

## **Abstract**

The Thesis explores the life situations of the three Mackay-based groups: Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander through oral history research and the lived experience of an Elder from each of these groups. Using a combination of oral and written approaches, the project seeks to document ongoing interactions between the three groups from the 1930s and assess their implications for culture, identity and mobility.

**Living between cultures: Reflections of three Mackay Elders:  
Aboriginal, Torres Strait Island and South Sea Island residents  
in Mackay from the 1930s to 2000.**

**Wayne Ah-Wong**

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements  
of Communication  
Masters by research

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Education  
Central Queensland University  
Rockhampton  
2007

## CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	i
Title page	ii
Contents	iii
Abbreviations	iv
List of Illustrations	v
List of Tables	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Declaration	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1	
History of cultural interaction 1930s – 1960	23
Chapter 2	
Social and living conditions 1930s -1960s	58
Chapter 3	
Labour and economic conditions 1930s -1960s	94
Chapter 4	
Reversing diaspora: cultural interaction 1970s–2000	120
Chapter 5	
Social and economic conditions 1970s -2000	148
Conclusion	176
Bibliography	183

## **Abbreviations**

<b>AAF</b>	Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship
<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ATSIC</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
<b>AWU</b>	Australian Workers Union
<b>CDEP</b>	Community Development Employment Project
<b>DAA</b>	Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs
<b>DNA</b>	Department of Native Affairs
<b>HREOC</b>	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
<b>HRSCATSIA</b>	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs
<b>MRSATSIC</b>	Monitoring and Reporting Section, ATSIC
<b>TSIAB</b>	Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board
<b>TSRA</b>	Torres Strait Regional Authority

## List of Illustrations

	Page
Map 1 Countries of origin Hall's three groups	10
Map 2 Thursday and Hammond Island evacuees in southern Queensland	26
Map 3 SW Pacific principal recruiting areas for Queensland labour trade	28
Map 4 Aborigines and the cattle industry	29
Map 5 Reserves and Communities in Queensland 1973	31
Illustration 1 Ahwang Obituary	38
Illustration 2 Former employees of Queensland Rail No 5 Flying Gang 1973	41
Illustration 3 Robert Boah	46
Map 6 Torres Strait Islanders transplanted culture	126
Map 7 Aboriginal culture reintroduced Into Mackay	129
Map 8 Contemporary cultural contact between Mackay and the Pacific islands	130

## List of Tables

	Page
Table 1 South Sea Islander population Mackay before and after repatriation	35
Table 2 Aboriginal population Mackay district 1900-1920	43
Table 3 Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander population Queensland 1970-2000	133
Table 4 Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander population Mackay 1986 to 2000	157

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the participants Tim Kemp, Robert Boah and Waway Tapim. Along with their respected wives, Nita Kemp, Winifred Boah and daughter Anna Tapim who contributed to the interviews. I would like to thank the participants for trusting me with their personal histories along with their patience over the years of the project.

I thank my Principal Supervisor Dr Denis Cryle for his confidence in my ability to complete the thesis, his patience with my limited skills and most importantly his continuous encouragement throughout the years. I also thank the Communication school for allowing me the opportunity to enrol in postgraduate studies. I also thank my Supervisors Associate Professor William Oates and Associate Professor Steve Mullins for their guidance and encouragement, additionally, managing my professional development.

This journey of research that touches the ancestry of both my wife Robyn and I would have been very hard without the love and financial support she extended to me during my twelve months of leave without pay and the years I have spent working on this thesis. I acknowledge my mother Elizabeth whose oral history passed down throughout my life has encouraged me to: physically visit the land of my ancestors and add to my desire to inform society of our three groups' existence and interaction.

Thank you: Julie Manaway from the Mackay Library, support staff from Nulloo Yumbah, AHE Faculty Research Office and Maud Doolah for your personal history that included history of the investigator's father.

## Declaration

I declare that the main text of this thesis is entirely my own work and that such work has not been previously submitted as a requirement for the award of a degree at Central Queensland University or any other institution of higher education. I also declare, that to the best of my knowledge all sources used have been acknowledged

Name – Wayne Ah-Wong

Signed -

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. Ah Wong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping 'W' and 'ong'.

Date – 31 August 2007

# INTRODUCTION

## Genesis of the Project

The title of the project is “Living between cultures: reflections of three Mackay elders; Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander, resident in Mackay from the 1930s to 2000”. The project was developed because of the investigator’s family background and interest in researching the two Australian indigenous groups and the Australian South Sea Islanders. Australian South Sea Islanders were brought to Queensland during the indentured labour days of the 1800s and their descendants still live in the Mackay region. Several authors have focused on “the use of force and deception” to get the Islanders onto Australian soil (Mullins, 1996, p. 8). Most Australian South Sea Islander descendants, past and present, are adamant that they were forced or tricked into coming to Queensland. However, Moore (1985, pp. 333-334) states that they were “brought to Queensland through legislation passed by this Parliament and recruited in ships under government control”. Australian South Sea Islanders therefore, contend that Federal and Queensland Parliament are obliged to grant services that the two indigenous Australian groups are privy to, for the reason that it was their initial labour that established the successful sugar industry on the Queensland coast. Australian South Sea Islanders however were not repatriated; they identify as such and are recognised as such by the communities they have lived in (Mullins, 1996, p. 15). In 1994 the Commonwealth Government recognised descendants of 19<sup>th</sup> century Australian South Sea Islanders (Mullins, 1996, p. 2). It is important to this project that the difference from the other two Australian indigenous groups is clear. In addition, for purpose of this project, Australian South Sea Islanders will be referred to as South Sea Islander people.

The investigator’s personal interest derives from the fact that each informant is related to the investigator either through marriage or as extended family.

Each participating elder's parents are deceased and their present family status is either as grandparents or great grandparents. The elder status for this project derives from the description by Reynolds (1978), Gistitin (1995) and Hamilton (1994). The process of colonisation tended to deplete tribal leaders from the 1800s in Australia. The process included areas such as the Torres Strait Islands, Mackay district, where it affected traditional Aborigines and South Sea Islanders who were brought into the district to supply a labour force for the sugar industry. Moreover, the result was decimation of their societies and loss of tribal leadership. Traditional tribal leaders were those knowledgeable in law and custom that included territory, religious sites and artefacts (Reynolds, 1978, p. 88). The last of the full blood Yuibera people were displaced from Mackay in 1922 (Kemp, 2005a). It could be argued that those rankings do remain within Torres Strait Islander culture after they transplanted their adapted traditions to the mainland (Beckett, 1987, p. 233). Gistitin (1995, p. 75) points out how the South Sea Islander group brought to Rockhampton, as well as to Mackay, "the old bachelor immigrant men ... the last died in the 1940s". The loss of the last island born people in the Mackay district necessitated a passing of leadership to a new generation, the Australia born, namely the participants' parents' generation and now, for the purpose of the investigator's enquiries, the participants' generation. Hamilton (1994, p. 16) points out that old age and death generate fears of there being no-one to 'bear witness' to events and, the investigator argues, in the case of Mackay, that this applies to traditions as well. Customarily, the investigator's generation, including those from the three groups in this project, have little knowledge of their own territory, law and custom, and therefore, are dependent upon the previous generations or the 'older people' to inform them in their own oral history style. The investigator is aware that elders with that knowledge are nominated by their peer group as an 'elder' and recognised by the younger generation.

Moore (1978, p. 8) continues this discussion with the observation that, over the years, the elders have accumulated and can still remember different incidents that may have escaped the history books. The time frame for this project was calculated from the age that the participants could recall their

childhood. The three elders tell their stories at their pace, using their own language style and explaining their views about what was happening around them during those given periods. The three informants were chosen partly because they are cultural brokers who were prepared to reflect on how they have lived. Brokers, according to Reynolds (1978, p. 203) are those who “act as a bridge between black and white communities and command respect in both worlds”. This project extends this idea not only to include interaction between black and white but between the three black groups in this project. Elders, because of their social maturity and their knowledge of how to co-exist in both white and black society do command respect from the three black groups (Reynolds, 1978, p. 203).

The investigator has endeavoured to glean from the interviewees their perceptions and responses to interaction, and social situations during their lives. For this project each of the participants are approximately the same age, seventy to seventy-three years. The main geographical focus for the study will be Mackay in Queensland. Mackay has been associated with the settlement of Australian South Sea Islander people in relation to the sugar industry from the beginning of the twentieth century. Research by Mullins (1996, pp. 3-5) suggests that this coastal district currently has a high representation of South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders. Moreover, there is also a sizable representation of Aborigines in the district. The three groups can be identified as established communities in this region. By the turn of the twentieth century in Mackay, intermarriage had begun between Aborigines and South Sea Islanders. Generally, it was Aboriginal women who married South Sea Islander men. According to Osborne (1997, p. 44) the Torres Strait Islanders began to arrive in “Mackay ... where the weather was warmer” during the 1940s and they enjoyed greater visibility by 1943. The historical interaction of three communities is the foundation for the project that incorporates an examination of such issues as cultural preservation, adoption and access to government services (Mullins, 1996, p. iii).

## **Research aims**

The Project has three aims. These aims are to explore the life situations of the three groups to be studied, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders through the lived experience of the elders as defined above. As will be discussed this was largely undertaken through oral history interviews and participation which allowed each of the participants to reflect upon the changing relationships and connections between the three local groupings. To this end, the project will explore and overview the type of interactions between the people of the three groups in the Mackay district during the 1930s through to the 1960s, rather than simply dealing with race relations as most historians have understood it. This will be done in the first instance by surveying the existing secondary literature.

The first aim is to refer to the contribution of authors such as Blake (2001) Allingham (1977), McClements (1973), May (1983), all of whom provide background information on Aboriginal people not only at the national level but also in relation to Mackay as well. Beckett (1987) and Osborne (1997) provide background information on Torres Strait Islanders living in the Strait and on their movements to the mainland. Moore (1979 & 1985) provides useful background on South Sea Islander people in Mackay from the time of their arrival. HREOC (1992) also includes local South Sea Islanders while referring to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Fatnowna (1989) is valuable as a supplementary oral history source for the participating groups. Research by Allingham (1977), McClements (1973), May (1983) in particular provides a breakdown of the lives of Aborigines living around the Mackay area during the 1870s through to 1910. Furthermore, these authors offer a useful background account concerning the lack of involvement of Aborigines in the sugar industry in the Mackay region since the 1920s. More recently Fatnowna's (1989) research describes the general interaction between the Aborigines and South Sea Islanders from the 1920s through to the 1960s. Osborne (1997) includes information on World War Two evacuation, a mass movement of female, old and feeble and children of Torres Strait Islanders

onto the Australian mainland. Osborne (1997) also mentions the social interaction between Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines on the mainland.

The second aim is to examine the changing cultural, social and economic status of the three groups over the period. For this purpose, the investigator will try to determine, through interviews with the elders and in the context of the secondary sources, what were the similarities and differences that existed in the social status of each group and in relation to mainstream society. What were the elders' experiences in regards to employment and how did they view the economic status of each group from the 1930s to the 1960s? The results should clarify similarities and differences across the three cultures (Hall, 1987, p. 135. Fatnowna, 1989, pp, 173-174).

The third aim is to explore the effects of diaspora on the three groups, identified above, in order to understand their adaptation over time to the culture of a host society while seeking to retain elements of their traditional culture. To determine the third aim of the project the analysis will use the research of Hall (1987) with input from Barker (1999) in support of Hall's (1987) concept of diaspora. Diaspora theory addresses the concept of self-identity and race as dynamic over time (Hall, 1987, p. 135). The objective is to compare the interactions between the three groups; and the key is to gather the reflections and use the interviews of the three elders.

### **Literature review**

The history of inter-racial relations in the Mackay district tends to emphasise particular groups and periods at the expense of others. South Sea Islander oral history suggested that it became a common occurrence within the Mackay region for Aboriginal women to be sought out as partners and brides by South Sea Islander men (Fatnowna, 1989, p. 125). Eventually, children of mixed marriages in the Mackay region were, the investigator believes, living within the two races and identified as South Sea Islander. During the early years of colonisation it was deemed detrimental to be identified as of Aboriginal descent. By the turn of the century the government had moved

remaining people identified as Aboriginal from the Mackay region onto reserves (McClements, 1973). By contrast, little has been written about Torres Strait Islander people living in the district. However, Beckett (1987) does provide background knowledge for this research, while Osborne (1997) includes information regarding the war-time evacuation from several islands of the Torres Strait to the Queensland coast as well as the voluntary migration of Torres Strait Islanders to towns along the Queensland coast. Fatnowna (1989) makes mention of Torres Strait Islanders only once in his book and that was to suggest that he did not know how a Torres Strait Island person got to be among the South Sea Island people in Mackay (Fatnowna, 1989, p. 162). Fatnowna's (1989) work examines the years of indentured labour recruitment leading up to the 1930s and includes the World War Two period and into the 1970s.

Noel Fatnowna (1989) is an Australian born South Sea Islander of the Fakanakafo Fataleka-speaking people of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Fatnowna speaks about "his immersion in two worlds," and "his experience in two cultures," (Fatnowna, 1989, p. xiii). Keesing (in Fatnowna, 1989, p. xiii) suggests that Fatnowna's oral history of the South Sea Islander, and the other groups in the text, is rich in experience and wisdom. However, this insight focuses only on one part of a much richer multi-racial heritage which includes multicultural and multiracial Mackay described by Mercer (1995).

Mullins research (1996) contributes immensely to the project. He analyses the controversy concerning identity choices made by the three groups for the purpose of accessing social services. He suggests, for policy and other purposes, that government establish criteria to identify. This process is paramount for accessing social services in place for people of mixed descent, who are put in the position of choosing how they identify (Mullins, 1996, pp. iii-iv).

During the 1960s Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were in demand for their black civil rights and were supported by South Sea Islanders at the national level and also at the local level. In Mackay, Torres Strait Islanders

and South Sea Islanders were both referred to as 'Islanders' up to this point in time. The Queensland government used the word 'Islander' to mean Torres Strait Islanders as well as South Sea Islanders. By the mid 1970s with the black movement and the emergence of indigenous rights, the focus was on civil rights and land rights. Because of the emergence of land rights it had evolved but also narrowed, starting a process of exclusion of South Sea Islanders from the Australian Indigenous category, exclusion from islander status and exclusion from indigenous government services. Additionally when the commonwealth intervened in indigenous affairs, South Sea Islanders were officially excluded from that category. With this in mind the project uses the oral history of participants from Mackay to further analyse the complex interactions that occurred within the three groups (Mullins, 1996, p. 9).

For the purpose of this project, it would be of great historical and cultural importance to have further background knowledge of their mutual inter-relationships and of the traditional elders from Aboriginal groups in the Mackay area. The historical and cultural importance of this section, for the Mackay region, is that people identify with land and language. Despite the diasporic movements of the three groups, Aborigines from across the state have since migrated back into the Mackay region with traditions that will be transplanted from other Aboriginal groups, either complementing or altering those of the original local group in the process. Again this is integral to the diasporic movements of the three groups identified\_(McClements, 1973).

The relationship of the three groups during the 1930s was shaped by the Aboriginal department and the process of assimilation. Assimilation was a policy of state and federal government. Beyond the Mackay and Australian context, assimilation was being practised in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. The idea was to assimilate immigrants of the colonial and post-colonial territories into British society. The Afro-Caribbean diaspora to which Hall (1987, pp. 140, 142) refers involved the:

shipping of Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And the migration back across the Atlantic from the Caribbean to Britain in the second half of the twentieth century.

Return migration became a voluntary process during the middle of the twentieth century. This was similar to the experience of the three groups in this project, when, after 1901 South Sea Islanders were exempt from the repatriation process and remained in Australia voluntarily. After World War Two in the early 1940s, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders migrated to Mackay voluntarily. As with the three groups in Mackay, their experience of violence was similar, in some cases less and others more so, to that of the Africans arriving in the Americas were subjected. Later, as Afro-Caribbean immigrants, they experienced voluntary migration to England. The Indian sub-continental group that Hall (1987, p. 138) refers to represents the following seven countries; including and according to population, India 1 billion: Pakistan 135 million: Bangladesh 132 million: Nepal 25,873,917: Sri Lanka 19,576,783: Bhutan 2,094,176: and the Maldives archipelago 320,165 (Hall, 1987, p. 138).

Most of the seven countries above have been part of the British empire or have been subject to India's control as a country belonging to the British commonwealth over the centuries. Again this is similar to the Queensland and Mackay situation and its people during the 1800s and late 1900s. Queensland is a part of and continues to be part of the commonwealth and the people here lived under a similar colonial British and commonwealth regime. Although, the Indian sub-continental immigrants may have experienced entry into England differently the topic of Hall's research, they nonetheless partook of a similar enforcing process of identity transformation (Hall, 1987, 135, 140). The Asian group that Hall (1987, pp. 135, 140) refers to and includes in his study were:

Asian Britons (who) had very different trajectories in relation to the British Empire and migration to Britain.

Writing in the same vein Barker (1999, p. 72) affirms that the majority of first migrant Asians migrated from Punjab, Gujarat and Sylhet and are also part of the Indian sub-Continental land mass. Those Asians were already affected by class, social cast and gender from the country of their origin. They entered Britain as business people with the idea of saving their money and becoming British citizens. However, they likewise experienced racial discrimination as

Afro-Caribbean people within a British inhospitable social environment. The three groups Afro-Caribbean, Indian sub-continental and Asian, that Hall (1987) examined, like the three groups in this project were all, at different periods of time, subject to an established and oppressive identity that Hall (1987, p. 141) highlights as:

Britishness or Englishness, with their connotations of nationalism imperialism racism and the state.

Although the three groups in his British-based research were not subject to dispersal after they left their country and arrived in Britain (Hall, 1987, pp. 137,142), there are similarities in the patterns of diaspora and ethnogenesis experienced by the three groups in this project, which validates the adoption of his model of cultural change.

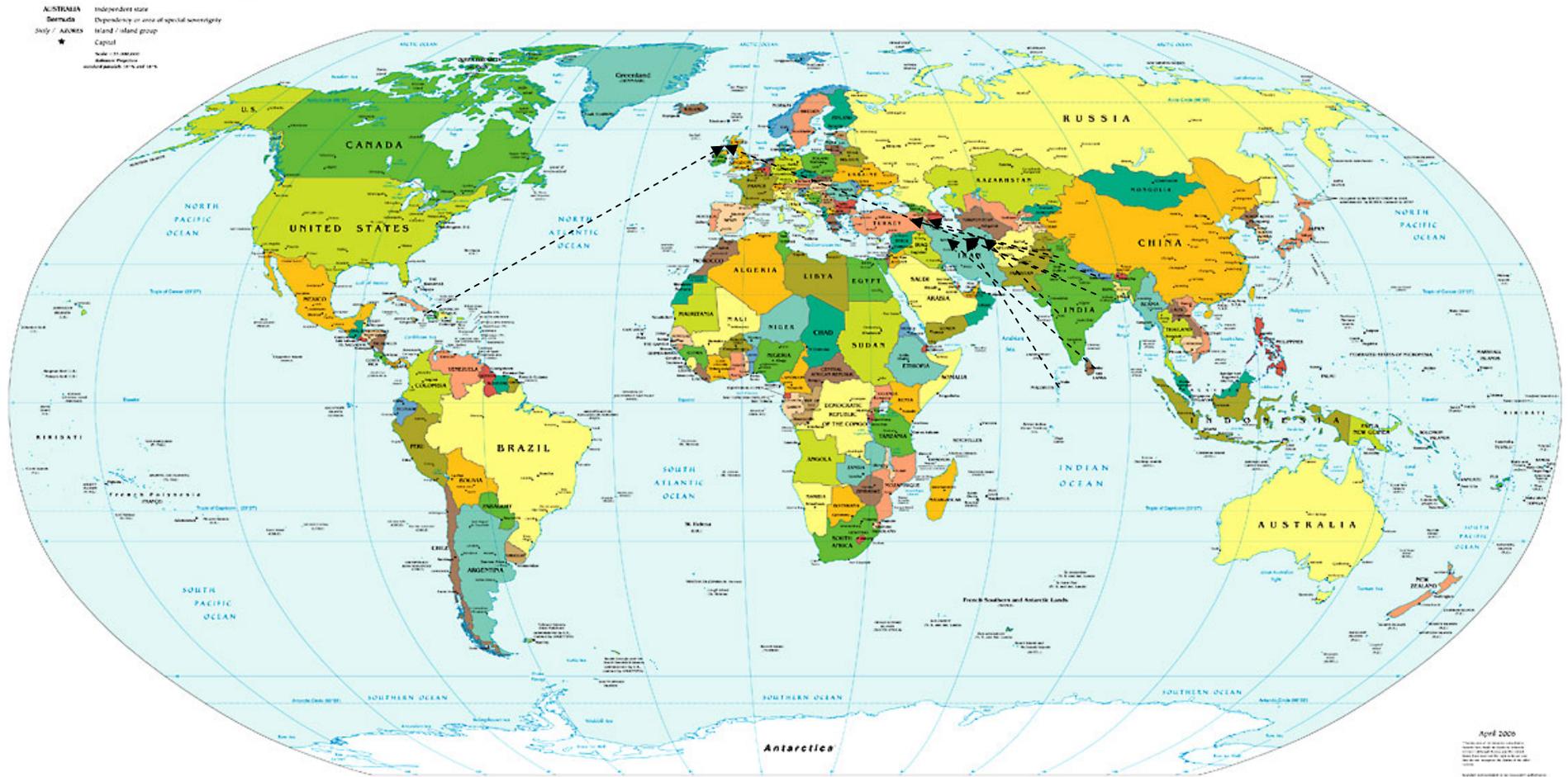
In this project the investigator extends Hall's (1987, 141) work to encompass the three local black groups. Hall (1987, 141) states that:

colonisers rarely, if ever, experience themselves as other ...  
(and) hold onto the illusions of one fixed and unchanging  
identity

Therefore, the investigator goes beyond the black and white assimilation that academics and historians refer to as race relations. The investigator discusses the integration of the three black groups into each other. Discussing how 'others' observed integration between themselves (Hall, 1987, p. 141).

Map 1  
 Countries of origin of the various immigrant groups discussed by Hall (1987)  
[http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/world\\_map.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/world_map.htm)

Political Map of the World, April 2006



Travel, journey and dispersal form the essential components of the diaspora which Hall (1987, p. 136) discusses. Associated issues include the understanding of homes and borders while also taking into consideration who travelled to where, when they travelled, how they travelled and what were their circumstances. Diaspora also includes a consideration of those who migrated, their descendants and includes those who are indigenous peoples. Culture changes when a group of people move outside their traditional territory. Diaspora gains momentum when the group integrates with other indigenous groups in the new territory. In addition, it also creates tensions between modern and traditional identities (Hall, 1987, pp. 136-138). Furthermore, the same theory suggests that race as a concept is more than a biological issue and includes what nationality a person identifies with and what country that person identifies with. Hall (1987, p. 138) suggests that 'race' is not correlated with belonging, but rather, invokes a process of cultural development by which 'race' is formed continually. Hall's (1987) research is a major influence on this project.

At the local level, Barker (1999, p. 69) implies that diaspora is characterised by forced dispersal and reluctant scattering through an area that is the result of flight or travel instigated by the threat of violence. These characteristics are relevant to both the Aborigines and South Sea Islanders. Aborigines were dispossessed of their land in the Mackay region by the threat of violence. Native policy up to the late 1800s in Queensland used the practice of "dispersal" to drive groups of Aborigines from the land. South Sea Islanders in the earlier years of recruitment were kidnapped or tricked into boarding ships bound for Queensland to work as cheap labour. Once on Queensland soil, the Islanders were equally separated from traditional groupings and forced to mix with other groups. The Torres Strait Islander female and child population were threatened by the war in the Pacific and were moved to the mainland for security reasons (Osborne, 1997 pp. 22-43 & 162-163). In addition, throughout the years of colonisation Torres Strait Islanders were threatened with removal to the mainland as punishment, if they were thought to be a problem in the islands (Mercer, 1995. Osborne, 1997, p. 162).

Barker (1999, p. 69) supports Hall's theory by suggesting that diaspora is less about "the equalising, proto-democratic force of common territory" and more about "remembrance and commemoration" of the first of their people of origin, including the process of their dispersal. However, there are problems within such groups in remembering their original land and the traditions from that land. Therefore, diaspora is not about absolute identities but about the contingency, indeterminacy and conflict of identities in motion and the focus is on the route taken: such as how the indigenous groups who settled in Britain got to the land they are now based in. This in turn suggests that it is not only the roots which are their genes but also the route that they took to get to where they are today (Barker, 1999, p. 69). In such cases, identities are in a state of continuous change, one which is referred to as ethnogenesis.

Jones and Hill-Burnett (1982, p. 215) discuss ethnogenesis as an emergence of ethnicity that "involves past-orientated group identification emphasizing origins" simply means group historical memory of the past. In addition, there is the understanding or recognition of "cultural and social distinctiveness". Furthermore, Jones and Hill-Burnett (1982, p. 215) highlight a tendency of such groups undergoing ethnogenesis "to seize on traditional cultural symbols as a definition of their own identity". Urban commitments have and continued to affect the culture of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders in Mackay. However, from 1970 onwards what has been identified, restored or transplanted as culture or tradition associated with each group has been ethnically distinct. In this project the three groups see themselves as ethnically distinct from the each other, while at the same time being ethnically distinct from the wider society. Generally, the three groups regard themselves as Australians, as a cultural group and also as a group within that cultural group, for example, Australians, then as Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders or South Sea Islanders, then broken down into an Aboriginal group for example Yuibera for Aborigines in Mackay. For Torres Strait Islanders they are broken down into island groups such as eastern or western island group, and for the South Sea Islanders, they are then broken down into Vanuatu or Solomon Island groups and then into smaller language groups such as Tanna Island in Vanuatu and Buka in the Solomon Island group. The Mackay experience

suggests that the majority of each group has replaced their culture with Australian mainstream culture while maintaining or reviving their former culture as an identity process. Maintaining and reviving traditional culture pays tribute to the first people who arrived, maintains memories of traditional land and endeavours to maintain the memories of culture. It also identifies or adopts that uniqueness or distinctness that sets them apart from other groups and justifies their identity (Barker, 1999, p. 69).

As Mullins (1996, p. 18) states:

all three are going through different stages of a process of ethnic formation, from being relatively culturally diverse.

He suggests, that the groups have identified their ethnic distinctiveness. Active ethnogenesis is happening also amongst the three groups as the people deliberately construct and identify the distinct identities of their group. For example: Torres Strait Islanders have ceremonies, language and dance that are unique to them, Aborigines have dance known as “shake leg” and language that is unique to their group while South Sea Islanders have a hula dance that is unique to their group. In addition, there are elders who belong to each group who have knowledge of who is a descendant of which group. Access to transport facilities allows the groups in the project the ability to monitor and if necessary introduce other distinct group activities. Torres Strait Islanders travel to and from the Straits, Aborigines travel between communities and across the state while South Sea Islanders from 1970 onwards are now travelling back to their ancestors’ islands. In regards to this project the three groups have through ethnogenesis addressed the political problem of accessing governmental services introduced by government following the 1967 referendum. In situations where the groups need to access government services or government funding, active ethnogenesis by the three groups has played its part, from the 1970s, in bringing a solution to the political problem of identity and who should access what service or receive what funding supplied by the government is a matter of choice. This supports Mullins statement (1996, p. 14) that “identity can be defined only by those who live it”.

## **Rationale for research**

The researcher as stated above gathered information from three participants who are elders. Those elders were: an Aboriginal resident, Torres Strait Islander resident and a South Sea Islander resident of Mackay. This research uses Hall's (1987, p. 137) concept of identity adoption over several generations. One difference to Halls' work is the way in which it seeks to determine how the children of mixed marriages from the three groups have adopted their identity. Information gathered from the participants and Mullins (1996, pp. 14-22) work identifies which traditions were kept and also those that remain at low levels or have been suspended over time.

