

Appendix 1

***Koori Mail Profiles of Stolen Wages claimants* by Christine Howes**

Yvonne Butler 1 March 2006

Tireless stolen wages campaigner Yvonne Butler is not happy that the Queensland Government closed its 'lousy little' \$55.4 million offer to former Aboriginal workers at the end of last month.

Mrs Butler says there is still unfinished business around the issue.

"I don't want to see people miss out," she said.

"No matter what the offer is like, I just feel that I have unfinished business.

"I feel sad and confused for them having forced us into doing this.

"They (the Queensland Government) need to meet with the right people, the ones who lived through this because none of us would have stood up and shaken hands on this offer."

Mrs Butler was born in Ingham but grew up in Mt Garnet, on the Atherton Tablelands, west of Cairns.

"Mt Garnet has a lot of bad memories for me," she said.

"Watching my elders, my mum and dad having to put their fingerprints and asking for their money, being told they had no money even though they worked.

"And having to live in that poverty, no shoes, going hungry most of the time, us kids, at times we'd be digging yams and tamarind and fishing for food.

"It took me from 1967 to May 1989 to be able to go back to that township, and it was only a couple of months ago I was able to go back by myself without my husband there as support."

Mrs Butler says her needs are simple - she just wants what's owed to her and her family.

"I want to put gravestones on my family's graves," she said.

"My eldest sister died when she was 17 in 1959 and it was like she never existed," she said.

"There's all that stuff where we were restricted in making our own decisions and it even hurts me today just thinking about it.

"No money can compensate what we went through but I just want what's rightfully owed to me, my mother, my father and my grandfather.

"I'm taking legal action because of the conditions we worked under.

"The malnutrition I suffered when I was a child, the humiliation and inhumane treatment while they're still talking with forked tongue."

SIDEBAR: The history of Queensland's stolen wages

In 2002 Queensland Government made a capped reparations offer of \$55.6 million to Aboriginal & Islander people whose wages and savings were held for them in trust by previous governments.

The offer amounted to fixed payments of \$2000 or \$4000 to individual claimants alive after 9 May 2002, which was the day the offer was first made.

Families of deceased workers were not able to apply.

Some elderly claimants were forced to work for more than 20 years with limited access to their wages and savings, most of which have not been repaid.

The offer required claimants to sign an indemnity to say they will not take any legal action to recover what might be owed.

Even if they have records to prove it, they could not claim all their money without taking the Government to court.

The Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages & Savings reparations offer closed at the end of January, 2006.

The Stolen Wages Campaign Working Group, of which Yvonne Butler is a member along with trade unions, ANTaR Queensland and other community groups, has been asked by elders across the state to continue the campaign for wage justice for Aboriginal and Islander Queenslanders.

SIDEBAR: Facts & figures

Breakdown of the Queensland stolen wages offer:

- * 8754 applications
- * 8049 assessed
- * 2722 rejected

* 4872 paid \$17.42 million, leaving just under \$30 million left out of the \$55.4 million.

Fred Edwards, 15 March 2006

Stolen wages victim says Queensland Government offer too paltry

To Normanton Elder Fred Edwards, the Queensland Government's \$2000 or \$4000 offer for the money he lost was made in the same in spirit to him as the ³old Protector days².

Mr Edwards, whose image appears on the Stolen Wages campaign postcards, remembers his early working life very well and considers the Queensland \$200 or \$4000 offer to be paltry.

"We worked like slaves for the pastoral industry all around here," he said.

"Most people were born on the station, grew up on the station and as we were growing up we were just thrown straight into the saddle and doing stock work and all that."

"The girls were around the house, all those sort of things."

Mr Edwards said he and the people he worked with had to beg for their own wages from the local courthouse.

"We didn't see money but we had to go to a Courthouse Protector and they'd write out orders for your ration or clothes," he said.

"We were kicked around like animals, even up to now.

"You could move around but way back in those days you were flogged and if you came into town they'd lock you up and then send you straight back out."

"You couldn't leave the place, you had to sign an agreement to say you'd work on the place for 12 months but when the 12 months was up you asked for a change they'd say 'no, you go back'.

"No matter what the circumstance was, you had to put up with whatever.

"Way back in the old days we had no one to tell us anything about what's going on because they didn't want us to know what's going on."

