

1924
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QUEENSLAND.

REPORT

UPON THE

OPERATIONS OF THE SUB-DEPARTMENTS

OF

Aboriginals, Dunwich Benevolent Asylum, Inebriates Institution (Dunwich), Jubilee Sanatorium for Consumptives (Dalby), Westwood Sanatorium, Government Relief, Home for Epileptics (Willowburn), Prisons, Queensland Blind, Deaf and Dumb Institution, and Diamantina Hospital for Chronic Diseases (South Brisbane).

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY COMMAND.

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Reports upon the Operations of Certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department.

Home Secretary's Department,
Brisbane, 26th August, 1924.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE HOME SECRETARY.

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.

WILLIAM GALL,
Under Secretary.

ABORIGINALS (Chief Protector, J. W. Blackley).
DUNWICH BENEVOLENT ASYLUM (Medical Superintendent, Dr. J. Booth-Clarkson).
INEBRIATE INSTITUTION, DUNWICH (Medical Superintendent, Dr. J. Booth-Clarkson).
JUBILEE SANATORIUM FOR CONSUMPTIVES, DALBY (Visiting Medical Officer, Dr. Wm. H. Jamison).
WESTWOOD SANATORIUM (Visiting Medical Officer, Dr. D. P. O'Brien).
GOVERNMENT RELIEF (Officer in Charge, D. A. Hogan).
HOME FOR EPILEPTICS (WILLOWBURN).
PRISONS (Comptroller-General, A. T. Peirson).
QUEENSLAND BLIND, DEAF AND DUMB INSTITUTION (Manager, I. Dickson).
DIAMANTINA HOSPITAL FOR CHRONIC DISEASES (Visiting Medical Officer, Dr. A. Jefferis Turner)

Aboriginal Department.—Information contained in Report for the Year ended 31st December, 1923.

LABOUR CONDITIONS ON LAND.

Although the drought still held sway, the majority of the Protectors report a distinct improvement last year in the demand for aboriginal labour, especially among the females.

The adverse conditions, due to the long-continued drought, mostly affected the labour in the pastoral districts, and caused some agitation for a reduction of wages.

Employers, generally, have observed the regulations, but some Protectors complain that breaches of the regulations governing employment are boldly committed in distant districts where regular supervision is not possible. This has been made more difficult by the restriction on patrols for other than police work.

The total number of natives engaged under agreement was 2,384 (males 1,807, females 577), and permits were issued for casual employment, for short terms, of 391 males and 535 females. Although this shows a decrease of 153 in the number of agreements entered into, the notable increase in earnings shows that the engagements were for longer and more settled terms.

Two new protectorates, Bedourie and Betoota, were created, and the Tumoulin centre was removed to Ravenshoe.

Sixty-seven trackers were engaged by the Police Department, and two recruited for the Victorian Police.

LABOUR CONDITIONS ON BOATS.

Practically all available native labour on the Peninsula coasts was absorbed in the fishing industry, and the behaviour of the aboriginal crews has been very satisfactory.

The permits issued at Thursday Island numbered 338, and during the year 237 islanders and 105 mainlanders were discharged at the Shipping Office. The wages earned amounted to £3,955, of which the islanders received £2,354 and the mainlanders £1,601, a slight improvement.

In addition 350 islanders worked their tribal company boats, earning £8,938, a more creditable result than it appears, for the actual catch was larger than that of the previous year. The decrease in earnings is really due to the further drop in price of M.O.P. shell, though rough weather also seriously hampered operations,

The rumoured repatriation of a number of the Asiatic aliens now engaged in the pearlshell and beche-de-mer industry, if it eventuates, should increase the demand for native labour.

At Cooktown 72 natives engaged on the fishing fleets, earning £1,093 in wages.

Forty natives signed on to luggers from Palm Island, but, as half of them afterwards absconded, this branch of employment proved unsatisfactory.

INSURANCE AND COMPENSATION.

