and the knowledge they gain in these branches, and the inculcation of habits of tidiness and cleanliness, will be of great benefit to them and the islands generally.

“ *Boats.*—The returns of nine island company boats working direct to this office are not as satisfactory as could be desired. The net value of produce sold was £1,659 16s. 3d., compared with £2,414 17s. 1d. in 1915. The drop may be attributed to two causes—fewer number of boats working for the whole year, and the falling off in the output of dinghies, owing to reasons quoted below.

“ The ‘Pegasus’ was found to be in such a bad way that she was broken up. It was intended to use the keel again, but on examination this was found to be rotten; the deck-house was the only sound timber in her. A loan of £200 was obtained from the aboriginal property account, and a further £100 from the Murray Island fund, and with this a new boat, called the ‘Don,’ was built. She commenced work a week or two before Christmas, and is doing well.

“ The falling off in the amount of dinghy produce is very marked. This is due to the fact that the home reefs, which were formerly worked by the women and old men, are being rapidly denuded of fish and shell. As a result the dinghies have to go further afield and work under greater difficulties, with which the women

are unable to cope, so the work is passing into the hands of the men, who, under the pretence of working the dinghies, neglect the company boats, or evade signing on articles.

“ To check this practice the islanders have been given to understand no more dinghies will be allowed them, and that, where an island possesses more than one company boat, neglect of these boats will result in all but one being taken away from them and handed to other islands to work. This has already been done in two instances, and in two other cases the men have been warned that, unless their returns improve, similar action will be taken.

“ The falling off in the amount of produce obtained by Darnley islanders is very marked. Darnley Island has always been a source of trouble in this respect, and is bracketed with Mabuiag as being the most unsatisfactory of the islands in the management of company boats. The trouble at Darnley is largely caused by men of other races residing on the island, who have no desire to work, and set a bad example to the others. Further reference to this is made under the heading of ‘General.’

“ A new system is being adopted with dinghies at Darnley Island—one man only is allowed to each dinghy, and he reports to the teacher regularly his catch and the hours worked. The teacher keeps a record of these, and sends them in quarterly when the produce comes in to be disposed of. We have suspected for some time that dinghy produce was being diverted through other channels, and it is anticipated this will prevent a continuance of the practice.

“ The ‘Poruma,’ the Coconut Island boat, did very well last year. It is all the more meritorious when it is remembered there is no European teacher there to keep them up to the mark. The credit is largely due to Olandi, to whom a boat was recently given to work, and Aragu, the native teacher.

“ The ‘Alice,’ ‘Yama,’ and ‘Miriam’ have done better this year, and the ‘Masig’ shows good results, but the ‘Cissy’ has fallen away; now they have cleared their debt they seem to have lost their incentive to work.

“ Excellent prices for fish and shell were obtained at the latter end of the year, and, should the market hold, the outlook for 1917 is very promising.

“ Last year the Mosby Bros.' boats, the ‘Nancy’ and ‘Yano,’ were worked respectively by Dan and Tom Mosby on the half-share system; they did very well, clearing respectively £101 and £130 for the year's work. Barney and Lawrence, working boats belonging to Messrs. Morey and Co., on the half-share system, cleared £100 and £187 respectively; these amounts included their share of the profits made by the ‘Yano’ and ‘Nancy.’

“ Returns of the twelve island boats working to Badu show a marked improvement on 1915 returns, the respective figures being £1,708 and £2,248. The Saibai and Dauan boats worked very well, the ‘Yaza’ £343, ‘Saibai’ £261, and ‘Dauan’ £255 heading the list. With the exception of the ‘Wakimab,’ all the boats

belonging to these two islands are free from debt; in fact, they can show credit balances amounting to £112. This excellent result is mainly due to the efforts of the Government teacher, Badu, who exercises a supervision over all boats trading to that place.

“The debts on boats to the Papuan Industries, Limited, were reduced from £193 in 1915 to £92—a very creditable performance.