"Things had changed a bit these days, with people standing by the Indigenous community and telling them what was going on," Mr Edwards said.

"We've got our rights today but I am angry," he said.

"We should be able to get everything back, everything that's owing to us."

Mr Edwards said he felt he had no choice about the Queensland Government's offer for his wages.

"I had no option," he said.

"I just had to take what's given to me but I would have liked to have got my mum's, dad's and my eldest brother's money.

"Even if it was just \$10,000 or \$12,000 or something like that I'd be happy with it but I'm not happy with \$4,000."

Mr Edwards said he did not understand why the Government did not see that.

"If (Queensland Premier) Beattie would just sit down and see these sorts of things, you know, if he was in my shoes, I tell you what, he'd be squealing too, you know, for the money, like we are.

"We've been knocked back by a lot of these sorts of things and it's no different from way back then to today.

"That was the way it was, there were things we couldn't do on our own, we were told what to do and we had to accept that."

Margaret Lawton, 29 March 2006

Punishment the spur for stolen wages

Former Woorabinda resident Margaret Lawton once had to wear a hessian bag. She also had her head shaved.

This was her punishment for defending herself from an employer.

It's one of the many reasons Mrs Lawton wants to fight for what she says she is owed in stolen wages.

"The owner tried some funny business so I hit him over the head with a mop," she said.

"I ran away after that but the police got me and I was sent back to the settlement (Woorabinda).

"To me the settlement was a concentration camp. There was dorms for boys and girls, police followed us around everywhere and we had to talk to our parents through barbed wire fence.

"We were not allowed to see them and if we got caught waving to them they punished us."

Rockhampton-born, Mrs Lawton was sent out to work at just 12-years-old.

After her punishment period at Woorabinda she was sent out to work again, this time for a family of six children on Bauhinia Downs.

"They were wonderful people, they treated us as our own," she said.

But when she returned to Woorabinda she was still not allowed to associate with her parents and even though she didn't want to leave her mother told her she had to go and try for work in Rockhampton.

"I was glad to get out of it," she said.

"I came down to Rocky at age 16 and worked for a big store.

"They put me through night class to teach me how to read and write and they wanted me to apply for an exemption from the (Aboriginal control) Act."

At the time Mrs Lawton's pay was two shillings but of that she received only six pence pocket money - one quarter of her wage.

"I got that [exemption] at the age of 17 but I still wasn't free from the Act," she said.

"While I worked my money still had to go into the police station here in Rocky.

"I wasn't allowed to handle any of my own money until I got married at the age of 18."

But when Mrs Lawton applied for the money which should have been in her accounts she was told there was none.

"We slaved out guts out," she said.

"They've got our money and now they built all those roads and hospitals and things but the people who slaved for it never saw any of it," she said.

Now chair of the Fitzroy Basin Elders Committee in Rockhampton, Mrs Lawton has stated publicly they are not prepared to let the matter rest (see Stolen Wages Update 8 at <http://wages.antarqld.org.au>).

Queensland Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Mickel has promised the Elders he will visit them at the end of April to hear their concerns.

They had made an urgent request to see him before the Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages & Savings Reparations offer closed at the end of January.

"Lots of our people here went through the same thing my sisters and I did but they've been knocked back even for that offer," she said.

"I was told that every dollar we've got still in trust is worth \$1500 so there's a fair bit of money there.

"We're not going to let it rest, I got \$4000 and they said we weren't entitled to any more but it doesn't even scratch the surface.

"If this means I'm going to get my money back or get this house that is owing to me then I'm happy to tell my story."

Vincent Reid, 12 April 2006

\$4000 offer "insult"

"A lot is owed to the Aboriginal men who not only fought in all those wards but were the backbone of the cattle industry" - Kudjala elder Vincent Reid

Aboriginal people were the backbone of the cattle industry across Australia but are yet to be recognised and that's the truth says Kudjala elder Vincent Reid.

"The Aboriginal people are the backbone of the cattle industry no matter where - here (Queensland), Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria - the Aboriginal people were the backbone of the cattle industry," he said.

"I speak that with all truth and honesty, that the Aboriginal man was not recognised for the work that he did."

Born in Charters Towers and forced to work under the Protection Act system, Mr Reid said he accepted the Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages & Savings Reparations offer of \$4000 for the 32 years of work he did on stations throughout Queensland.

