

1944.
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QUEENSLAND.

REPORT

UPON THE

OPERATIONS OF THE SUB-DEPARTMENTS

OF

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

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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, 12th October, 1944.

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,
Under Secretary.

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

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, 1944.

Population.—Due to war conditions, the annual aboriginal census has not been taken for a period of three years, and consequently the underquoted population of aboriginals, half-bloods, and Torres Strait Islanders in the State is based on previous statistics. However, a census will be taken during 1944, and it is anticipated that little variation in the figures quoted will result.

Estimated Present Population.—Torres Strait Islanders, 3,675; aboriginals, 8,977; half-bloods, 6,451.

Contribution by Aboriginals to the War Effort.—The organisation of mobile gangs of aboriginals for employment in essential industries continued during the year and much useful work was performed, particularly in rural industries.

The total number of aboriginal workers, male and female, in the State is 4,330.

The majority of these—viz., 2,800 are employed in the pastoral industry. The shortage of white labour in this industry has compelled greater use of aboriginal labour, to such extent that every available capable man is so employed and many instances are on record of aboriginals accepting responsibility and displaying an industry most commendable.

The organised mobile gangs were employed from Atherton to Murgon as follows:—

Sixty Yarrabah aboriginals have harvested peanuts, cow-peas, and maize on the Atherton Tableland. Approximately 100 Palm Island aboriginals are employed canecutting at Ingham. Sixty Woorabinda Government Settlement men have assisted in the cotton harvest at Biloela. One hundred and fifty Cherbourg and Woorabinda aboriginals rendered excellent service in harvesting the peanut crop in the Kingaroy district, and 105 aboriginals have been employed canecutting at Bundaberg. Seventy aboriginals from Woorabinda were responsible for harvesting the arrowroot crop at Coomera. The earnings of these mobile gangs for the year totalled £62,000.

All of these gangs have worked under the direct supervision of Department officers, and over the period of three years that they have been so employed, opportunity was taken of closely watching the reactions of the men under industrial conditions more or less foreign to them. It is pleasing to record that these reactions have in the main been favourable, with the result that many outstanding types received certificates of exemption from the controlling Act.

Exemptions.—Where it is apparent that a full-blood or half-blood is capable of controlling his own affairs and can safely take his place in the white community, a certificate of exemption from the Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act is granted. Experience has shown that with the majority of people so exempted they can settle down in their new sphere of life, and particularly in North Queensland it is expected that they will become useful citizens, and even if only in a small way will assist in populating that area and obtain regular employment in callings suited to them.

The number of such exemptions granted during the year under review was 80.

Government Settlements.—Governments settlements are established at Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement near Murgon, Woorabinda Aboriginal Settlement west of Rockhampton, Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement north of Townsville.

Agriculture.—As already shown, a large proportion of the available labour from these settlements is employed in essential industries throughout the State.

It will be appreciated that this labour, although now in keen demand, may not be so required in the post-war period, and consequently to keep each labour remuneratively and economically employed it is necessary to develop the aboriginal settlements to such extent as will—

- (a) Provide employment for every available and capable aboriginal;
- (b) Endeavour to reduce maintenance costs of the settlements.

With this end in view preliminary action is being taken for the systematic building up and improvement of the cattle herds and greater agricultural development. On Cherbourg and Woorabinda Settlements, where cattle-raising has been operative for many years, the herds total 3,750.

Drought conditions, of course, are always a menace, and it is proposed to guard against such by greater provision for water storage with a consequent increased carrying capacity on both settlements.

Cherbourg.—Agricultural: Despite that the land suitable for cultivation on this settlement is limited, approximately 30 acres have been prepared for planting vegetables and fodder crops. The limited area and general unsuitability of the soil militates against any hope of remunerative return other than for local consumption. It is intended, however, in the near future to extend the agricultural activities of this settlement by (a) building up a dairy herd, (b) raising of pigs, (c) the establishment of a poultry farm.