Twenty-eight claims under the Workers' Compensation Act were made, six being for fatal cases. Compensation amounting to £3,387 was

received, payment in each case being made to the Protector, who controls the disbursement of the money for the recipients' benefit. As native domestic conditions differ so from those of more civilised workers, the question of dependency is frequently difficult to decide, and the friendly co-operation of the Insurance Commissioner and his Claims Department with this office in arriving at a just and suitable settlement is worthy of appreciative mention.

ABORIGINAL TRUST ACCOUNTS.

Hereunder is a return of the various Savings Bank transactions of Native Trust Accounts, exclusive of store credits of inmates of mission stations.

—	No. of Accounts.	Total Wages Deposited.		Accounts Transferred other Districts.		Interest Earned.		Actual Withdrawals for Natives' Benefit.		Balance.	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Barambah	457	3,950	18 9	1,635	10 1	236	0 2	4,806	15 8	6,575	2 1
Palm Island	511	2,732	16 6	552	13 11	159	5 9	3,549	13 6	6,085	6 1
Taroom	176	1,905	13 2	39	6 6	43	1 0	2,320	2 6	1,400	11 9
Brisbane Girls	94	2,220	18 2	282	1 1	133	5 10	2,158	13 4	3,839	0 8
Brisbane Boys	18	238	15 11	Nil		21	14 2	157	12 8	741	4 9
Various Protectors	4,832	71,472	19 5	18,361	16 8	5,644	12 2	44,319	4 7	207,574	12 11
Totals	6,088	82,522	1 11	20,871	8 3	6,237	19 1	57,312	2 3	226,215	18 3

These figures show that native earnings have increased by over £30,000, or 60 per cent. on last year, although the number of new accounts opened is under 5 per cent. This is due to the much more stabilised conditions affecting employment.

The withdrawals for native benefit remain at about the same figure, but this year amount to about 70 per cent. of the earnings. These credits now average nearly £39 per head.

Contributions to the Provident Fund for the year amounted to £2,018, and there is now a balance of £10,255.

It was deemed advisable to invest a sum of £8,000 of this balance in the Treasury Loan Inscribed Stock, with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, at 5½ per cent.

AUXILIARY KETCH "MELBIDIR."

The services of the vessel were fairly constantly utilised, a distance of 3,149 miles being travelled, 928 of which were in conveyance of the Protector at Thursday Island on official duties. Eight hundred and sixty miles were covered for the Marine Department in the search for the "Douglas Mawson," 560 miles on Mines Department work, and 25 miles for the Police. As each Department bears the cost of its use of the vessel, this ensured profitable occupation and economy in upkeep.

The necessity for maintaining a Government patrol vessel at Thursday Island will thus be very evident, and to keep the "Melbidir" in the essential seaworthy condition extensive repairs will soon be necessary. The work of the vessel is practically all of a sea-going character, consequently wear and tear of rigging and engines is heavy. The matter of replacing the present engine, which is practically beyond profitable repair, with a new and higher-powered one, is under consideration.

CERTIFICATES OF EXEMPTION.

Applications for exemption from the Aborigines Protection Acts were received from 107 half-castes. After close inquiry into each case the certificate was granted in 34 cases (30 males, 4 females), the remaining 73 being deemed ineligible.

Two certificates of exemption, granted in previous years, were revoked because of the holders' intemperance.

REMOVALS AND RECOGNIZANCES.

Thirteen permits for transfer of natives to other districts were granted, and bonds were entered into for the return of 69 aborigines temporarily removed by employers.

It was not necessary to take action to estreat any of these undertakings.

FOOD AND OTHER RELIEF.

Regular relief rations amounting to £1,770 were issued from 31 centres in monthly or weekly allowance, according to recipients' need. In addition, casual relief, to the amount of £312, was given where found necessary. This relief was received by natives not entitled to benefits from the Provident Fund.

BLANKETS.

The following articles were distributed in addition to the annual issue of 3,906 blankets:— Women's and girls' dresses and petticoats, men's and boys' shirts and trousers, print, singlets, tent flies, tomahawks, knives, tobacco, pipes, needles and cotton, fishing lines, hooks and sinkers, calico, hats, soap, &c.