"I did accept a government offer of \$4000 because I thought to myself that I might not get a chance at another offer," he said.

"It was an insult when I took that \$4000.

"To my mind money is not acceptable to the traditional men of this country and I still think of it as an insult.

“The only way I can get rich is if the government gives our land back but apparently we cannot do that because of the ongoing cattle industry that came here over 150 years ago.

“The government gave them our land and we had to be on reserves which made our people angry.

“But we could not fight back against the government or the law the government provided to keep us in check which is in my mind an absolute degrading insult.

“There’s nothing we can do now except fight for what we believe in, our land, our people and our beliefs.”

While Mr Reid worked from station to station, sun up to sun down and often beyond, he said, his money was given to the local courthouse.

“If I wanted anything they’d give me a chit, not money,” he said.

“So it (\$4000) wasn’t much at all really, given the effort we put into that work, it wasn’t much at all because I was 32 years under that situation until I got crook.”

Adding Mr Reid’s insult was his grandfather’s story after he was a soldier in World War I.

“My father’s father was a soldier in WWI and you’ll see his name, George Reid, on the honour boards.

“When Billy Hughes was the prime minister, he promised every soldier that went overseas land, machinery and something to build his house on.

“But when my grandfather came back he was none the wiser.

“They put him back into his old shirt and trousers, took away his boots and uniform, and it was an insult.

“What Billy Hughes promised each and every soldier, they gave the European soldiers, not the black soldiers - they got nothing.

“He never got a damned thing, he got nothing, bugger all.

“And if he hadn’t have gone they would have shot him - court martialled him and shot him.

“But he went and he came back and he just went back to the way he was when they found him working on the cattle stations.

“A lot is owed to the Aboriginal man who not only fought in all those wars but was the backbone of the cattle industry.”

Aunty Vera Hill, 26 April 2006

Aunty Vera angry at stolen wages offer

In 2002 Queensland Government made a capped reparations offer of \$55.6 million to Aboriginal & Islander people whose wages and savings were held for them in trust by previous governments. The offer amounted to fixed payments of \$2000 or \$4000 to individual claimants alive after 9 May 2002, which was the day the offer was first made. Families of deceased workers could not apply.

Some elderly claimants were forced to work for more than 20 years with limited access to their wages and savings, most of which have not been repaid. The offer required claimants to sign an indemnity to say they will not take any legal action to recover what might be owed. Even if they have records to prove it, they could not claim all their money without taking the Government to court.

The Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages & Savings reparations offer closed at the end of January, 2006. The Stolen Wages Campaign Working Group, of which Aunty Vera Hill is a member, along with trade unions, ANTaR Qld and other community groups, has been asked by elders across the state to continue the campaign for wage justice for Aboriginal and Islander Queenslanders.

The *Koori Mail* will continue to report on individuals who have been affected by this policy.

“I didn't want to take it but I took it,” are the words of former Cherbourg dormitory resident Aunty Vera Hill about the Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages & Savings Reparations (stolen wages) offer.

Aunty Vera was born in Charleville before following her mother and siblings from there to Gayndah and ending up in Cherbourg at about the age of 13.

After just two years of schooling there, she was sent out to work at the age of 15.

“We were separated into the dormitories and I went to school there for a while,” she said.

“It was alright because we had family there but when I turned 15 they sent me out to work.

“All we got trained for was doing domestic work and nothing else so my first job was at a convent in Nanango with the nuns as a domestic.”

After a series of different jobs, including at times working in the dormitories themselves as a cook, Aunty Vera said she was never told how much money was in her account.

“We didn't know how much money we were getting paid, nearly every job we went to we didn't know,” she said.

“I was caught up in the mission and every time I came back I went back to Cherbourg where I worked as the cook, doing washing and all that.

“Whenever you went to the mission to ask for money they'd say ‘we give you that much and that's it’. They would never tell me how much money I had in the bank and I was never given anything, no passbook or anything.”

Aunty Vera said she was disappointed and angry about the government's handling of the issue.

“I received the \$4000, I didn't want to but they kept on saying we weren't getting anything,” she said.

“I didn't want to take it but I took it. That was just a kick back on us to make sure we all signed, that's what the problem was and that's how I looked at it.