“Again the Mabuiag boats have made a poor showing. They have been warned that unless they show a decided improvement their boats will be taken from them and rented to other islands.

Income of Torres Strait Islanders.

	£
By Wages	3,820
„ Island boats trading to Thursday Island	2,482
„ Island boats trading to Badu	2,248
„ Boys on Agreements	539
	£9,089

“The figures for 1914 and 1915 were respectively £6,891 and £9,143.

“*Island Funds.*—Island fund collections amounted to £999, an increase of £18, and expenditure to £967, an increase of £164 on 1915 figures. The total amount to credit of funds on 31st December, 1916, was £1,252. A large proportion of the expenditure was on island boats, and as this is on loan and bearing interest, the actual position of the island funds is even better than it appears. Particulars of collections, expenditure, balances, and loans appears in the Schedule.

“*Boat Insurance Fund.*—This fund now amounts to £245 19s. 11d. £120 was collected last year, and to this was added £4 2s. 9d. interest. No calls were made on the fund during the year.

“*Labour.*—Six hundred and sixty-nine permits for boat work were issued last year, including mainland natives, and 20 male and 23 female were signed on for shore work. Last year the figures were 537 and 38 respectively. Eight casual permits were issued.

“The wages earned by island boys employed on boats amounted to £3,820, of which they received £2,008 on termination of agreement. Island fund, hospital and discharge fees, slop-chest, and advances comprise the balance.

“Considerable trouble was again experienced with girls employed as domestic servants, especially when the boats were laid up. The younger girls are led by, and try to emulate the example of, the older women. There seems little prospect of there being an improvement in the moral tone of these girls unless the pernicious influence of the elder women is removed. A report on this subject, recommending the removal of a number of these women, will shortly be made.

“*General.*—Sixty-five days were spent in patrols in 1916, and a distance of 2,500 miles was covered. It is most essential every island should be visited by the Protector at least once

a month, and he should at least once every three months be accompanied by the Government medical officer for the district, who, in addition to examining the natives, and prescribing for them when necessary, could give valuable hints to the Government teacher.

“Under the heading of ‘Boats’ I referred to the influence of people of other races on the Torres Strait islanders. The population of Darnley especially is a very mixed one, and I consider it would be a distinct advantage if the South Sea islanders, of whom there is a large number, could be removed to some common centre, such as St. Paul’s Mission, Moa Island. I have discussed this matter with the Bishop of Carpentaria, who is in charge of the Church of England Mission work in the Strait, and he considers the suggestion a good one.”

RESERVES.

Where practicable, the Settlements and Missions, especially those nearer Brisbane, have been visited, and matters, particularly relating to the policy of industrial and social development, discussed with the superintendents.

The above policy aims at fostering such natural industries as will provide occupation congenial to the inmates, and on a scale sufficiently profitable to enable them to entirely support themselves in communities, developing the family life in hygienic and civilised conditions.

In the past more importance has been attached to the value of the race as a source of labour supply, regarding this method of self-support as a solution of the problem of the cost of relief. But such a system does little towards improving the social condition of the race as a whole, for the individual, though useful as a worker, still remains a pariah and exposed to the evils from which it is desired to protect him.

It is very gratifying now to observe the growing desire on the part of the Missions to mould their industrial and social policies to harmonise with that of the Department, and to recognise its sympathetic attitude towards their efforts. It is also evidently recognised that there need be no fear that such a policy will overshadow the importance of the spiritual work, but rather aid in the training and preparation of the people for such teachings.

GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENTS.

Barambah (Superintendent, B. J. T. Lipscombe).

Taroom (Superintendent, C. A. Maxwell).

Hull River (Superintendent, J. M. Kenny).

Labour.—The Settlements all report a steady demand for the surplus aboriginal labour, though in the two latter the requirements of the institution for development work had to receive first consideration. The number of agreements entered into were—Barambah, 340; Taroom, 69; Hull River, 90. This does not include casual permits for short terms of under one month.