The investigator utilised oral history and his experience as part of the three cultures while gathering the information. The oral history process is similar to the approach of Fatnowna (1989) and Mullins (1996) when collecting their information. The investigator's local experience is similar to Fatnowna's (1989) but will differ because the investigator, in this instance, is of South Sea Islander, Aboriginal and Chinese descendant. Fatnowna (1989, p. 162) mentioned the South Sea Islanders and Aborigines in his work: however, he did not mention if the children took on the Aboriginal identity or if the Torres Strait Islander person, mentioned in his work, married and had children and if so what identity was adopted? The current project also differs from that of Hall (1987, p. 140) because he, similar to Fatnowna (1989), is of a single diaspora.

## **Methodology**

The first objective of the study was to conduct and record in depth interviews with the three participants. The task involved encouraging and editing a recorded oral history of the participants. Where available photographs, artefacts and other recorded materials of the generations before the participants were born, and in some cases during their era, were used to encourage and prompt the participants. The focus was upon the degree of

recognition and assertion of indigenous cultures and people at difficult decades of this study. A second objective was to compare and contrast the experience of the different groups. For example, as a child what were their living conditions and what was their parents' employment status? Was their employment chosen or prescribed? The investigator will also seek to determine what social status each elder gained and also determine the economic situation over particular periods using secondary resources. During the project the investigator engaged four kinds of "research questions"; the focus of the first question enquired –

- What was the level and the nature of cultural interaction between the groups?

The second research question posed -

- What were the differences between social and living conditions of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders?

The second phase of the second question posed -

- what were the origins of these differences and how did they impact upon social and living conditions?

The third research question posed –

- what were the informants' perceptions regarding housing, employment, and the governance of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders?

Finally, this last research question focused upon the cultural interaction of the indigenous groups and posed the question -

- between the three nominated cultures within the region what factors influenced cultural interaction to the degree that it is today?

The investigator adopted a qualitative and ethnomethodological approach. It involved gathering extensive information from the participants by engaging in face-to-face, in-depth and semi-structured interviews allowing the narratives to evolve in a style the participants were comfortable with. Ethnomethodological methods sometimes involve participating in daily activities with participants (Hall, 1987, p. 140; Fatnowna, 1989, p. 4). The

investigator in this project has been born into and has lived a lifetime within the cultures and is aware of and has in the past participated in the daily activities of the three groups identified above. Therefore, this approach is appropriate (Neuman, 1994). One associated disadvantage is that the participants may take for granted the investigator's awareness of the traditions with the result that areas of research may be overlooked and gaps emerge in the information. Constraints and difficulties included the age of the participants. The investigator is aware that during the life of this project one intended participant declined because of emotional issues and there have been numerous deaths of elders in the area. The first choice of participants by the investigator was altered during the first six months prior to June 2002. A second chosen informant died in October last year as a result of age and an organ transplant. The investigator has become aware of the importance that each deceased individual's contribution of oral history would have had upon what has taken place over the years and their contribution to the history within the Mackay region. The investigator also became aware of two other Torres Strait Islander elders who passed away during the current life of this project, one 85 years old and the other 89 years. Currently, the project has three new informants with the age factor as a major constraint. The individuals were chosen on a voluntary basis and notification was given through the request for ethical clearance that they were not obligated to complete the project if at any time they felt uncomfortable. Or, if any information they contributed, that they felt was confidential, then it was their right to request that it not be documented.

In contrast with the present project, Mullins' (1996) research involved large organisations and numerous individuals, used both quantitative and qualitative data collecting. This project however researched a longer period of time and used only a limited number of participants. Two semi-structured interviews for each individual followed by telephone follow up conversations were undertaken. As such, the project exhibits both the strengths and potential weaknesses of much oral history interpretation.

For the purpose of this study, memory can be viewed as an unofficial account that is not always compatible with the written record. History by contrast is mostly derived from written records and is closer to an official interpretation (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 10 & 13). Hamilton (1994, p. 12) suggests that “dichotomies such as official/popular, authorised/unauthorised and historians versus people” complicate the similarities and differences between memory and history. Like Hamilton’s work, this project proceeds on the basis that memory and history is most effective when integral to and accommodating of each other (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 10 & 13). Prior to the mid nineteenth and early twentieth century, Hamilton (1994, p. 11) notes that memory was “the source” or “life of history”. Subsequently, institutional history using a social science approach has displaced memory and diminishes the spontaneity and emotional content of its narratives (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 10-11 & 20).

In this project the participants are bearing witness to a series of events that has been recorded, but not to any detailed extent from a tripartite point of view (Hamilton, 1994, p. 16). Such individuals may have a very different recollection of the past to the accounts of academics and trained historians. Research has shown that both oral history participants and professional historians are inclined to forget important parts of an event. Unless memory is continuously re-awakened and transmitted to others, there is the prospect that memory slowly fades and is gradually lost. With this in mind it is preferable for oral history participants and historians to support each other by confirming events through mutual accounts and appropriate task or processes (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 12-13 & 18).

One difficulty for oral historians is that if interviewees have no precise sense of a chronological order, how do we account for gaps in oral memory in the recent past? This is an opportunity for the investigator to assist by drawing upon academic and government resources to complement their memories (Hamilton, 1994, p.14). According to Hamilton (1994, p. 12) people remember what historians forget and historians remember what people forget. Hamilton (1994, p. 14) also claims that “memory unsettles the past” by addressing strategically forgotten areas thereby opening new interpretations based on

lived experience. Memory substantiates the perceptions of individual identity, security and authority (Hamilton, 1994, p. 15). For the three participants, it is conceivable that they will conveniently not remember or discuss events that; threaten their identity within their culture, threaten the security of their emotions or their authority as oral participants. In one case, during the project in question, a participant was not going to relate a particular event because his peers may disagree with his version of the event. In this regard Hamilton (1994, p. 15) suggests that most times “people insist that others should remember as they do”. Since, there are limited written records of the three groups’ history as a tripartite entity living on the fringe of mainstream society in Mackay, this project will combine the three oral participants’ different background while aiming to provide a richer cultural context. Therefore, from a cultural point of view, bearing witness to interaction with other participant groups in the project is beneficial for following generations. This applies equally to more recent decades, although some of these gaps have been addressed through the shared experience of the investigator himself (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 15-16).

Grievés (2004, p. 1) claims that from the 1970s there was increased academic interest regarding a “formerly concealed history of Aboriginal people in Australia”, although not yet for Mackay. Grievés (2004, p. 1) considers “we are on the cusp of a new reading of history” free from the confines of the past. That process, can be achieved by adopting Grievés’s (2004, p. 1) practice of gathering “regional and local histories, as well as histories of individuals and place” the way that is intended in this project. Oral histories, as Anderson (2002, p. 67) claims, “can also play a major role for the interviewee in the process of healing the wounds caused by past injustices”. Although the three interviewees bring to this project three different life experiences, the Aboriginal participant Tim Kemp is not bitter about the restrictions of the past imposed by government and colonial society. However, he is aware that his Aboriginal group, living in the Woorabinda community, and his wife’s Aboriginal group the Yuibera people from the Mackay region, were subjected to harsh living and survival conditions. The three interviewees shed light on

this difficult period. Their oral testimonies reveal an “otherwise ‘hidden layer’ of social history” as Anderson (2002, p. 67) says they should.

### **Thesis structure**

For the purpose of organisation, the thesis has been divided into two main periods the 1930s-1960s and the 1970s-2000 with the first three chapters, belonging to the first period. Chapter One begins with history of cultural interaction 1930s-1960s in which the focus is on the changing relationships between the three cultures. It includes intermarriage while the general aim is to explain the diaspora effect upon the three groups. It discusses the impact of travel on each culture within the Mackay region by identifying the original locations of three groups and how and why they entered the Mackay region. The Aborigines and South Sea Islanders receive initial precedence due to the fact that Torres Strait Islanders were not a visible race prior to the early 1940s around Mackay. However, World War Two affected Torres Strait Islanders and precipitated their migration to the mainland. Torres Strait islanders subsequently took their place in Mackay society as indigenous Australians with much pride and enthusiasm. Chapter One also analyses levels of interaction occurring between the three groups up to the 1960s. The participants each lend their voices in this section in order to tell the story their way. In addition, their accounts are supported and where possible aligned with the relevant literature.

Chapter Two endeavours to identify and discuss the social and living conditions of the three groups. In order to establish perceptive, similarity and difference between the three groups, the investigator also gleans from the informants their individual experiences of housing, employment and governance of each group in the Mackay region during the given period. This chapter also explores social issues of status in relation to education and religion. Secondary sources assist in determining a timeframe within the decades under examination and can be aligned with the local oral histories provided by the primary sources. May (1994) for example sheds light on the Aboriginal Protection Act and how it also affected Torres Strait Islanders on

the mainland, including Mackay. Blake (2001) sets the background for Aboriginal community style living on communities across the state such as Cherbourg and Woorabinda. Similarly, Moore's report and interviews, as broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC, 1979) relate to South Sea Islanders, including those in Mackay, and their issues including federal government prejudice and employment. Schedvin (1988) gives the reader useful background on the employment situation on the mainland from the 1920s leading to the 1930s and the end of the depression. In Queensland and in Mackay most people, regardless of colour, were obliged to work on identified public works projects.

Chapter Three complements Chapter Two by endeavouring to identify and discuss the labour and economic conditions of the three groups, Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders, within the Mackay region. As previously, the time period for this chapter is from 1930 through to the 1960s. The research analyses differences where they exist and documents similarities, in relation to the three groups. To achieve this task the investigator gleans the informants' perceptions of labour and economic differences in Mackay at this time. The investigator begins by reviewing the labour policies to which the three groups in Mackay were subjected under the influence of unionisation, World War Two, and other relevant state legislation. In short the investigator seeks to determine, through the participants, how policies affected their labour recruitment opportunities and living conditions. The main sources for this purpose remain the participant interviews. Throughout this project participants bore witness to a series of events, some of them unrecorded in the local context, although Mullins' work (1969) and Fatnownas' (1989) oral history remain as important local sources.

As in Chapter Two, secondary sources can in some cases be used to verify oral information about which some historians remain sceptical. Authors included within the secondary sources are Sharp (1992) and May (1994) who examine the Torres Strait Islanders within their work. Like Blake (2001) May (1994) also sheds light on the Aboriginal Protection Act and how it also affected Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland, including Mackay. Moore

(1985) and HREOC (1992) document the situation of South Sea Islanders and their issues including federal government prejudice and employment from a Mackay perspective. HREOC (1992) also makes reference to the other two local groups in this research and includes policy information which builds on Moore's (1985) previously mentioned work.

Chapter Four entitled cultural interaction, ethnogenesis and reversing the diaspora up to the present 1970s–2000, is a sister chapter to Chapter One insofar, as it addresses the impact of travel upon the cultures of the three groups in the project. However, Chapter Four explores a different time frame. By the 1970s the three groups have become separate visible entities within Mackay society although intermarriage continues. The investigator suggests a reversal of the diaspora theory from the 1970s to 2000. The argument advanced is that the three groups are transplanting and building upon what remains of their cultures and traditions. The end result is ethnogenesis which two of the participants, Aboriginal and South Sea Islander, have unconsciously alluded to at the beginning of their interviews. Questions of cultural awareness, lifestyle adaptation and what replaced it make up the last section of this chapter. The investigator examines if the interaction of people from the three groups in Mackay caused an overlapping of cultures and identity, and a hybrid theory in areas such as music, language or skin colour.

Chapter Five entitled, social and economic condition today 1970s–2000, is the sister chapter of Chapter Two and reflects the approach of Chapter Two whilst in the second time period 1970s to 2000. The chapter begins by interpreting the legislative changes that influenced social and economic conditions of the three groups during the decades 1970s to 2000. The 1967 referendum and identity issues are addressed in this section of the chapter followed by social issues, health and housing while the information relates to the Mackay area. It also takes into account what had been happening across the state, the government of the day and the attitude towards the three groups. The Chapter then explores employment, education and how each group addressed their work and employment conditions from 1970 to 2000. The investigator discusses employment, including the impact of mechanisation,

from personal experience that aligns with the participants and their lives including his personal recollections of work opportunities, the new generation and education opportunities. Although the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (ATSIC) is not formed until 1989, the investigator includes the participants' perceptions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission. The Chapter closes with the participants' views on the influence and impact of bureaucracy upon the three groups in Mackay.

## Chapter 1

### History of Cultural Interaction 1930s – 1960s

This chapter seeks to reconstruct the culture of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and the immigrant ethnic South Sea Islander people in Australia and focus upon the changing relations between these cultures at that time. More particularly, the researcher will concentrate upon the Mackay area from the late 1930s through to the 1960s including intermarriage between the three groups researched. As stated in the introduction the investigator has documented the participants' recollections from the 1930s, allowing them to reflect on their experiences from childhood. When combined with secondary sources these shed light on the political and social climate of the period. Although, not all the participants were in the Mackay region by the 1930s it is the living experiences that they bring to Mackay that add to this project. The broad aim of this chapter is to explore the effects of diaspora within the three groups identified, in order to explore their adaptation over time to the culture of a host country. Prior to 1930, creolization, diaspora and ethnogenesis had been progressively experienced by each of the cultures. Torres Strait Islanders, South Sea Islanders and Aborigines had interacted in the Torres Straits in the shell industry. Aborigines and South Sea Islanders had interacted in Mackay and also on Aboriginal communities across Queensland including the Queensland coast where the sugar industry had been founded. These experiences will be referred to throughout the project. The study acknowledges this blending of cultures in anticipation of the interactions that took place after the 1930s. The focus is also upon; displacement and diaspora, depletion and suspension of culture and the ongoing cultural practices of the three groups during the period in question.

The interviews with the three major participants identified in the introduction are the primary source of this analysis. These three interviews will be interpreted within the period in question. The testimony of the three participants is interpreted in the content of research by Hall (1987) which is

the seminal secondary source, for understanding the ongoing interaction of race and culture. As stated in the thesis introduction, the theory that Hall used will be applied to local cultural change. It will attempt to analyse how mobility impacted upon the three cultures and how diaspora pertains to the three cultures in question.

### **Travel and culture within the Mackay region**

For Aborigines in Mackay the discovery and colonisation of the Mackay region by European people from 1860 began the displacement of the Yuibera people from their traditional lands and homes. The Yuibera people had to make way for the cattle industry at first and then the sugar industry followed. After the initial invasion in 1860 and the beginning of the sugar industry in 1868 the Yuibera people were gradually being forced off their traditional lands and were camped along the waterways or on the fringes of the townships around Mackay (Moore, 1985, pp. 101-102). Employment on sugar cane farms did take place and the Yuibera people were very efficient workers on the cane farms. So effective were they that a settlement was established at two sites Sandy Creek and Bakers creek area, approximately ten kilometres from Mackay, to supply a labour pool for local cane farmers (Kemp, P. 2005, pp. 2-4). The arrival of South Sea Islander labour did not occur until 1867, after which sugar was crushed commercially (Moore, 1985. p.102). However, their fertile land, that was self supporting with a school, fruit and vegetable farms and a number of houses to accommodate the people, was put on the market a year later for sale to cane farmers. What was left to the Yuibera people consisted of a small block of land at the mouth of Bakers Creek with mangrove soil that was sand-fly and mosquitoes infested. Needless to say the Yuibera moved from this site back to the waterways, plantations or pastoral properties around Mackay or were removed to settlements across the state (Kemp, P. 2005, pp. 2-4). Those settlements included, Palm Island where accommodation was provided for them by missionaries or Government Protectors. At the turn of the century the local Aboriginal Yuibera people were living a destitute existence on the fringes of the town (Moore, 1985. p.121).

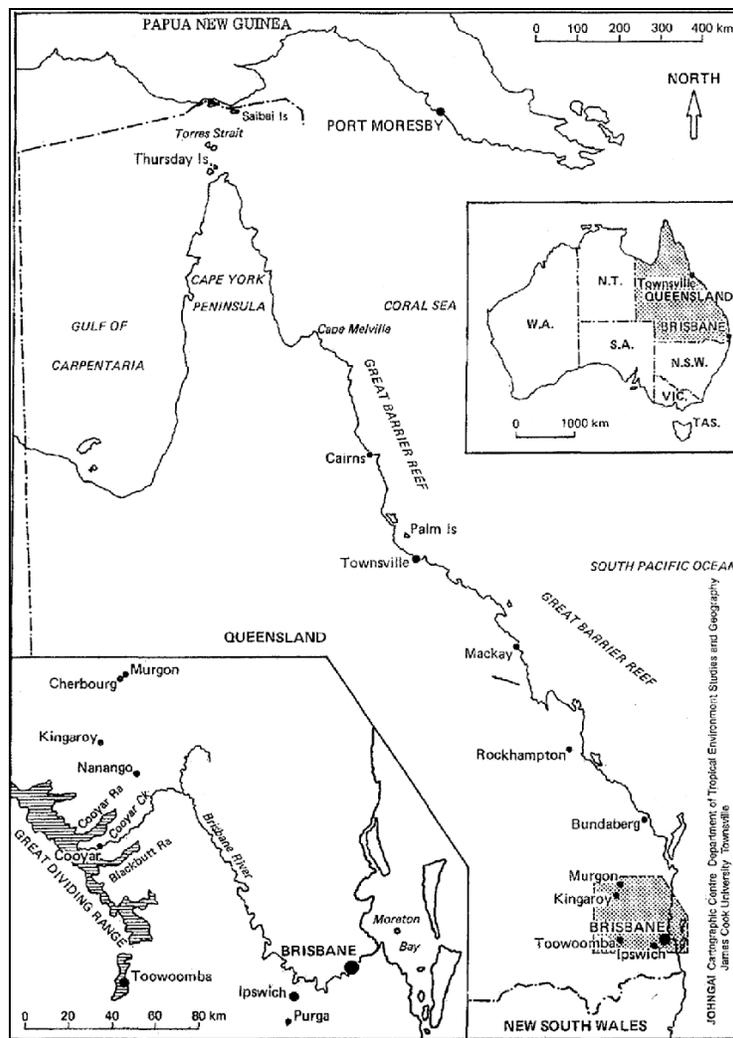
The experience of the Mackay Yuibera people group was similar to the situation of Aborigines elsewhere in colonised Australia. Similarly, before Protections Acts were passed for their welfare by a growing number of sympathisers (Hall, 1987, pp. 135, 137 – 138 & 142).

Beyond the Mackay and Australian context, however, as noted by Hall (1987) assimilation was being practised in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. The British objective was to assimilate immigrants of the colonial and post-colonial territories into British society. Afro-Caribbean, sub-continental Indians and the Asians were all mobile or immigrant groups involved in the assimilation practice over the above period. In keeping with Hall's notion of diaspora (Hall, 1987, pp. 135, 137 – 138 & 142) their journey included dispersal once they left their country and again dispersal at their arrival in Britain. The difference between the Mackay experience and the British experience remains significant in so far as; the three groups were not subject to restrictive and exclusive government policies such as those that governed Aborigines and South Sea Islanders (Hall, 1987, p. 137). In Hall's study (1987, pp. 135-153), no one group was indigenous to Britain; whereas in this study, two groups are indigenous to Australia while one is an immigrant group. However, one similarity to this project exists that Hall (1987, 137) highlights "the day to day experience of people with Afro-Caribbean and Asian origins" remained and the "racial discrimination" they experienced "in an inhospitable social environment". Thus, it is in an equally fearful environment that incoming cultures seek a degree of recognition. As with Hall's (1987) work, the objective of this project and of this chapter is an analysis of diaspora and the ethnogenesis process, in the Mackay area, and its application to the three distinct groups. Furthermore, the investigator will address similar influences to Hall (1987 p. 137) including "the rituals, religions, food and dress of ethnic minorities" such as South Sea Islanders, while investigating two Australian indigenous groups and their experiences of diaspora and ethnogenesis.

Australia's Aboriginal groups practiced a non-expansionist lifestyle according to which physical structure, geological features, flora and fauna within a geographical boundary were adhered to spiritually. An Australian mainland

Aboriginal group displaced from their traditional land may find some of their original culture would be difficult to transplant. Place of birth and language is significant to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual and determines where that particular individual fits into their society (Clarke, 1996, p. 5). Therefore, to remove individuals or groups of people from geographical locations traditional to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders is surely comparable to the British diasporic experience of travelling and moving into other territories and mixing with other societies (Hall, 1987).

Map 2



Queensland with insert showing where Thursday and Hammond Island evacuees were sent in southern Queensland

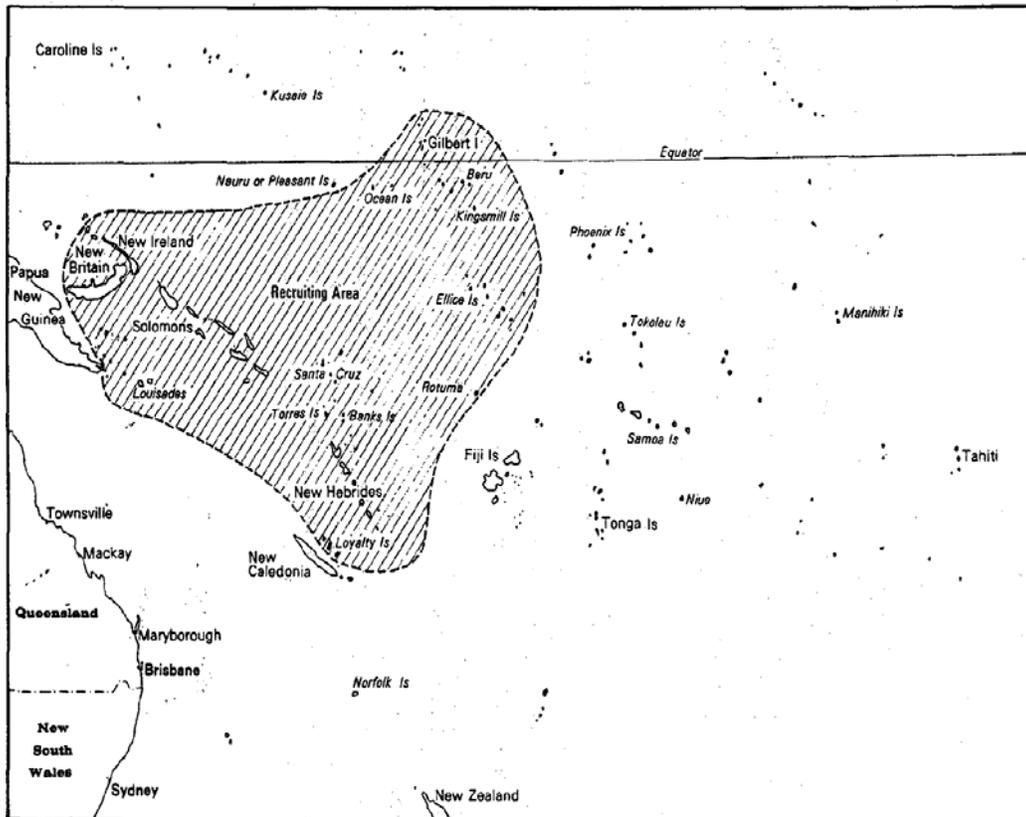
Source: Osbourne, 1997, p. xv

Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders were the obvious diasporic or immigrant travelling groups. Torres Strait Islanders were forced to leave their geographic regions as a result of colonial rule and the impending conflict. For example, individuals who caused disruption to colonial society within the Torres Strait Islands could be moved hundreds of miles away from their traditional land to an Aboriginal Community on the mainland. A large group of Torres Strait Islander women and children from the nearby islands of Hammond and Horn who provided the labour pool for Thursday Island were evacuated for security reasons to the Australian mainland at the threat of war and Japanese invasion during the early 1940s. However, remaining women, older people and children on the outer islands were left to fend for themselves as able bodied men enlisted in the defence force (Osborne, 1997, pp. 87, 90-93).

Osborne (1997, p. 22) suggested that there were 280 coloured evacuees from the Torres Strait in the first boat the 'Ormiston' to leave in January 1942. The evacuees on this boat were displaced to Cairns. The second boat was the Goodwill with 89 evacuees which departed on 24 February 1942; those evacuees were eventually placed in Cherbourg. The third boat was the Katoora with 97 evacuees aboard which departed on 28 February 1942; these were also placed in Cherbourg. The estimated Torres Strait Islanders placed in Cherbourg numbered 186 (Osborne, 1997, pp. 22, 26, 27 & 54).

South Sea Islanders were subject to different conditions as a result of travelling from their islands to the mainland of Australia (Fatnowna, 1989). South Sea Islander people, in the early years of the Australian sugar industry were either kidnapped or enticed to Australia as labourers. Or, after one term on Australian soil in the sugar industry some voluntarily returned for a contracted period once again in the sugar industry (Dutton, 1980).

Map 3



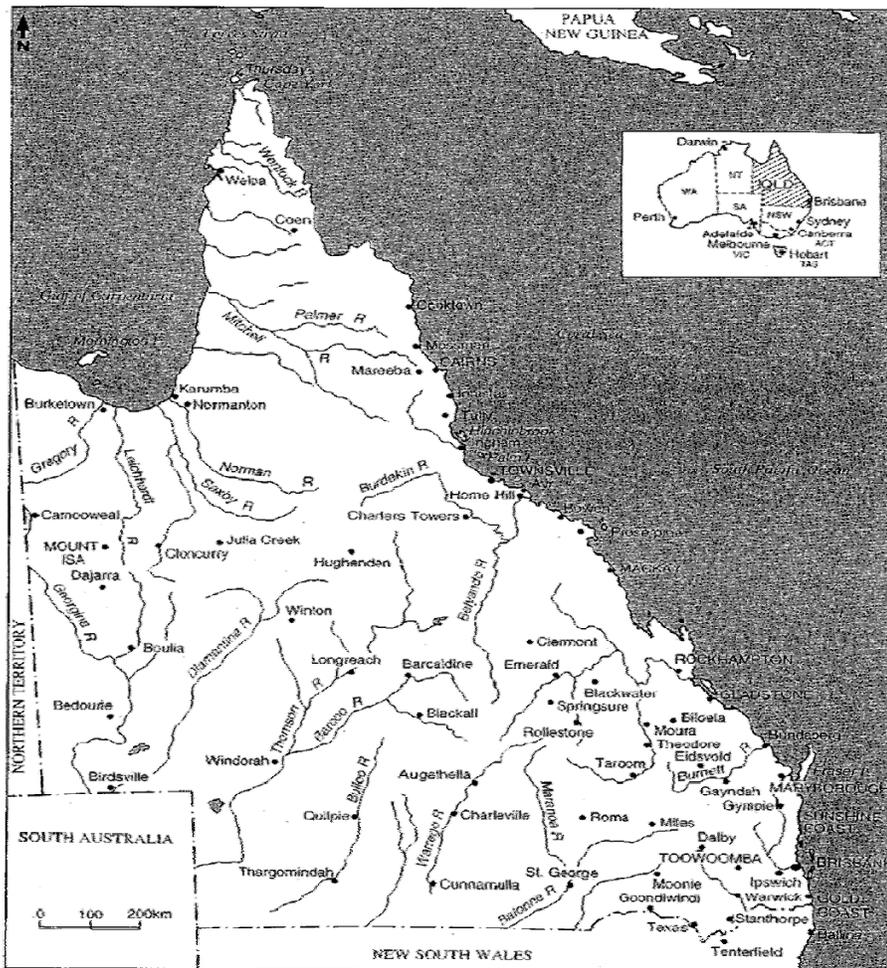
The south-west Pacific showing principal recruiting areas for the Queensland labour trade  
Source: Dutton, 1980, p. X

The Australian Aborigines suffered as a result of displacement from the land with which they identified in language and place. The dilemma for Aboriginal people is that they were dispossessed of their land in the Mackay region under threat of violence. Native policy up to the late 1800s in Queensland used the term “dispersal” to drive groups of Aboriginal people from their traditional land and then displace them in communities where they were less of a nuisance to any industrial activities and also out of sight from colonial society (Mercer, 1995). Moreover, there was an assumption that all Australian Aborigines were the same people right across the continent. The investigator understands that most Aboriginal individuals in the Mackay area, prior to the 1930s who married into the South Sea Island community remained under South Sea Island influence. Or, as two interviewees’ (Osborne, 1997, p. 23) confirmed in the case of other northern Queensland towns, Aborigines were:

for the most part invisible in towns and cities. Aborigines lived in a couple of camps on the fringe of the town but they weren't seen around too much not like today. You only got the odd black or 'half caste' child at school in the early 1940s.