“I asked the government lawyer before I signed about what happens if I don't sign, what else can I do, and he couldn't help us at all.

“He said he was sitting there making sure we all signed the paper which was wrong. He should have told us what the whole story was but because he was a government person he couldn't say much.”

Aunty Vera has been a regular at Stolen Wages Campaign Working Group meetings over the past four years even though she felt she had to accept the government offer.

“I came to the meetings because what they did to us wasn't fair. They still want to knock us around, I still do believe that,” she said.

“The government wants to keep us down in the lowest bracket, because we're black they can do what they like with us.

“It looks like they don't recognise that we used to work our guts out but I think we should keep going because we still want to see it.”

Alf Neal, 10 May 2006

Focus on Queensland Stolen Wages: It all has to stop, says Alf

North Queensland Elder Alf Neal speaks to the *Koori Mail* as part of our ongoing campaigning highlighting people affected by the Queensland Government's stolen wages policy and subsequent reparations offer...

“This has got to stop!”

That's the message from Yarrabah Elders Alf Neal, who says what happened to him happened to all Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

“Some of them (victims of stolen wages) were working from 10-12 years of age, that happened all over Australia but then I think deeply about when the convict came out and the Pacific Islanders.

“It happened to them and it stopped but it's continually happening to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.²

Mr Neal grew up on Yarrabah mission, south of Cairns, and went to work in 1940 at the age of 15.

“I was doing all sorts of work, chipping and all that sort of thing around the community,” he said.

“No matter where they lived people were under the (Aborigines Protection) Act.

“After a few months I left the dormitory and I worked all around here, then I went out on cattle stations for about six months of the year. I never received any money when I came back.”

Mr Neal said he accepted the Queensland Government's \$4000 offer even though he didn't want to.

“We had our own private bills to pay and we weren't allowed to get anything like that under the Act,” he said.

“Back in those days there was no electricity but if you got something from town, a kero fridge or wireless, that was a risk you took under the Act because we weren't allowed to get those things, you had to ask permission and they could say no.

“Everything had to go through them, even if a letter was sent over to me they would open it first and they read it, and if they gave it to you, they gave it to you. When you go down to the store, if my wife went down and got some goods, it would go to our account but there's no receipt. You don't know what you spent, you might have a fair idea but it goes to them and you don't get any receipt.

“When I got married we were getting rations, a two inch by two inch bar of soap you had to make last for a week or two, a bit of sugar, plain flour, cream of tartar, soda and syrup.

“And you’d get a plug of tobacco, that bloody thing followed us right up to Atherton, the police used to pay it whether you used to smoke or not.

Big sins

“Smoking and swearing were big sins but they were giving us that ration to smoke and now they’re trying to stop everybody from smoking.”

As a parent Mr Neal said he also missed out on child endowment payments to help support his children.

“People were getting it later on as things started to boil, people were complaining and they started to release it then but I didn’t get it until after I had my fourth child. That’s a lot of money.”

And so, Mr Neal said, it had to stop.

“No matter how young we are, no matter how old we are, we want to give something to the country but they’re still treating us the same,” he said.

“I’ve asked down (south) there if we’re still living under the Act but they say ‘no, that’s the housing act or some other act’ and I see there’s all sorts of acts.

“But I want to know if we are still under the Protection Act because of all these different acts which amount to the same thing.

“I think a lot of things have to be done properly and we need to do that by ourselves but it seems to me we’re still not allowed. I understand that you have to abide by rules and laws and acts but I don’t feel that we are controlling ourselves yet.

“Good thing I as just a happy-go-lucky fella.”

Aunty Ruth Hegarty, 24 May 2006

Cheerful heart turned sour

Brisbane elder Aunty Ruth Hegarty's life story has been well-documented in her books 'Is that you Ruthie?' and 'Bittersweet'.

But despite having those opportunities to tell her story in detail, her hurt and disappointment over the Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations offer has resulted in Aunty Ruth being an active and fighting member of the Stolen Wages Campaign Working Group since 2002.

Born in Mitchell and staying there for just six months before her parents were advised to move to Cherbourg during the Depression years, Aunty Ruth said the minute they arrived the family was separated into dorms and their lives were completely controlled by the Government and its agents.