The cost of these blankets and goods amounted to £2,061, and the cartage, &c., to £122.

The goods were obtained through the State Stores, and distributed from the various centres in good time for the winter needs.

OFFENCES AGAINST ABORIGINALS.

The following comparative table of prosecutions for offences against the Aborigines Protection Acts, for the past three years, speaks for itself:—

Offences.	1921.		1922.		1923.	
	No.	Fines.	No.	Fines.	No.	Fines.
Possession of opium ..	52	£ 343	25	£ 340	16	£ 204
Supplying liquor ..	13	246	11	181	9	137
Harbouring ..	7	31	2	4	1	1
Illegally employing ..	8	67	25	33	2	14

There is a further gratifying decrease in the number of prosecutions for opium and drink offences. This reflects credit upon the Police Department for the strict vigilance exercised. Of the cases for "Possession of opium," 6 were dealt with at Townsville, 5 at Atherton, and 2 at Hughenden.

The entire absence of "Opium supplying" cases is worth noting, and it may be taken from this that the traffic amongst natives has materially decreased, but there is no doubt, in many places, the drug, principally in the charcoal form, is obtained by them where Asiatics are numerous.

OFFENCES BY ABORIGINALS.

The following comparative statement of offences for which aborigines have been convicted during the last three years speaks for itself:—

Offences.	1921.	1922.	1923.
Drunkenness	26	46	20
Stealing	19	1	3
Entering premises	2	3	1
Desertion from reserve	4	4	2
Obscene language	4	7	2
Assault	1	6	1
Disobedience on reserve	3	..	1
Immoral offences .. .. .	..	4	2

REMOVALS.

The following statement shows the number of natives sent to reserves, on Minister's orders, for reasons of discipline or for their own relief and protection:—

Place.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
<i>Settlements—</i>				
Barambah ..	5	5	2	12
Palm Island ..	42	26	19	87
Taroom ..	9	2	7	18
<i>Missions—</i>				
Yarrabah ..	4	4	8	16
Mapoon ..	..	2	..	2
Mornington Isl.	..	..	1	1
	60	39	37	136

HEALTH.

Good health prevailed throughout the inland protectorates, with the exception of the western districts of Bedourie and Boulia, which suffered severe outbreaks of influenza.

The coastal institutions, especially in the Gulf, suffered several serious epidemics of fever, influenza, measles, sore eyes, &c.

Herberton district and Monamona Mission each experienced slight outbreaks of measles, while influenza claimed a heavy toll of victims at

Burketown and Croydon, appearing in a milder form at Mareeba and some other places on the coast.

Slight outbreaks of influenza and chicken-pox occurred at Thursday Island. Sore eyes affected a number at Mapoon. All missions report good results obtaining from the hookworm treatment, many cures being effected and a decided improvement noticeable in the health of the people from the continued use of the treatment.

Isolated cases of venereal were reported from several districts, but on the East Peninsula, at Burketown and Palm Island, it has been most noticeable, at the last place on account of its introduction by new arrivals from the Peninsula. Several cases from the Peninsula were isolated and treated at Cooktown gaol compound.

The Tropical Institute at Townsville also admitted 24 cases for treatment, from the surrounding districts. Other centres reporting treatment are:—Burketown 12, Camooweal 1, Longreach 1, Mareeba 3, Richmond 1, Monamona 3, Mapoon 5, Barambah 1, and Palm Island 10. Eight cases were also treated at mission stations. In several cases apparently complete cures resulted from treatment. The new mission now being established at Lockhart River, in Lloyd Bay, should help materially to combat the ravages of this insidious disease on the east coast of the Peninsula by checking illegal recruiting and the abuses incidental thereto.

Taroom Settlement suffered from pneumonia during the cold weather, several inmates, chiefly old people, succumbing.

At Palm Island Settlement epidemics of influenza and dysentery claimed numerous victims.

