
**An Index to the
Chief Protector of Aborigines Files
1898 - 1908**

Public Records Office of Western Australia

**The Library and Information Service
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Preface

The creation of this index has been facilitated by the increased awareness of the need for improved finding aids to assist Aboriginal people research their family histories, identified through recent documents such as the *Bringing Them Home* report (published by the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families), which recommended that government agencies should preserve and index relevant records “as a matter of urgency”. It is envisaged that through the creation of indexes such as this one, Aboriginal people will have improved access to the records which relate to them, so as to enhance their abilities to trace their families, and locate relatives.

The Chief Protector of Aborigines Files Indexing Project was undertaken as an initiative by the Public Records Office of Western Australia. The project, however, was made possible with funding provided by the Friends of Battye Library Society Inc., as part of their ongoing commitment to the improvement of access to records of importance to Western Australia’s cultural heritage. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the Friends of Battye Library Society Inc. for their assistance in bringing this project to fruition.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of Mr Paul Ferridge, who carried out the indexing of these files, Mr Damien Hassan, who co-ordinated the indexing project, and the staff of the Public Records Office of Western Australia, who provided constructive comment and advice.

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Introduction

The Chief Protector of Aborigines Files 1898 -1908 (AN1, Acc 255) are a rich source of historical information, and provide a unique insight into the administrative workings of the Aborigines Department during the fledgling years of the Western Australian government. These records consist of almost 1500 files, containing approximately 14,000 pages relating to the administrative functions of the Aborigines Department between 1898 and 1908.

The files are arranged by subject and have been numbered consecutively as they were created, with the numbering sequence starting at the beginning of each year. The first two years of files contain inward letters only, although the file jackets often bear notes on the actions taken by the Department. From 1901 onwards press copies of outward letters are included within the files, allowing a more complete comprehension of the events contained within the files.

The Chief Protector of Aborigines Files deal with a wide range of topics relating to the welfare of Aborigines and the general administration of the Aborigines Act 1897 (and later 1905), including the admission of Aboriginal children to missions, the distribution of government rations to the old and infirm, and criminal investigations and court cases concerning Aborigines.

This index will enable a greater degree of access to the vast range of material contained within these files, particularly with regard to records considered to be of cultural or genealogical significance to Aboriginal people. Consequently, the primary focus of this index has been to extract the names and aliases of all Aboriginal people mentioned within these files, and to present them in such a way as to aid researchers in locating files relevant to particular Aborigines.

References to settlers and officials, who are mentioned in the files have also been included in the index, as have references to people of other nationalities (eg. Afghans, Malaysians, etc.)

As part of this indexing project, each document attached to the Chief Protector of Aborigines Files was carefully studied so that references could be noted. The result is an index which is comprehensive and authoritative.

The Aborigines Department : An Historical Perspective

The Aborigines Department of Western Australia was formed under the provisions of the Aborigines Act 1897, as the replacement body for the Aborigines Protection Board. The Department was headed by the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Henry Prinsep, and was allocated an annual budget of £5,000. Under the provisions of the Aborigines Act 1897 the Department was made responsible for the well being of all Western Australian Aborigines, and given control over the provision of relief to the elderly, sick and destitute. The Act also placed a number of restrictions on Aborigines, including making it an offence for any Aboriginal to enter a public house, while simultaneously increasing police powers to enforce these provisions.

The powers of the Aborigines Department were further increased with the passing of the Aborigines Act 1905, which made the Chief Protector of Aborigines the legal guardian of all Aboriginal and Half Caste children up to the age of 16 years, enabling him to send any Aboriginal or Half Caste child to an orphanage, mission, or industrial school with or without the child's parent's permission. The 1905 Act also stipulated that no Aboriginal woman and non-Aboriginal man could be married without the Chief Protector's written permission, and provided for the appointment of regional Protectors with powers to grant permits for employment of Aborigines.

Throughout this period the Aborigines Department played a significant and increasingly intrusive role in the lives of Western Australia's Aborigines. Although the 1905 Act had significantly enhanced the level of control the Aborigines Department was able to exercise over the Aborigines, the Chief Protector continued to agitate for stricter legislation, with the result being the Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1911. This Act consolidated the Department's powers, particularly with regard to the guardianship of illegitimate Half Caste children, and continued the trend towards greater Departmental interference in the lives of Aborigines, that would prevail over the coming years.

