

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples



DR3217 - "Maranoa Charlie" King of Tinnenburra, ca. 1910

Research Guide to records about Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples at Queensland State Archives

Queensland State Archives (QSA) is the official repository for Queensland Government records selected for permanent retention because of their continuing value. The records are in our facility at [Runcorn, Brisbane](#), and open records are available for viewing in the Reading Room, free-of-charge.

Government authorities managed the lives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples over a long period of time. Consequently, a significant amount of information was created and retained. The records about Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples provide:

- the opportunity to research family and community links
- background to contemporary issues facing Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- provide valuable information for native title determination and other legal matters.

The main finding aid for records held at QSA is the [Queensland State Archives' online catalogue](#) (known as ArchivesSearch).

The following citation abbreviations are used throughout our catalogue:

- ITM – QSA Item (describes the item)
- PR – Physical Representation (generally the original or microfilm copy)
- DR – Digital Representation (for a digital image)
- S – Series ID (for series of records)
- A – Agency ID (for the creating or responsible agency).

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that our catalogue contains images, names and voices of people who have died.

Our commitment to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Queensland State Archives' Statement of Intent is part of an approach to share and value the historical knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islander peoples, see Appendix 1.

Administering agencies and their records

In the past, Queensland Government agencies recorded where the First Peoples lived, locations to which they travelled or were sent, as well as personal information. This was due to government controls under legislation such as the *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897*.

The main records are those created by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and its predecessor agencies. The following list gives the names of many of the administering agencies.

- [Native Police](#), 5/5/1857–31/12/1867, A2377
- [Colonial Secretary's Office](#), 10/12/1859–6/8/1896, A107
- [Home Secretary's Office](#), 6/8/1896–5/12/1935, A123
- [Northern Protector of Aboriginals Office](#), 1/1/1898–25/3/1904, A142
- [Southern Protector of Aboriginals Office](#), 1/1/1898–25/3/1904, A1834
- [Office of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals](#), 25/3/1904–12/10/1939, A135
- [Office of the Director of Native Affairs](#), 12/10/1939–28/4/1966, A136
- [Aboriginal and Island Affairs Department](#), 28/4/1966–16/1/1975, A137

- [Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement Department](#), 16/1/1975–31/5/1984, A143
- [Community Services Department](#), 31/5/1984–14/12/1987, A139
- [Department of Community Services, Ethnic Affair and Northern Development / Department of Community Services](#), 14/12/1987–7/12/1989, A217
- [Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Division](#), 7/12/1989–25/1/1996, A41
- [Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Division](#), 7/12/1989–25/1/1996, A2568
- [Department of Family and Community Services](#), 25/1/1996–26/2/1996, A141
- [Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy](#), 29/6/1998–4/9/1998, A10902
- [Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development](#), 4/9/1998–22/2/2001, A9450
- [Department of Families, Youth and Community Care](#), 26/2/1996–22/2/2001, A49
- [Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council](#), 31/5/1984–1/1/2005, A2852
- [Department of Communities](#), 12/2/2004–3/4/2012, A10721
- [Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs](#), 3/4/2012–16/2/2015, A11465
- [Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships](#), 16/2/2015–12/11/2020, A11653
- [Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships](#), 12/11/2020–18/5/2023, A11917
- [Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts](#), 18/5/2023–1/11/2024, A12015
- [Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism](#), 1/11/2024–, A12121

Between 1966 and 1975 there were regional offices of the Office of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals and the Aboriginal and Island Affairs Department strategically based around Queensland. These are listed in Appendix 2, with their QSA agency identifiers..

Access

Every record at QSA is allocated an access category:

- Open – researchers can view open records without seeking permission from the responsible agency. All researchers are welcome to visit the Reading Room to request and view open records.
- Restricted – researchers cannot view records while the restricted access period applies without permission from the responsible agency. The restriction period may be 30 years or longer, and a 100 year restricted access period may be applied to personal and confidential information. Access is granted at the discretion of the responsible agency.

Research

1. A name or keyword search in [ArchivesSearch](#) is the best starting point. ArchivesSearch is the main finding aid used to find references to records held at Queensland State Archives.

To help you with searching, view videos on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/qldstatearchives> - look for the heading [Using ArchivesSearch](#). The how-to video [Requesting an item](#) includes steps to request access to an item with access restrictions.

2. If your research is for records between 1859 and 1935, try searching **Queensland Government indexes and registers, 1859-1935**

- **Index to Colonial Secretary's Office and Home Secretary's Office correspondence about Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1859-1903**

This index of letter numbers is available online [here](#). To find the letters, go to [S5253](#), 1859-1903 (COL/A in-letters) available online in [ArchivesSearch](#).

- **Index to Home Secretary's Office correspondence about Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1904-1930**

This index of letter numbers in Home Secretary's Office General Correspondence is available under *Finding Aids by Others* on the Reading Room computers. To find the letters, contact QSA for a search of [S5263](#).