At that time Aborigines were under the authority of a Government Protector and restrictive government policies; therefore invisibility was to their benefit. If not they were subject to displacement to a community somewhere in the state. The three groups were each subject to geographical displacement to areas hundreds of kilometres distant (Mercer, 1995). Map 4 indicates the historical spread of Aboriginal station labour across the Queensland pastoral industry.

Map 4



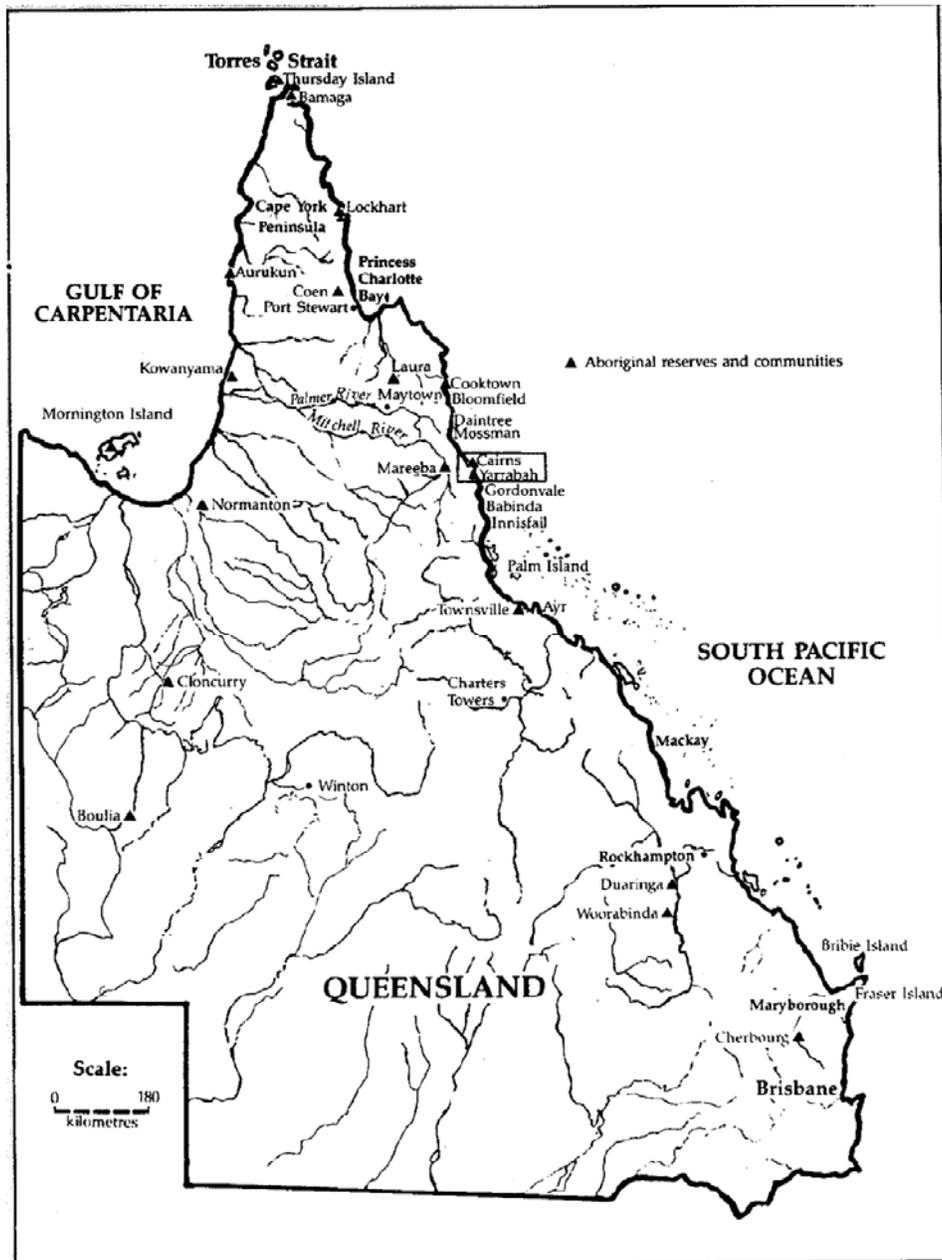
Queensland

Aboriginal labour and the cattle industry  
 Source: May, 1994, p. 12

According to Hall, travel and dispersal are essential components of the “diasporic” experience (Hall, 1987, p. 141). Other issues including homes and borders, namely who travelled to where, when they travelled, how they travelled and what were their circumstances. The first of the three groups which can be identified as travelling into the Mackay region were the South Sea Islanders in trading ships from their Pacific Island homeland. For many of this group, an element of initial force was sometimes used, or they were tricked into coming or they signed a contract for three years work, in keeping with Hall’s (1987, p. 142) theory of “conditions of crisis and transitions”. The next group to be affected by displacement was Aborigines who were forced out of their traditional land in the Mackay region to make way for the sugar industry. The Torres Strait Islanders were the last of the three groups to travel into the Mackay region during 1942 and 1943. These particular Torres Strait Islander evacuees, consisting of women and children, had been evacuated to Cherbourg settlement. The evacuation journey involved travelling the entire length of the state. Cherbourg situated some 270 kilometres northwest of Brisbane and approximately 1200 kilometres south of Mackay was the model for Aboriginal communities across Queensland. After an eleven month period in Cherbourg, the evacuees travelled to Mackay, and other coastal towns, to escape the cold weather and to gain employment (Osborne, 1997, pp. 32-33, 43- 44).

From the 1930s onwards an understanding of the dynamic impact of diaspora applies to these three groups in this research, in so far as they moved or were moved from their “traditional territory”. The Aborigines of the Mackay region had either married into the South Sea Island community or the Anglo-Saxon communities in Mackay. As part of the displacement process for Aborigines in Mackay, the last remaining full blood Aboriginal was removed to Palm Island (Kemp, P. 2005). Despite the travel undertaken by Torres Strait Islanders to Mackay evidence confirms that interaction from the 1940s in Mackay was not the first time the three cultures had mingled. This had already begun, within the Torres Straits and on the Australian mainland within government managed Aboriginal communities (Osborne, 1997, pp. 23, 44).

Map 5



Reserves and other Aboriginal Communities in Queensland 1973  
Source: Thomson, 1989, p. xxiii

Barker (1999) suggested that diaspora is a concept that is characterised by forced dispersal and is the result of flight or travel that has been instigated by the threat of violence. These characteristics are relevant to the three groups in this research. The Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were subject to the Government policies of the day and were either displaced to Government Aboriginal communities or were living on their traditional islands in the Torres

Straits. As mentioned above the threat of war and invasion brought an evacuation to the Australian mainland. South Sea Islanders were denied citizen rights because of the union bans on cheap labour working in the sugar industry during the early 1900s. Consequently, they were forced to work in secrecy on the cane farms of sympathetic employees to obtain money to survive (Dutton, 1980, p. 9).

Writing in the same vein Barker (1999) addresses Hall's theory by suggesting that diaspora is not about equal territory but more about remembrance and commemoration. This involves, remembering and paying tribute to the location of the first of their people who arrived in the new country and the origins and the process of their dispersal. Consequently, there is a problem with the group not remembering their original land and the traditions from that land. Therefore, the movement associated with diaspora gives rise to ethnogenesis, rather than distinct communities; it is about the contingency and indeterminacy of identity formation. The focus is on how the immigrant groups settled and how this came about (Barker, 1999, p. 69).

Mainland Australian Aborigines never had the opportunity to lobby for equal territory when moved to other regions of Australia. At the time, Aboriginal traditions and language were outlawed by the Government so remembrance and commemoration for the Mackay Aborigines struggled to survive. Aboriginal descendants from Mackay living on Aboriginal communities during the 1930s to 1960s did not have full access to their original land or their traditions. In contrast, the majority of South Sea Islanders living in Mackay during that period had voluntarily adopted colonial Christianity and suspended their South Sea Island traditions and culture. Usually, South Sea Islanders came and lived on the land to which they were contracted. Therefore, equal territory was never an issue for South Sea Islanders. This was in contrast to the former Torres Strait Islanders who were not dramatically affected by Australian colonialism. They were always aware that they had their territory in the Torres Strait Islands. Consequently, their culture and traditions continued to be strong and came with them. Moreover, during the 1930s to 1960s in

the Mackay region their cultures were transplanted more readily (Becket, 1987).

During the 1930s to 1960s, as intermarriage occurred between the three groups in Mackay, Aboriginal culture and traditions were discouraged by government policy. South Sea Island culture and traditions remained as minor activities. Those activities were exhibited in the traditional cooking of taro, watercress, yam, island stories and houses of thatch, and the fact that South Sea Island people were a recognised race of people. The intermarriage between South Sea Islander and Torres Strait Islander people saw Torres Strait Islander culture closely adhered too (Kemp, 2005 and Boah, 2004).

It is argued, as suggested by the diaspora theory, (Baker, 1999) that the three researched groups do not possess an absolute identity. The closest to an absolute identity would be the Torres Strait Islander culture and traditions that are now recognised in integrated marriages. But even here there had been previous contact. Therefore, this culture is determined by the parents and children's choice of adaptation of selective traditional practices (Tapim, 2004). South Sea Islanders may have arrived in Mackay with their own culture and traditions. However, life in this country resulted in significant changes to their traditional activities. Those traditional activities included gardening on a small scale on the islands but this did not compare to the industrial scale of the sugar industry in Mackay. However, most South Sea Islanders in Mackay at that time did practise small gardening for personal use and satisfaction (Boah, 2004).

### **Torres Strait Islanders in and around Mackay during the period 1930s to the 1960s**

Prior to British settlement Torres Strait Islander social, hunting and raiding parties landed on the Queensland coast in ways that led to individuals living along the coast and including the Mackay region. Torres Strait Islanders were very able seamen and knowledgeable in regards to the Barrier Reef including

the southern end of the Barrier Reef (Beckett, 1974, p. 350). Prior to the arrival of Torres Strait Islander war time evacuees, the South Sea Islanders and Aborigines had experienced approximately sixty years of mutual interaction. Consequently, that interaction between the Aboriginal and South Sea Islander people was accepted and recognised by the 1930s (Boah, 2004 and Kemp, 2005). In contrast, Torres Strait Islander people and their interaction with Aborigines and South Sea Islanders in Mackay from 1942 to 2000 amounts to fifty eight years of interaction. Those fifty eight years of interaction constitute two generations.

South Sea Islanders were recorded as settling in the straits from 1864. They had come ashore with the missionaries at the beginning of colonisation. During the 1880s it was recorded that there were 340 South Sea Islanders working among the crews of 102 vessels operating in the Straits. During the period of repatriation and from the years 1904 to 1906 an estimated 150 South Sea Islanders were transferred to the Torres Strait Islands. At that time the population of Torres Strait Islanders was a mere 2000. It could be argued that from 1906, the 490 formerly identified South Sea Islanders had or would, through intermarriage, contribute to the indigenous Torres Strait Islander population into the future (HREOC, 1992, pp. 65-66). Meanwhile for the South Sea Islander population in Australia from 1906 it was estimated 2500 remained of the 55,000 who were brought here from 1863 to 1904 (Mullins, 1996, pp. 8-9). Both Torres Strait Islanders and Australian South Sea Islander populations, at that period of time in their history, were similar and could both be described as; residual, a thin thread or bordering on extinction. Both groups had hovered under threat of extinction, but with intermarriage, at that time their children added to the population of both groups (HREOC, 1992, pp. 65-66).

Note the statistics in Table 1, about the decline from 1175 in 1900 to 1079 in 1906, differ from those proposed by HREOC (1992. p, 18) where it is estimated that there was an estimated 1000 South Sea Islanders who illegally evaded authorities in Australia during the repatriation period; that accounts for an estimated 2500 within Australia during 1908. Mackay has and remains

identified as having the largest South Sea Islander population in Australia (Jupp, 2001, p. 687). Therefore, it could be suggested that Dr Clive Moore's (1985, p. 286) population figures could include another 500 to 700 of the 1000 illegal South Sea Islanders.

Table 1  
South Sea Islander population in Mackay before and after repatriation

1900	1906
1775 (1900) in Mackay	1079 (1906) approx in Mackay

**Sources:**

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1992, *The Call for Recognition, A Report on the Situation of Australian South Sea Islanders*, Sydney, New South Wales, Alkenpress Pty Ltd, p. 18; Moore, C. 1985, *Kanaka, A history of Melanesian Mackay*, Port Moresby, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, pages 159, 182, 286, 363; Jupp, J. 2001, *The Australian people*, Oakleigh, Victoria, Angus & Robertson publishers, Cambridge University Press

To understand the extent of the Torres Strait Islander presence in and around Mackay during the period 1930s this research begins with Tim Kemp's oral history regarding the Woorabinda community. Most Queensland Government communities were managed similarly. Therefore, there was the occasional South Sea, Torres Strait Islander family or individual living in such communities. After diaspora and creolization occurred on Reserve communities, those living experiences continued in Mackay and other areas of Queensland in successive years. During this period Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people were still subject to the Protection Act. Tim Kemp (2005) the Aboriginal participant in the research, stated that he remembers "more or less one or two" Torres Strait Islanders at the Woorabinda Community. In particular, a school Teacher during the 1930s named Jeffery Doolah. Doolah "was teaching the young fellas there to do the island dance" (Kemp, 2005). Kemp commented that "there was odd Torres Strait Islanders or South Sea Islanders in the families (within the Woorabinda Community)". While a "South Sea Islander fella that I saw there was a preacher". Tim Kemp recalls that during the 1930s and 1940s in the Woorabinda Community

people did not “question nobody in those days”. He goes further to state that “if people on the community said that they were a black fella so they were a black fella and that’s it” (Kemp, 2005). He confirms that, intermarriage presents a people with decisions about which culture to adopt: the visible colonial lifestyle or South Sea Island culture? Whether Torres Strait Island culture, like Jeffery Doolah’s dancing experience, is appropriate on an Aboriginal community will be discussed later in this chapter. Tim Kemp (2005) also stated “There probably would have been more people there with intermarriages... not as many as there is now”. Generally, Kemp (2005) states that for Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders on the Woorabinda Community during those years: “you would just say you were a Murri or a black fella in the mission sent here by somebody, some government authority” you were to be accepted by the Aboriginal people. Within the Woorabinda community the Protection Act brought the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people together in one site. Therefore, it can be argued that there was a steady integration of the two cultures under those circumstances, one which fostered the ethnogenesis process. Although, the three groups in this project protect their individual cultures, intermarriage obliges each to be aware that they will have to identify with one or other of their culture.

The presence and impact of Torres Strait Islander people in and around Mackay during the period 1930s was minimal. For the purpose of this project the participants first noticed Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay at the wharf on the Pioneer River. Robert and Winifred Boah who are both South Sea Island descent agreed that when the Torres Strait Islanders “come here (Mackay) that was their job (on the boats), they just come here on their way to havin’ their recreation weekend or whatever” (Boah, 2004). The picture painted here was that the Torres Strait Islander men came ashore when the boats on which they were crew members arrived to unload and take on supplies. During those events the Torres Strait Islander crews came ashore for recreation leave before returning to sea (Boah, 2004 and Kemp, 2005). Thus, there was no stable, visible and significant Torres Strait Islander people group in Mackay up to the 1930s and prior to World War Two (Hodes, 1998). Noel Fatnowna

(1989) a South Sea Islander person did remember a Torres Strait Islander man working in the sugar cane fields with the South Sea Islander workers when he was a child around the early 1940s. In that instance however Noel Fatnowna had no idea how the Torres Strait Islander man came to be amongst the group in Mackay (Fatnowna, 1989).

The Torres Strait Islander presence in and around Mackay during the 1940s only became visible when the second wave of Torres Strait Islander evacuees moved into the Mackay region during 1942 and 1943. The migration was the end result of the Japanese threat to the Pacific region. The Australian Government decided to bring those people who were not capable of military service to the mainland particularly Torres Strait Islanders from Thursday Island, Hammond Island and Horn Island. In the case of Thursday Island the focus was on European families and the men who were administrators, lugger owners and other non-Torres Strait Islander working class people. Indigenous Islanders were only allowed onto Thursday Island during the day to work for the Administrators. Consequently, the larger number of indigenous Torres Strait Islanders came from Horn and Hammond Islands (Osborne, 1997, p. 16).

The more visible migration of the Torres Strait Islanders to Mackay began in earnest from 1942 as evacuees moved from Cherbourg Aboriginal Community. The last of the Torres Strait Islander evacuees to leave Cherbourg migrated just before Christmas 1943 (Osborne, 1997, p. 44). Osborne (1997, p. 44) maintains that the second wave to enter Mackay waited for their partners to arrive from the defence force in the straits.

## Illustration 6

Ernest Ahwang Obituary: Torres Strait Islander family who had travelled from Cherbourg to Mackay 1943

**FAMILY,** friends and music lovers throughout the Mackay region are mourning the death of Ernest Ahwang on August 5. He was 64.

The well-known and talented Mackay musician was born on Thursday Island on January 1, 1941, the son of Senmille and Jaffa Ahwang and the youngest of their 11 children.

A year later the family moved from Thursday Island to Cherbourg, in southern Queensland. In 1943 they came to live in Mackay where Ernest attended Mackay North High School.

Even as a young boy Ernest was very musical, blessed with a special gift that enabled him to teach himself to play the guitar. His music would take him on a journey

**Ernest Ahwang  
1941-2005**

that would last his entire life-



**MISSED:** Ernest Ahwang, centre, with his brothers Paul, left, and Arthur, right, loved playing music for family and friends. Picture: Contributed.

Source: The Daily Mercury, Friday September 30 2005 p. 40

During 1944, in Cairns and Townsville building plans for houses was authorised to accommodate the Torres Strait Islander evacuees who had disembarked in those towns from the 1942 evacuation from the Straits. In Mackay a year later the voluntary migration of Torres Strait Islanders from Cherbourg resulted in the Government making plans to build extra houses in Mackay. Authorisation for extra houses to be built to cater to the housing shortage and the evacuees was granted in March 1945 (Osborne, 1997, pp. 22, 26, 27 & 54).

Robert Boah recalls two South Sea Islander men, one by the name of Stumpy (Henry) Miller and the other called Bell (Colin) Tommara arriving from Rockhampton to Mackay for work in late 1945 and 1946. Both South Sea Islander men boarded and socialised with Mr Jaffa Ahwang a Torres Strait Islander man and his family on weekends (Boah, 2004). The Ernest Ahwang

(Daily Mercury, 30/09/05, p. 5) obituary confirms the Jaffa Ahwang family name and presence in Mackay. The twin brothers with Earnest Ahwang in the photograph (refer to illustration 4) were a similar age to the two South Sea Islander men from Rockhampton and would have been the mates that linked them to the family. Therefore, the suggestion is that healthy social interaction had been taking place within the Torres Strait Islander families and the South Sea Islanders in Mackay in the middle of the 1940s.

In September 1946 the numbers in the Torres Strait Defence Force dwindled. Those Torres Strait Islander men who had served in the Defence Force would have rejoined the shell industry or in other cases travelled to the mainland to join their evacuated families (Thursday Island State High School, 1987, p. 24). After their war effort in the Torres Strait Islands, the men determined that it was their privilege to travel to the mainland for employment outside the pearling industry. Furthermore, soldiers in the Torres Strait Defence Force had learnt trades, and other skills that were in demand in the mainland work force. Consequently, those experiences enhanced their employment opportunities (Beckett, 1987).

When Tim Kemp arrived in Mackay in 1948 he was aware that the three groups identified in the project “were sort of split” (Kemp, 2005). Furthermore, he would suggest that the Torres Strait Islanders were not interacting as freely as the South Sea Islanders and Aborigines (Kemp, 2005). It could be suggested that Tim Kemp was at that particular time in his life not as knowledgeable in regards to which individuals or families were interacting with each other at that time. In contrast with Robert and Winifred Boah he was aware of a healthy social interaction between the three groups in the Mackay region (Boah, 2004).

The investigator recalls being told by his mother, a South Sea Islander, that Torres Strait Islander people would cycle from Slade Point to Pleystowe to socialise with the South Sea Islanders living in that area during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The investigator recalls his mother informing him that his father, Maurice Ahwong, who is an Aboriginal descendant of the Koonkandji

group from the Cairns district, had arrived in Mackay during the early 1950s to work on the cane fields and in the timber industry in Eungella. When he first arrived in Mackay he lived with and socialised with several Torres Strait Islander families, after an invitation from Jaffa Ahwang and his family. There was the implication that Jaffa Ahwang recognised the surname Ahwong then linked that to his as blood relations from the Torres Straits.

The third migration of Torres Strait Islander people south to the mainland took place from the 1950s onwards as the Torres Strait Islanders sought a better lifestyle, employment and higher wages. One of the towns on the Queensland coast to which the group moved was Mackay to work in the sugar industry and for the Queensland railways (Hodes, 1998).

After the invasion of the Pacific Islands by the Japanese and in his case the Korean War, the Torres Strait Islander participant, Waway Tapim made his way to the Queensland mainland (Beckett, 1987). Waway Tapim (2004) first worked in the far north of Queensland after the Pacific Islands invasion stating “we joined up, we was on the railways, we was workin on the railway at Mount Surprise line (Almaden) line, Mount Surprise Chillagoe on the cattle track”. Waway Tapim and a Torres Strait Islander mate of his signed up for the Korean War while working on the railway at the Mount Surprise line. Waway Tapim was discharged from the Korean War in 1955 and he returned to the Torres Strait Islands. It was not long after his return that his mother passed away there. Waway Tapim then came to Mackay where he met and married a South Sea Islander lady in 1956 whose name was Petronella Ambertel. Waway Tapim received a returned soldier’s loan and brought a house in the south of Mackay. It was in this house that Waway Tapim and his family resided. Waway Tapim and his family have been recognised as part of the Torres Strait Islander community in Mackay since his arrival. There is evidence that interaction and marriages between South Sea and Torres Strait Islanders had occurred prior to Waway Tapim’s marriage. Despite the fact that Waway Tapim suggests that his marriage cleared the way for other Torres Strait Islander mixed marriages in Mackay he may have been referring

to his traditional island the island of Mer and to the inhabitants on the mainland intermarriage with South Sea Islanders in Mackay (Tapim, 2004).

Waway Tapim worked for the Queensland Government Railway for many years as a maintenance worker and was promoted to foreman. Waway Tapim was in charge of a maintenance gang that worked around the Mackay region. By this time the Torres Strait Islander population in and around Mackay was substantial. Many of the Torres Strait Islander families were now settled and integrated into Mackay society and the work force. Torres Strait Islander men were also travelling to Mackay from the decline of the trochus and pearl shell industry a trend which continues to this point in time (Tapim, 2004).

Illustration 7



: Former employees of Queensland Rail No 5 Flying Gang 1971, Bill Mann (Leading Hand)  
Waway Tapim (Foreman) Wayne Ah-Wong (Junior- Nipper).  
[Photographed by the investigator in Rockhampton 2006]

During the late 1950s the Torres Strait Islander population expanded to a healthy size as they came to settle in Mackay for work. After the 1950s a large contingent of Torres Strait Islander workers entered the region with the disbandment of the Torres Strait Defence Force and the demise of the shell

industry. Mackay industries offered opportunities for transferable skills from army experience such as trades, learnt by Torres Strait Islanders. By the end of the 1960s a growing population of Torres Strait Islanders lived and worked in the Mackay region (Osborne, 1997, p. 44).

### **Cultural awareness and lifestyle adaptation within Aboriginal and South Sea Island groups**

Kennedy (2002) suggests that with the demise, in 1885, of the Aboriginal Reserves between Sandy Creek in the south to Bakers Creek in the north the remnants of the Yuibera group were scattered around the district. Fringe camps were set up on the banks of the Pioneer River close to the townships of Walkerston and Balnagowan on either side of the river. Sandy Creek was also a site of a fringe camp. Eventually, the Yuibera people travelled up onto the range and into the Nebo district looking for work. The Yuibera people had land that stretched from the O'Connell River in the north back to the range and south to the township of Ilbilbie. Over the years the Yuibera people suffered from dispersals, European disease and displacement, eventually becoming a depleted and forgotten people. What remained of the Yuibera culture had changed considerably to that of an adopted culture or residual one hidden by the Yuibera descendants (Kennedy, 2002).

Those Aborigines were traditional to the Mackay region who decided to stay in the area integrated into the different societies and assumed their life styles. Tim Kemp's father-in-law was raised by a grazier with the surname Smith. Tim Kemp's father-in-law came under the guardianship of the grazier at the age of 7 or 8 years old. Mr Smith was a descendent of the local traditional group the Yuibera people. Nita Kemp (Kemp, 2005) stated that her father worked in Michlemores, the hardware store on the Pioneer River (Kemp, 2005). Mr Smith would have been exempted at some time in his life to be able to hold his job in Mackay, suggesting he would not have been subject to the Protection Act. Policies that included taking of Aboriginal children from their parents, adoption into white families or displacing them in children homes were part of the Protection Act (Moran, 2005). Nita Kemp lived all her

life in the Mackay region, like her father who bought a house in the suburb of Mackay for his family (Kemp, 2005). The interaction of the Yuibera with other societies in the Mackay region has depleted any form of the original culture or tradition. Tim Kemp's son Phillip Kemp delivered a presentation at the Ministerial regional community forum in 2005, at which he stated that the last of the recorded original Yuibera people was displaced in 1920 to the Palm Island Reserve off the coast of Townsville (Kemp, 2005a, p. 4).

Tim Kemp was granted Exemption from the Protection Act in 1944. In Kemp's situation, the Act included policies that those Aborigines who applied and were granted exemption had to "give up their Aboriginal traditions and communal associations, and show proof that they could manage themselves in the cash economy" (Moran, 2005, p. 179). The concept of the Protection Act included assimilation into the white society aimed to eventually diminish Aboriginal culture and tradition (Moran, 2005).

Table 2  
Aboriginal population in the Mackay district 1900-1920

1900	1922
80 – 90	2 (full blood)

**Sources:**

Kerr, J. *Research notes on Aborigines in the Mackay district*, Brisbane, Type Script, 1992. Kemp, Phillip. 2005, Commemoration of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of Queensland's first Aboriginal Reserve near Mackay, *Ministerial, Regional, Community Forum, Mackay/Whitsunday Mackay & McEwen's Beach –11 April*, Department of Communities Mackay and Whitsunday region, Typescript, 11 April.

The figures cited in Table 2 refer to the Yuibera people who were the original inhabitants around Mackay. 1900 blanket distribution Eton 20, Mackay 38, Mirani 21, (total 79). 1899 Blanket distribution equals Mackay 50 Mirani 25 Walkerston 12 (total 87). By 1920 the Table shows that there were very few surviving full bloods that were sent to Palm Island. For the purpose of the 1900 calculations, estimates were had by blanket distribution figures for Mackay and smaller centres such as Mirani and Walkerston and Eton (Kerr, 1992).