The number of natives treated at district hospitals was 564, and the mission hospitals treated 89 in-patients, 65 being at Aurukun during the epidemic of influenza. The Torres Strait Hospital admitted 127.

There were 408 deaths recorded, 122 occurring on the settlements, 69 in Torres Strait, 38 on mission stations, and 179 in district camps.

As against this, 246 births are reported, 139 being registered. There is an excess of deaths over births this year owing to the increased mortality amongst the old people as a result of the epidemics.

At Barambah Settlement 859 cases were treated, and 318 were admitted to hospital, while at Taroom 35 cases were admitted out of 514 examined and treated.

YOUNG WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Very few complaints have been received with regard to the conduct of the girls in employment, and those were principally due to resentment of the restrictions upon their roaming the streets at night time.

Owing to the pressure of clerical work, and the time occupied in shopping for the girls in employment and buying drapery for the settlements, the Inspector has not been able to visit many girls in service. This is to be regretted, as constant visits are required to ensure the regulations with regard to accommodation being carried out.

Few country inspections have been possible for some years, and the observance of the regulations has to some extent to be taken on trust,

which is not at all fair to either party. An inspection of these girls at least once yearly is highly desirable.

The Savings Bank accounts held number 94, with an amount to credit of £3,839, representing an average of £40.

The wages collected during the year totalled £2,220, while the withdrawals made for clothing, dentistry, and holidays amounted to £2,158.

There are now 87 girls under agreement from the head office, of whom 29 are in town situations. Eight girls in town situations last year have been placed in the country. The restriction on city employment has to be carefully enforced to prevent country employers from evading the rule by bringing servants into town with them, or city employers from recruiting them from the country. Only 4 young women were granted their exemption, being considered capable of managing their own affairs.

Permission was granted to 18 females to be legally married, 10 being to men of their own race, 2 to Pacific Islanders, 1 to a Malay, and 5 (half-castes) to Europeans.

Although it is not possible to obtain record of all tribal marriages, 35 such unions by full-blood couples of semi-civilised type were reported.

Twenty-six European half-caste women, most of whom were married, received the maternity allowance, sixteen cases being dealt with through head office and ten through local protectors, thus ensuring the disbursement of the money for the purpose granted.

Owing to adverse reports by local protectors, it was found necessary to remove 86 women and children to various settlements and missions for better care and protection. Of these 34 women and 39 children were sent to the settlements and 10 women and 8 children to missions.

The number of children in homes was 56, for whom £942 was paid as maintenance. They were distributed as under:—

Sacred Heart Mission, Thursday Island	17
Mapoon Mission	7
Salvation Army Industrial Schools—	
Yeronga and Chelmer (girls) ..	13
Riverview (boys)	6
Purga (boys and girls)	13
	—
	56

TORRES STRAITS ISLANDS AND CAPE YORK PENINSULA.

In his report the Protector at Thursday Island says:—

The health of the island natives was, on the whole, better than during the previous year. Itch, coughs, &c., were as usual experienced, but responded to the medicines supplied. At Poid (Moa Island) yaws again appeared about the middle of the year, and it became necessary to punish the parents of some of the children for refusing to report the cases to the teacher. This had the desired result, and the malady was practically wiped out at the end of the year. In the matter of minor illnesses, Poid village does not compare favourably with other islands, due principally to the absence of a white teacher.

The returns show that the population of the islands is 2,713—men 747, women 643, boys 701,

girls 622, being an increase of 1 on the previous year's figures. The births numbered 84—46 boys, 38 girls. There were 14 marriages and 40 deaths.

Schools.—All teachers report satisfactory progress during the year. Towards the end of March a violent hurricane swept over Torres Straits, doing considerable damage to gardens. Murray, Darnley, Yorke, and Cocconut Islands received the full force of the blow, and the crops were blackened and singed as though a fire had passed through them.

The new quarters for the teacher at Darnley Island have not yet been started, but the Works Department have all material ready for commencing after the wet season.