After starting work at the age of 14 she said she spent nine years in and out of the Cherbourg dorm, working and trusting that the government was taking care of her finances.

"It was good in one way to know you had a bank account but that was controlled by government as well," she said. "When we were in Cherbourg we were only allowed to draw from that account once a fortnight and we couldn't nominate how much we wanted - all we did was put our name down that you wanted to draw.

"That gives you some idea of what the control was at that time and that would go on just about all your working life - they controlled every aspect of our lives."

Aunty Ruth wrote her first protest to the government when she was just 14 years old.

"I've found that letter in the government files since then," she said.

"And I got a pay rise as a result of that, but it was a form of imprisonment, you know, you had to sign a contract when you went to work and these people controlled you."

Aunty Ruth said the leftover money from the Government's offer should be paid out to the claimants according to the original QAILSS proposal of different amounts according to how long people worked - not just based on their age.

Aunty Ruth attended negotiation meetings with the government until May 16, 2002, when the offer was made, as a representative of the then Queensland Government's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board.

"The offer itself stunned me because QAILSS told me in a meeting that they had already presented their proposal but (Queensland Premier Peter) Beattie later denied having seen that," she said.

"Even up until the day we went to that meeting (in May 2002) we thought we were going there to talk the QAILSS proposal up to the Premier and we thought they were expecting around \$200 million.

"So I went along to that meeting with a cheerful heart because I thought it would be good.

"But when Mr Beattie walked in that day he came in in a flash, put a piece of paper in front of us and said 'this is it, this is the offer, you either take it leave it'."

"The first thing that came to my attention was the \$55.6 million, at the time.

"I looked at that then looked at the others and I left it to them to say something but there was complete silence, almost as if they'd expected it when I know at least two of us hadn't expected it.

"The only thing that was said was there needs to be consultation and QAILSS then asked for \$200,000 and that's when the offer went down to \$55.4 million.

"This sickened me and I didn't know how to respond - for the first time I think I was stunned."

After four years of campaigning, Aunty Ruth said she is still disappointed that more hasn't been done.

"My mum worked for almost 20 years, for all of my child hood life she was out working and I have documentation that she was controlled even after she left the mission," she said.

"I just thought for all they went through back then, there was no caring in what was done to them and there still isn't.

"To scale it down so that people who had worked for years and years were worthy of the same as the younger people at the time just goes to show that the government wasn't doing their work.

"They just rushed it through and we know some people have been paid who didn't work and there are people who worked who haven't been paid as well.

"My family and I have lived through this and the offer itself was insufficient. We will always say that."

George & Maureen Reid, 7 June 2006

Wages anger is deep

In 1983 Charters Towers-based elder and former stockman George Reid told an interviewer people were starting to "sing out about this sort of thing".

He was referring to the backbreaking and essential stock work he did for wages, the bulk of which were handed over to the local 'Protector' and kept 'in trust' by the government.

Mr Reid died in the late 1980s, but his daughter Maureen in particular felt so strongly about the amount of money her family had lost in stolen wages that *Koori Mail* was given special access to an interview recorded with her father in 1983.

For much of the hour-long tape the late Mr Reid spoke about how essential the work he did as a stockman was, particularly during the wars when there was no one else to do it, and how much of his wage (two pounds out of every two pounds and ten shillings) was kept by the government through the local policeman.

"It was all banked at the police station but I never saw it," he said.

"They just handed cheques over, we were never given statements of any kind.

"When it all boiled down to it no one got any of that money that would be worth millions today."

Mr Reid said the conditions they worked under were not as good as the white stockman and there was no such thing as equal pay in those days.

"We all worked together but didn't live together," he said.

"They didn't appreciate what was done for them.

"Aboriginal stockmen were the backbone and carried out all the work, especially during the war - there had to be somebody to look after the stock."

Margaret Reid said her older siblings had discussed applying for their father's money but were unable to claim it under the conditions of the Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations offer, which was now closed.

Ms Reid applied for and successfully claimed \$4000 for the work she did from the age of 16, but said: "I reckon that wasn't much of a payout."

She believed her father wouldn't have thought much of it either.

"I think he wouldn't think much of it because they worked for years on the cattle stations and never got much out of it," she said.