Tim Kemp's mother and father taught him to speak their language and his mother taught him to identify traditional foods and medicines. Tim Kemp's father would not speak a word of his traditional language in front of any white person for fear of retribution from the authorities (Kemp, 2005). Tim Kemp could converse with his mother and father in their traditional languages. His father and mother passed away 1942 and 1944 respectively. Consequently, Tim Kemp has not conversed in his traditional language for 61 years. There were few other people for Tim Kemp to converse with in his traditional language because he did not teach his children to speak the traditional language. However, there is a mother and son who lived at Woorabinda who both speak conversely in their traditional language. Moreover, the mother and son are the only people known by Tim Kemp who can still converse in their traditional tongue and who are still living today in the town of Rockhampton. Tim Kemp suggests that during the earlier years the mother and son would have conversed inside their house in private (Kemp, 2005). There were still strict government rules in regards to speaking a traditional Aboriginal language in public at Woorabinda and a great deal stricter in Mackay during the earlier years of Tim Kemp's life. Once Tim Kemp was working in Mackay his traditional language would not have been used at all. Tim Kemp's exemption status would have restricted him from any social gathering and language exchanges. Consequently, his daily use of his traditional language would have been replaced by the English language. In the Mackay region Tim Kemp did hear and knew of men from the Birra and Wirra group who spoke their traditional Aboriginal language out bush while mustering cattle in the pastoral industry. However, their language was never publicly spoken in the Mackay Township. Those men included George and Eddie Budby. Generally, Aboriginal people who moved to Mackay during the later years of 1960s had adapted to the colonial life style and language (Kemp, 2005).

As for the South Sea Islanders they were changing their language from the time they arrived in Australia. The Solomon and Vanuatu Islands are each an entity of their own without including the other Pacific islands. By the 1930s the Aboriginal and the South Sea Islander participants were being taught the English language at public schools. Moreover, to this day both men speak

and read English very well and without the hint of an accent of a former and traditional language. As a child Robert Boah recollects four older South Sea Islanders who spoke bisloma pigeon. Three were old and needed to rest suggesting they were beyond working age and maybe of the original people that were brought to Australia to work on the sugar plantation or were a first generation Australians. The fourth person was a first generation South Sea Islander lady, Elizabeth Bickey, the investigator's grandmother (Boah, 2005). The investigator Wayne Ah-Wong recollects being informed by his mother that Elizabeth Bickey and her husband Peter communicated in bisloma pigeon to their children, four boys and a girl, she later became Elizabeth Ah-Wong, the mother of the investigator. To the delight of her children, grand children and great grand children, Elizabeth Ah-Wong still speaks the bisloma pigeon to them. Although Elizabeth Ah-Wong's family can not communicate with her, they understand completely what she is saying to them and they are also aware of the uniqueness of this practice.

The South Sea Islander language or what Dutton (1980, p. 2) would suggest was left of a mix of island languages he identifies as Canefields English was generally used when the older people got together. Canefields English was the result of the numerous Pacific Island groups, the plantation owners, field supervisors and Missionaries and included a suggested nine languages (Dutton, 1980, p. 2). These older people would speak enough English for the children to understand and run errands to the shop for them. Robert Boah recollects that generally most of the South Sea Islander population had been speaking English, when he was a child, and did not converse in their traditional language. Anglo-Saxon people frowned on language that was not English during this period which was the assimilation period like that in post-war Britain. Robert Boah recollects that, except for the four people he knew who spoke the traditional language fluently most of the South Sea Islanders of his generation and after only knew a few words and did not know enough to converse. The need for the South Sea Island traditional language ceased when he was a child. Consequently, that language died with the generation before him. Robert Boah, also recollects being told that the language used here on Australian soil was from Australia and that it went to the Islands with

the first recruits to the sugar plantations who then went back to their islands and taught the language there (Boah, 2005).

The South Sea Islanders in Mackay became aware that their traditional language after 1904 though after repatriation years was of little social benefit to their descendants. Moreover, traditional languages could identify the descendants who were at that time trying to assimilate into the colonial lifestyle. Furthermore, it could jeopardise their exemption from repatriation claim and be an excuse for the Government to send them back to the Pacific Islands. Other reasons for the loss of South Sea Islander language was the shame of a sub standard or broken English. Consequently, by the 1930s second generation South Sea Islanders would not acknowledge the language in public even though they possessed a passive knowledge of the language (Dutton, 1980, p. 110).

Illustration 8



Robert Boah taken in Mackay 2006  
[Photographed by the investigator]

Robert Boah attended a primary school that taught standard English until he was 14 years of age. For the participants of this project they would have been encouraged by their parents to learn a sound Australian English to survive in an English-speaking society (Dutton, 1980). The South Sea Islander

languages was given up so they could adapt colonial language religion, education and lifestyle while culture was suspended (Boah, 2004).

The Torres Strait Islander participant Waway Tapim has a strong obvious accent in his English language that suggests that English is a second language. Waway Tapim has the ability to converse with his traditional language with other people from his island and surrounding islands. He also had English language skills during his earlier years working on the Australian mainland to organise administration duties for up to twenty railway employees, organise and lead twenty people on a daily five working day week, write work reports for railway inspectors and converse daily with train controllers to know what trains were on the track in the area he had his twenty workers working. Moreover, the investigator had the experience of working within a twenty man railway maintenance gang that Waway Tapim supervised for two years in the Mackay district. Tim Kemp recollects Torres Strait Islanders publicly conversing in their traditional language in Mackay (Kemp, 2005). It is possible that those Torres Strait Islanders who were displaced into the communities on the Queensland mainland would have been subject to the policy that restricted traditional language to be spoken on the community. Consequently, for that Torres Strait Islander family, their traditional language, by the 1930s and onwards, would have been depleted and replaced with the English language. That English language, being taught at the government schools would have been what the Aborigines were accustomed to and also the use of English as an everyday language. It could be assumed that the Torres Strait Islander families on the communities after the 1930s would have integrated into the Aboriginal families (Kemp, 2005). For the Torres Strait Islanders who voluntarily travelled into the Mackay district and those evacuated from the Pacific, the prohibition of their language was never an issue for the authorities in Mackay. Tim Kemp (2005) commented that he was envious of the Torres Strait Islander people and the Maltese people who were often heard using their traditional language in public around Mackay.

For the three groups included in this project, there are three different versions of traditional Indigenous culture and language in regards to Mackay. Travel, displacement and mixing with other societies had resulted in the South Sea Islanders voluntarily surrender or suspend their culture and language (Dutton, 1980). Travel, displacement and mixing with other societies, for traditional Aborigines of Mackay, tended to result in significant depletion of their culture and language the result of the Government's Protection Act and in the later years the assimilation policy. Finally, the Torres Strait Islanders have maintained their culture and language while conscious of government policies, travel, moving and mixing with other societies. However, the end of the Second World War and the defeat of German race politics meant that Australia as a nation did not want to be seen as racist at the international level. Consequently, Torres Strait Islander language and culture has survived and has been transplanted onto the mainland although modified and accepted to the urban environment (Moran, 2005, p. 180).

After the amendment of the Protection Act and the Restriction of the Sale of Opium the Australian objective was to assimilate Aborigines into the white life style and that objective continued until the dismantling of the Protection Act in 1973. Prior to the war in the Pacific, Torres Strait Islanders were threatened with displacement to Aboriginal communities on the mainland. Including Cherbourg and Woorabinda southwest of Mackay where Tim Kemp (2005) grew up and was aware that South Sea and Torres Strait Islanders were living on the community. As a result of the Protection Act they were then subject to ethnogenesis. This project includes the immigrant South Sea Islanders who worked the cane fields in the Mackay region and who were not subjected to the Protection Act as rigorously as Australia's indigenous people. South Sea Islanders chose to assimilate to the European lifestyle after the enforced 1904 repatriation policy even though an assimilation policy had not yet been enacted, this group tended to adopt English as their primary language. For those reasons, the three groups were to some extent all mobile or immigrant groups involved in the assimilation practice of the period mentioned above. Consequently, the diasporic processes of travel, displacement and mixing with other societies resulted in the eventual loss of language for this group.

Cultures changed as each people group moved outside of their traditional territories for example Aborigines displaced on government communities and Torres Strait Islanders travel to the mainland. Diaspora gained momentum when the group integrated with each other in the new territory, for example on the government communities and then as the Mackay experience (Hall, 1987).

South Sea Islanders came to Australian soil with a culture and a tradition. Those cultural activities could not be practised because of their new environment and the society. Generally cultural activities would have been suspended as the South Sea Islander people were engaged in plantation agriculture (Moore, 1985, pp. 123-124). Traditional activities such as marriage would have ceased by the late 60s (Tapim, 2004). By the 1930s most people of this group would have been expatriates who were zealously adapting the colonial way of life to succeed in this society. Islanders worked at a job and were paid for their services after which they went to a store to buy food for cash. They had also learnt to read the bible and attend church. Anything less would have been seen as inferior to the current colonial way of life (Dutton 1980).

The colonial style of village living was similar to that which South Sea Islanders were used to. During the earlier years several houses were built in the group's island style of grass thatch house in the Mackay region. However, during the 60s in the Mackay region, the traditional island style of house had become less evident and changed to include artificial house material such as nails and iron roofing. This group of people never camped in one place as they moved from one water course or farm to the other. For those people who claimed exemption from the 1904 Repatriation process this would have been denying any cultural or traditional activity. Therefore, after twenty-six years this cultural group was continuing to learn and adapting a life style that could benefit and blend with the colonial way of life (Dutton, 1980. p.4).

### **Interaction between the three groups over 1930s – 1960**

During the 1930s the Aboriginal and South Sea Islander participants recollect that there had been some degree of interaction between the Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders in the Mackay region. Generally, most interaction occurred when the Torres Strait Islanders were on leave from their trochus, pearl, fishing or cargo boats that were loading or unloading at the Pioneer jetty (Boah, 2004). There was the rare occasion that a Torres Strait Islander person was identified working the sugar cane fields in the Mackay region (Fatnowna, 1989). As stated the Aboriginal participant recollects the Torres Strait Islander teacher at the school at Woorabinda teaching Aboriginal primary school students Torres Strait Islander traditional songs and dance. There were Torres Strait Islander families living on the Woorabinda Community (Kemp, 2005). It could be argued that there had been similar circumstances for other Torres Strait Islander families living in the Mackay community during the 1930s. Generally however, for the Mackay region, interaction between the Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders was very limited (Boah, 2004). During the 1930s the shell industry in the Torres Straits was a thriving industry and two thirds of the working population employed in that industry. It therefore could be argued, that this is one of the reasons that the Torres Strait Islander population was so insignificant in Mackay at that time (Sharp, 1981- 982).

The interaction between Aborigines and South Sea Islanders up to the 1930s was generally accepted. These two groups did have thirty years of mostly hospitable relations with occasional hostile interaction from the turn of the century (Fatnowna, 1989). A blanket distribution for Aboriginal people occurred at Mackay, Mirani, Nebo and Walkerston suggesting that there were fringe dwelling groups still active after the Reserve was closed at Bakers Creek in 1885. In the lead up to 1915, casual and permanent work permits were granted for Aborigines to work around the Mackay region. This should have been for award wages, due to the fact that the unions had stopped Pacific Islanders working and award wages were supposed to be given to all

people working in the sugar industry (Kerr, 1992). Those positions taken up by Aborigines included beche-de-mer fishing, cane and tobacco farm labouring. Work permits were granted to Aborigines from the fringe areas of Mackay and included Walkerston, Mirani and Eton (Kerr, 1992). Consequently, there was a healthy interaction between the South Sea Islanders and what was left of the local Aboriginal population from around Mackay. Moreover, the groups interacted at the work place and then interacted at the social level during the weekends (Fatnowna, 1989). During the 1930s South Sea Island children and Aboriginal children enrolled at their local government primary school in the same way as the Aboriginal and South Sea Island participants (Kemp, 2005 and Boah, 2004).

The 1940s witnessed a healthy interaction between Aborigines and South Sea Islanders. The Aboriginal and South Sea Islander participants recollect other people from their cultural group travelling from southern towns such as Bundaberg and Rockhampton to work in the sugar industry in Mackay. Tim Kemp has suggested that most Aborigines who travelled from other towns along the Queensland coast were in all probability those who had been given their exemption papers. Therefore, those people were in a similar position to the Aboriginal participant in this research who by law could not socialise with any Aboriginal person including their own relatives. Tim Kemp recollects being denied a ride in a truck that was travelling from Duaranga to the Woorabinda community with other Aborigines on board including his relatives. Tim Kemp was denied a ride in the truck because of his citizenship status and he had to ride his bicycle all the way to Woorabinda (Kemp, 2005 and Boah, 2004).

As previously indicated work was available on the Queensland coast and attracted a steady migration of Torres Strait Islanders to the coast. For example, small gangs were being sent to the mainland as cane cutters. There were also men from other Pacific islands who settled and married into the three groups mentioned in this research. Doug Pitt and his family were settled in Mackay by the late 1940s (Kemp, 2005 and Boah, 2004). After the war in the Pacific, Torres Strait Islander men who had served in the Islands'

Defence Forces began moving to the mainland of Australia with the skills they had learnt. Those skills included; carpenters, plumbers and plant operators. Torres Strait Islanders who had enlisted during World War Two assumed it was a right they had earned to be able to travel to the mainland and work (Beckett, 1987).

By 1950, there was a significant visible population of Torres Strait Islanders living in Mackay. The indigenous population began to grow with the arrival of Aboriginal workers from the south. During that decade the Torres Strait Islander participant, Waway Tapim, married a South Sea Islander girl from a Mackay family. The Torres Strait elders of Waway Tapim accepted the marriage. Waway Tapim's experience did differ to the Torres Strait Islanders who serviced the administration islands including Thursday, Horn and Hammond island groups. People from all nations including South Sea Islands and Aboriginal people from the mainland, on these islands were interacting socially and professionally from the previous century suggesting that intermarriage would be common. Waway Tapim took his South Sea Island bride back to his island home in the Straits where she was accepted as a family member and treated as a very important person. Waway Tapim implies that Torres Strait Islanders on Mer and the other outer islands were generally not permitted to marry outside of their own cultural group. The acceptance of the relationship by those elders and people from Waway Tapim's island caused a greater acceptance of mixed marriages between Torres Strait Islanders and the South Sea Islanders in Mackay (Tapim, 2004). Since the menfolk from the three groups in this project, Torres Strait Islanders, South Sea Islanders and Aborigines, had been working together on roads, railway and cane cutting gangs in the Mackay region, they began to understand and respected what remained of each other's culture (Boah, 2004).

The Aboriginal population began to grow again around Mackay with the arrival of Aborigines granted exemption such as Tim Kemp. Although they were granted their exemption status they still secretly maintained their cultural identity (Kemp, 2005). May (1994) suggests that other Aborigines without exemption papers were given permission to leave the reserves and move into

the sugar industry with permission and work permits from the Government Protector. In addition, the 1950s isolation of Aboriginal Reserves was becoming harder to maintain and Protectors were devising other means to entice workers back to their Reserves by maintaining control of bank books and workers dependants on the reserves (May, 1994, p. 146). There was the obvious South Sea Island group who were established in the Mackay region as a result of the founding sugar industry. In addition, the Torres Strait Islander population began to grow as the state government infrastructure developed and work became available in the sugar industry, and other construction industries (Osborne, 1997, p. 83).

During the 1950s the three groups tried to maintain their separate identities in Mackay. The menfolk of the three groups were working together in agricultural and construction industries in the area (Kemp, 2005; Boah, 2004 and Tapim, 2004). Over the years prior to settling in Mackay, Torres Strait Islanders had become aware of other Pacific Islander groups. Naturally, they were aware of an Aboriginal people group who had traded with them from the Cape York area and then worked the ships in the shell industry in the Torres Straits similar to the South Sea Island groups (Sharp, 1981-1982). It is estimated that up to this decade there would have been approximately five hundred and onwards Torres Strait Islanders on the Australian mainland. Towards the end of the decade institutional organisations began to emerge and lobby for the three groups in the Mackay region.

The Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA) was first formed on the 16 February 1958 after which it became the Federal Council for Advancement for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) 1964. FCAATSI addressed issues that included employment, housing, health and education (Horner, 2004, p.35). Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were now in an era of support services and an acknowledged disadvantaged group. The stronger bodies of people representatives such as unions were now lobbying for them in the Federal Government arena. May (1994, p.148) states that, post war, Aborigines were drawn into the sugar industry and “received award wages for the first time”; this in turn accounts for the growing

population of Aborigines returning to the Mackay sugar industry in late 1950s and into the 1960s.

Tim Kemp recollects, as an Aboriginal elder, how he introduced into Mackay the combined Indigenous status for the Mackay region at the state government level (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 1992). Tim Kemp eventually reached the status of spokesperson or representative for Aboriginal people in the Mackay area and as such, he was summoned by the state government at Mackay during the early 1960s. Tim Kemp instigated the Indigenous status that is currently operating in Mackay where Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders can claim various services. During the late 1960s either the principal or the deputy principal of the Mackay High School noticed that Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander students were denied ABSTUDY funding. After some discussion among the teachers regarding access to funding and an appropriate person to approach a State Government Politician for Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander pupils, Tim Kemp's name came up and he was contacted. It was decided that it would be better if an Aboriginal or South Sea Islander person were to approach the politician. Eventually, the local ALP member Edmund Casey was approached and then met with Tim Kemp and discussed the ABSTUDY situation. The ALP Member Edmund Casey took the case to Parliament. Upon return Edmund Casey informed Tim Kemp that Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander High School students would be able to claim ABSTUDY funding by identifying as having "Islander descent". Tim Kemp states that it was he who rectified this situation by meeting with the politician Edmund Casey who then took the issue to Parliament (Kemp, 2005). Legal representation was also an issue that was addressed by the FCAATSI body (Horner, 2004). Tim Kemp was chosen at a meeting in Mackay to travel to Townsville to speak to a legal body to represent Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the courts within Mackay. At that time Tim Kemp was the only identified Aboriginal person at that meeting so he accepted the invitation to travel to Townsville to represent the Indigenous people in Mackay (Kemp, 2005).

For South Sea Islanders life during the sixties in Mackay continued in a mode of survival. In some cases this group had to identify as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in particular as having “Islander” descent to gain access to the services set in place by the government of the day. In this situation and at that time both Australian Indigenous groups accepted the South Sea Islanders into the service programs. More often than not, the South Sea Islanders were descendants of either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people through mixed marriages as with Tim Kemp and Waway Tapim. It could be argued that South Sea Islanders during the 1960s who were descendants from mixed marriages were now claiming their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up cultural interaction over the period in question travel had a major impact upon cultural interaction of the Torres Strait Islanders, Aborigines and immigrant South Sea Islanders in Mackay. For the Torres Strait Islanders their presence and the situation around Mackay stemmed from three migration waves to Mackay. The cultural interaction for the Aboriginal and South Sea Island groups in the Mackay community was minimal and related to survival. Local Aborigines suffered significant changes to culture through force and displacement. Moreover, many South Sea Islanders voluntarily laid their culture aside and replaced it with the colonial lifestyle. The levels of interaction and group awareness occurring between the three groups over the same time period grew steadily. However, Torres Strait Islanders entered the Mackay region with a culture that was more intact than the other two groups.

Diasporic experiences impacted on culture within the three groups during the 1930s to the 1960s in two ways. For Torres Strait Islander people the first two waves of migration to the mainland involved threats, fear and in some cases violence. The last migration wave by Torres Strait Islanders to Mackay was voluntary. Travel for this group did not have a vast impact upon their culture because they came away from their traditional land and transplanted their culture on the mainland. Aborigines prior to colonialism lived a non-

expansionist lifestyle. Consequently, the experience of diaspora and displacement had a major impact upon the local Aboriginal group. The violence associated with dispersals, threats of displacement and government policy resulted in a significant detrimental change to culture and language forced upon the local Aborigines in Mackay. The impact of travel for South Sea Islanders was similar to that of Aboriginal people and included kidnapping, trickery and travel to Australia from their traditional land. The end result for South Sea Islanders in Mackay was a suspended and depleted culture.

In the case of Mackay, and the presence and situation of Torres Strait Islanders developed over three waves. The third voluntary wave into Mackay after World War Two established an extension to the Mackay work force. Torres Strait Islanders after the war experience arrived in Mackay with war time skills and trades that gave them greater work experience and opportunities than the other two groups. South Sea Islanders and Aborigines who ventured into the Mackay region after the war were accepted by families of Torres Strait Islanders. Towards the end of the 50s and 60s intermarriage was accepted between the three groups, even so, each group protected what was left of their individual culture.

Cultural awareness for Aboriginal and South Sea Islander groups in the Mackay community was not as evident in this period. Most Aborigines had been displaced from Mackay prior to the 1930s. Those local traditional people who had remained in Mackay were married into other people groups. During the 1950s and up to the late 1960s in Mackay, Aborigines were returning to the region to work. However, government forced policies and public approval denied them any cultural activities. South Sea Islander peoples' culture had evolved to the point that they suspended it to adapt the colonial life style either through religion, education or mixed marriage. In addition, voluntarily suspending their culture supported their decisions in regards to exemption from repatriation in the early 1900s and social acceptance from mainstream society. State education and the English language became available to children of both groups. Generally, indigenous

culture was replaced with colonial life styles for the Aborigines. While South Sea Islanders, accepted the colonial lifestyle and surrendered their cultures.

Interaction between the South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay was insignificant from the 1930s through to the early 1940s. Torres Strait Islanders only visited the town of Mackay when the ships they manned were unloading cargo after which they took recreation leave before going back to sea. The South Sea Islanders and Aborigines had a 25 year period of healthy interaction prior to the arrival of the Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay. During those 25 years intermarriage did occur and therefore continued on, even though Aboriginal identity at that time remained hidden. The Aboriginal population in Mackay had deteriorated up to the 1930s from Government policies including displacement. Torres Strait Islanders began to arrive in Mackay in significant numbers from the early 1940s and then from the middle of that decade there began a healthy social interaction between the two groups. During the 1950s the Aboriginal population grew again as they entered the region to bolster the work force. The interaction began earnestly as the three groups came together in industrial and social activities including mixed marriages. The 1960s brought the 'services era' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and excluded the immigrant South Sea Islander population. During this era in Mackay South Sea Islanders were accepted into some of the services by the two Government nominated groups. Also during this era, Aboriginal descendants of mixed marriages between South Sea Islanders and Aborigines would begin to identify and claim their Aboriginality to access those services. It was a similar situation for Torres Strait Islander descendants who claimed their identity. While South Sea Islander descendants continued to be excluded from such services. Some South Sea Islanders were trying to maintain their separate identities and would not align with the Islander status that the government recognised.

## Chapter 2

### **Social and living conditions 1930s -1960s**

This chapter endeavours to identify and discuss the social and living conditions of the three groups, Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders, within the Mackay region. The time period for this chapter analysis is from 1930 through to the 1960s. The project analyses the origins of the informants' perceptions of similarities and differences between the three groups. To achieve this task the investigator will glean what their perceptions were regarding housing, employment and the governance for each group in the Mackay region during the given period. The first question addresses the major social differences, in the given period above, between the three groups in the project. Seemingly the project examines how status was determined and goes on to analyse how education, religion and local industries influenced social position starting with local industry because it was one incentive for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to come to Mackay. A third question relates to the participants' perceptions of housing, employment and their administration of that time. Obviously for people moving into the region, housing would be the first priority followed by employment and whether it allowed them to provide for family or friends. Finally, the investigator explores how the participants understood government attitudes of the day towards each of the three groups in the project.

The main sources for this purpose remain the informants' interviews. As stated in the introduction and in reference to Hamilton's (1994) work, memory is at times purposefully forgotten for personal or political reasons. Not only is memory forgotten at the individual level but by society as well. With this in mind the investigator is using oral history participants (and local historians), throughout this project to complement each other and verify specific events through mutual accounts (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 12-13 & 18). In addition, Mullins' work (1969) and Fatnownas' (1989) oral history will be drawn upon to support the participants with their own personal recollections. Moreover,

these latter sources will provide and contextualise the primary interview material during the time under consideration.

Additional secondary sources such as academic accounts, government publications and typescripts will also be drawn upon. The secondary sources also determine a timeframe within the decades under examination and can be aligned with the local oral histories provided by the primary sources. This in turn provides verification for oral information about which some historians remain sceptical. Authors included within the secondary sources include Beckett (1987) who examines the Torres Strait Islanders in his work. Osborne's (1997) work lays the foundation for understanding their evacuation onto the mainland. The end result is the migration into the Mackay region of Torres Strait Islanders. May (1994) also sheds light on the Aboriginal Protection Act and how it also affected Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland, including Mackay, while Blake (2001) sets the background for Aboriginal community style living on Cherbourg community. He identifies the pattern for most Aborigines living on communities across the state, such as at Woorabinda where Tim Kemp went to school. Moore's report and interviews, as broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), of 1979 relate on the other hand to South Sea Islanders and their issues including Federal Government prejudice and employment. It also includes South Sea Islanders from Mackay. Schedvin (1988) clarifies the employment situation on the mainland from the 1920s leading to the 1930s and the end of the depression. In Queensland and in Mackay most people irrespective of colour were obliged to work on specific public works projects.

### **Social status and education**

This question has been divided into three sub-questions to comprehend the differences between the three groups in this section of the project during the period indicated. The investigator will present background information so that the reader is aware of the experiences the participants bring to their stories. The task is to determine how each participant regarded education and religion and where they felt it became a benefit or disadvantage to their group.

Subsequently, consideration by the investigator will seek to ascertain from participants whether they felt that industry, employment participation, separated the three groups in Mackay.

Again the question is answered primarily by discussing South Sea Islanders. The reason for this is, that in Mackay during the 1930s the South Sea Islanders were the most visible majority of the three groups in the research. Torres Strait Islander visibility became apparent during 1942 and 1943. Moreover, they brought their own self-belief and established social status in mainstream society from their involvement in World War Two. Aboriginal visibility became apparent during the middle of the 1940s as a result of the wartime labour shortage. Tim Kemp was aware that it would have been those Aborigines exempt from the act who were the first of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to arrive in the Mackay region prior to 1940 (Kemp, 2005). Social status is generally gained through education, employment, religion and subject to acceptance or non-acceptance by the dominant people group in this case white society. During the 1930s education was set in place for all children in Queensland. Employment however was still a segregated area for different groups. Religion was a choice for all Australians who set foot on Australian soil and was generally accepted as a civilised form of living by white society. The dominant social group then determined which group would then be granted their social status in that society.

The participants in this project were beginning school during this decade. Robert Boah the South Sea Islander participant began school in the Mackay region. The Torres Strait Islander participant began his schooling in the Torres Strait and the Aboriginal participant began his schooling in the Woorabinda community. During the 1930s South Sea Islanders in Mackay were classified by the government as Australian citizens and were trying to integrate into the Australian society. Those who were now living here had signed exemption papers and were now exempt from the repatriation period of 1904 to 1906 and were now considered as part of Australian society (Moore, 1985, p 323). Children like Robert Boah a second generation Australian South Sea Islander began his education during the decade of the

1930s. Robert Boah started school on the south side of the river at Walkerston School although he did not stay there for long. He left for Dumbleton School on the north of the river where he spent most of his school years. In his final years, he attended Connesby School on the north side of the river. He left school at the age of fourteen years to begin work in the sugar industry (Boah, 2004).

Robert Boah's father wrote letters of request to people who were in positions to authorise a school for South Sea Islander children in Walkerston west of Mackay. That school operated for one year between 1932 and 1933 until financial problems caused the schools closure. There were racist attitudes to children of South Sea Islanders and Aborigines attending European schools. For Islander children the standard of education improved through the decade of the 1930s (Moore, 1985, p. 324). However, it could be said that the Islanders' social status was lowest on the social ladder in Mackay (Moore, 1985, p. 324). Through the 1940s and 1950s and up to the 1960s South Sea Islander children generally did not continue school after primary level. Most children left school to help support the family. Parents had minimal education and did not encourage secondary education. Blatant racism became less of a problem over the years. However, their relationship with teachers and other students was still affected by racism. Up to the 1960s schools were not equipped to deal with the Islanders' reading and other educational problems. Generally, black students came last in the class (Moore, 1985, p. 325).