- **Registers of letters received, Home Secretary's Office, S12844, 1930-1935**

At this time to find letter numbers about Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples from 1930 to 1935, search the digitised copies of the [registers of letters received - Home Secretary's Office, 1897-1935, S12844](#) available online in [ArchivesSearch](#). To find the letters, contact QSA for a search of [S5263](#).

*In summary: How to find letter numbers for Home Secretary's Office correspondence
1859 – 1935*

1859–1903

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Colonial Secretary's Office Secretary's Correspondence, 1859-1903 Index - this index to letter numbers is available [online here](#).

1904–1930

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Home Secretary's Office Correspondence, 1904-1930 Index - this index to [General Correspondence, S5263](#) is accessible on the Reading Room computers under *Finding Aids by Others > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*.

1930–1935

To find Home Secretary's correspondence from 1930 to 1935, begin by finding letter numbers in the [Registers of Letters Received, S12844, 1897–1935](#). These registers are online in [ArchivesSearch](#).

Other records at Queensland State Archives

Researchers may wish to widen their search to include agencies other than those listed in this Research Guide. Refer to our [Research Guides to records at Queensland State Archives](#) for overviews of other subject grouping of series of records available at Queensland State Archives.

Other sources of information

Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies index

This index (formerly known as the Mackett Index) is available online on the [Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies](#) website. It provides valuable references to First Nations peoples across Australia.

A Guide to Queensland Government Records Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: Records Guide Volume 1 and Volume 2, 1998 (available under *Selected Resources by Others* on the Reading Room computers)

These volumes list records created by predecessor agencies of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. They are useful for the history of functions and responsibilities.

Mini Pathway: Native Police & Black Tracker Records, compiled 2002 (available under *Finding Aids by QSA, Other* on the Reading Room computers)

Search [ArchivesSearch](#) for additional records.

Queensland Aboriginals References 1861-1895 (available under *Finding Aids by QSA, Other* on the Reading Room computers)

This is a partial listing of references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the inwards correspondence of the Colonial Secretary's Office - [S5253](#).

Material relating to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander peoples, 1899-1944 by Thomas Blake, 1983 (available under *Selected Resources by Others* on the Reading Room computers)

This is a list of items in the General Correspondence [S5263](#) and Correspondence Inwards [S5253](#) of the Home Secretary's Office, as well as the Health and Home Affairs Department General Correspondence [S6679](#).

History of the Administration of Aboriginal Affairs, 1824-1984 (available under *Selected Resources by Others* on the Reading Room computers)

This brief administrative history covers the years 1824 to 1984.

Aboriginal War Census records

These war census records refer to home front duties of Aboriginal peoples including as stockmen and labourers. Useful records includes our [Aboriginal War Census Returns 1915-1916 index](#) and the [Lists of Aboriginal peoples living at various settlements to be used for war census purposes, circa 1915–1916 \(DR25243\)](#).

Specialist research services

Community and Personal Histories (CPH)

CPH is part of the Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism. This team provides specialist research services into the lives and families of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

You may contact CPH by:

- completing the [online enquiry Family history request form](#)
- sending an email to cph@dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au or enquiries@dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au
- writing to address: GPO Box 15397, Brisbane City East QLD 4002
- calling the toll-free telephone number within Australia: 1800 650 230

More information is available on their website at <https://www.qld.gov.au/atsi/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/family-personal-history/>.

Link-up (Queensland)

[Link-up](#) offers tracing and reunion services for Stolen Generations to find and bring together families.

State Library of Queensland

The [First Nations](#) web page on the State Library of Queensland's website provides records, resources and information useful for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are tracing their ancestors and compiling community histories.

Appendix 1.

Our commitment to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Queensland State Archives (QSA) acknowledges Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this land and recognises their ongoing connection to Country, community and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise that the historical information held in the archives relating to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples was often collected without consent and remains a source of pain for First Nations communities.

We also acknowledge that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the custodians of their traditional knowledge and cultural expressions and have the right to protect and control that knowledge. We commit to being an archive that respects this right and provides a culturally safe space for remembrance and healing for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To achieve this, we support the 2019 [Tandanya-Adelaide Declaration](#) – the first international archives declaration on Indigenous people and matters. The declaration identifies the following themes and commitments for immediate action:

- Knowledge authorities
- Property ownership
- Recognition and identity
- Research and access
- Self-determination.

We commit to embracing First Nations worldviews and methods of creating, sharing and preserving valued knowledge.

We commit to building relationships with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising that the needs, priorities and holders of knowledge vary across communities.

We commit to listening, learning and persevering in this reciprocal, respectful engagement to become a more comprehensive and inclusive record of the peoples of Queensland.

These commitments are part of our journey of change to welcome, involve and empower Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Appendix 2.

