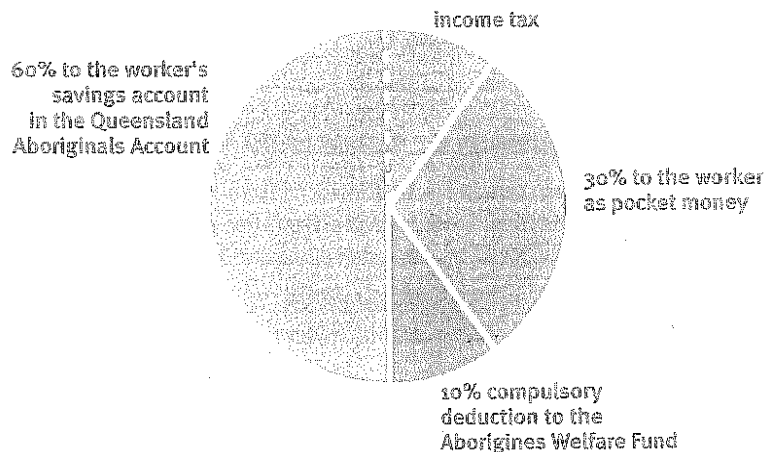


Wages and Savings of Indigenous Queenslanders 1897-1972

What happened to the wages of Aboriginal workers?

- From the 1890s until 1972, the Queensland Government controlled the labour, wages and savings of most Aboriginal Queenslanders. Some workers lived on settlements and missions and did not strictly earn a wage but others were sent out to work for employers and did earn a wage.
- Many people say that they never got the wages they earned and that their wages were unjustly taken from them and put into the Welfare Fund.
- This information sheet will help to explain what happened.

Where did the wages go?



Queensland Aboriginals Account

The Queensland Aboriginals Account (QAA) was a single bank account used to control the wages and savings of Aboriginal people. Until 1966, Aboriginal people 'under the Act' were forced to make compulsory savings into this account.

An individual ledger card record was kept for each person who had money banked into this account. This record, known as a Savings Account, showed their name, individual deposits and withdrawals and the balance they had in their savings account.

Many people did not know what was happening to their wages money. Unlike the rest of the community, Indigenous people did not have control over their own money. Government officials took money out of the account to pay for things like clothing, travel fares, postage, medical and dental expenses and purchase orders for the worker or

their family, but the workers themselves were often not told of this. This has led to concerns about how the money was spent and whether people got all the money they should have.

There are also concerns about possible fraud and mismanagement of savings accounts and wages. This is very hard to prove because so much time has gone by and because there is very little evidence on the records to show if there were any improper dealings with the accounts. However, the Government has put resources into investigating this.

By the early 1990's the savings accounts were closed. All of the balances were distributed.

Therefore, according to Government records there is no money in the QAA, which held the savings of Aboriginal workers.

July 2001

Aborigines Welfare Fund

The Aborigines Welfare Fund was set up in 1943 for the general benefit of Aboriginal people. Despite what many think, the whole of the wages of Aboriginal people did not go into this Fund.

A part of Aboriginal workers' wages was taken and put in the Aborigines Welfare Fund. Some workers had 2.5 per cent of their wages taken, others had 5 per cent taken, still others had 10 per cent taken. (The proportion taken depended on each worker's family circumstances and location.)

This means that Aboriginal people were contributing to their own welfare.

Surplus interest earned from investment of balances in the Queensland Aborigines Account was also paid into

the Aborigines Welfare Fund. The Fund also held moneys from the operations of retail stores, cattle, farming and other activities conducted on settlements (now Aboriginal Deed of Grant in Trust or DOGIT communities) and unclaimed money from the estates of deceased or missing Aboriginal people.

As at 30 June 2001, there was \$8.3 million in this fund, which has been frozen since 1993. By law, the money in this fund may only be used for the general welfare of Aboriginal people. This means that no money has gone into or out of the fund (apart from the interest it is earning) since 1993.

What is being done about this?

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy has created the Work and Savings Histories Unit to look at all issues arising from the past control of wages and savings of Indigenous people. Two separate areas are being looked at:

- **Wages and Savings of Indigenous Queenslanders 1897-1972:** The Department is holding information sessions in various locations around the State during 2001/2002. For further information contact:

Work & Savings Histories Unit
Ph: 3405 6695 or 3224 7540
Freecall: 1800 809 097

- **The Non-Payment of Award Wages Process 1975-1986:** If you worked for the Department after 1975 you may be eligible for a \$7000 payment. See the separate information sheet. The Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA) is coordinating this issue on behalf of Indigenous people.

If you want to know more, contact:

FAIRA: 1800 622 738 or fax: (07) 3391 4551 or www.faira.org.au

- Research is still being conducted into the accounts used to manage the wages and savings of Torres Strait Islanders.