Blake (2001, p. 57) states that the "settlement regime was to reform, subjugate and dominate" Aborigines living within its boundaries. Aboriginal culture was considered as basically inferior to colonial expectations or to the ruling elite. One of several mechanisms undertaken to dominate Aborigines on communities was state schooling. Like Cherbourg, Woorabinda had a state school operating when Tim Kemp became school age (Blake, 2001, p. 53). Tim Kemp (2005) was born in 1929 so by the 1930s he states "I was about 10 or 11 years old I should imagine". Jeffery Doolah a Torres Strait Islander, mentioned in Chapter One, was teaching at Woorabinda around 1930 or 1931. Tim Kemp did his schooling at Woorabinda. It could be

assumed that Tim Kemp also went to school until he was 13 or 14 years old like Robert Boah. Tim Kemp went from school to the cattle industry. Jeffery Doolah a Torres Strait Islander Teacher at Woorabinda School would no doubt have obtained social status among white and black society. Moore (1985, p. 330) would comment that "most visible leaders were the lay preachers". Jeffery Doolah and Sam Wilson, a South Sea Islander, whose office Tim Kemp (2005) would state was:

similar to a Preacher or a lay preacher for the Australian Inland Mission (AIM) were both operating in their respective office. I became a free person in 1944 I got an exemption from the Aboriginal Act

Therefore, Tim Kemp's social status would have ascended to a similar status as working class white society with access to numerous employment opportunities and other benefits such as purchasing land. Tim Kemp after receiving his exemption certificate moved to St Lawrence, on the coast between Rockhampton and Mackay, to work on the railway (Kemp, 2005).

Blake (2001, p. 65) also states that, for Aboriginal children, school was there to train children in diligence and studious habits. A report written by the Director of Education in 1930 wrote that the objective was to "establish a sturdy and intelligent universally peasantry on the land" (Blake, 2001, p. 65). What was reinforced in the Aboriginal children at school was they were never going to be land or farm owners. They were taught that they were to be farm labourers and labourers in industries such as the cattle industry. Therefore, studies in history or geography were not considered. It was determined that Aboriginal children should be taught the basics and be able to read, write and do simple mathematics to approximately year three. Consequently, the children were taught what was necessary to work as domestics or farm labourers. During 1938 it was decided that geography be taught to Aboriginal children to help them when they went to different parts of the state to work (Blake, 2001, pp. 65-66).

In 1913 a School had been set up in Thursday Island for 'coloured' children (Osborne, 1997, p. 17). Colonial racism against the indigenous people or the

children of indigenous people in mixed marriages was evident. An oral history participant in Osborne's work (1997, p.17) points out that some:

(Torres Strait Islander) children were only allowed to go to grade five ... they were told they did not have the brains to go further ... we weren't allowed to sit for scholarship.

However, the investigator argues some children were able to progress further in education during the 1930s in the Torres Strait (Osborne, 1997, p.17). The school system was similar to the Aboriginal situation on the mainland because this process was set up under the 1904 Aboriginal Protection Act and transplanted in the Torres Strait Islands. Waway Tapim attended primary school in the Torres Straits. Obviously, the Torres Strait Islanders, the indigenous race to those islands, were being treated similar to the Aborigines on the mainland. The Aboriginal child on the mainland was educated to a level that would enable them work as labourers and house servants (Blake, 2001, p.65). Moreover, South Sea Islanders in Mackay were considered as possessing an inferior intellectual capacity and barbarous habits (Moore, 1985, p. 323).

However, during the 1940s and 1950s, education for the Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay was generally similar to that available to the South Sea Islander and Aboriginal children. Torres Strait Islander evacuee families and those who came down after the war to Mackay towards the end of the 1940s were subject to the same colonial view that education did not provide a career for 'coloured' people. As suggested by Moore (1985, p. 325) coloured or:

Melanesian children entering the Queensland education system before the 1960s had very little chance of emerging with a standard of education similar to their European classmates.

Generally, academic grades for black students were at the lower end of the scale (Moore, 1985, p. 325). For some Torres Strait Islander, Aboriginal and South Sea Islander children education did not improve until the late 1960s and early 1970 when ABSTUDY programs improved their chances at school.

Generally, the education standard for the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander children would have been from a year three to five

level when they received basic skills to read and write or, to a level that was needed to do labouring work. Girls were educated to a standard that saw them move into positions such as house maids or carers for children of colonial families. Consequently education was not a career choice for Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders. Most people from the three groups in this research in the Mackay region did not continue after primary school. Most of them left school at the age of thirteen. In regards to differences in education between the three groups in Mackay there was the church that added status to an individual. Other than that, the three groups were educated to the same level and most were subject to the 'coloured' issues that plagued all black skinned people in Mackay at the time. Additionally, remedial reading and the lack of specialised resources to address those issues were not available at that time.

### **Social status and religion**

One collective belief system that did affect the three coloured groups was religion. Religion was a social practice that was accepted by colonial society and also brought with it a form of unofficial education. Religion also brought leadership qualities out in individuals and consequently established social status for the individual and their respective families within their peer group. Religion was introduced to the Torres Strait Islanders in the Torres Straits. To Aborigines it came with colonialism on the mainland. For certain South Sea Islanders religion had been introduced prior to their arrival on Australian soil.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) began their missionary work in 1871 amongst Torres Strait Islanders. LMS representatives inspected the islands, concluding the marine industry had a detrimental affect upon the indigenous inhabitants. The missionaries determined that the appalling decline in the Islander population and disease was due to the pearling industry. At this point in time the LMS took it upon themselves to organise social order against the marine industry for the Torres Strait Islanders. What religion did, in the form of the LMS, for the Torres Strait Islanders in the straits established three patterns. The first was that the Islanders would not attack Europeans or their

flocks, they were aware that the missionaries were prepared to protect them from lawless foreign seamen and religion stopped the raiding and feuding cycle between islands in the straits. The Islanders gave up their ferocious lifestyle and as reported in 1898 were now devout religious people (Beckett, 1987, pp. 5 & 40).

The LMS had convinced the Torres Strait Islanders not only to accept the gospel but the colonial experience as well. The LMS had completed their work in the straits and were now considering missionary work with the people of Papua New Guinea. When the Queensland Government appointed the Government Resident, John Douglas, in 1886, the Torres Strait Islanders had by then adapted religious culture and colonial lifestyles. Religion was the so called pathway and the ideology to colonial living. John Douglas was so impressed with the Islanders' adaptation that he pressed his case for the Islanders to be accepted as British citizens. Religion had elevated the Islanders to the status of citizenship thereby, making them exempt from the Aboriginal Protection Act. This status could be considered as exempt from the Act in the same way as Aborigines had to apply for and had to be eligible under a set criteria. John Douglas claimed that Torres Strait Islanders possessed a noticeable mental superiority in comparison to the mainland Aborigines. It could be assumed that the concept and the adoption of religion as the so-called pathway and the ideology to colonial living and the acceptance by the Torres Strait Islanders made it easier for colonialists to accept them as British citizens. John Douglas was granted his request, so that in the next eighteen years up to 1904 the Torres Strait Islanders were classed as British citizens. Torres Strait Islanders were granted a greater amount of autonomy than most of the South Sea Islanders and Aborigines during the same period (Beckett, 1987, p. 45).

Missionaries and philanthropically inclined individuals were responsible for the first number of private enterprise institutions called missions established from 1815 onwards across Australia for the protection of Aborigines. In 1895, a plan submitted to the Home Secretary by Archibald Meston, a self-proclaimed expert on Aboriginal issues, suggested that those reserves or missions

managed by non-government officers, for example by William Thompson a Salvation Army officer, were doomed to failure. Archibald Meston did not argue against the protection of the Aboriginal race or the settlement program. Archibald Meston's recommendation was that the government establishes and manages the settlements. He argued that religious teachings were impractical in imperative basic skills for the self-support of a settlement (Blake, 2001, p. 1). In Queensland, Barambah, under the management of William Thompson a Salvation Army officer was gazetted in February 1901 and later became known as the Cherbourg community (Blake, 2001, p. 6). William Thompson saw his calling not in organising people to work the soil but in rescuing the souls of men. Those he saw who needed rescuing the most were the Aborigines living on the fringe of the town. William Thompson submitted a letter and his plan to the Home Secretary. The letters addressed the plight of the Aborigines and his solution which was a missionary settlement (Blake, 2001, p. 5). Generally, the missionaries saw the wretched state that Aborigines were living in and decided to rescue them from poor health that included introduced diseases by colonialism, poor housing, sexual exploitation by white men and excessive alcohol consumption. Similarly Woorabinda, 300 kilometres west of Rockhampton, was established during the early 1930s where Tim Kemp went to school before moving to Mackay as an adult (Blake, 2001, p. 5). During his interview Tim Kemp indicates that:

“I was ten years old ... the South Sea Islander fella that I saw there was a preacher like a church minister. In Woorabinda it was called AIM Australian Inland Mission. Something similar that still happens today”

This confirms a religious pattern that followed within Aboriginal communities. During Tim Kemp's childhood it was provided not so much for basic education but for the moral lifestyle that colonialism endorsed.

Religion was introduced to several islands in the South Sea Island group where recruitment for Australian cane fields took place. Those islands were the New Hebrides now known as Vanuatu and the Loyalty Islands. The Loyalty Islands had been evangelised during 1842 by Samoan missionaries from either the LMS or the Marists. It was estimated that one thousand recruits from the Loyalty Islands arrived on the Queensland soil during the

early recruiting years between 1863 and 1872. In 1878 an amazed Bishop spoke to and witnessed an Islander reading a bible on a recruiting vessel (Moore, 1985, pp. 310 -3 11).

Missionaries and philanthropically motivated people began to campaign for missions to protect the souls of the South Sea Islanders in the Mackay area. The reasoning was that the islanders were being led astray by the Chinatown attractions. Those attractions included: gambling, prostitution and alcohol consumption. The other explanation was that the conversion of a large number of South Sea Islanders on Australian soil would mean less missionary work on the islands in the Pacific. At that time South Sea Islanders were contracted for a three year term and in the contract was a return fare to the island from which they had been recruited (Moore, 1985, pp. 310 -312).

Religion was not a new experience to some of the South Sea Islanders. It could be argued here that colonisation in the Pacific Islands was or had existed from the time that the sugar industry was being established on the Queensland coast. Similarly in the case of the Mackay, Kanaka Mission establishments were erected throughout the state prior to the repatriation period from Australia. The word 'kanaka' was sometimes used to describe the South Sea Islanders. There were an estimated total of eleven missions throughout Queensland (Moore, 1985, p. 311). Missionaries had personal relationships with several farmers and plantation managers within the Mackay region and often requested donations of land and finance from them. Consequently, there were several mission sites that changed over the years. Generally, a mission operated with a full time missionary, European parishioners and South Sea Islander lay preachers. Within the mission movement came the teaching of literacy and basic education including the skill to read music as Islanders attended night classes. However, Christianity was taught in separate sites from the parent church and with a different theory not too far removed from the parent church and its theology. In general the view was that South Sea Islanders who adapted Christianity would then become law abiding citizens (Moore, 1985, p. 314). Moreover, this supports the theory that for South Sea Islanders, and similarly for the Torres Strait

Islanders, the adoption of religion is the so called pathway and the ideology to colonial living (Beckett, 1987, p. 45). Christianity in the early 1890s in the Mackay region brought peace to the plantation quarters of South Sea Islanders. As stated earlier local Aborigines and any Torres Strait Islanders who were in the region at that time were integrated into the South Sea Islander population. Plantation owners were concerned with the pandemonium that broke loose on plantations on the Sabbath day or the day of recreation. The pandemonium was the result of alcohol consumption that resulted in drunkenness and caused fights. Both blacks and whites were in danger during these days of disorderliness. The adaptation of Christianity on these plantations brought peace and tranquillity on the Sabbath day. That effect alone caused plantation owners and farmers to consider the mission movement as a very proactive event. Islanders were being converted right up to the end of the repatriation period in 1908. Several missionaries took their services from Queensland back to the Pacific Islands during the repatriation period (Moore, 1985, p. 314).

Without the missions and the literacy that was taught there the European style of protests against deportation could not have been as effective for those South Sea Islanders who were exempted (Moore, 1985, p. 325). Christianity for South Sea Islanders became the ladder to social status when dealing with Europeans in regards to work, social or political issues. Europeans in Mackay never seriously considered the Islanders or any other 'coloured' person as anything other than illiterate pagans until they adopted Christianity and became literate. Europeans, including Mackay residents, regarded Christianity as the most beneficial initiative that they could bestow upon the South Sea Islanders and for that matter the Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines (Moore, 1985, p. 306). At the end of repatriation of most South Sea Islanders in 1908 those who remained in Mackay, were given no invitation or consideration to join either the Presbyterian or Anglican denominations. The remaining Islanders built their own churches, where once the missions were situated, and continued on under the leadership of their Islander lay preachers. There were cases where South Sea Islanders bought land under the name of a religious group. However, as the years went on

South Sea Islanders who had paid for the land lost it because there was no proof of a sale and the land remained with the religious group. A leading South Sea Islander lay preacher who had his religious foundation established in the Presbyterian church separated himself from that denomination and changed to Seventh Day Adventism in 1925. The result was that a large number of Islanders followed his leadership and also converted to Adventism. By the 1930s in Mackay the missionary movement had lost its momentum (Moore, 1985, p. 306).

For coloured people the mission movement, during the 1930s, continued to be taught in separate sites and were regraded by non-indigenous church patrons as a second class or informal church compared to the parent church where non-indigenous people fellowshiped. Those separate sites included missions within the Torres Strait where Islanders preached from the pulpit, missions on the Aboriginal communities where Aborigines preached from the pulpit and missions in the Mackay region where South Sea Islanders preached from the pulpit (Moore, 1985, p. 306; Beckett, 1987, p. 230; Blake, 2001, 237). The migration to the Australian mainland by Torres Strait Islanders had not begun in earnest. The Christian movement, colonial adaptation and work ethic were well established in the islands by the decade of the 1930s (Beckett, 1987, p. 80). For the Aboriginal people the mission movement continued in communities across Queensland where government management was not or could not be established (Blake, 2001, 237). Educational standards had risen due to the lobbying of missionaries and philanthropists in the decade prior and therefore state education was made available to the three groups in this project (Moore, 1985, p. 323). Queensland Education has provided services where necessary and included the three groups into state schools where applicable. State schools had been established on Aboriginal communities. Furthermore, they had been made accessible and included coloured people in Mackay and the same applies in the Torres Straits for the Indigenous Islanders therein. Christianity for the groups in this project suggested an acceptance of religion and the colonial way of life. Lay preachers were recognised as leaders in their community by the church and by their peers as well. Religion gave Aborigines, Torres Strait

Islanders and South Sea Islanders access to basic education, English language, social status and peace within their communities (Moore, 1985, pp. 314-315 & 323; Beckett, 1987, p. 230; Blake, 2001, 237).

Torres Strait Islander religious leaders and their followers after the 1940s came to the mainland with the idea that as in the Torres Strait islands they would be able to preach and fellowship in their own church. South Sea Islanders were inclined to accept the same idea after being deserted by the two major denominations. Adventism had encouraged that process for the South Sea Islanders in the Mackay region. Where Adventism did not exist, other small community churches continued until they were adopted by other denominations (Moore, 1985, p. 320). For example, the Assemblies of God (AOG) denomination from America arrived in Queensland during 1929. The AOG attracted Aborigines and South Sea Islanders in particular from around Mackay. The investigator recollects his grandmother taking him to AOG Christmas day celebrations. He recollects following his mother into the AOG congregation during the late 1960s. The eldest daughter of the investigator's grandmother followed her husband into the Seventh Day Adventist movement and remained there as members until their deaths (Beckett, 1987, p. 81). When the LMS ceased their activities in the Torres Straits the Anglican denomination took control and embraced a Torres Strait Island style religion that included feasts, dancing, island songs and eventually tombstone openings (Beckett, 1987, p. 81).

From the 1940s through to the 1960s, religion in Mackay became a place for worship and fellowship. Church became a place for coloured people to express themselves in song. The three groups in Mackay would follow their respected leaders. When the Torres Strait Islanders arrived in the early years as evacuees or after the war they befriended or consorted with Aborigines or South Sea Islanders (Beckett, 1987, p. 229). In regards to church they would follow each other or a respected family to where that family had established themselves. Similar to Aborigines when they arrived in Mackay they worshipped where other coloured people fellowshiped. South Sea Islanders worshipped with either Adventism or the new AOG movement. Waway Tapim

the Torres Strait Islander informant was not a practising Christian when he arrived in Mackay after his war days in Korea. He met his wife a young South Sea Islander lass who was a devoutly religious person with the AOG. While on the last of his army leave Waway Tapim struck up a friendship with Petronella. After several meetings Petronella's conversations suggested to Waway Tapim that in order to develop a sincere relationship with her he would have to accept the AOG teachings. Eventually, Waway Tapim married Petronella and he has fellowshipped with the AOG since that time in 1956 (Tapim, 2004).

The investigator recollects that Seventh Day Adventist church in Mackay is where Robert Boah the South Sea Island informant's mother attended church. Yasserie was the maiden name of Robert Boah's Mother and her family had strong connections with the Adventist church in Mackay. The investigator has sighted a Mackay council document that confirmed that the parents of Robert Boah's mother were first generation Australians and were active members of the Seventh Day Adventist church in Farleigh north of Mackay from around 1925. Generally, the investigator recollects conversations confirming that for most South Sea Islanders religion has been a part of each individual's family if not for them personally then somewhere in the past as ancestors were affiliated with a church (Moore, 1985, p. 320). From the 1950s onwards in Mackay Christianity gave the Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders a form of autonomy. Autonomy came when lay preachers led congregations and prayed for their flock without the interference of white people. For example, the church people did not have to go to a white man to pray for their flock. As a Torres Strait Islander interviewee in Beckett (1987, p. 231) would state "I got a white man over me at work. No need I got another Boss when I go prayer". South Sea Islanders had their lay preachers in the Seventh Day movement and Torres Strait Islanders had their church leaders registered in the Anglican Church and other overseas denominations (Beckett, 1987, p. 81). The change of culture and the decision to change to a white religion was a smooth transaction for South Sea and Torres Strait Islanders (Moore, 1985, p. 306. Beckett, 1987, p. 40). However, for Aborigines religion was forced upon them by the missionaries and it became the way of survival. For

Aborigines religion had benefits. For example, if they converted to European religion it would go in their favour when the citizenship application was submitted. Generally, Aborigines participate in colonial religions to appease authorities and what remains of Aboriginal culture and tradition they practice when and where they can or it remains suspended (Blake, 2001, p. 57). South Sea Islanders, like Aborigines, have suspended their original culture and adopted the European religion for the benefits it brings (Moore, 1985, p. 315). However, Torres Strait Islanders have interwoven their former religious traditions into their new colonial religious practices. And like South Sea Islanders and Aboriginal people they have adopted European religion for the benefits it has brought to them (Beckett, 1987, p. 56).

### **Local employment and the three groups**

It was the majority of South Sea Islanders that established the sugar industry in Mackay prior to 1901. Aborigines were moved out of the area and onto established communities before the 1930s (Moore, 1985, p. 129). As stated earlier in this chapter, Aborigines generally worked the cattle and agricultural industries to the west of Mackay. For Aborigines, government communities such as Woorabinda were the identified sites for labour pools accessed by cattle property managers. Generally, Aborigines were allocated work within a given area of their communities (Blake, 2001, p. 126). Mackay South Sea Islanders, who had been exempted from deportation, were restricted from working 50 kilometres inland, a ruling that emerged from the white Australia policy. The policy was to restrict them from working within the cattle industry. The argument here is that industry did not set South Sea Islanders apart from Aborigines; rather it was the government that dictated what group was employed in the cattle or sugar industry at that period (HREOC, 1992, p. 14). During this decade, Torres Strait Islanders were still working within the profitable shell industry in the straits.

In 1947 a gang of eighty Torres Strait Islander men were organised by the Protector and sent to Queensland to cut cane (Beckett, 1987, p. 71). Selected Aboriginal workers moved off the reserves and into the sugar

industry on the coast subject to the Protector's approval. Those Aborigines who were 'exempt' from the act had been working around Mackay in the sugar industry during that decade (Kemp, 2005 and Boah, 2004). However, the cattle industry was still the main employer of Aborigines and was one of the 'essential services' that the Manpower Directorate monitored for the supply of labour. Industry did affect separate each group early in the decade (Blake, 2001, pp. 123-128). Tim Kemp was affected by the cattle industry and the sugar industry. While Tim Kemp did not have his exemption certificate the directorate did not allow him to move away from the cattle industry to railway work. After Tim Kemp obtained his exemption papers he was allowed to move from central west Queensland into Mackay on the coast and obtain work in the sugar industry in 1948 (Kemp, 2005). However, with the outbreak of war and the labour shortage the only industry that had to adjust or relax policies would have been the sugar industry. The sugar industry would have to break down the 'colour' bar to maintain productivity (Beckett, 1987, p. 71).

The 1950s the good years for coloured people working the sugar industry in Mackay. There was plenty of work as Robert Boah (2004) would state "you only had to walk down the road and there would be a job for you". Waway Tapim also came to Queensland in that decade to work in the sugar industry in north Queensland. South Sea Islanders were now collecting the award rate of pay for working in the sugar industry. May (1994) records that Aborigines, without exemption papers, were released for work reasons from their communities but they had to return to their community when work was unavailable. Aboriginal families of those individuals granted permission to live and work off the community were not given permission to join their partners. This practice instigated by the Protector as an incentive for the workers to return to their communities. Aborigines during that decade still had their wages monitored by the Protector who took a percentage of the pay for the community. The remainder the worker kept for himself and his family (May, 1994). Distance between Industries was the main factor that set the three groups apart. The cattle industry operated away from the coast inland and out of the Pioneer Valley. Similarly the agriculture industry operated along side the cattle industry in the open country inland or further up the coast in

Bowen. The sugar industries operated in the fertile Pioneer Valley area. Employment for the three groups around Mackay during the decade of the 1950s was positive as industries continued to relax previous employment restrictions.

The decade of the 1960s ushered in the machine era. Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders could not obtain collateral to purchase machinery to harvest the sugar cane (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 1992, p. 90. Beckett, 1987, p. 72). People from the three groups began looking elsewhere for work. Many of the Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders changed to railway maintenance work. These positions were regarded as unpopular by white people and were considered too hard and too much work for the amount of pay available. The Torres Strait Islanders revelled in this environment. As relatives and friends they joined gangs and built a reputation as efficient and competitive working gangs. Consequently, the West Australian mining companies requested or invited the Torres Strait Islander men to lay the railway tracks for the coal trains to shift the coal from the mine sites to the harbours for shipment. During the years of the development of the West Australian coal lines many Torres Strait Islander, South Sea Islander and Aboriginal men travelled from the Mackay region to work. When the sugar industry in Mackay weakened, as a form of employment of men from in the three groups, the railways either locally or interstate took up the slack for employment opportunities (Beckett, 1987, p. 72). After the mechanisation of the sugar industry and as the 1960s drew to a close, Mackay people from the three groups were brought together by industries such as the railways. The three groups were drawn together as they tried to identify work opportunities at the end of the 1960s. The industries drew the three groups together and therefore there was greater interaction as they worked together in railway gangs across the country.

## **Perceptions of the informants in regards to housing, employment and governance**

This question has been divided into two sub-questions. The task in this first sub-question is to look at the participant's life experiences and at their employment choices in the period mentioned below. There were times when governments and bodies of authority directed or oversaw requirements for the three groups in regards to housing. However, their employment opportunities were also a determining factor in the capacity of each participant to provide shelter for their families. Oral history is utilized and supported by academic writings where available.

The task of the sub-question is to analyse the experiences and oral histories of each participant; to understand how their lives accommodated to or separated from each other. This in turn depended upon the extent to which each participant understood the government's impact on their daily lives.

### **Housing and employment**

The 1930s was the end of the Depression and Employment Councils, along with municipal and local councils, were appointed to identify projects for which the government and banks would approve funding (Schedvin, 1988, pp. 338-339). Funding for projects such as road construction, rural development, water supply and sewerage was considered. In rural areas such as Mackay road construction catered to large numbers of unskilled labour who were easily organised. However, workers were only employed for a day or two a week as basic wage principles were zealously guarded by the unions (Schedvin, 1988, pp. 338-339). Queensland during the 1920s did not use the entire amount of funds allocated for relief funds similar to New South Wales. Therefore, by the 1930s Queensland still retained a credit balance. The public works programs in Queensland continued at a time when other states had run out of funds. Queensland had lower unemployment and this could be attributed to the sugar and beef industry. Those industries employed South

Sea Islanders and Aborigines in and around Mackay. In the meantime Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines from the Cape York area continued to work the shell industry at maximum production (Schedvin, 1988, pp. 338-339).

The sugar and beef prices on the international market according to Schedvin (1988, p. 105) “held up much better than the wheat and wool prices” in New South Wales. Around the Mackay region during the early 1930s the sugar industry continued to be productive. Schedvin (1988, p. 50) suggests that Australia reached “something like industrial maturity around 1960”. South Sea Islanders exempt from the repatriation process and in fewer numbers were working under strict regulations in the sugar industry. For Aborigines, who voluntarily moved from Mackay, this meant working the cattle properties around Nebo and elsewhere where government reserves supplied workers.

As stated in Chapter One of the thesis all full blood Aborigines had been displaced from the Mackay sugar region by the 1930s. Tim Kemp (2005) when arriving in Mackay in 1944 on a visit came to quickly understand the situation regarding housing for Aborigines and South Sea Islanders. He recalls:

I got off of the train ... and I asked some murris there where I could get accommodation. Oh you'll never get accommodation in Mackay. The pub won't put you up because you are a Murri and the other boarding houses and all the places are filled with American soldiers. This fella said to me, see that old fella over there (that was Nita's Father Mr Smith) him and his missus they put up station workers sometimes.

That Aboriginal man would later become Tim Kemp's father in law. It is interesting to note that although Tim Kemp was exempt from the Act he was still classed as an Aboriginal person by home owners and publicans when seeking accommodation. Meanwhile, 'murris' recognised Tim Kemp as one of them although he has a certificate to confirm he is exempt from the act (Kemp, 2005). The investigator assumes that Tim Kemp's father in law had been 'exempted' from the Aboriginal Act. Why could it be assumed that he was exempt from the Act? Because he had been adopted by a European cattle property owner at the age of seven and an estimated date of birth at

around 1910, he had a job in Michelmores a warehouse in Mackay, to have that status and position he would have had to have been educated and he had also brought a house in Mackay (Kemp, 2005). Many of the feats he accomplished during those years, in Mackay at that time, would have been nearly impossible for an Aboriginal or South Sea Islander man prior to 1930 in Mackay. The grandson Phillip Kemp (2005, p. 4) wrote that the last two full blood Aboriginal men had been displaced to Palm Island in 1920.

In 1948 Tim Kemp the Aboriginal participant arrived in Mackay for work. Tim Kemp continued his relationship with the family that owned the house and who had accommodated him during his first visit to Mackay in 1944. Tim Kemp started work in the Sarina mill 35 kilometres south of Mackay. Tim Kemp (2005) states that:

Yeah the 40s and the 50s and even into the 60s eh. That was the problem people (coloured) couldn't rent houses. It was the same the owners of the house, would say on the phone, I have a house at such and such and they'd give me the home address. So you go to the home address and ask them about the house and as soon as they seen you were a black fella they'd say oh no it's gone this morning

In order to do something about the situation for the "coloured" people in Mackay, Tim Kemp joined the Aboriginal movement and liaised and lobbied for issues such as education and legal representation. In addition, housing and health issues would have been included in the issues that were arising from the 1950s to the 1960s in Mackay for Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders this while he was a committee member of the Aboriginal advancement movement (Kemp, 2005).

Although, quarters were built for the Islanders they did choose to build their own houses. Islanders around Mackay built their houses for a number of reasons including cultural and traditional. They used grass to roof their houses and in the earlier years grass was the main item for the entire house. By the 1920s the Islander long term residents began using harder artificial material such as iron sheets and steel nails (Moore, 1985, pp. 129, 213-215). Robert Boah (2004) recalls a house built by his grandfather and inherited by his mother:

it was left by my grandfather for us. He built that house. He built another one in Dumbleton so he left that for my mother and we moved in there. That house was built of corrugated iron and bush timber.

