

Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897, Queensland

1897 – 1939

URL: https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/qld5_doc_1897.pdf

Details

The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897, with the full title “An Act to make Provision for the better Protection and Care of the Aboriginal and Half-caste Inhabitants of the Colony, and to make more effectual Provision for Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Opium” (Act no. 61 Vic. No.17). The Act established the positions of regional (Protectors and later Chief Protector) and the role of Protector of Aboriginals (Female). The act was repealed on the 12 of October 1939 by the Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act 1939 (Act no 3 Geo.VI No.6).

The 1897 Act and the subsequent amending Acts of 1901, 1927, 1928 and 1934 gave the Chief Protector of Aboriginals enormous control over the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Frankland, 1994).

Section 6 of the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 stated that:

The Governor in Council may from time to time appoint, for the purpose of carrying the provisions of this Act into effect, fit and proper persons, to be severally called “Protector of Aboriginals,” who shall, within the Districts respectively assigned to them, have and exercise the powers and duties prescribed.

These included the role of Protector of Aboriginals (Female). The Female Protector (sometimes called the Protectress) monitored the employment of Aboriginal girls and women, inspecting work conditions and ensuring wages were duly paid. The girls were only given pocket money, while the remainder of their wages was banked in personal accounts by the protectress. The contents of personal bank accounts were made available to the girls if they married or left work to live on the government settlements.

The first appointment to the role of Protector of Aborigines (Female) was in 1899. Frances Meston (the wife of Archibald Meston, Southern Protector of Aborigines) also managed the Aboriginal Girls Home in West End. The Protectress supervised girls sent to work as domestics in and around Brisbane.

Mrs Meston was succeeded by Mary Easter Frew on 2 February 1900. On 25 March 1904 Mary Frew was appointed Superintendent of the Aboriginal Girls Home. Following complaints made by the girls, a full enquiry determined that Frew had misappropriated funds belonging to Aboriginal workers. She resigned in May 1905.

The last Protector of Aboriginals (Female) resigned in 1933. A report on the Office of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals conducted in 1932, called for the position of Female Protector to be abolished. The duties of the Female Protector were handed over to the female officers of the accounts branch of the Chief Protector’s Office

and the responsibility of inspecting Aboriginal girls in employment was transferred to the Inspector of the State Children's Department.

More info

Chronology

- **Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897, Queensland (1897 – 1939)**
 - Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act 1939, Queensland (1939 - 1966)
 - Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act 1965, Queensland (1965 - 1972)
 - Aborigines Act 1971, Queensland (1972 - 1984)
 - Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984, Queensland (1984 - current)

Related Entries

Is amended by

- [State Children Act 1911, Queensland \(1911 - 1966\)](#)
- [Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts Amendment Act 1934, Queensland \(1934 - 1939\)](#)
- [Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1901, Queensland \(1901 - 1939\)](#)
- [Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts Amendment Act 1928, Queensland \(1928 - 1939\)](#)
Date: 1928 - 1939
- [Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts Amendment Act 1927, Queensland \(1928 - 1939\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Aboriginal Girls Home \(1899 - 1906\)](#)
- [Fantome Island Lazaret \(1939 - 1973\)](#)
Aboriginal people were moved to Fantome Island under the provisions of the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act.
- [Fantome Island Lock Hospital \(1928 - 1945\)](#)
Aboriginal people were moved to Fatome Island under the provisions of the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act.
- [Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement \(c. 1904 - 1986\)](#)
- [Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office, State Government of Queensland \(25 March 1904 - 12 October 1939\)](#)

Related Archival Collections

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Records \(1880s - current\)](#)

Resources

- McCorquodale, John, [The legal classification of race in Australia](#), Aboriginal History, 1986
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