Explanatory Notes

The following notes are intended to assist clients to gain a better understanding of the nature and structure of the information provided within the Aborigines Department Files Index.

Scope:

The primary aim of this index was to create a comprehensive listing of all the names of Aboriginal persons mentioned within the Chief Protector of Aborigines Files. References to the names and designations of settlers and officials that were directly connected to the events detailed within the files have also been listed, as have references to persons from non-English speaking nationalities. The Chief Protector of Aborigines and the staff of the Aborigines Department have not been included within the index, as they are mentioned too frequently within the files, to make their inclusion practicable.

For the purposes of this index the Department's first Travelling Inspector of Aborigines, Mr G. Olivey was considered to be a member of the Department's regular staff and has not been indexed in his official capacity, although there are entries concerning his activities after leaving the service of the Department. Mr Olivey's successors in the post of Travelling Inspector - namely L.P.H. Beurteaux, James Isdell, and Charles Fartiere - have been indexed, as the volume of correspondence they generated was substantially less than that of Mr Olivey. Similarly, the Superintendent of the Welshpool Native Reserve, Mr Thomas Kelly, has also been included in the index even though he was regarded as a member of the Department's staff.

Spelling Accuracy and Gender/Racial Designations:

The spelling of all names, locations and titles contained within the index have been taken directly from the information provided in the original files, and as a result there may be some discrepancies. (For example "Jinny" may be spelt "Ginny", "Ginnie", "Jinnie", etc. in different files.) Standardisation of spelling was not undertaken as part of the indexing process as it was believed that maintaining the original wording of the document was necessary in order to make the index a more accurate finding tool.

As most of the documents contained within the Chief Protector of Aborigines Files are hand written, it was not always possible to decipher the correct spelling of peoples' names or the names of places. In cases where the correct spelling of a particular word is unclear due to poor legibility, a "(?)" symbol has been placed after the word.

To assist in the identification of individuals, gender designations have been included for Aboriginal and Afro-Asian names. The gender designation is given in brackets after the individual's name, or in cases where an Aboriginal name and an alias are given the gender designation will be placed in the "Aboriginal name" field.

In a number of cases the gender designation will be followed by further information on the race of the individual. For Aborigines this additional information will usually identify whether the individual is a Half Caste or a Quadroon. Where no other additional information has been provided, or only the gender designation has been assigned, the individual is assumed to be a "full blood" aboriginal.

Extended designations have also been given to a number of Afro-Asians, so as to clearly identify their country of origin. For example the designation (m-Manillaman) would indicate a male native of the Philippines. In cases where it has not been possible to identify an individual's race an educated guess has been made based on the information provided within the file.

Location:

The "Location" field indicates either the current position of an individual mentioned within a particular file, the home town or station of that individual, or the locality in which the events described within the file occurred. Settlers and Afro-Asians have in most cases only been linked to a single location - usually their home town or station - while Aboriginal names can be linked to a number of different locations, so as to reflect all the places that the Aboriginal has travelled too, as documented in a particular file.

There is also a separate "Station/Mission/Reserve" field which contains locations that are considered to be of particular relevance to Aboriginal researchers, due to the fact that these types of localities were generally frequented by significant numbers of Aborigines

Aborigines Department File Listing:

In order to make the best use of the index it should be used in conjunction with the Aborigines Department File Listing (AN 1/2). This listing provides a brief description of the contents of each file as taken from the file's cover page. By checking a name in the index and then cross-referencing the file number given with the listing, a fairly accurate indication of the contents of the file can be obtained.

Abbreviations:

Abbreviation	Explanation
m	Male
f	Female
h/c	Half Caste
qdrn.	Quadron (ie. 1/4 Aboriginal)
Const. No. #	Police Constable
Corp. No. #	Corporal of Police
Sergt. No. #	Sergeant of Police
JP	Justice of the Peace
RM	Resident Magistrate
GR	Government Resident
Dr	Doctor
RMO	Resident Medical Officer
DMO	District Medical Officer
Rev.	Reverend
WNC	Witness Native Contracts
Protector of Abs.	Protector of Aborigines