Des Donnelly, 21 June 2006

Des Donnelly was taken from his mother at the age of six months. As a boy working on a dairy farm near Ipswich, he stood in cow manure just to keep his bare feet warm. Now, he wants to know...

'Where's my money?'

Des Donnelly describes his first 18 years of life as a "rough spin".

Mr Donnelly was born in Brisbane in 1914 and fostered out to families "only to be exploited by them".

"I didn't know anything about my mother, I didn't know anything about my father," he said.

"I found out later she was worried about me but I didn't know anything about it, I just had to accept it.

"I was put out to foster parents and then when I came to the age of 14 it was the policy of the Queensland government to put boys out into factories and onto farms, and girls were supposed to do domestic work.

"We were exploited.

"I did both, I did domestic work and used to work at a Salvation Army home, I used to polish the floor and do the washing and all that sort of thing.

"A lot of people wouldn't realise what went into that, we'd have to boil a copper and hang the sheets out and then put them through a mangle.

"When we were finished we'd have to clean the copper with ashes from the fire until they were like a brand new copper.

"There was one fellow in particular who took a disliking to me, I think they must have known about my Aboriginality."

Mr Donnelly didn't know he was an Aboriginal man until the Freedom of Information acts in the 1970s finally allowed him access to his ancestry.

"They didn't want us to know anything about it and when I went through the Freedom of Information Act I found out I had cousins and brothers living only a short distance away from me I didn't know anything about," he said.

"What would a child who was taken away from his mother at six months old and put into an institution know?"

He said he when he was about 14 he was sent to a dairy farm outside of Ipswich.

"All I was given for a bed was a chaff bag made of calico and filled with hay and our blankets were corn bags sewn together," he said.

"I slept in hay sheds and barns with snakes, rats and insects; there was nowhere for us to hang our clothes.

"We shivered like hell in the winter time, I used to start at 3.30 in the morning and I used to have to walk around barefooted in the dark on the frost, rounding up cows for the milking.

"I'd get chilblains on my feet but when a cow lay down at the night time the frost would land on her and when I got her up, I used to jump into that spot or I used to stand in their droppings and rub that on my legs to keep warm - and that was the only thing that used to ease the pain.

"Then I'd finish at about 9 or 10 at night.

"I'd say that it was more like a prison farm, I never had a day off, I never heard a radio, I never saw anyone.

"I worked like that for four years and I tell you the wages we got, for a person to do that now it would be astronomical for the sorts of things we had to do.

"And to think that was taken off us."

Accountability

Mr Donnelly said he was frustrated by the Queensland Government's lack of accountability in their record keeping.

"There's a lot of bureaucracy going on somewhere," he said.

"They say we received our money or we received pocket money as a portion of our wages but we never received any of it.

"It was paid into a trust fund into the Queensland Treasury - and the first reply I got back from them was that they have no records from me whatsoever.

"They were supposed to keep those records.

"The next they told me my records were destroyed in the 1970 floods.

"The next minute they turned around and said that because I wasn't brought up under the Protection acts, I was brought up under a different state act, they said I'm not entitled to the Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations offer.

"But that's three different versions they've given me.

"We knew nothing about what happened to our money.

"When I was 18 I went down to the state government and I asked them for my money and they said they'd make it up and post a cheque out, which I never received.

"Now when they said they'd post a cheque you'd think they'd have something somewhere to prove that cheque was sent out or to show that it was never taken.

"They've got no proof.

"What right does (Queensland Premier Peter Beattie) have to turn around and keep millions of dollars of people's money?

"That's the people's money that they're entitled to and he can settle that issue as quickly as he can if he wanted to.

"But he just doesn't want you to know about it.

"I hadn't really known so much money was missing but I do know that \$55 million dollars is like a grain of sand on the beach compared to what's really owed to us.²

Mr Donnelly has written his own life story and is looking for a publisher.

Mary Twaddle, 5 July 2006

“The State’s got a lot of answer for”

When Mary Twaddle was a girl going to school on Palm Island she only saw her parents over on Fantome Island just once a fortnight.

Born in the rainforest between Millaa Millaa and Mareeba, Mrs Twaddle said it was hard to live under the Protection Act after the freedom she and her family had enjoyed until she was nine-years-old.

"We were removed from here and sent to Palm Island in about 1937 or 1938," she said.