Protector of Aboriginals offices (Chief Protector of Aboriginals), 1904–1966

Adavale, A1615 Atherton, A8810 Babinda, A1616 Banana, A2812 Bedourie (Diamantina), A2033 Birdsville, A2034 Boulia, A10560 Brisbane, A59 Cairns, A7135 Cardwell, A10640 Charters Towers, A2713 Chillagoe, A1617 Clermont, A1618	Cloncurry, A1619 Coen, A75 Cooktown, A1620 Croydon, A1621 Doomadgee, A2537 Duchess, A1622 Edmonton, A10566 Einasleigh, A1623 Eromanga, A10668 Forsayth, A1624 Georgetown, A2433 Herberton, A1626	Hughenden, A1627 Ingham, A1628 Irvinebank, A1629 Kidston, A1630 Kilcoy, A3589 Kowanyama, A11130 Kuridala, A1625 Laura, A1631 Lockhart River, A10454 Mareeba, A1632 Millaa Millaa, A1633 Mona Mona, A1634	Mossman, A1635 Mount Garnet, A1636 Mount Isa, A10537 Mount Molloy, A1637 Mount Surprise, A1638 Mundubbera, A1639 Nebo, A1640 Nocundra, A1641 Normanton, A10936 Port Douglas, A2525 Quilpie, A10669 Ravenshoe, A8555 Richmond, A10561 Somerset, A1614	South Brisbane, A3587 Springsure, A11672 St George, A10558 Thursday Island, A1642 Townsville, A10533 Turn Off Lagoon, A10557 Weipa South, A11134 Windorah, A2435 Winton, A10564 Yarrabah, A2036
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District offices (Aboriginal and Island Affairs Department), 1966–1975

Atherton, A3300 Babinda, A196 Birdsville, A10450 Charters Towers, A1201 Chillagoe, A272 Clermont, A198 Cooktown, A199	Croydon, A200 Cunnamulla, A7138 Doomadgee, A375 Edmonton, A10567 Einasleigh, A202 Hughenden, A276 Ingham, A205 Kowanyama, A10463	Lockhart River, A10452 Mackay, A10464 Mareeba, A206 Maryborough, A10559 Mossman, A279 Mount Isa, A3847	Mount Surprise, A209 Normanton, A213 Ravenshoe, A210 Richmond, A10562 St George, A9348 Weipa South, A10527 Winton, A10565 Cairns, A10461	Normanton, A213 Rockhampton, A270 Townsville, A10470
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Appendix 3.

Records of Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders – in summary

What records can I find?

Records and stories give us pathways from the past to the future. If you are an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander, and your family members were born or have lived in Queensland, take note of the details in oral family stories. These details may provide clues that lead you to find historical records now stored at the Queensland State Archives (QSA). The records held at QSA may provide an insight into individual and family experiences such as employment histories, how you or your family are connected to a certain place, local and community histories, and information for Native Title research.

Government records that may contain relevant information are kept at QSA. Examples include:

- Records of Offices of Protectors of Aboriginals
- Colonial Secretary's inward correspondence, read on for more information
- Home Secretary's inward correspondence, read on for more information
- Other examples of records include
 - Schools and missions
 - Mabuiag Island School, 1900–1984, A8636
 - Lockhart River Mission School, 1924–, A11971
 - Settlements
 - Barambah Aboriginal Settlement, 1905–1931, A9657
 - Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement, 1931–1939, A563
 - Police
 - Police Station, Goovigen, 26/2/1936–, A2013

Community and Personal Histories (CPH)

This team helps find:

- where your family comes from
- who your family is; and,
- how you might be connected to a certain place.

Use their online enquiry form to contact the CPH team: <https://www.qld.gov.au/atsi/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/family-history-request-form/index.html> or phone the team on 1800 650 230.

How can I get access to records?

Some records are on open access and can be viewed by anyone. Others are restricted from access (sometimes referred to as closed). Records can be restricted for a number of years and some records will be restricted for up to 100 years if they contain personal or sensitive information.

Accessing restricted records

QSA can assist with applications for access to records subject to a restricted access period. To help you with searching ArchivesSearch, and applying for access to restricted records, please view our *How to* videos on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/qldstatearchives> - look for [Using ArchivesSearch](#).

How do I research the records?

QSA online catalogue

Try to find out names, places, dates and events because these pieces of information help your search. Type the name of a person or a place in QSA's catalogue at this website link:

<http://www.archivessearch.qld.gov.au/Search/BasicSearch.aspx> .

QSA webpage for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples

<https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/arts/heritage/archives/atsi/>

This page includes additional information such as:

- You can search by keywords for references to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Colonial Secretary's correspondence from 1859–1903 using the *Index to Colonial Secretary's Office and Home Secretary's Office inwards correspondence 1859-1903* available [here](#)
- To find references to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Home Secretary's Office Correspondence, 1904-1930, search the index on the Reading Room computers under *Finding Aids by Others > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*
- To search for references to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Home Secretary's Office Correspondence, 1930-1935, begin by find letter numbers in the [Registers of letters received, S12844](#) available online in [ArchivesSearch](#).

What can't I find at QSA?

QSA does not provide access to birth, death and marriage certificates. For these, go to the Queensland Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages [Family history research service](#) web page.

For military records, try the [National Archives of Australia](#), or the [Australian War Memorial](#)

For historical Queensland newspapers, search the National Library of Australia's online database [TROVE](#).

Need more information?

Check our online catalogue [ArchivesSearch](#).

Phone us on (07) 3037 6777 or you can [email](#) an archivist.