Cocoanut and Pineapple Plantation—Cape Bedford Mission.



Sisal Hemp Plantation—Cape Bedford Mission.

Very few complaints as to conduct were received, and employers generally fulfilled the terms of their agreements satisfactorily. The wages offered ranged from 6s. to 30s. a week, of which, on an average, 40 per cent. was paid to the Settlement and banked to the workers' credit, the amounts so collected being—Barambah, £2,336; Taroom, £527; Hull River, £1,489.

Health.—Health has generally been fairly good. This has been dealt with in a previous heading. At each place a regular visiting medical officer has been provided, and nursing attendance.

Crime.—Crime of a serious nature is practically non-existent. Some minor offences, usually resulting from introducing drink, have been dealt with by the local police court; and a few tribal fights quelled, only one (at Taroom) resulting in any serious injury.

Retail Stores.—These stores have fully justified their existence, being not only a great convenience to the inmates, but a means of helping to reduce the temptation to waste their earnings in gambling, opium, or drink. The sales of goods at each place amounted to—Barambah, £1,737; Taroom, £703; and Hull River, £435.

School.—The attendance of the pupils has been regular, and satisfactory progress has been made. Where possible, examinations have been conducted by the State school inspectors, who have also kindly given assistance and advice. The absence of proper quarters at Taroom and Hull River has delayed the appointment of separate officers for this work and retarded progress, but it has been loyally carried on by the other officials. By the advice of the medical officer, Barambah, all children of school age and under are supplied daily during the winter with hot thickened soup, and a marked improvement in mentality has been the result.

Industries.—At each station industrial operations have been carried on as steadily as the fluctuating supply of labour made it possible, the men, of course, preferring to avail themselves, where opportunity offered, of the paid employment outside. At Barambah areas of maize and wheat have been cultivated, and from the products 6 tons of maize were sold and 7 tons of wheat gristed for food supply.

Forty acres of flats have been cleared and enclosed for cultivation, a new cattle dip constructed, a new maternity hospital built, and a fine sawmilling plant and water supply service put in course of installation.

At Taroom 4 miles of fencing was erected and over 1,000 acres of scattered pear cleared. A bore 260 feet deep has been sunk and a splendid supply of fresh water obtained. Plans have been made for an efficient water service for stock and domestic purposes. Two good 5-acre areas

have also been cleared and fenced ready for cultivation. Twelve bales of wool, shorn from the sheep, brought £176, and wether lambs sold brought another £87.

At Hull River the plantations have yielded 1,439 bunches of bananas, 70 tons pumpkins, 40 tons sweet potatoes, 2,000 pineapples, and large quantities also of melons, yams, taro, cassava, tobacco, coffee, &c. There are also over 1,000 citrus fruit trees, and a number of cocoanut trees have been planted. One hundred and forty-three cases of bananas were sold in the South at a profit of 8s. a case, but all the rest of the above produce was utilised for home consumption, and resulted in great saving of bought foodstuffs. The fishing boats also ensured plentiful supplies of dugong, turtle, and fish.

Stock.—The Barambah cattle herd was augmented by the purchase of twenty good heifers and two good young bulls of milking shorthorn strain, and was thoroughly overhauled with the object of improving it towards productiveness. The Taroom herd now number 93, including 28 working bullocks, 21 milkers, and a Hereford bull. The sheep at this place now number 842, although 115 woolled wether lambs were sold during the year. It has not been possible so far to acquire more than a few milkers towards the stocking of Hull River run with cattle.

Administrative Buildings.—The need for more extensive accommodation for conduct of the work of administration is keenly felt at each of these institutions. The installation of the sawmill at Barambah will, it is hoped, enable this to be effectively met at this place and also Taroom.

Two new cottages have been approved for Hull River, and are being cut out by the Works Department.