For more information please contact



Queensland Government

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

PO Box 397 Brisbane Albert Street Queensland Australia 4002

Rockhampton: (07) 4938 4690

Townsville: (07) 4799 7470

Cairns: (07) 4039 8177

Thursday Island: (07) 4069 1243

Mt Isa: (07) 4743 9444

South Queensland: (07) 3224 5917

WAGES AND SAVINGS OF INDIGENOUS QUEENSLANDERS 1897-1970s

HISTORY SHEET

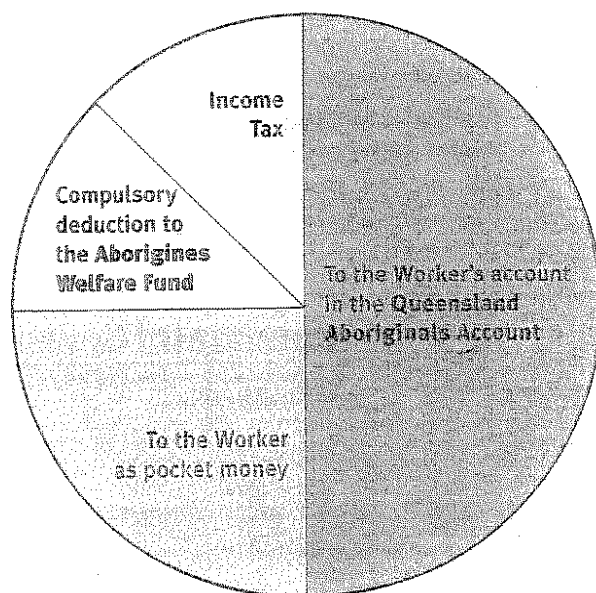
What happened to the wages of Indigenous workers?

From the 1890s until the 1970s the Queensland Government controlled the wages and savings of Indigenous Queenslanders who worked under the 'Protection Acts'. Some workers lived on settlements and missions and their wages were paid in rations, shelter and some cash. Other workers were sent to work for employers and their wages were paid into a savings account held by the Government.

Many people say that they never got the wages they earned and that their wages were unjustly taken from them and put into the Welfare Fund.

This information sheet will help to explain what happened. The information relates to the wages of Aboriginal people. A different, but similar system was used to control the wages and savings of Torres Strait Islander people 'under the Act'.

Where did the wages of Aboriginal workers go?



The **Queensland Aboriginals Account** was a single bank account used to control the wages and savings of Aboriginal people. Until the 1970s, Aboriginal people 'under the Act' were forced to make compulsory savings into this account.

An individual ledger card record was kept for each person who had money banked into this account. This record showed their name, individual deposits and withdrawals and the balance they had in their savings account.

Many people did not know what was happening to their wages money. Also, unlike the rest of the community, Indigenous people who were 'under the Act' did not have control over their own money. Government officials took money out of the account to pay for things like clothing, travel fares, postage, medical and dental expenses and purchase orders for the worker or their family, but the workers themselves were often not told of this. This has led to concerns about how the money was spent and whether people got all the money they should have.

Other concerns raised questions about possible fraud and mismanagement of savings accounts and wages. This is very hard to prove because so much time has gone by and because there is very little evidence on the records to show if there were any improper dealings with the accounts.

By the early 1990s the savings accounts were closed. All of the balances were distributed and there is now no money in these accounts.

Therefore, there is no money in the Queensland Aboriginals Account which used to hold the savings of Aboriginal workers.

What is being done about the history of wages and savings controls?

The Queensland Government is offering reparations to people whose wages or savings were controlled under the 'Protection Acts'. For details, see the information sheet on the Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations Process.

WAGES AND SAVINGS OF INDIGENOUS QUEENSLANDERS 1897-1970s

HISTORY SHEET

The **Aborigines Welfare Fund** was set up in 1943 for the general benefit of Aboriginal people. Despite what many think, the whole of the wages of Aboriginal people did not go into this Fund.

Until 1966, part of Aboriginal workers' wages was taken and put in the Aborigines Welfare Fund. Some workers had 2.5% of their wages taken, others had 5% taken, still others had 10% taken. (The proportion taken depended on each worker's family circumstances and location.)

This means that Aboriginal people were contributing to their own welfare.

Surplus interest earned from investment of balances in the Queensland Aboriginals Account was also paid into the Aborigines Welfare Fund. The Fund also held moneys from the operations of retail stores, cattle, farming and other activities conducted on

settlements (now Aboriginal Deed of Grant in Trust or DOGIT communities) and unclaimed money from the estates of deceased or missing Aboriginal people.

At June 2003 there was \$8.8 million in this fund, which has been frozen since 1993. This means that no money has gone into or out of this fund (apart from the interest it is earning). No money from the Welfare Fund will be used for the Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations payments.