Various small repairs have been effected to other quarters by native labour, as the Government carpenter did not visit the islands. Extensive repairs will be required to the teacher's quarters on some of the other islands in the near future as they are showing signs of deterioration. This applies especially to Mabuig, Yam, and Murray Islands.

Except at Poid village (Moa Island), things may be regarded as satisfactory. It is sincerely to be hoped that, in the near future, the appointment of a white teacher there will be possible. At this place the school is also the residence of the native teacher, a most unsatisfactory arrangement, and a separate building is badly needed. A grass building for the purpose is shortly to be built by the natives.

Island Funds.—The total collections were £1,936, and the disbursements £1,128. The amount out on loan to native fishing vessels is £2,839, a slight increase of £140, and the balance on hand now is £2,753. This is very satisfactory in view of the bad working season and fall in prices of produce.

Island Company Boats.—The boats have experienced another bad year for fishing operations. A serious falling off in the amount of produce won was noticeable in the case of the boats of the western islands—viz., Badu, Mabuig, Poid, and Saibai. The weather conditions adversely effected the vessels of these places, probably more than those of other islands, but some of these western island boats could have done better.

The price of M.O.P. shell continued to fall, as the figures below will show, and this militated further against successful working.

	Maximum price reached.			Minimum.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1921 ..	153	10	9	130	0	0
1922 ..	138	0	0	118	10	6
1923 ..	124	0	0	107	0	0

In spite of this, some of the boats showed very gratifying increases in the value of produce won, compared with the previous year's effort, as indicated hereunder:—

	1922.	1923.
	£	£
“Sissy”	246	573
“Yama”	330	493
“Caroline”	293	413
“Miriam”	115	217
“Alice”	139	344
“Don”	181	241
“Erub”	172	192

All these vessels belong to islands of the Eastern groups. While all of these boats increased their

last year's catches, the western boats have to admit a discouraging decrease which more than balanced the gains of the other groups.

The total catch brought £8,938, a loss of £802 as compared with the previous year's results, but this would be accounted for by the fall in market prices.

The vessels "Kismet" and "Nancy," owned by the Mosby Bros., have done fairly well. At present the "Nancy" is in debt £70, which should, with decent working conditions prevailing, be repaid this coming year. The "Kismet" is now free of debt. Both of these vessels pay their crew the ruling wages in the pearling industry.

General.—The number of Savings Bank accounts in operation at the end of the year was 688, an increase of 78.

The earnings banked amounted to £5,441 and the withdrawals to £4,688. The balance to credit is £7,680.

Native settlements are established on practically every island in Torres Strait, in addition to which tribes on the mainland are camped at Cowal Creek, Pascoe River, Lloyd Bay, Orchid Point, Cape Direction, and McDonnell and Moreton Telegraph Stations.

On the islands, sufficient foodstuffs can be raised in the gardens on almost every reserve, and strict supervision is exercised to ensure every able-bodied native's cultivating his garden to the best advantage. Fish and yams are still the staple food of the mainlanders, augmented by European foodstuffs bought with the earnings of those employed in the fishing industry.

At Cowal Creek, on the western extremity of the Peninsula, where a native missionary is now established, the people are progressing very satisfactorily. This settlement was visited on six occasions, and they have now been induced to commence gardening on lines similar to the islanders. Naturally their efforts are crude. It is pleasing for them to have made a start, and as natives from further south are attracted to this camp, and the children are brought in for schooling, this settlement has every prospect of progressing. At present their village is not much behind the standard of some of the islands.

Twenty-two days were spent on patrol duty, approximately 1,000 miles being travelled. Forty-seven settlements were visited and matters straightened out where necessary. The importance of patrol work in this district cannot be overestimated as bringing home to the native population the interest which the Government has in their welfare, as well as materially assisting the Government teachers and native officers in the successful administration of their settlements and industries.

HALF-CASTES.

The most vexing problem the administration is faced with is that of the half-caste. About 30 per cent. of the native population are crossbreeds of European, Pacific Island, or Asiatic strain. Unlike the full-blood, who usually accepts protection as a matter of course, the half-caste, once

civilised, frets at the supervision so necessary for his welfare, and this discontent is often fomented by unscrupulous or misguided people.