Social Improvement.—Many of the natives are making praiseworthy efforts to improve the condition and style of dwellings by building comfortable huts and cottages in place of the old "gunyah" or "bijan." Particularly is this noticeable at Hull River, where, instead of a scattered camp of bark huts, a regular village with a wide street of cottages, on stumps, in proper alignment, has sprung up. This village also boasts of a proper sanitary service on the pan system. At Barambah and Taroom the administrative and native quarters are being laid out in proper village plan with the same object in view. It is hoped by this means to deal with many of the problems of health and morality.

Religious services and instruction have been regularly given by the neighbouring clergy, assisted by the officials, and were much appreciated and readily availed of by the inmates. The usual festivities were organised at Christmas time, and supplies of extra provisions, luxuries, toys, and presents provided.

MISSIONS.

Yarrabah, Cairns (Superintendent, S. Lyon, F.R.G.S.).

Monamona, Cairns (Superintendent, J. L. Branford).

Cape Bedford, Cooktown (Superintendent, Rev. G. H. Schwarz).

Moa Island, Torres Strait (Superintendent, Rev. G. A. Luscombe).

Mapoon, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, Rev. N. Hey).

Weipa, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, Rev. E. Brown).

Aurukun, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, T. W. Holmes).

Trubanaman, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, H. Matthews).

Mornington Island, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, Rev. R. Hall).

The reports from all Mission Stations are most satisfactory. Health has generally been good, and has been already fully dealt with in the early part of the report.

Conduct has been good, and discipline has also been well maintained, and no crime of any serious nature has been reported.

At Yarrabah, early in the year, a strike occurred, but it was firmly and tactfully handled by the Superintendent, and as, after inquiry, the Chief Protector was subsequently able to uphold the action of that officer, the result from the point of view of discipline and contentment has been excellent.

Instruction.—School has been regularly maintained, and good progress has been reported generally. At most stations marked attention has been paid to systematic training in handicrafts such as, for boys—carpentry, joinery, boatbuilding, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, painting, gardening, seamanship, care of stock; and, for girls—sewing, needlework, dressmaking, cooking, milking, housework, and gardening. At Yarrabah this training is being carried out on extensive lines, including a large two-storied wood and concrete building for a women's training home, and aims at developing a system of skilled native instructors and overseers.

Amongst the more primitive races on the Gulf Missions, the result of patient work is now seen in the growing desire on the part of the "bush" natives to send their children to the Mission schools. A number of the Mission school children won prizes in the Aboriginal Court at the Brisbane Exhibition, and a pleasing incident is quoted of a number of them at Weipa voluntarily donating portion of their small money prizes to the Red Cross funds; others made and contributed bandages, &c.

Religious teaching has been regularly carried on, the services and classes being well attended, and the missionaries speak in encouraging terms of the results from a spiritual point of view. The incident just referred to is spoken of as a hopeful sign, "inasmuch as compassion for the suffering stranger means much more from the aboriginal than from a member of a race which has through many generations become imbued with Christian principles." A desire for a better way of living is most marked also amongst many of the young people, though in most cases the old people apparently do not desire any change. At Aurukun, also, visits were received from a number of the wild tribes from outside the reserve, to ask if someone would come and "make mission" for them.

Industrial.—Good reports come from all stations as to the progress of this side of the Mission work, and its importance is recognised as a factor in the social uplifting of the people, as well as a means of assisting and educating them to become self-reliant and independent.

At Yarrabah, in the agricultural departments alone, 276 acres are under cultivation in fruit, vegetables, cotton, cocoanuts, maize, Rhodes grass, &c. It is estimated that over £1,500 worth of food has been raised and consumed, including 150 tons of sweet potatoes.

At Monamona, 70 tons of potatoes, 10 tons of pumpkins, 50 acres of maize, and 6 acres of bananas were raised as food, besides which 130 acres of fresh scrub were cleared and burnt off. In addition, a hydraulic ram was installed, providing a good water supply.

At Cape Bedford a good season yielded over 75 tons of potatoes, besides an ample supply of pineapples, cassava, and cocoanuts, calculated to have saved over £20 per month in food during the last seven months. They also sold £124 worth of cattle and pigs, besides supplying the beef needed by themselves.

