Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Research Guide to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples records 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 Islanders;
- provide valuable information for native title determination and other legal matters.

**Records**

The main records are those generated by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) 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 administrating agencies. To browse the series of records for an agency, click on the hyperlink.

**Administrating 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

**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 any relevant records. For more information about us, view available facilities and how to get to QSA.

- Restricted – researchers cannot view files while the restricted access period applies.

The restriction period may be 30 years or longer. The 100 year restricted access periods is applied generally for privacy reasons. Any restricted record requires the permission of the responsible or owning agency before access will be granted. View the access category for the item (or series of records) in our catalogue to determine if the record is presently closed; it is calculated using the end date of the record.

QSA has a process to apply for access permission to view and/or copy records subject to restricted access periods. Please contact QSA staff for details on how to apply for access to restricted records.

Research

Some agencies in the past, particularly those concerned with the administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, have created records containing information on specific individuals and communities. A name search in the Queensland State Archives’ online catalogue and in the index to Colonial Secretary’s correspondence relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 1859-1903 is a good place 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 e.g. Auditor-General’s Office, Police, Courts of Petty Sessions and the Registrar-General. Obtaining information from these records will require more research time.

Researchers do not have to make an appointment to visit or view records in the Reading Room. Researchers can visit during opening hours and an archivist is available in the Reading Room to assist.

Assistance is available from Community and Personal Histories (CPH). See Specialist research services at the end of this brief guide for contact details for the CPH team.

Finding aids

The main finding aid for records held at QSA is the Queensland State Archives’ online catalogue. There are also a range of finding aids available on our website and in the Reading Room. Image Queensland may also be searched for digitised images and documents. Please be aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material accessed in Image Queensland may be culturally sensitive for some individuals and communities.

Publications and Indexes

Online

**Mackett Index** (on the Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies website)

Paul Mackett’s index is available online at [http://www.cifhs.com/](http://www.cifhs.com/). The Mackett Index provides valuable references to Indigenous matters and personal names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
Index to Colonial Secretary’s correspondence relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 1859-1903 (on the QSA website)

The index to Colonial Secretary’s correspondence about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from 1859-1903 was created by CPH staff from Series ID S5253, Inwards Correspondence, Colonial Secretary’s Office and Home Secretary’s Office. Some of the special batch files about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people covered in this index are digitised.

Also check the QSA website for other indexes and digitised records such as Aboriginal War Census Returns 1915-1916 index and Digital Image ID 25243, Aboriginal people - war census, circa 1915 – 1916

Paper copies in the Finding Aids area of the QSA Reading Room

A Guide to Queensland Government Records Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Records Guide Volume 1 and Volume 2

This publication lists records created by the predecessor agencies of the DATSIP; it contains good background information on the functions and responsibilities of the agencies.

Mini Pathways: Native Police and Black Tracker Records

Pathways are function or subject based guides which are designed to alert researchers to the wide variety of records available about a topic. Please be aware that since publication of the Pathways and Mini Pathways series, more records have been received that may be relevant to this topic. Search the Queensland State Archives’ online catalogue for additional records.

List of Reference to Aboriginals – Items of Interest

This list was created by Bernard McDougall and lists some of the records of interest.

Signposts

The volumes in this series were compiled for geographical areas (e.g. Thursday Island) and list records held at QSA created by local agencies including Land Agents, Mining Wardens, local authorities and local courts. Please be aware that since publication of the Signpost series, more records have been received that may be relevant to these geographical areas. Search the Queensland State Archives’ online catalogue for our complete holdings.

Queensland Aboriginals References 1861-1895

Partial listing of references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the inwards correspondence of the Colonial Secretary’s Office - Series ID S5253.

Gall Collection (also known as Gall estray papers)

This finding aid is a subject listing of Series ID S6786, which consists mainly of miscellaneous correspondence and papers originally extracted by Mr W Gall, during his time as Under Secretary, Home Secretary’s Office between 1913 and 1935. The series also contains some personal correspondence addressed to Mr. Gall and connected with official activities.
Material relating to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders by Thomas Blake, 1983

A list of items in the General Correspondence Series ID S5263 and Correspondence Inwards Series ID S5253 of the Home Secretary’s Office, and Health and Home Affairs Department General Correspondence Series ID S6679.

History of the Administration of Aboriginal Affairs
This is a brief administrative history of the agencies responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to 1984.

Specialist research services

Community and Personal Histories Unit

The Community and Personal Histories Unit is part of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. This team provides specialist research services into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ lives and families. You may contact CPH by:

- completing an online enquiry form: Family history request form | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples | Queensland Government
- sending an email to: enquiries@datnip.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 the 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 members of the Stolen Generations in Queensland to find and bring together families.

Queensland State Library’s web page - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family history

This web page has resources, information and records useful for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in tracing family and compiling community histories.

Need more information?

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