The half-caste, no matter how civilised, is rarely able to hold his own in the business or labour world, and is nearly always socially ostracised, as evidenced by the fact that, even when granted exemption, he almost invariably has to turn to his own colour to marry, and frequently drifts back to the camps to the full-bloods.

The class most needing protection are the half-caste females, as their colour and defenceless position mark them as fair game for the unscrupulous. Unfortunately, domestic service, so suitable for them in many ways, exposes them to these very dangers. These women are of more social value to the community as healthy wives of their own men than as a doubtful commodity in the labour market.

To combat the half-caste evil, it is essential that the gulf between the white and black race should be widened as far as possible. With this in view, the marriage of full-blood women to whites or aliens is rigidly tabooed, half-castes of aboriginal nature are encouraged to marry back, and the superior type are assisted to uplift themselves and mate with their own kind.

RESERVES.

The reports of the various institutions offer some interesting and encouraging evidence of the great possibilities in the evolution of a native civilisation under conditions ensuring protection and benevolent guidance.

From the old, free, nomadic tribal life to a settled, peaceful life on a reserve, under discipline, is in itself a long step, but it is wonderful that a people, who had never known the arts of husbandry, should so readily adapt themselves to home and family life and evince an appreciation of its responsibilities and duties.

To have also shown themselves capable of understanding the true community spirit, by learning and accepting the principles of self-government, and responding to the call for service for the welfare of their own race, is proof that the right material is there for the making of good citizens.

GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENTS.

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

Taroom (Superintendent, H. C. Colledge).

Palm Island (Superintendent, R. H. Curry).

Labour.—The adverse seasons greatly affected the demand for permanent labour, especially at Taroom where the surrounding district is purely pastoral. At Barambah there was plenty of casual work offering for women, and at Palm Island 40 men were employed in the fishing fleets for short terms. The demand in the sugar-growing districts was good, but great care had to be exercised to ensure that the native was kept strictly to the work for which he was engaged.

The number of engagements entered into was—

Barambah 626, including 552 casual jobs.

Taroom 75, including 10 casual jobs.

Palm Island 184, including 44 casual jobs.

About £13,000 was earned in wages, and of this amount approximately £9,500 was paid into the various natives' bank accounts for the benefit of themselves and their dependents.

	Barambah.	Taroom.	Palm Island.
	£	£	£
Collections	5,205	2,096	3,516
Interest	236	43	159
Settlement contributions ..	349	137	502
Withdrawals	4,806	2,320	3,549
Balance	6,575	1,401	6,085

Population—

Barambah 663 (242 men, 151 women, 270 children).

Taroom 323 (134 men, 63 women, 126 children).

Palm Island 731 (329 men, 203 women, 199 children).

Health.—See under "Health."

Crime.—There was an absence of serious crime, and the conduct generally was very satisfactory.

Eight Barambah natives were punished in the police courts for minor offences, and at Palm Island an attempt at gambling was summarily dealt with by the Superintendent, who banished the offenders to a neighbouring island for a term.

Taroom also reports one case of attempted assault which was dealt with in the police court. With the exception of a number of minor offences and breaches of regulations, dealt with by the native court, the conduct generally was good.

Retail Store.—A perusal of the following table will show the volume of business being transacted through the settlement stores. The sales are entirely from the earnings of inmates in employment, and as the profits are available for development work they are, to some extent, returned to the customers, indirectly, in benefits.

Settlement.	Cash Sales.	Bank Orders.	Free Issues.	Total.
	£	£	£	£
Barambah ..	644	2,968	322	3,934
Taroom ..	1,126	1,170	276	2,571
Palm Island ..	280	2,251	83	2,614
				£9,119

Schools.—Periodical inspections by the Public Instruction Department inspectors have shown that good progress has been made, especially in view of the difficulties due to inadequate accommodation. At Barambah a start is being made on the erection of a new up-to-date school building to hold 200 pupils, and the teaching staff have already shown good results in the manual branches, some very creditable specimens of basket and raffia work, wooden toys, rugs, mats, dolls, &c., being made by the children.