At Mapoon most of the young adults have supported themselves entirely by working their own gardens, and, in addition, traded to the extent of £308 with the Mission store for extra comforts.

Even at Mornington Island the primitive natives have taken kindly to industrial training, and cultivate 3 acres in vegetables, make hay for the stock, cure bêche-de-mer, help with building, and now have become so proficient as boatmen that the ketch is entirely manned by them.

At the Gulf Coast Missions agricultural operations have not been very successful, the soil being too poor for more than kitchen-garden work and requiring regular fertilising and irrigation to ensure any return. Cattle-breeding has formed the principal work, and, with net-fishing and bêche-de-mer curing, has enabled a portion of the food supply to be earned. Although this is an occupation for which natives

are peculiarly fitted, unfortunately few of the institutions have been able, with their limited means, to acquire sufficient stock to enable anything like a profitable industry to be built up, and, unless some substantial assistance is received, it will be many years before they can expect their herds to be revenue-producing.

Practically all the reserves contain sufficient cattle country, not only to enable all beef needs to be raised, but sufficient revenue, also, to make them self-supporting as well as of value to the State, if they are stocked to anything like their capacity.

As evidence of the possibilities in this direction I would mention that Trubanaman Mission, on the Mitchell River, from its herd of 460 head, sold 48 bullocks for a net profit of £375, all of which was again invested in fresh stock.

ABORIGINAL PROTECTION PROPERTY ACCOUNT.

The following statement shows the receipts and disbursements of the money collected from unclaimed estates which, by Regulation 14 of 1904, can only be utilised for the benefit of aboriginals:—

<i>Receipts.</i>		£	s.	d.
Balance, 31st December, 1915		1,489	9	2
Estates of Deceased Aboriginals		646	2	3
Interest, Barambah Joint Account		83	2	2
Interest, Taroom Joint Account		19	14	0
Interest, Hull River Joint Account		9	8	9
Wages of Deserters		220	9	3
Sales and Receipts at Aboriginal Court		11	4	6
Gratuities to Prisoners		32	0	0
General		0	19	8
Refund Advance on Shell, Torres Strait Boats		174	3	9
Refunds Island Boats' Loans		99	17	0
Estates of Insane Patients		91	5	2
		£2,878	5	8

Expenditure.

	£	s.	d.
Barambah Interest Account (including Balance, 1914)	102	14	3
Taroom Interest Account (including Balance, 1914)	24	19	4
Hull River Interest Account (including Balance, 1914)	13	9	0
Purchase Cutter for Hull River	140	0	0
Prizes, Aboriginal Court	27	5	0
Clothing, Girls—to first situations	64	16	8
Clothing, Boys—to first situations	9	12	1
Loans—			
Hull River Advance Account	10	0	0
C.P.A. Office Advance Account	95	0	0
Murray Island Boat	200	0	0
Accounts Transferred to Relatives	80	2	0
Refunds to Trust Accounts	41	16	0
Rations to Deceased Relatives	6	11	0
Burials of Deceased Natives	23	11	0
Proceeds Sale of Exhibits	6	17	0
Exhibition Expenses	9	0	5
Patriotic Show Expenses	4	15	5
Refund Railway Fares, &c.	3	7	0
Estates Transferred Deputy Commissioner			
Insanity	71	14	7
Refund Part Cost Stolen Dinghy	6	16	4
Purchase Aboriginal Weapons	2	2	0
Boiler, Barambah Sawmill	280	0	0
Grant of Fencing Material, Cape Bedford	59	9	2
	£1,293	18	3
Balance	1,594	7	5
	£2,878	5	8

The estimated aboriginal population is 16,700, and the expenditure on relief during the year was £27,244.

The collections, including wages and earnings of aboriginals, sales of produce of Settlements, &c., amounted to £51,373.

Yours obediently,

J. W. BLEAKLEY,

Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

Price, 1s. 6d.]

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Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the year 1916

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