What will happen with the Aborigines Welfare Fund?

Following community consultations about what should be done with the Welfare Fund, the Government is considering all the options and will make a decision in the near future.

For further information on the Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations Process contact your nearest DATSIP Regional Office:

South Queensland Regional Office Brisbane

Phone: (07) 3225 8982
Freecall: 1800 001 968

Central Queensland Regional Office Rockhampton

Phone: (07) 4938 4690
Freecall: 1800 001 984

North Queensland Regional Office Townsville

Phone: (07) 4799 7470
Freecall: 1800 003 541

West Queensland Regional Office Mount Isa

Phone: (07) 4744 7333
Freecall: 1800 621 548

Far North Queensland Regional Office Cairns

Phone: (07) 4039 8177
Freecall: 1800 001 931

Torres Strait Regional Office Thursday Island

Phone: (07) 4069 1243
Freecall: 1800 001 942

For interstate residents Work and Savings Histories Branch

Phone: (07) 3234 8389
Freecall: 1800 809 097



Queensland Government
Department of Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Policy

For other enquiries

www.indigenous.qld.gov.au

Work and Savings Histories Branch Phone: (07) 3234 8389 Freecall: 1800 809 097

INDIGENOUS WAGES AND SAVINGS (1890s-1980s) REPARATION PROCESS INFORMATION SHEET SEPTEMBER 2003

Centrelink entitlements

People who receive Centrelink entitlements should contact their nearest Centrelink Office to discuss whether the reparation payment will affect their entitlement.

Taxation

The Australian Tax Office has advised that compensation payments will not be subject to income tax.

DATSIP REGIONAL OFFICES:

SOUTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL OFFICE

BRISBANE

Level 1, Mineral House, 41 George Street Brisbane

PO Box 220, Albert Street, Brisbane, 4002

Phone: (07) 3225 8982

Freecall: 1800 001 968

Fax: (07) 3225 8981

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND REGIONAL OFFICE

ROCKHAMPTON

Cnr Cambridge & Victoria Parade, Rockhampton

PO Box 883, Rockhampton, 4700

Phone: (07) 4938 4690

Freecall: 1800 001 984

Fax: (07) 4938 4369

NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL OFFICE

TOWNSVILLE

4th Floor, State Government Building

Corner Stanley and Walker Streets, Townsville, 4810

PO Box 5620, Townsville Mail Centre, 4810

Phone: (07) 4799 7470

Freecall: 1800 003 541

Fax: (07) 4799 7549

WEST QUEENSLAND REGIONAL OFFICE

MOUNT ISA

52 Miles Street, Mt Isa, 4825

PO Box 309, Mt Isa, 4825

Phone: (07) 4744 7333

Freecall: 1800 621 548

Fax: (07) 4743 9611

FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL OFFICE

CAIRNS

1st Floor, 36 Shields Street, Cairns

PO Box 5365, Cairns, 4870

Phone: (07) 4039 8177

Freecall: 1800 001 931

Fax: (07) 4031 1114

TORRES STRAIT REGIONAL OFFICE

THURSDAY ISLAND

1/46 Victoria Parade Thursday Island

PO Box 94, Thursday Island, 4875

Phone: (07) 4069 1243

Freecall: 1800 001 942

Fax: (07) 4069 1781

FOR INTERSTATE RESIDENTS

WSH BRANCH

Level 4A, 75 William Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

PO Box 397, Albert Street, Brisbane, Qld 4002

Phone: (07) 3234 8389

Freecall: 1800 809 097

Fax: (07) 3224 8662



**Queensland
Government**

Department of
Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Policy

INDIGENOUS WAGES AND SAVINGS (1890s-1980s) REPARATION PROCESS INFORMATION SHEET SEPTEMBER 2003

Decision

In November 2002, the Queensland Government decided to offer reparations to people whose wages and savings were controlled under the 'Protection Acts' between the 1890s and the 1980s. The Government recognises the historical injustices suffered by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders through the controls imposed by successive governments over this period. The reparations will include an apology and a monetary amount to individuals, a public statement in Parliament, and the adoption of a Queensland Government protocol for acknowledging traditional owners before commencing Government business.

Individual reparations

An amount of up to \$55.4M will be available over a three-year period for individual reparation payments of:

- \$4,000 to each person alive on 9 May 2002, who was subject to government controls over their wages or savings under the 'Protection Acts', who was born on or before 31 December 1951; OR
- \$2,000 to each person alive on 9 May 2002, who was subject to government controls over their wages or savings under the 'Protection Acts', who was born between 1 January 1952 and 31 December 1956.

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP)

Over a three-year period commencing early 2003, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP) will be processing the individual reparation payments and apologies.