At Taroom, although school is conducted in a mudbrick building with ground floor, the singing, reading, brightness, and demeanour of the 57 pupils was very favourably remarked upon.

No teacher has yet been appointed to Palm Island, but 110 scholars are taught by an educated native girl with fairly good results.

Industries.—The prolonged drought period was responsible for the failure of agricultural efforts, especially at Barambah and Taroom.

Cotton-growing was attempted at both places, but without great success. A plague of moths at Barambah destroyed the English potato crops, but about 5,000 head of cabbage, a fair crop of turnips, and 4 tons of lucerne hay were obtained.

At Palm Island 50 tons of sweet potatoes were harvested, and about 600 banana plants, 600 seed cocoanuts, and 3,700 pine suckers planted out. Twenty-seven sacks of beans were gathered by the children and sold on their behalf.

A number of the Barambah inmates were also kept busy cleaning the paddocks of noxious weeds and undergrowth and splitting posts and rails for fencing.

A considerable amount of scrub clearing was accomplished at Palm Island, a new cowyard and bails built, a well sunk, and a four-acre plot of ground levelled off for use as a recreation park.

Stock.—At Barambah during the latter part of the year, feed was so scarce that trees had to be lopped to feed the stock, which suffered heavily in losses. The last muster showed 18 horses and 191 goats.

Taroom also suffered from the dry weather, and over 20 head of cattle were lost, leaving about 320 head still on the settlement.

Building and Village Development.—At Barambah several more weatherboard cottages have been added to the native village and occupied by those with the largest families. The saw-mill had to close down again in September, as the bullocks were too poor in condition to haul timber. The building work nevertheless progressed steadily. The native village shows some well-improved little homes with plots neatly fenced, and cultivated with vegetables, flowers, creepers, &c.

At Taroom a number of mudbrick cottages and buildings were erected, but all important development is held up owing to uncertainty as to future site, as the Dawson irrigation scheme may make a removal necessary.

At Palm Island, a boatshed was removed from Lucinda Point and converted into a new girls' quarters. Three thatched cottages were built to serve as a lock ward in the segregation area, and the hospital and police quarters were thatched.

Social Improvement.—Considering the obstacles in the way of lack of material and means for providing better accommodation for themselves and their families, for the housing problem has important bearing on the question of social progress, the general tone of the village life is decidedly improving. There is a very evident desire for more civilised and comfortable conditions of living. Those fortunate enough to secure cottages have, by their good example in building up a simple refined home life, done more to inspire this desire than any lecturing could have done. Gambling and immorality are still a source of trouble, and will be until it is possible to combat them by providing means for healthy social and domestic recreations for the hours, when, for lack of these occupations, they get into mischief.

Religious Instruction.—At Barambah, the Church of England rector of the district holds regular services, and gives religious instruction with the help of the members of the staff. The Salvation Army and the missionaries of the Aboriginal Inland Mission also visit for religious meetings.

Taroom was visited at intervals by the clergy of the Bush Brotherhood, and regular services and Sunday school were conducted by the members of the staff. A missionary of the Aborigines Inland Mission also visited on regular days and held religious meetings.

No denomination sends clergy to Palm Island, but services were regularly conducted by native members of the settlement.

Recreations.—The usual outdoor sports of cricket, football, tennis, &c., are always popular, and were encouraged by assisting the natives to obtain sporting material. Every encouragement was also given them to practice and retain their skill in, and love for, their old native arts, sports, and pastimes.

The usual Christmas festivities were indulged in, the extra luxuries, gifts, sports, prizes, picnics, &c., provided, being keenly enjoyed.

MISSIONS.

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

Mona Mona, Cairns (Superintendent, J. L. Bradford), Seventh Day Adventist.

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

Moa Island, Torres Strait (Superintendent, Rev. J. W. Schomberg), Anglican.

Mapoon, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, Rev. J. B. Love, M.A., M.C., D.C.M.), Presbyterian.