Woorabinda.—Agricultural: To date land has been prepared for the planting of 700 citrus trees. The ultimate aim in this citrus orchard venture is a minimum of 2,000 trees on 30 acres, with virtually unlimited room for expansion. The site selected has already been approved by experts. Work is in progress on clearing and stumping a further 20 acres for the growing of fodder crops for a dairy herd to be established. The raising of pigs and poultry will also be undertaken on this settlement.

In succession the programme provides for further areas up to 100 acres for irrigated lucerne and marketable crops—viz., maize, potatoes, cotton, wheat, &c.

On Palm Island Settlement the intensive cultivation and production of tropical fruits—viz., bananas and papaws, is under way.

Manual Training and Domestic Science.—In furtherance of the policy for the development of the settlements and the training of the aboriginal residents thereon, manual training classes for boys and domestic science for girls will be extended on the three settlements.

The main venue for such immediate increased tuition will be Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement. There arrangements have been made for the erection of a workshop to operate in conjunction with the existent manual training classes. Such workshop will be equipped on modern lines to produce joinery, furniture, &c., and when operating it is expected that the output, to supply primarily the requirements of aboriginals throughout Queensland, will be in the vicinity of £2,000 per annum.

The domestic science class will provide tuition in cooking, housewifery, sewing, &c., to such extent that efficiently trained domestic servants will be available for employment. Likewise trained machinists will be employed on the manufacture of garments for sale to aboriginals throughout the State.

Education.—The total number of children receiving primary education in the State is 2,400. To obtain the best results from the existent primary education system, selected promising boys and girls are given the opportunity of secondary education with a view to ultimately utilising them in semi-administrative positions on the Government settlements and church missions or to fit them to take their place outside the aboriginal communities.

At present there are seven boys in All Souls' Secondary School, Charters Towers, two girls in St. Anne's Secondary School, Ravenswood, two girls at St. Mary's Secondary School, Herberton, and two boys at the Roman Catholic Agricultural College at Abergowrie.

The experiment of secondary education for these aboriginal children will be watched with interest.

Aboriginal Accounts.—The total amount held in trust in the savings bank accounts of aboriginals is £303,544. 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.

The number of estates so administered was 176, and the amounts made available to next-of-kin was £10,759.

Torres Strait Islands.—With the successful progress in war operations it has been possible to gradually reintroduce departmental civil administration in this area, which in the early days of the war was practically non-existent.

In 1942 it became necessary to evacuate practically all of the white staff from the Torres Strait area, the result being that the civilian population suffered considerably through lack of immediate personal supervision. Already action has been taken for the appointment of three supervising Government teachers for the larger islands, and it is hoped within twelve months to have all the islands suitably staffed.

Every able-bodied Torres Strait Islander is in the Armed Forces, and naturally the marine industry in which these men were employed in pre-war days is now defunct.

In anticipation of post-war reconstruction in this area, the Director of Native Affairs has been instructed to proceed to Torres Strait and there confer with Islanders and officials with a view to formulating a satisfactory post-war reconstruction plan for the rehabilitation of the Islanders following the termination of hostilities.

His Excellency the Governor has already paid a visit to Torres Strait, and his influence and helpful advice on matters pertaining to the administration and general welfare of the Islanders is deeply appreciated.

Church Missions.—Church missions throughout the State have continued to render excellent service in caring for the aboriginals under their charge. Developmental work on all missions, in keeping with the national requirements for the production of food, has continued. Likewise all missions have co-operated with the Department in making available every able-bodied man for employment in the pastoral and other essential industries.

To these missionaries, particularly on Cape York Peninsula, where the stress of war has added considerably to their difficulties, the Department is appreciative of the excellent service rendered by them.

Scouting.—The Boy Scout movement is an excellent assistant in the character building of the aboriginal boy. This is exemplified in an active troop operating on Palm Island Settlement. The troop which previously existed at Cherbourg Settlement is now being re-established under the guidance of the Queensland Branch of the Boy Scouts' Association.

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.

Native Affairs - Information contained in Report of Director of Native Affairs for the Twelve months ended 30th June 1944

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