The house was situated at the Palms on the Walkerston side of the Pioneer River. Robert Boah's mother was a second generation Australian and his father was a first generation Australian suggesting that with permanent residency in mind the material used would be what the Europeans considered as acceptable (Boah, 2004).

The building of traditional South Sea Island grass huts around Mackay had begun to fade by the 1930s (Moore, 1985, 211). The Islanders were choosing permanent building material with the idea they were here as permanent residents. The Islanders around Mackay were living on crown land near waterways or living on blocks given to them by sympathetic land owners. In other cases Islanders were leasing land and likely to be using hard material to build their sheds for their farm implements and would have used the material to build their houses. It has been suggested that several of the houses built in the 1930s resembled houses built by the poorer European people. The other point was that more than two decades had elapsed since the repatriation period and those Islanders left on Australian soil now considered themselves as permanent residents. During the 1930s the Islanders around Mackay were a people group who were forgotten or ignored except for a small number of sympathetic farmers. The Islanders existed in the shadows of society as an unwanted 'coloured' group who were restricted to the point of non-existence. This situation was very similar to what Aborigines around Australia were experiencing as far as acceptance to the mainstream of society (Moore, 1985, pp. 323-335). However, Aborigines during the 1930s were able to obtain permanent housing and seasonal employment as part of the paternal settlement societies. Those settlements also supplied work legally as labour pools for the cattle and agricultural industries (Blake, 2001, pp. 209). In comparison, Islander employment opportunities during the 1930s in the sugar industry around Mackay where restrictions were harsh and if not Islanders worked illegally.

The early 1940s witnessed a change for the three Mackay groups in this project. Demand for labour was such that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were also moving into the Mackay region from the inland settlements and from the Torres Strait to work in the sugar industry in Mackay. There was a basic wage for all workers during the late 1940s generally across all the sugar related industries (HREOC, 1992, p. 90). Consequently, there was a demand for the Queensland Government to build houses for the influx of people into the Mackay region. Those houses were integrated amongst mainstream houses in Mackay (Osborne, 1997, p. 54). On the cane farms, accommodation was supplied for some of the employees during the crushing seasons. In some cases accommodation was made available for the general farm hand during the slack season. Generally, accommodation was provided for by the established families Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders or South Sea Islanders as each group or individual arrived in the town (Beckett, 1987, p. 229). What was happening in Mackay at that time was a process called 'intersecting diaspora'. Intersecting diaspora involved the three groups being subject to certain forces bringing them together. Those forces included Government policies and the racial differences excluded the three groups from the mainstream. HREOC (1992, p. 67) reasons that the three groups in this project have:

endured a history of colonial exploitation and racial discrimination. All were treated last century as uncivilised persons of lower status than white people

Using a different example Hall (1989, p. 75) affirms the drawing together as:

black American soldiers and Aborigines tended to associate drawn together through their common experience of racism.

This strongly suggests a group of 'others' for as Hall (1987, p.141) states "colonialists" regimes "rarely if ever experience themselves as other". The result of that including ethnogenesis was ongoing as each black group identified with each other. For example, the Torres Strait Islander family that took the two South Sea Islander men from Rockhampton into their house and these men became in-laws and close friends of Robert Boah (2004). As other Torres Strait Islanders migrated from the islands they also approached their friends and relatives settled here in Mackay to organise accommodation for them. This practice continued into the 1950s as the investigator's father, a

person of Aboriginal and South Sea Islander descent from Mossman north of Cairns, entered the region to work in the timber industry in Eungella (Beckett, 1987, p. 229).

The 1950s in Mackay were years of plenty for the Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders. Work opportunities in the sugar industry and its associated industries were abundant (HREOC, 1992, p. 90). By this decade the demand in the shell industry in the Torres Straits had practically ceased. Torres Strait Islanders were migrating into Queensland as cane cutting gangs (Beckett, 1987, p. 71). Wages were higher than those available on the islands. In addition, people were looking for a higher standard of living for their children in areas such as education and employment (Osborne, 1997, p. 44). After his time in the Torres Strait Island Defence Force and the death of his mother, Waway Tapim moved to Queensland as part of a cane cutting gang near Cairns. While cutting cane he got a job on the railway and then signed up for the Korean War. After being discharged from the Army he arrived in Mackay. As a returned soldier his status and skills were utilized to acquire housing and employment. Waway Tapim married during this period of his life. As an employee of the Queensland Railway with the responsible role of foreman, his employment stability and Christian lifestyle allowed him to be independent of government services that other Islander people depended upon. Housing was not a major issue for his wife and children for, by virtue of both his status as a returned soldier and as a Torres Strait Islander person he was entitled to support for housing (Tapim, 2004). The stability of his fortnight and annual income plus his returned soldier status allowed Waway Tapim to buy his house in the suburbs of Mackay where he raised his family (Tapim, 2004).

Other Torres Strait Islander men immigrating to Queensland and seeking accommodation made friends with or sought out partners with Aborigines and South Sea Islanders in Mackay (Beckett, 1987, p.229). The end result was that Torres Strait Islanders arriving in Mackay and with stable incomes and the high wages during the cane crushing seasons they brought their own houses. If not, they either rented accommodation within the town or took up

blocks on crown land and built their own houses similar to South Sea Islanders. Where ever the situation arose and crown land was available either of these groups made use of the land (Osborne, 1997, p. 44). For example, the investigator is aware that it is common knowledge among the local Mackay Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander groups in this project that the Sam family, a Torres Strait Islander husband and a South Sea Islander wife brought land in the Illawong Beach area of Mackay and family, still own and live there today. Similarly, the investigator is aware that the Barba family of Torres Strait Islander descent also occupied crown land in that area. However, when council laws became stringent the family was forced to move after living there for approximately two decades. Local knowledge of the area suggests, that Torres Strait Islander families were now living in the Slade Point, Bakers Creek and Town Beach areas. Consistent with the recollections of Robert Boah and Waway Tapim, the three groups cooperated and supported each other in Mackay where housing was an issue.

The investigator recollects his mother informing him that land on both sides of the Pioneer River that she lived on with her parents, Balnagowan first during early childhood and then later in life Pleystowe during the 1940s. Both had access through cane farms and the farmers allowed that access to be used. As the HREOC (1992, p. 88) suggests, these:

isolated semi-rural existence, clustering mainly in virtually self-contained communities within the sugar growing district

This in turn suggests that governments and land owners were sympathetic to the 'coloured' people using their land as access to crown land. The investigator recollects and his mother has passed on her history regarding where on the Balnagowan side of the Pioneer River South Sea Islander families built houses on a three kilometre long by five hundred metres wide stretch of land that bordered the Pioneer River and housed up to seven or more South Sea Island families. While on the Pleystowe side of the river, where the investigator as a child and the participant Robert Boah had raised his family, there were up to five South Sea Island families that possessed crown land measuring approximately five hundred metres long and five hundred metres wide and also bordered the Pioneer River. At the time the

other houses in that piece of land were using the timber cut from sawmills and also had timber floors but because they were built earlier they were clad with corrugated iron. The investigator recollects the house that he grew up in, from 1964 to 1968, on that same stretch of land was built with a mixture of bush timber and milled timber but was the only one with a dirt floor. During the 1950s Robert Boah built his house within that block of land. Robert Boah used fibro sheets, iron roofing and milled timber from a timber mill in Mackay and his was the most up to date house on that section of land. Robert Boah raised six children there from 1954 to the early 1970s. Robert Boah left that house and moved to Walkerston during the 1970s where he bought and renovated the house he now resides in (Boah, 2004).

In Mackay local issues for Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders included access to government housing. Government housing was then allocated for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Mackay area. Other government services included education and legal representation. Those people from the three groups in this project who were of mixed racial ancestry used their ancestry traits to identify and obtain a house or services where the necessity demanded. To access educational benefits in Mackay some South Sea Islanders used the 'islander' status to access the ABSTUDY benefits (HREOC, 1992, p. 66).

Tim Kemp the Aboriginal informant was the chairperson of the One People for Australia League (OPAL) in Mackay. He got an invitation to attend a conference in Townsville during the 1960s where Dr Coombs the Chairman of the Australian Council for Aboriginal Affairs would be attending. Tim Kemp (Interview, 10 April 2005) recollects:

Sixty-five people from sixty-five different towns, eh, all over Australia and every one of the representatives that went there spoke about housing problems all over Australia. They had the same story. When you ring up on the phone (about the house) they tell you yes (you can have the house), but as soon as they seen you (were Black) they tell you no (you can not have the house it was taken just before you got here). Dr Coombs did something about getting these housing co-ops in the government ones and the private ones that's how all these housing co ops came about. I was the sole representative from

here (Mackay), I went up there and that was my main concern housing. Because it was so widely known all over Australia, the government did something about it

With the introduction of the housing co-operatives the Torres Strait Islanders would have also been granted housing alongside Aborigines. However, the HREOC (1992, p. 90) suggests that South Sea Islanders eligible for housing under:

the 1960s a second relocation phase started with the provision of housing by the Aboriginal and Islander Advancement Corporation. The older houses were cleared as part of local 'slum clearance'. Today a large portion of South Sea Islanders still live in this housing in towns, and a few still live in the older dwellings in hamlets

Or, in some cases as the investigator's mother has informed him, Mackay farmers from her mother's generation gave South Sea Islanders, who had been faithful employees, a block of land to put a house on and live under a condition that the piece of land was not to be sold and if the descendants of the family moved out of the house the land goes back to the farmer. The investigator recollects the last of his South Sea Islander relations subject to this process were denied legal ownership to house and land during the 1970s. The step sister and brother in-law of the investigator's mother had died and their adult children, the following generation, had tried to gain ownership of the house and land that their parents had lived on for decades. Unfortunately, the son of the former owner of the farm, the next generation, reverted to the unwritten contract of the house and land being taken back. Today the investigator can only view the roof and walls of the weather board house that have fallen down and tall grass has over grown a previously manicured lawn surrounded by fruit, palm and mango tree.

To sum up, housing in Mackay did not pose a problem for South Sea Islanders and Aborigines after 1930s apart from those who had purchased land of their own. Most coloured people built on crown land, land that was set aside informally for islander families who had employment ties to farmers, or land sympathetic farmers had no use for. By the early 1940s Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders began moving into the Mackay area for work. Housing then became a problem. Those families of the three groups in this project

who did acquire housing in Mackay cooperated and supported each other over the years. Into the 1960s council laws became stringent forcing people off crown land or land where most islanders gathered, and into government funded housing including Aboriginal housing or private rental.

### **Perceptions of treatment across the three groups**

Nationally the Aboriginal black rights movements in the south were recruiting South Sea Islanders to support the movement. By the early 1960s the process continued at the ground level in Mackay and also included Torres Strait Islanders. Cooperation between the three groups in this project was similar to happenings throughout the state in sugar towns such as Bundaberg in the south to Mossman in the north of Queensland. The three groups cooperated in black rights movements that included; acknowledgement of the three separate groups, the use of traditional language, acknowledgment of the Aboriginal act, difference in payment and a lack of accommodation. The investigator will discuss the three groups separately and analyse their perceptions.

During 1936 within the Torres Strait Islands, indigenous Islanders went on a strike and according to Beckett (1987, p. 52 & 55) it was:

specifically against the government with the result that Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939 met the islanders' desire to be distinguished from Aborigines

The same Act also included improvement of their working conditions within the shell industry and greater autonomy. Enlisted Torres Strait Islanders in the armed force also went on strike in the Torres Strait Islands during World War Two for improved pay conditions. The argument here is that those two actions above signify a strong-willed and well organised group (Hall, 1989, pp. 51-52). Aborigines during the 1930s were under the restrictive control of state Government and the settlement conditions. The organisation of people to participate in organised action against institutions was minimal if non existent in some parts of Queensland. These groups were scattered over large distances, for example, Cherbourg Woorabinda and Palm Island communities,

and communication between the communities was monitored. Aborigines were subject to severe punishment to the point of death for not complying with colonial wishes. As expected, fear still lingered into the 1930s for mainland Aborigines (Hall, 1989, pp. 3-5). Like Aborigines South Sea Islanders during this decade in Mackay remained subject to the White Australian Policy. The Islanders remained reduced to living a subsistence life style and were largely shunned by society. In addition, Islanders were trying to earn a living from the sugar industry with severely restricted work opportunities while supporting each other to survive (Moore, 1985, pp. 336).

It could be argued that in Mackay during the 1930s South Sea Islanders were aware of Aboriginal people and their issues with the Government of the day. This included, Aborigines who were not exempt from the Aboriginal Protection Act and who were in most cases not visible in Mackay until after World War Two. The investigator assumes that those non-exempted Aborigines who integrated with South Sea Islanders in Mackay sheltered under the latter's identity to hide from the restrictive policies of their present government. Those who were exempt from the act were expected not to identify as Aboriginal and were to integrate into colonial society. South Sea Islanders and those Aborigines, it could be argued, who were in close relationships were aware of those policies. South Sea Islanders were also subject to restrictive government policies suggesting the two groups were drawn together and supported each other during the restrictive years of the 1930s (HREOC, 1992, p. 19).

During the 1940s on the mainland Torres Strait Islanders did go about their daily business as though they were not subject to the Aboriginal Protection Act. As stated in Osborne (1997, p. 44) "all the families ... we are not under the act and we are free people". Torres Strait Islanders were granted permission to leave the Cherbourg community if they had work to go to. However, it was their doggedness and assertion that convinced the Protector to allow them to move off to the coast to obtain work. On the coast they settled in towns such as Brisbane, Bundaberg and Mackay. As war evacuees they were not subject to, or, the government of the day relaxed the Protection

Act after World War Two. It was during this decade that the three groups in this project became greater allies in the Mackay area (Osborne, 1997, p. 44). For example, Torres Strait Islander evacuees who settled in the Mackay area struck up friendships with South Sea Islanders. As stated earlier, in this chapter, Robert Boah's South Sea Islander male friends from Rockhampton and the investigator's father an Aboriginal-South Sea Islander man from Cairns resided with Torres Strait Islander families in Mackay when they first arrived in the area.

In regards to Aborigines, South Sea Islander participant Robert Boah (2004) recalls that:

oh poor fella (Aborigines), see they had restrictions and all that out there (daily life) eh? Yeah when I went out of school I went like down (pub) to have a beer eh. They weren't allowed in the pub and all that (including other restrictions). From when I started drinking they (Aborigines) weren't allowed to have a drink (alcohol)

It is interesting to note that Robert Boah, the South Sea Islander participant, acknowledged Mackay's local Yuibera people as the first of the 'coloured' people to be employed in the sugar industry in Mackay. The investigator proposes that most Mackay South Sea Islanders are of the opinion that they are the only coloured people associated with the sugar industry prior to World War Two. However, as noted earlier in this chapter Yuibera people were competent farm hands. Robert Boah (2004) points out that:

Yeah well just like us, see them fellas come in and work in the cane and then we just sort of take over from what they done

Both Robert and Winifred Boah agreed that the difference was that South Sea Islanders remained working in the cane fields. As Robert Boah advanced to adulthood he obviously had an understanding of the political issues in progress. One result was, that in later years Robert Boah (2004) would lobby for lower interest rates, for housing loans, similar to those for which Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were eligible.

Tim Kemp (2005) stated in his interview he was envious of the Torres Strait Islanders because they were permitted to and they were able to speak their traditional language in public. This was the same feeling Tim Kemp had

towards the Italian people who also continued speaking their language in public in the streets of Mackay in the late 1940s. Tim Kemp was aware that Torres Strait Islander war evacuees had government approval to do things that Aborigines were not permitted to. For example; speak their language in public, teach their traditional practices in a government school environment, evacuees were permitted to travel across the state for work without restrictive government monitoring. All of the points above were restrictions to which Aborigines were accustomed in the 1930s and 1940s. Tim Kemp knew that South Sea Islanders were also not as restricted in their movement along the coast as South Sea Islander men, over the years, walked from sugar town to sugar town for work. Generally, they worked for islanders who leased land with cane on it. For example, South Sea Islander men walked from the northern and southern towns to Mackay for work. From Rockhampton and after the sugar industry failed in that region Islander men and women moved into the sugar industry in the north and also the cattle industry in the central Queensland region. In all likelihood Tim Kemp would have met or heard of those people (Kemp, 2005). The investigator's family history on his father's side, relates how during the 1920s, two male South Sea Islander brothers walked from Rockhampton to Cairns for work.

During 1941 Aboriginal activist Pearl Gibbs spoke on radio in NSW "the first time an Aboriginal person had given a scripted address on a state radio network (Horner, 2004, p. 12)". Although Aboriginal human rights activists and their movements were targeting rights for Aborigines there were also South Sea Islander descendants among the committees and organisations. It was Pearl Gibbs who invited Faith Bandler to join her in an organisation that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people could learn and work together. The father of Faith Bandler was a South Sea Island man from Vanuatu and her mother was from an Indian family living in Brisbane. A member of the Women's Land Army from 1942 to 1945 after which Faith became a member of Council for Aboriginal Rights (CAR) formed in 1951 in New South Wales. Pearle Gibbs persuaded Faith to join her and form a new organisation which became the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF) in 1956 (Horner, 2004, p. 17). Of interest in the later years of the post referendum period Evelyn Scott

is of Aboriginal and South Sea Islander descent. Another at the local level was Noel Fatnowna a South Sea Islander from the post referendum period (Moore, 1979, p. 84). These individuals fought for Aboriginal and South Sea Islander recognition as well but failed to gain that recognition at their first attempt. Their first attempts convinced government of the day that South Sea Islanders were a separate race but were, however, not eligible to access those government services that targeted Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who are indigenous to Australia (Moore, 1979, p. 65). While cooperation between Aborigines and South Sea Islanders at the national level for black human rights was taking place these actions were also played out in earnest at the local level in Mackay. Those actions filtered down during the following decade and were an honest display of cooperation between the three groups in this project. For example, Tim Kemp was the only Aboriginal person at one particular meeting so the other people would have been from the two Islander groups (Kemp, 2005). In 1958 information reached Brisbane regarding a meeting of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA) in Adelaide. Consequently, with a Victorian and South Australia branch it was decided that a Queensland State Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (QSCAATSI) would be formed and a delegate was to attend (Horner, 2004, p.31). Eventually this led to the development of local organisations that Tim Kemp became involved in. At the local level he went on to represent the town of Mackay on issues such as education and legal representation for Aboriginal and Islander people (Kemp, 2005).

As noted above Robert Boah was aware that Aborigines were subject to greater restrictions than his people's group. However, Robert Boah similar to other South Sea Islanders basked in the relaxation of the former restrictive government policies from the early 1930s. As a result South Sea Islanders were seizing work opportunities. Similarly the other two groups in this project, in Mackay, were also focusing on securing their future. The investigator recalls his father informing him about the government practices that affected his Aboriginal friend. This particular incident affected the investigator's father for the rest of his life. He had become friends with a

Aboriginal fellow called Benny Gibson from Palm Island. They met in Mackay and became friends in the early 1950s. Both were very efficient amateur boxers. When Benny Gibson began running out of money he asked my father to accompany him to the Mackay police station to get some money out of his banking account. It was the process for him to do when not on the Palm Island community. The police officer on duty that day in Mackay only gave Benny Gibson a little of what money he had in his bank account telling him that was enough. When Benny Gibson asked for more of his money he was told by the officer to get on his way and was arrogantly dismissed. The investigator's father was embarrassed, frustrated and very angry that his friend was treated in such a manner. However, that was the government process that Aborigines had to adhere to. The informant's father was Aboriginal-South Sea Island descent on his mother's side and Chinese on his father's side. Because, the informant's Chinese grandfather brought land in Mossman north of Cairns and raised his children on that land the informant's father, wife and children were exempted from the Aboriginal Protection Act. The investigator's father was able to work and collect his full pay and was never subjected to what his Aboriginal friend Benny Gibson was subjected. The investigator's father often told him as a child that he was to work for his own money and to collect his own money when he began work. As an adult the investigator's father often retold this incident to him. It is only in the later years of the investigator's adult life that he realises that his father was reinforcing that incident so that the investigator would not allow himself to be in such a position.

An incident that was also retold to the investigator by his father, and the children involved, in regards to the awareness of government treatment to each group concerned hiding Aboriginal children from the Protector in Mossman north of Cairns. The investigator's grandfather who was exempt from the act often hid two Aboriginal female children of light-skin appearance from the Protector when they came to the Mossman area during the late 1930s and the early 1940s. The children were Maud and Anne Solomon who were friends of the investigator's grand father. When they heard that the Protector was coming to the area the two female children would run the

several miles to the investigator's grandfather's property and hide there until the Protector left the area. An additional instance was when the two girls went to live with the investigator's grandparents for several months. Maud Doolah (nee Solomon), a widow today, who was married to two Torres Strait Islander men confirmed these incidents in an interview in 2002 in Mackay where she lives today (Doolah, 2004).

Waway Tapim the Torres Strait Islander informant recalls that he had to get permission from the Protector Mr O'Leary to marry his South Sea Islander bride, thereby, indicating that when the two groups intermarried they were forced to be aware of or were subject to the government policy and procedures of that day. Beckett (1987, p. 54) notes that Protector O'Leary "was promoted to department head ... in 1941". It is worth noting that in contrast to Aborigines and rulings when Torres Strait Islander men were sent to work on the mainland as cane cutting gangs Beckett (1987, p 72) states:

the government made no attempt to regulate their (Torres Strait Islander men) employment or earnings to contribute towards their island community

However, Tim Kemp (2005) did state that:

in 1965 I worked with a gang of Torres Strait Islanders on the line around Bloomsbury and one of them got me to write him a letter to his wife, and he stated this you know, about how he had to send so much money home. I said "what are you still under the Aboriginal Act?" and he said "yes"

Menfolk of the evacuees who stayed on the mainland were also not obligated to pay a percentage of their pay to their island communities. They were granted permission to find work on the mainland so they could support their families (Beckett, 1987, p 72).

During the 1950s the three groups in this project benefited immensely from the relaxation of government policies after World War Two. Those benefits included the relaxation of policies, growth of the labour force, decline of the White Australia Policy and increased movement of people across the state. Because of the reasons for integration in Mackay such as housing and employment the three groups were well aware of each other's situation in regards to government policies.

One positive outcome of the referendum of 1967 was that it brought many government service benefits together to raise the living conditions of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. However, in Mackay it did include South Sea Islanders in regards to housing. Those living conditions include; indigenous housing, education and employment. However, research by Moore (1979) would also suggest that loans from the financial institutions were definitely out of the question for the three groups in this project. In particular, for South Sea Islanders and Aborigines. Unfortunately for the South Sea Islanders in Mackay they have been excluded from the referendum benefits of the 1960s (Moore, 1979, p. 81 & 83). This section of the paper will examine how the exclusion was acknowledged by members of each of the three groups and how they informally included Sea Islanders to the benefits of the referendum. While the research appears to be contradictory in regards to South Sea Islanders being excluded on one hand from the benefits of the referendum; and on the other gaining some of the benefits from Aboriginal programs, it was the ambivalent wording of the policies in relation to Aboriginal and Islander people that enabled these practices. In addition, intermarriage between the three groups also justified those benefits. As the momentum of equal rights movement for Aboriginal people began to surge during the 1960s. Torres Strait Islanders were included in those Aboriginal rights because they are indigenous to Australia. The formal wording during the 1960s was the Aboriginal and Islander movement. South Sea Islanders were included under the Islander status (HREOC, 1992, p. 68).

Tim Kemp was made aware of the Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander children and their exclusion from the ABSTUDY education benefits during the 1960s. ABSTUDY was set in place to financially support Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders while they studied. It was, as stated earlier in this chapter, that at the request of Tim Kemp as an Aboriginal representative from the Mackay area to the federal government that South Sea Islanders be included in the ABSTUDY benefits (Kemp, 2005). Education for Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders was at a level that was much lower than their European class mates. Tim Kemp's actions in this matter suggested that he was well aware of the treatment to

which government policy subjected the three groups. It was still a common occurrence, in the 1960s, for black or coloured children not to continue after primary school (Moore, 1985, p. 324).

Tim Kemp also lobbied for legal representation for the three groups in Mackay during this decade. Tim Kemp (2005) states “so I was one of the first four or five to go up and see about getting legal aid here” of that group he was the only Aboriginal (HREOC, 1992, p. 68). Once legal representation was granted for Mackay, in regards to the three groups in this project, a liaison person was employed who went to the clients and asked if they required legal representation. During the late 1960s there were two Islander persons who were prominent liaison officers between the clients and the legal representatives of Aboriginal and Islander people in Mackay. Those people were Tony Irelandes an Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander and Noel Fatnowna a South Sea Islander. Between Tim Kemp the Aboriginal person, Tony Irelandes the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander person and Noel Fatnowna the South Sea Islander it could be argued here that the three groups were very much aware of how the government treated Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders and their legal rights during the 1960s (HREOC, 1992, p. 68).

There is a strong argument that the three groups whether or not they were drawn together because of skin colour were well aware of the way landlords regarded skin colour when renting, and they did support each other strongly during the 1960s. Tim Kemp (2005) states that:

owners of houses would say I've got a house at such and such and they'd give me the home address. You'd go to the address and ask them about that house and as soon as they seen you were black.. as soon as you turn up they'll say “no it's gone, we've given it to someone this morning”. I went up to this conference 65 people from 65 different towns all over Australia. They had the same story. When you ring up on the phone they tell you yes but as soon as they seen you they tell you no

Tim Kemp also recalls during the decade a Torres Strait Islander person who could not write and who was working on the railway with him in

Bloomsbury. The individual asked him to write a letter home to his family in the islands. Included in the letter was money he had to send home to the community council and to his family. Tim Kemp was dumbfounded that this was still taking place for the Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland (Kemp, 2005). This is an example of how the groups, through interaction socially and at the work place, continued to learn and understand the government attitudes and interference in each others lives during the 1960s.

Each of the three groups in this project were aware of the governance of the day and the policies, attitudes and the effect it had upon each of the group's daily lives. The Aboriginal participant appears to have been the most observant of the three participants and the most active politically at the Mackay level followed by the South Sea Islander participant. The supporting of individuals and families, irrespective of identity, as they migrated into the Mackay region is evident through academic writing and the recollection of the informants. Employment opportunities brought the three groups together in Mackay from the 1940s. Racism by some non-indigenous people in Mackay put a stop to private rentals for all three groups. Exclusion by racism was thereafter a common cause between them. Governance of the day was accepted by the Aborigines and the South Sea Islanders from the 1930s through to the end of the 1960s. In contrast Torres Strait Islanders, living in the straits during the 1930s and on the mainland in the early 1940s as evacuees, were proactive in reaction to government attitudes and procedures to the referendum in the 1960s.

## Chapter 3

### Labour and economic conditions 1930s -1960s

This chapter complements Chapter Two by endeavouring to identify and discuss the labour and economic conditions of the three groups, Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders, within the Mackay region. As previously, the time period for this chapter analysis is from 1930 to the 1960s. The research analyses the origins of differences where they exist, then document similarities, where applicable, between the three groups. To assess this information the investigator first reviews the policies to which the three groups in Mackay were subjected. Those regulatory frameworks include: union influence, war-time legislation and other policies of the period. Subsequently the investigator seeks to determine, through the participants, how policies affect their labour recruitment opportunities and living conditions for the three groups during the period above. The main sources for this purpose remain the participant interviews. Throughout this project participants bear witness to a series of events, some of them unrecorded in the local context, from an individual perspective (Hamilton, 1994, p. 16).