"My parents and the younger ones had to stay on Fantome Island but me and my two brothers lived in the dormitory on Palm Island because there was no school on Fantome.

"It was hard. Living under the Act was different to the freedom we had here - we didn't have that freedom, it was taken off us and we missed that.

"There were more restrictions on our lives, going there and living in the dormitory with a lot of other children from all over the place, the different tribes of people there."

Mrs Twaddle's first job off the island was on a cattle station near Charters Towers.

"I left school in 1945 and the Catholic priest on Palm Island made sure I went to a Catholic family and they took me to Mass.

"I stayed about a year there, went back to Palm and from there I was sent back up here to the Tablelands and I was here for four or five years.

"After that I went back down to Townsville in the mid-1950s and when I went home I got married there and had my son.

"Then I did community work with the government people, that sort of job, at that time the department people didn't know how to take the Aboriginal people, you know, so we were doing their job.

"We didn't get enough pay for that sort of job, we were doing the job that belonged to them, we were doing their job."

Mrs Twaddle said in all of that time she never knew how much money she had.

"I can remember getting seven shillings or something, for pocket money," she said.

"I never saw the rest of it, that was all sent to Palm and even when you went home if you asked to draw some money you were just given a paper to go to the store and get an order.

"That didn't last, my money didn't last and I was told a little while after that my money had all gone.

"I didn't see anything (records), until not so long ago when I asked for my family history.

"They sent a whole list and there was a little bit of wages there, I think about \$300.

"But we worked hard and long, that \$300 was supposed to be my pay but I never saw that money."

Mrs Twaddle successfully claimed both the HREOC-determined Under Award Wages payment of \$7,000 for her work for the Government, as well as the Queensland Government's Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations amount of \$4000.

"I reckon I was worth more than that," she said.

"We worked all that and a lot of overtime too and we just got a bit of money but it wasn't the full amount."

Mrs Twaddle also believes she should be able to claim for her family's money.

"When I got my files, on that statement my Dad worked as a state policeman from 1920-1925, he worked all these areas here and then when we went to Palm Island he worked there as a policeman again, then he worked cane cutting and as a stone crusher building that big reservoir they've got out on Palm," she said.

"He worked all those jobs and then we lost him in the 1950s. And all those records were there, we sent a photocopy to the department but they're saying they've got no records.

"Then I wrote to fill in my husband's work and I just got another letter back just last week to say they haven't got his file even though he worked all around down south and on Palm.

"They still said they haven't got any records for him but they didn't look very hard, I named everyone he worked for, I've got all those manager's names and all the fellows that he worked under but they still said they had no record of him.

"I would like to get that (money) because I'm the only one left now and it would be nice to get something and leave something for the children."

Mrs Twaddle has been to Stolen Wages meetings in Townsville and said she was happy people were continuing with the campaign.

"They're trying to do something for us, to support us and if they can get something I'll be happy, I know a lot of us will be happy," she said.

On the money left over from the \$55.4 million stolen wages offer she said Queensland Premier Peter Beattie should come and talk to them about it.

"That money belongs to people, they should let them have it and do what they want to do with it," she said.

"Peter Beattie never came back and talked to us ordinary people, it would have been nice if he'd have sat down with us.

"We voted for them because we thought they were for the workers but they've been a big let down.

"The State's got a lot to answer for, I'd still like to fight because they're still wrong."

Hilton Noble Snr, 19 July 2006

Grave concern over wages

"I'm only concerned about my parents money at this point in time," Hilton Noble Snr says about the money missing from his family due to 'stolen wages'.

Mr Noble settled for the \$7000 (Under Award Wages payment determined by HREOC) and the \$2000 (Indigenous Wages & Savings Reparations payment determined by the Queensland Government) for the work he did himself when he was younger but, he said, he used that money to pay off a tombstone for his parents who were buried along the waterfront at Yarrabah, near Cairns.

"I put the history down so the grandchildren and the rest of the family could see it," he said.

"I'm just worried about entitlements for my mother and father - where they were under the Act, especially my mother who was part of stolen generations.

"She was taken away from her country and never went back there at all.

"Her father was a Danish man so when they rounded up all the fair skinned children they moved them from the Cape either into Yarrabah or Palm Island and then sent them out to stations to work.

"She ended up on Palm Island and was sent from there out to Richmond, back to Palm and then to Yarrabah where she met my father.

