

# Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders



Research Guide to records about Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders 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 agencies have managed the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over a long period of time, therefore a significant amount of information was created and retained.

The records about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples provide:

- the opportunity to research family and community links
- background to contemporary issues facing Aboriginal 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 and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that our catalogue contains images, names and voices of people who have died.**

## Records

The main records are those generated by [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships](#) and its predecessor agencies. All of these agencies created records specifically about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The following list gives the names of the previous administering agencies. To browse the series of records for an agency, click on the hyperlink below.

## Administering Agencies

- [Native Police](#)
- [Colonial Secretary's Office](#)
- [Home Secretary's Office](#)
- [Northern Protector of Aboriginals Office](#)
- [Southern Protector of Aboriginals Office](#)
- [Office of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals](#)
- [Office of the Director of Native Affairs](#)
- [Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs](#)
- [Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement](#)
- [Department of Community Services](#)
- [Department of Community Services and Ethnic Affairs](#)
- [Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs](#)
- [Family Services, Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Department, Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Division](#)
- [Department of Families, Youth and Community Care](#)

- [Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy](#)
- [Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy](#)
- [Department of Communities](#)
- [Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs \(DATSIP\)](#)
- [Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships](#)
- Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts

## 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

Some agencies in the past, particularly those concerned with the administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' affairs, created records containing information on specific individuals and communities. A name search in the [ArchivesSearch](#) and in the [Index to Colonial Secretary's correspondence relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1859-1903](#) is a good way to begin your research.

Records of other agencies have been created to document the functions and activities of government and their arrangement does not distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous topics. Researchers may have to widen their search to include agencies they would not normally research (eg. Auditor-General's Office, Police, Courts of Petty Sessions and the Registrar-General).

Assistance with research is available from [Community and Personal Histories \(CPH\)](#). See Specialist research services at the end of this guide for contact details.

## Frequently asked questions

For more information and tips about searching for records about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, refer to *Summary of records of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*.

## Other sources of information

A range of [finding aids](#) are available on our website and in the Reading Room. If an [online QSA index](#) is available, we recommend researchers search this. The content of online indexes has been sourced directly from original records. Digitised copies of many original registers and indexes are also available in the [QSA catalogue](#), and digitised copies of some microfilmed original records are available on Reading Room computers.

### **Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies index**

This index (known as the Mackett Index) is available online on the [Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies](#) website. It provides valuable references to Indigenous matters and personal names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### **Index to Colonial Secretary's Correspondence relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1859-1903**

This index was created by the Communities and Personal Histories (CPH) from [Series ID S5253](#) - Inwards Correspondence, Colonial Secretary's Office and Home Secretary's Office, and is available on the QSA website [here](#). The Colonial Secretary's Office inwards correspondence letters (COL/A in-letters) are available on our Reading Room computers under *Selected QSA records* title. Some special batch files about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples covered in this index are digitised.

### **Index to Home Secretary's Correspondence relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1904-1930** (available under *Finding Aids by Others* on the Reading Room computers)

The index to Home Secretary's Correspondence about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from 1904-1930 was created by the CPH staff from [S5263 - General Correspondence, Home Secretary's Office](#), 1902–1935. Digitised copies of [Registers of Letters Received - Home Secretary's Office, 1897–1935, S12844](#) available under *Selected QSA records* on the Reading Room computers.

### **A Guide to Queensland Government Records Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: Records Guide Volume 1 and Volume 2** (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 Pathways: Native Police & Black Tracker Records** (available under *Finding Aids by QSA, Other* on the Reading Room computers)

*Pathways* and *Mini Pathways* are function or subject based guides. Please be aware more records may have been received. Search the Queensland State Archives' online catalogue 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 - [Series ID S5253](#).

**Material relating to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander peoples 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 [Series ID S5263](#) and Correspondence Inwards [Series ID S5253](#) of the Home Secretary's Office, as well as the Health and Home Affairs Department General Correspondence [Series ID S6679](#).

**History of the Administration of Aboriginal Affairs** (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 people including as stockmen and labourers. Useful records includes our [Aboriginal War Census Returns 1915-1916 index](#) and the [Lists of Aboriginal people 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships business unit. This team provides specialist research services into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lives and families. You may contact CPH by:

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

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 [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family history](#) web page on the State Library of Queensland's website has resources, information and records useful for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander peoples in tracing family and compiling community histories.

### Statement of Intent

The [Statement of Intent](#) released by Queensland State Archives is part of a new approach to sharing and valuing the historical knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are committed to embracing First Nations world views as part of the government's Path to Treaty commitments.

### Need more information?

Check our online catalogue [ArchivesSearch](#).  
Phone us on (07) 3037 6777 or you can [email](#) an archivist.

## Summary of records of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

### What records can I find?

Records and stories give us pathways from the past to the future. If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and your family members were born or have lived in Queensland, take note of the details in old 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, including employment histories
- How you or your family are connected to a certain place
- Local and community histories
- Information that can be used for Native title research.

Queensland Government agencies in the past recorded where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived, locations to which they travelled or were sent, as well as personal information. This was due to past government controls over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lives.

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
- Home Secretary's inward correspondence
- Records about schools, missions and settlements, prisons, courts, police, etc.

### 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 and Torres Strait Islander peoples**

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

This page includes additional information such as:

- Keyword searchable summaries on references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Colonial Secretary's correspondence from 1859–1903 - **Index to Colonial Secretary's Correspondence relating to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders 1859-1903** available [here](#).

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### *How to find Home Secretary's Office correspondence 1904 – 1935*

#### *1904–1930 – Index*

This partial index to [General Correspondence, S5263, 1902-1935](#) is accessible on the Reading Room computers under *Finding Aids by Others*.

#### *1930–1935*

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

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## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, 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.

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

## 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 year 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 a process to apply for access to records which are restricted by the responsible government agency. To help you with searching [our catalogue](#), 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](#).

## 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 at <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces/>.

Other useful sources include:

- Military records – contact the [National Archives of Australia](#), or the [Australian War Memorial](#)
- Newspapers – try the National Library of Australia's online database [TROVE](#).

### Need more information?

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