Additionally, Mullins' work (1969) and Fatnownas' (1989) oral history remain as important local sources. Further secondary sources will also be drawn upon for this chapter, such as academic accounts, government publications and unpublished typescripts. As stated in Chapter Two secondary sources also determine a timeframe within the decades under examination and can be aligned with the local oral histories provided by the primary sources they can also in some cases be used to verify oral information about which some historians remain sceptical. Authors included within the secondary sources include Sharp (1992) and May (1994) who examine the Torres Strait Islanders within their work. Blake (2001) as in Chapter Two lays the foundation for Aboriginal issues while May (1994) also sheds light on the Aboriginal Protection Act and how it also affected Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland, including Mackay. Moore (1985) and HREOC (1992) document the

situation of South Sea Islanders and their issues including Federal Government prejudice and employment from a Mackay perspective. HREOC (1992) also makes reference to the other two groups in this research, around Mackay, and includes policy information which builds on Moore's (1985) work. Moore's report and interviews, as broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), of 1979 is in turn an extension of oral history for South Sea Islanders in Mackay. Saunders (1993) more recent work and that of Evans and Scott (1995) are equally valuable on issues of labour and wartime control.

### **Legislation and the changing workplace**

Twentieth century government and union policies were generally set in place to protect people from such things as social and work place exploitation. The policies that were in effect in Queensland from 1930 through to the 1960s are addressed in this section. Those policies included: the Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act 1939, Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901 and the Pacific war legislation. Hall (1989, pp. 25-26) also makes reference to the enlistment of men from the three groups in this project into the Australian Armed Force in Mackay. This section addresses these three policies in relation to Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders in Mackay during the given period (HR&EOC, 1992, pp. 16, 75-76, 78, 84). The Aborigines' Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld) was developed to "make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal half-caste inhabitants of the colony" (Blake, 2001, p. X1). The scheme was "based on humanitarian grounds" and "was a positive attempt to help" Aboriginal people (Blake, 2001, p. 237). The aim was for direct involvement of the state while bypassing mission societies and benevolent associations (Blake, 2001, p. 238). Several issues dealt with by the Aboriginal Protection Act of 1897 included; the restriction of the supply or sale of opium to Aborigines, the formation of a labour force and the appointment of a Government Protector.

The Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act of 1939 continued with policies from the previous Act. It did include South Sea Islanders to a degree as the HREOC (1992, p. 19) confirms that South Sea Islanders who were children of “aboriginal Mothers from 1934 and Pacific Islanders who associated with Aboriginals could be brought under the control of the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897 and 1934. The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld) and the updated Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act 1939 had been transplanted north to the Torres Strait Islands and its indigenous people where similar policy strategies were set in place (Sharp, 1992, p. 110). As a result, the Act would affect all three groups in this project in: Aboriginal communities across the state, including Cherbourg, Woorabinda and in Mackay where South Sea Islanders were gathered. The Act hinged on the creation of three strategically selected Reserves across Queensland where all Aboriginal people were to be relocated (Blake, 2001, p. 3). However, it veered away from segregationist policies and shifted towards assimilation. Generally, this was to be the pattern for all reserves across Australia (Blake, 2001, p. 18).

It was suggested in 1895 by those government supporters of the reserve movement that once the movement gained momentum, three years training would provide a labour force on established reserves that could be utilised for cane, coffee or other seasonal crops on the coast. As mentioned in Chapter One, this was similar to previous practice and failed in the late 1860s around Mackay at a site known as Sandy Creek and Bakers Creek about ten kilometres south of Mackay. When the government took control of Barambah in 1905, later to be named Cherbourg, there was a vigorous campaign to hire out labour; even to the point that occasionally when work was not available the Protector allowed people who were living on the Barambah reserve to look for work away from Barambah (Blake, 2001, pp. 119-122 & 126. For the remainder of this project Barambah will be called Cherbourg). Usually, the process took place at all Aboriginal communities across Queensland including Woorabinda the community closest to Mackay the location from which Tim Kemp came years later. The Protector determined that the greater the paid

labour force employed from his reserve the greater their economic dependence. Therefore, to generate revenue the Cherbourg Superintendent and Reserve Superintendent elsewhere decided on wage deductions. Obviously, those deductions were to be taken from those people living on the reserves that each Superintendent had authority over. Furthermore, the majority of the deductions came from those who were employed outside of the reserve. There were cases where smaller deductions were taken from Aboriginal workers who worked on the reserves. As stated in Chapter One this is the reserve from which several Torres Strait Islander evacuees came before arriving in Mackay some years later. Local knowledge suggests that Torres Strait Islander families also travelled from Woorabinda to Mackay in later years as well strengthening links to Aboriginal communities across the state (Blake, 2001, pp. 139 & 141).

The only other alternative for Aborigines to escape community wage deductions was the exemption process that separated them from the reserve work force, pay deductions or having to live on a reserve. The exemption process involved an Aboriginal person applying for exemption from the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld). There were criteria that had to be met and applications were assessed by the Superintendent who then, either authorised or declined the exemption application. This was the situation for Tim Kemp, the Aboriginal participant in this project (Blake, 2001, p. 136).

Sharp (1992, p.25) suggests that by the middle of the nineteenth century the Torres Straits were inundated with hundreds of vessels. Those vessels were there to extract trochus shells, pearls and beche-de-mer from the waters of the straits. After 1871 and under missionary influence, the indigenous Torres Strait Islanders had made inter-island peace with each other and with colonists. Additionally, peace would also extend to those South Sea Islanders and Aborigines who had landed in the straits to work the shell industry at that time. Without a doubt socialising and intermarriage would have taken place between the peoples represented there at that time. During the repatriation of some South Sea Islander indentured labourers from the mainland in 1904, an

estimated one hundred people were returned to various islands in the Torres Strait. It is therefore possible that some of those descendants did find their way back to Mackay over the decades of migration to the mainland (HREOC, 1992, p. 65). Vessel owners sailing into the straits hired the Torres Strait Islanders as crew members, divers and at times used individuals on land to clean and prepare the shells for shipment to the mainland. During the early 1930s there were cases where the Torres Strait Islanders brought their own boats; however, there remained an element of control by the Protectors and some cases the teachers on the island (Sharp, 1992, p. 112).

Torres Strait Islanders were under the supervision of the Protector and white teachers. As with Aborigines, all travel, work and social activities was monitored and authorised by the Protector. The system in the Torres Strait also deducted wages to generate revenue for each community. Those deductions were generated to financially support each island group similar to the Aboriginal 'settlement maintenance'. During the 1930s the shell industry was operating at its height. Therefore, each Islander group was economically comfortable and less likely to migrate to the mainland. Generally, most males in the straits eventually came to work in the pearl industry (Beckett, 1987, pp. 43, 46 & 49). However, after the war it did not reach the potential of the pre-war era which led to the emigration of people to the mainland for work in coastal centres such as Mackay (Sharp, 1992, p. 112). In January 1936 Torres Strait Islanders participated in an inter-island strike that called for autonomy and a self-sustained lifestyle (Sharp, 1992, p. 112). The result of the 1936 inter-island strike resulted in the Islanders winning recognition as separate people under the Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939 or the new law as they called it. The Torres Strait Islanders Act granted a significant measure of autonomy to Island councils. Consequently, prior to the Pacific war and evacuation of the Torres Strait Islanders in 1942 the policy that was in place for indigenous Islanders in the straits was the Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939 (Sharp, 1992, p. 112).

The policy that was initially utilised for South Sea Islander indentured labourers along the Queensland coast was legislated in 1861. That Act was

known in Queensland as the Masters and Servants Act 1861. Though not designed specifically for the indentured labourers, it was however, used to punish indentured labourers for disobeying orders or absconding. The policy had greater benefit for the masters. The recruitment of South Sea Islander indentured labourers began in 1863 for work in the pastoral industry in the southern Queensland district (Moore, 1985, p. 129). The Naturalisation of non-European people was addressed in the Aliens Act 1861-67 and it put an immediate stop to South Sea Islanders even considering applying for or receiving citizenship. By comparison, among non-Europeans entering the country, Africans and Asians were allowed to apply for citizenship (HREOC, 1992, p 14).

The Australian South Sea Islander community developed its character from the 1880s to the 1920s while subject to the policies introduced by the authorities of the day. Moore's (1985, p. xvix) theory is that the group became "insulated from the mainstream life in the Mackay district". While distance and inadequate communication, isolated the Islander group in Mackay, the policies relating to race and the sugar industry remained effective (Moore, 1985, p. xvix).

The Immigration Restriction Act was developed to restrict the immigration of non-whites particularly Chinese into Australia. This was the forerunner to the White Australia policy that was gaining the majority of support in Federal Parliament. However, it was the South Sea Islander indentured labourers who suffered from that policy and consequently were repatriated. The recruitment of indentured islanders was to cease by 1904 and the repatriation of all South Sea Islander indentured labourers was to be completed by 1907. The Polynesian Labourers Act remained in force until 1904 the end of the recruiting trade (Moore, 1985, pp. 129 & 131).

There were those South Sea Islanders who under certain criteria were nevertheless exempted from repatriation and allowed to settle in Australia. They became a small group of permanent Australians. Consequently, after the repatriation period, trying to extract an existence was very hard for the

South Sea Islanders with policy after policy restricting employment opportunities. The White Australia policy was gaining majority support in Federal Parliament with unions also endorsing the Policy (Moore, 1985, pp. 131 & 274).

### **The Union Movement**

The trade union movement, Liberal government in Queensland and the majority of rich plantation owners, combined, lost the fight against the deportation or repatriation of all South Sea Islander indentured labourers from Queensland including from places like Mackay. While in reluctant cooperation with the commonwealth government and the industrial courts the Queensland conservative government set in place strategies to inherently oppose and force the remaining exempted South Sea Islander indentured labourers out of both the sugar and agricultural industries. The Queensland conservative government zealously practised and promoted the White Australia movement. Generally, the union movement restricted non-European employment in the sugar industry, continuously supporting the White Australia movement and discriminating against, denying and isolating South Sea Islanders equal opportunity to employment and other living conditions. Included as non-Europeans in the Mackay region would have been Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders under the category of 'coloured labour'. To the investigator it would appear that South Sea Islanders could pass as either or in the case of Mackay while, the other two groups would be classed similarly as 'coloured labour' (HREOC, 1992, p 14).

In 1902 coloured labour produced 85.5% of all the sugar produced in Queensland. By 1908 the labour movement, in its endeavours to terminate the employment of non-Europeans in the sugar industry targeted South Sea Islander indentured labourers. The result was that in the same year 87.89% of Queensland sugar was harvested by white labour. The labour movement continued its fight against 'coloured' labour in the sugar industry and two years later in 1910 sugar grown and harvested by white labour in Queensland reached 92.8%. The labour movement continued with discriminatory policies

into the 1940s. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) vehemently opposed South Sea Islander and other non-European workers, which would include Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, in the sugar industry. Where necessary the AWU used industrial awards to by pass the federal governments' resistance to discriminating against the South Sea Islander Indentured labourers (HREOC, 1992, pp. 19-20, 29).

Finally in July 1919 the Queensland Industrial Court introduced an award that brought two decades of restrictions, to exclude South Sea Islanders from working on European farms. There were two natural catastrophes that impacted upon the South Sea Islanders in 1918 and 1919 in Mackay. They included, a stronger than normal cyclone in 1918 and an influenza epidemic in 1919 that had decimated the South Sea Islander communities. The cyclone destroyed many of the South Sea Islanders flimsy houses and the epidemic took the lives of many of the South Sea Islanders in Mackay. The final blow was the 1919 sugar award that was passed down while the influenza epidemic was in full swing and excluded South Sea Islanders from employment in that industry. In the case of Mackay the award affected Aborigines' considering that the last full blood Aboriginal persons in Mackay were displaced in 1922 though not necessarily excluding Aboriginal people who had married into South Sea Islander families (Moore, 1985, p. 333).

Through the 1920s and into the 1940s what remained of the exempted South Sea Islanders earned a living working on small farms, identified as no greater than forty acres. The government with the Australian Workers Union (AWU) support passed an award that banned 'coloured' people, in particular South Sea Islanders, from cutting cane on farms over forty acres unless they were owned by a South Sea Islander person (HREOC, 1992, p 14). There was an estimated fifty of those forty acre farms that were leased to South Sea Islanders from three mills in the Mackay region. The blocks leased from the mills were usually blocks that European farmers had no use for, were uncleared bushland or were situated on the side of a hill or a mountain. Moore (1985, p. 332) indicates that those remaining South Sea Islanders in Mackay "lived scattered around the old plantations areas on leased land".

The participant Robert Boah, his grandfather, also called Robert Boah leased land at Alexandra west of Mackay. It can be presumed that he had Islanders working for him. While Winifred Boah's grandmother and her first husband, Robert Kia, also leased land around Mackay near the Leap north of Mackay. Family oral history confirms that Robert Kia did have other Islanders working for him and he was known and had contact with the grandfather of Robert Boah the participant (Moore, 1985, p. 335). Very few South Sea Islanders still leased forty acre farms by the 1930s. Reasoning suggests that by the 1930s the leasers were too old and their ages would have ranged from sixty to eighty years. An 'indigence allowance' was granted to forty-five of the South Sea Islander elderly in the 1930s. The total amount of the government's "indigence allowance" came to one pound one and eight pence a month. Then in 1940s the Labor government changed the "indigence allowance" to the old age pension (Moore, 1985, pp. 132, 334, 336).

### **War-time Legislation**

During the 1930s most identified Aborigines were living on reserves that had been set aside for them. Generally, the labour force on a community was used to supply labour to the surrounding industries. During this period Torres Strait Islanders were content with living and work conditions in the Torres Straits. The war in the Pacific brought change to most people in the Torres Strait Islands. South Sea Islanders continued working in the sugar industry but under very restricted conditions. It was not until the labour shortage, due to the war, that work opportunities became easier to access for the South Sea Islanders and for that matter Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

Aborigines were the labour force for the industries that surrounded the Queensland Reserves. In Cherbourg and Woorabinda the cattle and agricultural industries thrived (Blake, 2001, pp. 117-125). The cattle industry as Tim Kemp (2006) relates in his oral history was his prime destination:

you are from the cattle industry and the cattle industry people are short of labour

he recalled, implying that when he left school and went to work, it was inevitably in the cattle industry. In Mackay during the 1930s most Aborigines were not visible and 'coloured' people were restricted from working in the sugar industry. Therefore, Aborigines were directed by government and other nominated institutions in the areas they worked. Community living and direction by the Protector dictated work opportunities (Kemp, 2006).

South Sea Islanders in Mackay during the 1930s worked within restrictive conditions legally for their peers. Other options in Mackay, as Fatnowna testifies, involved illegally working for sympathetic non-indigenous farmers. Therefore, in Mackay and continuing into the 1930s the sugar industry was where they were generally employed. They continued to operate as an invisible people group, as Aborigines had done earlier in colonial society - 'out of sight out of mind' (Moore, 1985, pp. 129, 140-141).

Surprisingly, in this period of colonial history in Australia the Torres Strait Islanders were brave enough to strike and were awarded a major part of their claims. However, job choice was obvious. Three years later and the day after Australia entered the war on 3 September 1939 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders did not hesitate to enlist in the Australian defence force. Although Aborigines had been in active service during World War One they were still not encouraged to apply for the armed services in 1939. Pervasive racism still remained a trait throughout Australia during the 1930s and 1940s. Although threatened by Japan policies were never changed. Torres Strait Islander men had little option but to join the Defence Force given that the shell industry had wound down due to the Japanese threat in the Pacific region. It could be argued here that although the Torres Strait Islander men were not forced the only attractive choice was what the government offered, that being the armed forces. The other option could have been a return to their former hunter gatherer life style or dependence upon the Protector. There were those who eagerly joined up and there were those who reluctantly joined the defence force from 1939 to 1943 as a work option. As the Torres Strait Islander participant Waway Tapim (2004) confirms:

I was sixteen years of age. We ... put our age up to eighteen.  
We join to help fight for our country

Others who had reluctantly joined would have been denied work not only on the pearling luggers but in other small boat industries as well (Hall, 1989, pp. 39, 51-52).

By the end of the war three thousand Aborigines and eight hundred and fifty Torres Strait Islanders had enlisted. Seven hundred and seventy Torres Strait Islanders had served in the units based in the Torres straits (Hall, 1995, pp. 8, 11, 16 & 30). Fatnowna (Moore, 1979, p. 59) mentioned that South Sea Islanders could not join the Armed forces unless they identified as Aborigines. Ultimately they did, and many South Sea Islander men denied their South Sea Islander identity and took on an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity and joined the armed forces (Moore, 1979, p. 59).

During World War Two legislation resulted in many Aborigines and South Sea Islanders in Australia improving their circumstances. For example, with the war-time labour shortage, work became readily available for Robert Boah in the sugar industry. Tim Kemp was never short of work in the cattle industry during the same period. Most of the two groups lived under similar conditions as the rest of Australia's citizens. As the participants Tim Kemp and Robert Boah concur later in this Chapter, regarding access to coupons and the lack of other everyday items. Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders came forward voluntarily and enlisted for the war in the early 1940s regardless of racist policies. Horner (2004 p.12) writes that World War Two took priority over all social issues in Australia. Both, black and white people, in the face of existing government department policies, enlisted to defend the country from forces invading from Asia and the Pacific.

### **War-time industries and the Manpower Directorate**

After World War One and from the middle of 1927, Australia descended into a financial depression (Schedvin, 1988, p. 108). Depression was widespread across the globe and in Australia during the 1920s there began a rebuilding

program to rebuild Australia's flagging economy. The war-time legislation and the impact upon the exempted South Sea Islanders in Mackay would bring employment issues to the fore. There had to be a major effort for government to keep the war effort working effectively in such areas as agriculture, in particular the sugar industry including Mackay, that was stable revenue for the Australian government and the cattle industry to keep food for the war effort.

During January of 1942 a Manpower Directorate was founded and the Directorate generated a list of occupations to identify where the majority of human resources would be required to support the war effort. The list was to prevent the loss of skilled workers from essential services. Labour controls were set in place for the management and administration of armed services and industry. Early in 1942 the Japanese advanced into the Pacific and an estimated 100, 000 men were enlisted into the armed forces resulting in a labour crisis. In 1942 the Manpower Directorate authorised and monitored persons moving from industry to industry. The regulations set in place by the Directorate to manage the crisis of World War Two impacted upon the daily activities of individuals more so than any other government operation during the early 1940s (Australian War Museum, 2006, p. 1).

The government had the authority through the Manpower Directorate to; exempt people from the armed forces to protect an 'essential service', they were authorised to identify industries they considered as an 'essential service' and unemployed people had seven days to reregister with an employment service. Moreover, the government through the Directorate determined where each man or woman would give their services either within the civil industry, war industry or armed services. The Directorate command included; prevention of service or enlistment, unauthorised employment and employees resigning from their work place. In addition, it restricted supervisor's dismissal rights, it directed individuals from job site to job site and coerced information from the individual (Australian War Museum, 2006, p. 1).

Roy Schaber (Laughton, 1995, p. 6) an Aboriginal man had to obtain permission from Man-power to leave his position on a cattle station at Mount

Riddock. Schaber then moved onto Alice Springs and then Adelaide to enlist in the Australian Borneo campaign in 1943. Tim Kemp (2005) recollects people going to the court house to speak to the Manpower officers. Kemp was well aware of the Manpower Directorate and the effect it had on the labour force. Tim Kemp (2005) after many years in the cattle industry recollects applying for a position on the railway:

I realised that I only knew stock work so I tried to get some work in the railway. Manpower said no I had to stay in the cattle industry". Manpower told you where you went to work

He also recollects that men who had left the Army had to see the Directorate to get a job cutting cane. Noel Fatnowna (Moore, 1979) did not make mention of Manpower in his oral history. Robert Boah (2004) suggests that the Manpower process may have been phased out by the time he was at an age to work. The investigator recollects his mother informing him that her father a South Sea Islander had to work two days a week on road works in Mackay. Those two days would have been organised by the Directorate. The investigators grandfather road his bicycle from Balnagowan to Mackay each of those days. He had started at five o'clock in the morning. After work he arrived home after dark around six thirty or seven o'clock. In Mackay the sugar industry was the main local industry that employed South Sea Islanders therefore with the end of the war and the labour shortage they never saw the need to venture outside the industry. Prior to 1942 they could have enlisted in the armed forces as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person (Moore, 1979, p. 59). Obviously after the war and with the skills learnt while in the service Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders left the less skilled jobs and ventured into employment areas that white Australians were privy to (Hall, 1995, p. 18).

After the wartime evacuation of several Torres Strait Islands in the early 1940s several Torres Strait Islander families arrived at the Cherbourg community. After a short period of time the majority of Islander families left the community for the warmer climate on the coast which included Mackay. The Manpower Directorate had regulated employment for white women; however for the Islander woman there is no evidence to suggest that they

were obligated to approach the Directorate for work. It seems that they obtained their employment by word of mouth from white friends who knew them on the islands, a network of relatives including island friends and Indonesians were their source for their employment. It would seem that there were occasions that Torres Strait Islanders operated outside the normal procedures and were not required to register with the Manpower Directorate. This is evident from the fact that they went about finding their own employment (Osborne 1997, pp. 44-46).

### **Use of coupons during wartime**

The advent of World War Two also placed a demand upon the basic every day items on the homes in Australia. The result was the governments reorganising of Australia's economy and human resources as it continued from the depression of the late 1920s and the early 1930s. The middle of 1942 and the Australian war effort in earnest in Australia witnessed the Australia's Prime Minister Curtin calling for all Australians at home to live a period of time in self-denial or abstinence from store goods and material things that they considered normal and that request "reached into every home in Australia (Osborne, 1997, p. 187)".

Shortages and rationing of every day items became commonplace. There was a constant shortage of tobacco and beer for the general public however those items were never rationed. The rationing of petrol began in 1940 and only people classified as 'essential users' could purchase tyres and tubes for vehicles during that period. In May 1942 the Prime Minister requested that we make do with what clothing we have, then, in June 1942 he granted equal number of coupons for linen and clothing requirements to Australian families. During July of 1942 tea became a rationed item. Then in August 1942 sugar became rationed and January 1944 meat also became a rationed item (Osborne, 1997, p. 187).

From the 1920s to 1937, the period of the depression, unemployed Aborigines were denied access to food and work relief, similar to the rest of the

Australian population and including the South Sea Islander population. The denial to relief food and work forced Aboriginal people onto Aboriginal communities where the Chief Protectors of Aboriginals had control over them. The Protection Board could now monitor Aboriginal movement and have greater control over them while also catering to their basic needs (Hall, 1989, p. 4). Tim Kemp (2005) recalls Aboriginals on the Woorabinda Aboriginal community not having to use coupons during the period that coupons were used. Tim Kemp witnessed that there was no tea or sugar made available on the community. Tim Kemp (2006) stated "if you had money you just went and brought it". Therefore, tea and sugar would have been available and blankets and clothing were issued by the government. Tim Kemp (2006) also stated:

I remember the Graziers going to town and swapping their meat, butter and milk coupons for tea coupons. The Graziers could do that because they owned cattle and had access to the meat, butter and milk by making their own

Tim Kemp (2005) went on to state:

I had to use a coupon that my brother had to get a hat once. To get coupons you had to go to the court house and speak to a JP. Aboriginal people that were Exempt from the Act had to get coupons

It can be assumed that Tim Kemp's brother must have been exempt to be in possession of the coupons. Tim Kemp (2005) went on to add that the coupon procedure "ceased at the end of the war in 1945 and that was the last I heard of it". Robert Boah (2004) recalls his family using coupons during World War Two. Robert Boah (2004) said:

yes I was small at the time. I remember you had a book and when you went to buy things at the shop you had to take a coupon out of the book. I remember you could not buy rice. I like fish and rice so that is why I remember. Plenty fish but no rice

Similarly, further to the north of the state Mrs Henaway, a South Sea Islander from Ayr (Moore 1979, p. 72) states:

I remember the war years when you had to have a docket (coupon) to go and get your ration of butter, tea, milk and meat. I stood (in line) at a butchers shop

The investigator's mother recalls her father a South Sea Islander first generation indentured labourer from Buka Island in the Solomon Island group using government coupons for the family's basic foods in Mackay. Noel

Fatnowna also recollects that his family also had to use coupons during those years of global war. Therefore, South Sea Islanders had to use coupons for rationed food the same as all other people in Mackay. Obviously Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland would also have used the coupons to obtain the basic store foods during the years of the early 1940s.

When the Torres Strait Islander evacuees reached Mackay in late 1943 the season of austerity was in effect. All Australians were living a life of self-denial to support the war effort. Coupons were used to buy basic store foods. The Torres Strait Islander evacuees on the main land were far better off than the people left behind on the outer islands of the Torres Straits. Those Torres Strait Islanders never got the chance to shop for basic store foods. The Island folk did little shopping for basic store foods before or during war in the Pacific. On the islands Torres Strait Islanders had been accustomed to some store foods with the cash payment that their menfolk worked for on the shell boats. Their men folk added to the basic foods by often bringing turtle or dugong from the shelling boats that they worked on. Torres Strait Islander evacuees on the mainland, including Mackay, would have, similar to other Australians consider the circumstance as either an irritation or an inconvenience in comparison to the Torres Strait Islanders in the Torres Straits where the basic store foods never arrived at all (Osborne, 1997, p. 188).

For those Islander evacuees at Cherbourg Osborne (1997, p. 39) states that they:

queued with the local women for rations of basic foods such as flour, rice, sugar tea, jam. Vegetables and meat from the settlements gardens and herbs were handed out on certain days

The fact that the settlement had gardens confirms that Aboriginal communities also supplemented their rations with produce from their gardens in a manner similar to South Sea Islanders in Mackay. Once in Mackay Torres Strait Islander evacuees would have had to approach the courthouse for their coupons. This was a legal process because Torres Strait Islander evacuees were granted permission to leave the Cherbourg community for reasons such

as work. Islander evacuees requested a meeting with the Protector O'Leary and Osborne (1997, p. 44) states that they said:

All the families want to go out because we are not under the act and we are free people I want to go, go find a job

Once the Torres Strait Islander families had been granted permission to leave the Cherbourg community they would have had to comply with the coupon regulations similar to the rest of the general public.

During the period of coupons, relief work programs and ebbing of cash flow, most South Sea Islanders in Mackay grew their own fruit and vegetables. This practice supplemented what they received from their plantation supplied diets, coupons and relief work payment. The produce from the gardens was for their personal use and also enabled them to swap with other people for goods they did not have. Access to water was one reason that they often shifted and built their houses along the waterways around Mackay (Moore, 1985, pp. 226-227). As a child, Robert Boah's (2004) family ate a lot of fish as he stated "plenty fish" and no doubt would have traded fish for vegetables. Along the river on the Palms side were springs named after South Sea Islanders and Robert Boah remembers at least five of these. Where Robert Boah (2004) lived "we went to one of them springs and the others used to get all our taro". Those springs had a lot of taro, watercress and yam growing wild. Unfortunately, Robert Boah (2004) highlights:

They do planning (islander people) musta been a pretty big spread (taro and water cress) from here up to that house (demonstrates long distance). Now there's nothin because they've got the irrigation pump on it. It (spring water) used to always trickle down through there

After the farmers started sinking wells and using irrigation during the 1960s those springs have all dried up. Robert Boah, to this day, still goes fishing in the same waterways of the Palms and Dumbleton Rocks that he fished in as a child. Often Robert Boah informs the investigator of his fishing trips in the area and how and what he caught. Moore (1985, p. 226) states that:

taro and yam ... were planted by European and Islanders ... only few years after the labour trade commenced. A decade later yams and taro were commonplace on plantations

This suggests that, South Sea Islander recruits arriving on Australian soil grew vegetables and added to their plantation supplied diet from the time they arrived in Australia. In addition, several South Sea Islanders who had completed their first contract in the cane fields came back to Australia under new contracts. When, leaving the islands to return they brought with them edible plants to add to their Australian diets. South Sea Islanders are gardening people similar to the Torres Strait Islanders so it was only natural that they would continue with this practice while in Australia and it was a very proactive activity for survival (Moore, 1985, p. 227).