Weipa, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, H. Mayer), Presbyterian.

Aurukun, Gulf of Carpentaria (Superintendent, W. F. Mackenzie), Presbyterian.

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

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

Purga, Ipswich (Superintendent, Comdt. Wm. Knight), Salvation Army.

Conduct.—The conduct on all stations has been good. There has been no serious crime, the usual minor offences and disputes being dealt with by the native councils, and the punishments awarded by them accepted and carried out by the offenders.

Religious Training.—It is claimed that the absence of serious crime is directly attributable to the influence of the religious teaching. To be suspended from participation in the spiritual benefits, for any misconduct, is usually sufficient punishment, the offender endeavouring by better behaviour to win back these privileges. Church services are regularly attended, and at many places native lay assistants have qualified to conduct services when the chaplain is absent.

The existing high moral tone and spirit of contentment is indicated at all stations as indubitable proof of the value of religious teaching in the uplift of the native.

Health.—Most stations report that improved physique, due to better ordered living conditions, is helping the native to more successfully combat such epidemics as influenza, &c., to which he is especially susceptible.

The birth rate of these stations continues to exceed the death rate.

Education.—Steady progress is being made, the parents daily realising more and more that their children are benefited by the teaching.

Elementary domestic science is taught the girls, whilst the boys follow on their school course with a trade or outdoor usefulness.

At Yarrabah turning, fitting, blacksmithing, tinsmithing, and woodworking are carried on, also repairing of engines and agricultural implements.

Industrial and Agricultural.—Considerable advancement has been made in station improvements, though bad seasons were responsible for the failure of agriculture at several places.

At Mapoon where the main support is bêche-de-mer fishing, the natives were unfortunate in losing their fishing cutter in a cyclone. The boat has since been replaced and the industry is again on a good footing. The sale of copra, adzed timber, beef, and fancy work done by the women has greatly helped towards maintenance. An experimental plot of cotton has been planted and a 40-acre garden securely fenced.

In spite of exceptionally dry weather at Cape Bedford, 20 tons of sweet potatoes and a fair crop of corn were grown, together with bananas and cassava. Thousands of cocoanuts were gathered and increased the food supply. Scrub clearing is in progress, and a splendid road, 25 miles long, has been built to ensure communication with Cooktown. The work was done entirely under direction of a full-blood native inmate.

Bad weather at Mona Mona was responsible for the failure of the crops, and heavy frosts almost destroyed the banana plantation. Two miles of fencing were erected and 65 acres of clearing and scrub falling accomplished.

Yarrabah reports a period of great activity. More than enough maize for home use was grown, the surplus being sold, and good crops of sweet potatoes, bananas, pumpkins, melons, peanuts, and general vegetable produce were obtained. Cotton to the value of £33 was disposed of.

Engine and boiler rooms were built at the saw-mill, and a power-house and new workshops are being erected at the head station. A new boys' dormitory (70 ft. by 45 ft.) has been completed, and a six-roomed house for the chaplain is in course of erection, proving that aboriginal tradesmen may be trained to accomplish work of considerable magnitude. A strong wharf, 120 ft. in length, is nearing completion, and many alterations and repairs have been carried out.

A large quantity of timber was milled for export and 60,000 super. feet were retained for use on the settlement. The tram lines were considerably extended and are proving useful in conveying log timber to the mill. Regular work was found for the three bullock teams, which are keeping in excellent condition.

Forty acres were cultivated at Purga, where lucerne, maize, oats, barley, potatoes, &c., were grown. Besides that used for home consumption, farm produce to the value of £332 was sold. Four hundred acres of grazing land have been cleared of prickly-pear, and a further 6 acres prepared for cultivation.

Native earnings outside the mission amounted to £777, of which £540 was spent by the men on the maintenance of their families.

Report upon the Operations of certain Sub-Departments of the Home Secretary's Department - Aboriginal Department, Information contained in Report for the year ended 31st December 1923

Corporate Author: Queensland, Chief Protector of Aboriginals

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