Who can make a claim?

If you believe that the Queensland Government controlled your wages or savings under a 'Protection Act' and you were born during the eligibility period, you should contact your nearest DATSIP Regional Office (see over) for advice and to complete a claim form. You will need to provide some proof of your age such as a driver's licence, seniors health care card, age pension card or Centrelink income statement.

Can I claim if I got a UAW payment?

The Underpayment of Award Wages Process (UAW) was a separate process about a different matter. Anyone who believes that they meet the reparations criteria can claim, regardless of whether or not they claimed for a UAW payment.

Deceased persons

You can claim on behalf of a deceased relative if they were still alive on 9 May 2002, when the Government made its decision to make a reparations offer. If you wish to make a claim on behalf of a deceased relative, you will need to provide proof of that person's birth date as well as proof of when they passed away. Ask your nearest DATSIP Regional Office for advice.

How will my claim be processed?

The details you provide on your claim form will help DATSIP officers search for records. They will be looking for any records which show that your wages or savings were controlled under a 'Protection Act' during the period 1897 to the 1980s. They will also check your proof of age records.

Elderly claimants and those who are critically ill will be given first priority.

Once your claim has been assessed, you will be contacted by DATSIP letting you know whether your claim has been assessed as eligible or ineligible.

Paying eligible claimants

If your claim is assessed as eligible, your nearest DATSIP Regional Office will notify you and arrange for you to receive free legal advice. If you decide to accept the payment you must also sign a Deed of Agreement saying you will not ever go to the courts about the same claim. If you decide to sign this Deed, then you can receive your payment. Payment may take up to six weeks after you have signed the Deed of Agreement.

Ineligible claimants

If your claim is assessed as ineligible you will receive notification from DATSIP. You will be given a phone number to call if you disagree with the assessment result. If you can provide further information, you can ask for your claim to be reassessed.

INDIGENOUS WAGES AND SAVINGS REPARATION PROCESS

HOW WILL IT WORK?

1

CLAIM FORM

People wanting to put in a claim have to:

- Fill in the claim form
- Have proof of date of birth

If you want to put in a claim for someone who has passed away you have to:

- Fill in the claim form
- Have proof of date of birth of the deceased
- Have proof of their date of death

2

ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (DATSIP) will:

- Register details of all claim forms received (enter on database)
- Send a letter to each claimant telling them that their claim form has been received
- Tell people what their Claim ID number is in this letter. People will need to tell DATSIP this number whenever they call us for information.

3

ASSESSING CLAIMS

DATSIP will:

- Assess elderly and seriously ill claimants as first priority
- Look for a record of a claimant's wages or savings being controlled under a 'Protection Act'
- Assess the claim as either 'eligible' OR 'ineligible'
- 'Eligible' means the person will be offered a payment and apology
- 'Ineligible' means the person will not be offered a payment and apology

4

ASSESSMENT LETTERS – ELIGIBLE

ELIGIBLE CLAIMANTS

DATSIP will:

- Send a letter to all 'eligible' claimants telling them when a meeting will be held in their area so that they can get independent legal advice
- Provide an EFT form for eligible claimants to give their bank account details on. If the claimant decides to accept a payment after they've had their legal advice, they should send the completed form to DATSIP.

INDIGENOUS WAGES AND SAVINGS REPARATION PROCESS

HOW WILL IT WORK?

5

ASSESSMENT LETTERS – INELIGIBLE

INELIGIBLE CLAIMANTS

DATSIP will:

- Send a letter to all 'ineligible' claimants telling them why their claim is 'ineligible'
- Give 'ineligible' claimants a Freecall phone number to call to talk about why their claim is 'ineligible'
- Assess the claim again, if 'ineligible' claimants can give more information.

6

LEGAL ADVICE AND 'DEED'

ELIGIBLE CLAIMANTS

DATSIP will:

- Pay for a lawyer to give eligible claimants independent legal advice

After they get their legal advice claimants will:

- Have at least 24 hours 'cooling off' time before they decide if they want to or if they don't want to accept the offer.
- After the 24 hours, people can choose to sign the 'Deed of Agreement' accepting the offer of money if they want to

7

PAYMENT AND APOLOGY

ELIGIBLE CLAIMANTS

DATSIP will:

- Receive the signed 'Deed of Agreement' document
- Send out a letter of apology from the Minister to the person who signed the Deed
- Make the reparation payment to the claimant (either straight into their bank account or by cheque)

8

CLAIMS FOR DECEASED PERSONS

- DATSIP will follow the Succession Act in making payments for eligible deceased claimants
- This will mean paying back whoever paid for the funeral
- Then if any money is left it will go to the Public Trustee for paying rightful beneficiaries

For more information see Claim Form and Information Sheet



**Queensland
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Department of
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