"I've got some information here, all the places one would have to look for records, and I've shown this to my niece who is actually chasing this up now. The thing is she wasn't allowed to access anything even though she knew it was there."

Mr Noble said his father was a community policeman on Yarrabah before the 1976 Anti-Discrimination laws were in place and he's not sure what happened to his wages.

"My father was born in Western Australia where my grandfather, the Reverend James Noble, was the first Aboriginal Deacon," he said.

"He was a community policeman here (in Yarrabah) for many years but he mostly worked for cane farmers out of Yarrabah, at Redlynch and around there."

Mr Noble said he would take his wages fight to solicitors as soon as he could.

"There's a lot of us in this community who would like to buy our own house, we're tired of paying rent because we've paid it off so many times and we should be able to own our own homes," he said.

Problem

"And if they (parents) were given those wages I would not have to go through this problem of buying a tombstone for them.

"I disagree with the government when they've said the people who worked out on the stations or wherever had to be alive from this day on.

"Aboriginal people are lucky to live to 50, especially on the missions.

"The women may live a little longer but my mother was very sick and she passed away before her time but these fellows are saying to me 'you're not entitled to anything because she passed away before time'.

"It doesn't make any sense because the Act was in place, she was a part of that, she went out there working, she did her job and never got any money for it.

"I'm a bit angry at the government for that situation."

Monica Mcgilvary, 2 August 2006

She's angry over stolen wages

Monica Mcgilvary is wondering why Queensland Premier Peter Beattie doesn't seem to understand the plight of those who were affected by stolen wages.

Because, she said, the Premier's wife, Mrs Heather Beattie (nee Halliday) and her sisters grew up on Pormpuraaw, then Edward River, on the western side of Cape York alongside her own family.

"We used to carry Heather everywhere on our hip, everywhere we went," she said.

"I was Monica Wheeler and in the 1950s when I was at Pormpuraaw the three Halliday girls grew up alongside me and my sisters.

"Pormpuraaw had just started then but I was born in Old Mapoon.

"We were working at Pormpuraaw and Heather's mum and dad, well, she was working in the dispensary because she was a nursing sister there and he was teaching and he was the priest.

"She's not anybody that came from wherever, she was in the back country too."

Mrs Mcgilvary said they were all treated 'sort of' the same - they wore the same clothing and ate the same food.

"I don't know what her mum and dad's wages were but I got pulled out school to work so I moved on from there," she said.

"When I worked I couldn't buy myself material or whatever, my boss had to buy it for me.

"I went to work on stations since 1951 and then when I came here (to Normanton) in 1959 we had all our money in the Protector's office, we never held a bank book or anything.

"All we would get would be something for the races or Christmas or Easter, those were the only times we came to town."

Mrs Mcgilvary said her parents and her parents' parents were affected by stolen wages.

"My dad was the first man on Pormpuraaw to start the cattle there because he was a cattleman," she said.

"It was Edward River then, he was sent from Mapoon to start up the cattle work there, and the younger brother George Wheeler was sent to Kowanyama, which was Mitchell River then.

"Uncle George was on Kowanyama for a few years.

"We were on Edward River in 1963 when Mapoon got burned down but my mother's and my grandparent's place got burned down, both grandparents - we got nothing, no loyalty."

Speaking at a stolen wages meeting in Normanton hosted by Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett, Mrs Mcgilvary said she had accepted the \$2000 Indigenous Wages & Savings Reparations payment from the Queensland Government but was not happy about not getting her family's money.

"We asked if we were going to get it for the deceased ones but so far that hasn't come up yet," she said.

"We got the \$2000, but we've got loved ones here we could do something about, some of the graves over there you could just walk over - you don't know they're there, the ground is just flat, it's terrible.

"If we had that money we could do something and make it known that the loved ones are there and their names are there.

"They're the people who could have had that money and didn't get it so we'd like to show something that we can do for them with it.

"We're not stupid, you know, we've got a bit of thought and pride for ourselves otherwise we wouldn't be here to talk about what we're talking about now.

"Don't forget, and you can put that, that I know Heather Beattie and I carried Heather Beattie - Peter Beattie never picked someone from a really flash city, she grew up on Pormpuraaw when it was in the wild days."

ends