After Robert Boah moved to the northern Dumbleton side of the Pioneer River he started work and depended on his cash payments. Noel Fatnowna (Moore, 1978, p. 68) also talks about his parent and his wife's parents:

they grew their own food there. My wife's people had one of the biggest vegetable gardens going ... they used to take their vegetables into the small towns ... and sell the vegetables. Many, many times I remember islander people would come to our place to bring food for us—fish and sea foods. When they came they got vegetables to take home with them. We helped one another

What they grew or hunted was then swapped for other food or goods during those lean years. The investigator recollects his mother informing him that her father had many varieties of vegetables in his garden. It also included tobacco and peanuts. For the investigator's mother her family stopped gardening after the father's death in 1945. The older boys in family had started work and did not have the time to attend to the established gardens. After the war, work and cash was once again becoming accessible so there was no urgent need for the gardens. As Mr Bobongie (Moore, 1978, p. 59) stated:

when they (South Sea Islander men) came back they couldn't fit in to the old ways. They wouldn't even come home. All the boys just left the old people on the farms

This statement supports the theory that after the war the young South Sea Islander men did not return to their former lifestyles. Instead, they choose work and pay awards that they had been denied access to prior to the war. This applies equally to most sugar farms in the Mackay area. As Robert

Boah, (2004) stated “you just have to walk down the road and get a job”. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were granted permission to move across the state for work reasons away from their previous allocated work sites (HREOC, 1992, p 14).

### **Labour recruitment opportunities and living conditions**

In understanding the situation in regards to the three groups in Mackay from the 1930s there are to be three factors to be considered. These factors include the invisibility of Aborigines in the Mackay district, insignificant numbers of Torres Strait Islanders in the Mackay district and as the largest group of the three exempt South Sea Islanders dominance of the population. As discussed in Chapter One, the last full blood Aboriginal persons were displaced from Mackay during 1922 (Moore, 1985, p. 332). Therefore, mixed marriages between Aborigines and South Sea Islanders would have eventuated in their children adapting the South Sea Islander identity in the Mackay area. Children of these mixed unions who were children of an Aboriginal mother would also not have wittingly verified their Aboriginal identity; the reason being that they would then fall under the 1897 and 1934 Aborigines Act. The invisibility of Aborigines was due to the restrictiveness of the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897 and 1934 (HREOC, 1992, p. 19). As Blake (2001, p.135) states it affected:

all of the Aboriginal workforce in the state, regardless of whether a worker came from a settlement or lived outside

In addition, by not identifying as Aboriginal and having a South Sea Islander parent families would not be separated from each other. For example, for those Aboriginal descendants the government or a Protector could at their convenience displace any one of the descendants onto a Reserve such as Palm Island, Woorabinda or Cherbourg. In addition, there was also the process of wages being subjected to a percentage for “settlement maintenance” when descendants became of working age (Blake, 2001, p. 21).

In the decade of the 1930s, South Sea Islanders were banned from working the cane fields around the Mackay district and the Queensland coast. Torres

Strait Islanders were either still living in the Straits or were also banned from working the cane fields similar to South Sea Islanders or for that matter any 'coloured' skinned person that would have included the Aborigines. Aborigines however, were on Aboriginal reserves far away from the Mackay region in places like Cherbourg, Woorabinda or Palm Island by the 1930s. Those people would in all likelihood have been employed in the cattle industry or in agriculture (Kemp, 2005). This was similar to work patterns at the Cherbourg settlement where, ring barking or clearing land for agriculture or stock also took place (Blake, 2001, pp. 119-122, 126). Those bans against 'coloured' skinned people were the result of Acts and Union awards in support of the White Australia policy with the support of the Federal Government and the plantation owners and the general white population in the Mackay area. Although it may seem contradictory, coloured people did continue to work the cane industry in the Mackay district through the decade of 1930s and to the early 1940s. The conditions were restrictive and, however, meagre the coloured people did earn a hard fought existence. The very industry that South Sea Islanders were brought to Australia to lay the foundations for turned against them most cruelly in the Mackay region. If not for the support of several sympathetic farmers and three mill plantations in the Mackay region the South Sea Islander population would have only a negative history of unemployment to all today (HREOC, 1992, pp. 18, 89-90). It must be noted here that, without the granting of sale or lease of land, though unsuitable and menial, the mill plantations, the Farleigh, Homebush and Palms mills could be seen as sympathetic to the coloured race by providing them with a means to eek out an existence for the coloured people in the Mackay region from 1906 into the 1930s (Moore, 1985, p. 334).

There was a tactic used however to enable coloured skinned people, Aborigines and South Sea Islanders to work legally in the sugar industry. The AWU award banned 'coloured' people, from cutting cane on farms over forty acres. The award, however, did allow for 'coloured' people to work on farms less than forty acres. Furthermore, if the farm was over forty acres that farm had to be owned by a fellow South Sea Islander person for a coloured skin person to be able to work for a wage (HREOC, 1992, p 14). Moore

(1985, p.334) estimates approximately fifty farms either owned or leased by South Sea Islanders around the Mackay region. Those South Sea Islander land owners were either immigrants or first generation South Sea Islanders. The land was not prime farm land but “unwanted hill land” leased by the remaining plantation mills Farleigh, Palms and Homebush. The HREOC (1992, p 20) suggests that in some cases, land was brought under the name of a sympathetic cane farmer and the South Sea Islander person worked that land consequently, after the death of the South Sea Islander the land would go back to the farmer. Approximately two hundred exempt Melanesians in Mackay had survived up to 1918 and into the 1930s owning or working for their fellow South Sea Islander friends (Moore, 1985, p. 334).

The grandfather of Robert Boah, the South Sea Islander informant, also called Robert Boah, was one such land owner. Therefore, other South Sea Islanders would have worked for him on his farm. Robert Boah the informant married the granddaughter of another land owner Robert Kia. Robert Kia a South Sea Islander person owned a small farm on the side of a hill outside Mackay close to Farleigh. There were several South Sea Islanders who worked on Robert Kia’s cane farm. After the death of Robert Kia his wife Elizabeth married Peter Bickey. Peter and Elizabeth Bickey had five children and the last was Elizabeth who is the investigator’s mother. Peter Bickey moved his family to crown land at Balnagowan on the banks of the Pioneer River to have access to water. The investigator was informed by his mother that her father, Peter Bickey, did not use those three acres of crown land for producing cane. The investigator’s mother, the daughter of Peter Bickey, often takes the investigator to that land they owned on the banks of the Pioneer River and points out that block which is distinguishable by the surviving fruit trees such as mangoes, fig and banana trees still growing today. The investigator grew up living across the river from that block of land during the 1960s (Moore, 1985, p. 335).

Noel Fatnowna recalls from 1906 through to 1940s, South Sea Islanders he knew were illegally working in the sugar industry. Noel Fatnowna recalls his father and other South Sea Islanders organising with sympathetic cane farmers to strip cane for planting at night under the cover of

darkness. That task, took place after the white workers had finished working in the field and had gone home for the night. Noel Fatnowna recollects clearly this sort of activity happening in 1936. Government legislation, union awards, federal government members, plantation owners and the general white population in the Mackay area in support of the White Australia policy resulted in the activities that Fatnowna recalls (Moore, 1979, p. 66). In comparison to Moore (1985, p. 335) Noel Fatnowna's recollections of coloured people, in that instance, working illegally in the cane industry in Mackay suggest that those South Sea Islanders he knew did not have connections to other South Sea Islanders who leased or owned land that they could work for legally. Or there were not enough South Sea Islander land owners to offer work to the remaining South Sea Islander population in the Mackay region.

Tim Kemp after leaving school at Woorabinda worked in the cattle industry right through to 1948 when he came to Mackay and started work in the Sarina Sugar Mill just south of Mackay. After several years in the cattle industry Tim Kemp, as noted above, had a desire to become skilled at other industries by trying to obtain work in areas such as the railway. This was before the war ended and obviously Tim Kemp's request was denied by the Manpower Directorate (2005). Tim Kemp recollects there were no Aborigines coming off the Woorabinda or Cherbourg communities to work in the Mackay sugar industry. However, Tim Kemp (2005) did state that "during the war years Woorabinda and Cherbourg people were sent down to Bundaberg to cut cane". Tim Kemp recollects the Directorate operating from 1939 through to 1945 when the war ended. Tim Kemp (2005) went on to state that:

People who had left the Army had to see Manpower to get a job cutting cane. When I got to Sarina mill and got work it was turn up and if a job was there you got it. To get to the Manpower office you went to the Court House

The early 1940s witnessed the outbreak of World War Two and, close to Australia, war in the Pacific. It also resulted in a war time labour shortage with the end of those wars during the early 1940s. It opened the door to greater employment opportunities for South Sea Islanders in the sugar and agriculture industry. As a result, it brought employment opportunities for all 'coloured' workers, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Mackay area (HREOC,

1992, p 90). The Torres Strait Islander evacuees were voluntarily emigrating from Cherbourg and later on from the north of Queensland and residing in the Mackay region. Aborigines were also migrating into the region from other areas to work in the sugar industry. In addition, Aborigines living on communities were being granted consent to work outside of their communities to bolster the workforce in the Mackay region. Consequently, previous government policy and awards had become less stringent in areas where the three groups were once formally denied access. The sugar industry in Mackay provided labouring work on all cane farms where opportunities became available and in some cases work was available at the sugar mills in Mackay (HREOC, 1992, p 21).

Tim Kemp the Aboriginal informant arrived in Mackay from Duaringa, a little north of Woorabinda (2005). Robert Boah recalls Aborigines coming to Mackay from the southern towns on the Queensland coast to cut cane from the late 1940s. For Aborigines, the labour shortage offered work opportunities further a field. For example, Cherbourg people were granted work permits to work in Bundaberg in the sugar industry. This opportunity also gave people from the community the chance to enjoy life away from the community. Most individual Aboriginal employees still had their pay banked and pay packets were still monitored by the Protector who then allowed an amount for the worker to collect and that would meet his or her living expenses away from the community (Blake, 2001, pp. 117-130).

The shell industry was the major employer of Torres Strait Islanders prior to World War Two. The industry was resurrected after World War Two. However, when it failed the Protector granted leave for men to work on the mainland (Hall, 1995, pp. 17-18). After World War Two Torres Strait Islander men were arriving on the Queensland coast to link with their evacuated families and work opportunities. It can be assumed that Torres Strait Islander men were working in the cane industry from the middle of the 1940s in the Mackay region (Hodes, 1998). Robert Boah also recalls South Sea Islanders coming from Rockhampton to work in the sugar industry in Mackay in the early 1950s (Boah, 2004). Waway Tapim came to Cairns to work in a cane

cutting gang that was organised from Thursday Island by the Protector during the 1950s. He eventually, made his way to Mackay and began work on the railway (Tapim, 2004).

After World War Two Torres Strait Islanders were moving freely along the Queensland coast from the towns they were evacuated to during the war. They voluntarily travelled to towns including Mackay. Some of those who had remained in the islands in the strait moved to the mainland. Their work opportunities were appealing in industries such as sugar industry, carpentry, plumbing, drivers, railway and other construction fields or where their armed service skills could be utilised resulting in better lifestyle for their families. It could be argued this process was a form of choosing your own place of employment. In other instances men left the islands to join their evacuated families on the mainland and that could also be considered as having chosen their place of employment (Hall, 1995, pp. 17-18). Therefore, in post war years they would have been employed within well paying positions while living a comfortable standard of living in towns such as Mackay. This contrasted with the Torres Strait Islanders in the straits where basic store foods, work opportunities a typical mainland lifestyle were not accessible (Osborne, 1997, p. 201).

There is evidence to suggest that South Sea Islanders did work in the cattle industry after the middle of the 1940s. The investigator recollects his uncle Les Kia and his mother informing him of the days that he worked on a cattle property, south of Sarina and possibly over the Sarina range, between the early 1930s and late 1940s. At the end of a long period with a particular boss, he was awarded with a suit, a saddle and a return train ticket to Townsville. The investigator's uncle always talked with pride in regards to the award and he considered it to be a very generous gift in the late 1930s. Generally, Islanders were subjected to union and government policies and they survived on the fringes of the sugar industry. It was World War Two that brought the labour shortage that consequently resulted in the relaxation of government legislation and union awards in places like Mackay. That same process allowed the three groups in this project from Mackay to participate more

broadly in the Mackay work force (HREOC, 1992, p. 89). Robert Boah recalls that his relatives organised work for him in the sugar industry when he left school. After the war things did change and work became easier to obtain although the most opportunities remained in the sugar industry (Boah, 2004). For those who had joined the armed forces opportunities arose as policies and awards continued to be overlooked. Returned soldiers, from the three groups in this project, were offered jobs away from the more specific jobs allocated to South Sea Islanders subject to policies and union awards. By the late 1940s rail and road construction fruit and vegetable picking was added to the employment opportunities for Aborigines and South Sea Islanders (Hall, 1995, pp. 17-18).

The decade of the 1950s was one of opportunity for employment and prosperity for the three groups in this research in regards to the sugar industry in Mackay. There were many labouring jobs cutting the cane during the crushing and then planting and weeding during the slack season. The totally excluded exempted South Sea Islanders were now legally in work that had been denied them from 1919 (Moore, 1985, p. 332). The Torres Strait Islanders after the early 1940s would have been subject to the union award that banned 'coloured' workers in the sugar industry. However, during and after war in the Pacific, their armed force status and the labour shortage recruitment and conditions for the Torres Strait Islanders would have been generous. As for Aborigines, work and recruitment in the Mackay area was rewarding. Robert Boah (2004) recalls Aborigines in larger numbers moved into the area after the war years. Aborigines were subject to the Aboriginal Act but work was available at the award rate of pay. However, Aborigines were still subject to the Protector commissioning their pay packets for "settlement maintenance". The main reward was the fact that they were able to have time away from the community and still return after a satisfied period or subject to the Protectors' reasoning (Blake, 2001, pp.139 -140). Those employment opportunities and benefits continued into the 1950s for the three groups in this project in the case of Mackay (HREOC, 1992, p 90).

Moore (1985, p. xvix) asserts that the 1960s, however, brought in the mechanised era of cane cutting. The mechanised form of hand cutting, shifting the cane off the fields, into the sugar mills, where milling technology took over from manual labour, and eventually bulk sugar terminals where machinery took over from manual loading onto ships, took away many labouring positions from Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders (Moore, 1985, p. xvix). Horner (2004, p. 93) indicates that during the 1960s any skilled and responsible Aboriginal person who wanted work could apply for work at the same rate of pay as other Australians. However colour of skin, lack of education and trade skills would deem this unlikely (Horner, 2004, p. 93). Mechanised changes restricted Aborigines and South Sea Islanders access in the industry. Reason would suggest that loans from banks were generally denied and collateral would have been hard to access to purchase machinery or land (HREOC, 1992, pp. 62 90).

## **Chapter Four**

### **Reversing diaspora: cultural interaction 1970s–2000**

Chapter Four is the sister chapter to Chapter One. It begins with the impact of travel upon the cultures of the three groups in the project and builds upon Chapter One. However, Chapter Four explores a change in the time frame from the 1970s to 2000. By the 1970s the three groups are separate visible entities within Mackay society even though intermarriage continues. A discussion of the level of cultural awareness, lifestyle adaptation and what replaced it begins the last section of this Chapter. The investigator questions if the interaction of people from the three groups in Mackay caused an overlapping of cultures and identity in areas such as music, language and skin colour.

An analysis of their mobility involves ongoing travel and the extension of the diaspora theory discussed in Chapter One. However, the investigator suggests a reversal of the diasporic movement in the period 1970s to 2000. The argument advanced is that the three groups are transplanting and building upon what remains of their cultures and traditions. It then follows that after settlement of the South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders, excluding Aborigines who have their roots on mainland Australia, there is the argument of alliance to island territory for the other two groups. Contemporaries are encouraged by government departments to enhance depleted cultures which have been the result of restrictive government policies in the past. The end result produces ethnogenesis which the two participants (Aboriginal and South Sea Islander persons) have unconsciously alluded to in the course of their interviews.

It is with this in mind that the project informants continue with their stories about working together as labouring gangs in different industries through the 1970s. They also relate stories respecting each others cultures and explain how social mixing has impacted upon them both as individuals and as members of different cultural groups. Regarding the participants consulted for

this study Tim Kemp has continued into the 1970s and beyond with his support and activities for equal rights and in educating the public in regards to the three groups in this project. The South Sea Islander participant Robert Boah is aware and understands the plight of the three groups in this project. Robert Boah's wife Winifred has been a South Sea Islander representative since the 1970s and remains a fighter for South Sea Islander social equality up to the present day. Winifred Boah is strongly supported by her husband and attends many of the social forums and cultural meetings that target the three groups in this project. Robert Boah has no bitterness from the past however; he is a focused individual who saw the opportunity, after World War Two, through work in the cane industry, to own his own house, land and to set his family up in an environment that was stable and had access to education.

Similarly, the Torres Strait Islander participant Waway Tapim speaks without bitterness in regards to the past. He has enjoyed life and speaks excitedly about life on the shell boats, his years as a soldier in the defence force and speaks proudly about his working life as a supervisor of many railway gangs on the Queensland coast and in Western Australia. In the 1970s Waway Tapim supervised large gangs of men in Western Australia building the coal lines from the mines in the interior to the coast. It could be suggested here that the Aboriginal and South Sea Islander interviewees have undergone an unconscious healing process. Consequently, although subject to the injustice of the past as young men, both are not angry or bitter men and have taken their place in Australian society. The Torres Strait Islander interviewee however, having been accepted into the defence force twice from an early age, and having held supervisory roles over people of all nationalities had been in a position of respect, and has never required a healing process to the same extent (Anderson, 2002, p. 67).

### **Travel, culture and diaspora 1970-2000**

A visible Aboriginal presence in Mackay up to the 1970s can be dated from World War Two, a period of approximately thirty years duration, similar to that for Torres Strait Islanders and their visible presence. In that instance

calculation would suggest that there is only one generation of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay excluding those Yuibera people who were intermarried and lived under the identity of their spouse (HREOC, 1992, p. 34). In comparison, South Sea Islanders and their presence from 1867 to 1970 stretches back to approximately one hundred and three years. By the 1970s there was an estimated two generations of South Sea Islanders in Mackay. The South Sea Islander diaspora has been active for the longest in Mackay. Up to the 1970s the major part of their culture had been suspended. Torres Strait Islanders have not undergone dramatic change in tradition or culture since the 'coming of the light', a teaching that consisted of Christianity introduced to the islands, and have been able to transplant and continue practising traditions on the mainland including Mackay at their convenience. In contrast, Aboriginal traditions and cultures of the people in Mackay had been subject to greater depletion (Kennedy, 2002). However, restoration and adaptation from other Aboriginal groups has enhanced and balanced Aboriginal culture in Mackay. Therefore, in contrast with their earlier diasporic experiences Australia's indigenous groups now come together, enhancing and building upon a depleted Aboriginal local culture in the process (Hall, S. 1987, p.141).

The 1970s was a decade that continued with fewer restrictions upon the mobility of the three groups. In 1969 a letter was submitted to the general meeting of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF) congratulating the AAF for dismantling the restrictive Aboriginal Welfare Board in New South Wales (Horner, 2004, p. 145). Aborigines accepted the opportunities associated with greater mobility and began migrating to townships on the coast from the western cattle regions of the state and from the Aboriginal communities. In some cases they were being integrated into the cities by government assimilation programs. In Mackay, it seems, all those Aborigines who had travelled into the region were not part of the Yuibera group. Most were Aborigines of other clans from throughout the state who were making a fresh start for their families. They came to Mackay for the benefits of housing, education and health. Employment opportunities in Mackay had declined during the 1970s as a result of mechanisation from the 1960s. Beckett (1989,

p. 172) states that commonwealth department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) produced a report “for the years 1972 to 1974” regarding the “right of Aborigines to retain and restore their language and customs”. However, a traditional non-expansionist lifestyle encompassing geological features and geographical boundaries could no longer be adhered to. Aborigines of the Yuibera group could not or did not have access to these geological features and geographical boundaries because the land now belonged to non-Aboriginal people who were ignorant of Aboriginal traditions (Clarke, 1996, p. 5). Those Yuibera people remaining in Mackay were beginning the long slow process of regrouping their people and accepting Aborigines from other groups, who had settled in Mackay and were there to support their cause in a manner similar to Tim Kemp. As Tim Kemp (2005) highlights:

I've married a South Sea Islander lady myself. It took fifty years for the three different cultural groups in Mackay to come together. And they all come together pretty good now.

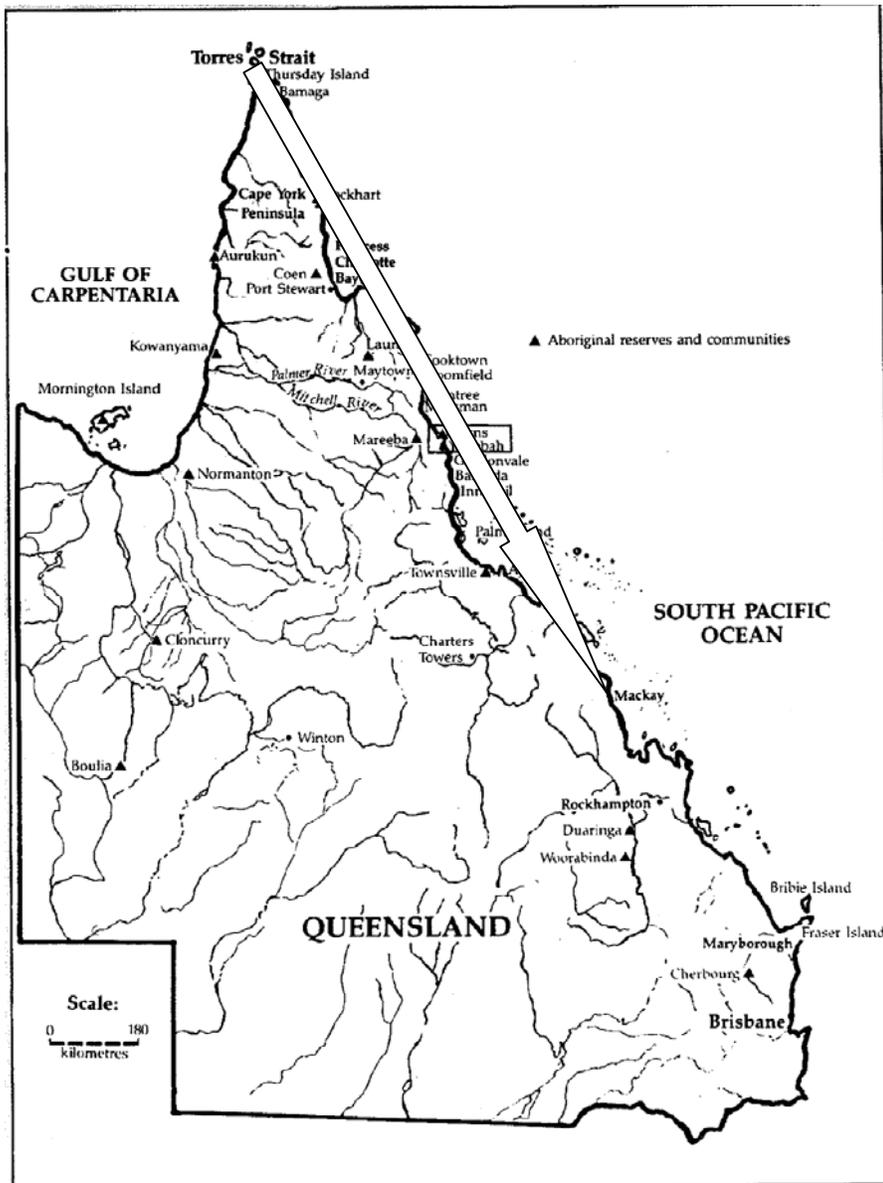
Diaspora, in the instance of the Yuibera people, involved migration out of the region and re-entry or migration back to the region. For those Yuibera people, displaced twenty or so years earlier, culture would have continued to undergo change. Yuibera people who voluntarily moved outside their traditional territory, for example, and travelled up onto the range country of Nebo prior to the turn of the century would also have experienced change. Their integration with other groups of indigenous people in new territory and subsequent re-integration in Mackay continued the diaspora processes of cultural change. Their return to Yuibera country after approximately fifty eight years, coupled with the re-emergence of local Yuibera people who remained under the South Sea Islander umbrella created tensions between traditional and modern identity (Hall, S. 1987, pp. 135 & 141). However, it could be argued here that for those Yuibera people who identified over three generations, there was less tension over identity. A parent of Nita Kemp's father, for example, would have had to be a traditional Yuibera person. Therefore, Nita Kemp would be a second generation and her children third generation Yuibera descendants from colonisation in Mackay. Nita Kemp for example, the participant's wife, has no doubt that her identity is of Yuibera ancestry. Similarly, Nita Kemp's children are recognised members of the Yuibera people (Rosser, 2002, p. 1).

It could be argued here that Nita Kemp and her claim to her Yuibera identity was the result of her father's not being forced out of the Yuibera country, suggesting that, she is the last remaining elder of the Yuibera people (Rosser, 2002, p. 1). In the case of other Yuibera people who have been displaced by government departments their sense of identity would have differed slightly. Inter-marriage on Aboriginal communities where there were Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders, such as at Cherbourg, Palm Island and Woorabinda, would interfere slightly with identity from a traditional perspective. Consequently, modern identity from the Aborigines perspective varied with Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander descent. This supports Hall's previously stated view that there is no absolute identity; yet the three participants in this project, continue to identify those who have a semblance with the first Aborigines of the area, in this case the Yuibera people. That practice of acknowledgement by the South Sea and Torres Strait Islander groups is performed to respect the traditional Aboriginal people of the area (Hall, S. 1987, p. 135).

Torres Strait Islanders were well established in Mackay by the 1970s. Emigration to the Mackay region continues up to the present. Traditional dances, songs and cooking, among other traditional activities, were transplanted to the Mackay area. Torres Strait Islanders continue to travel great distances across the country for traditional gatherings. Those gatherings include tombstone openings, weddings and funerals. Because Torres Strait Islanders maintain a strong adherence to their traditions the investigator will discuss this group next in this Chapter followed by South Sea Islanders and returning to Aborigines already discussed. Tombstone opening ceremonies, marriage and language traditions are all significant cultural activities to be examined for this purpose. In regard to the Torres Strait Islanders, although the great migration numbers of the earlier years has slowed, the trickle to the mainland for work and education continues. Of significance here are tombstone openings, a tradition that has been transplanted onto the mainland. Islanders travel from far field as Western Australia to attend tombstone openings in the straits as well as the

Queensland coast. Inversely, diasporic practices from the 1970s onwards for Torres Strait Islanders have encouraged the adoption of white society lifestyles in Mackay, for example, religion, work responsibilities and living by mainland laws. At the same time, Torres Strait Islanders have retained their traditional culture. That traditional culture may vary slightly on the mainland; however it is aligned as much as possible to island tradition in the straits (Beckett, 1987, pp. 207, 232-233). The change in culture and the acceptance of that change by the Torres Strait Islanders aligns with the theory by Hall (1987, p. 141) that “nobody moves from one place to another or inherits and appropriates from a mix of cultures without being changed by the experience”. Access to transport has been advantageous to the Torres Strait Islanders. Travel has allowed them to access the social benefits of the mainland while being able to maintain their traditional and cultural practices with no major concerns to the slight changes to accommodate urban living on the mainland.

Map 6



Reserves and other Aboriginal Communities in Queensland 1973  
Torres Strait Islander people transplanted their culture from Torres Strait into Mackay  
Source: Thomson, 1989, p. xxiii

Certain elements of the marriage laws and traditions of the three groups within this project were by the 1970s becoming a thing of the past with the acceptance of mixed marriages on the mainland. Yet Torres Strait Islanders continue to monitor traditions such as attending a wedding of a relative. Grooms and brides are reminded of their obligations to those who have attended. The bridegroom and the bride are reminded who has travelled great distances, who has contributed and what their contribution has been.

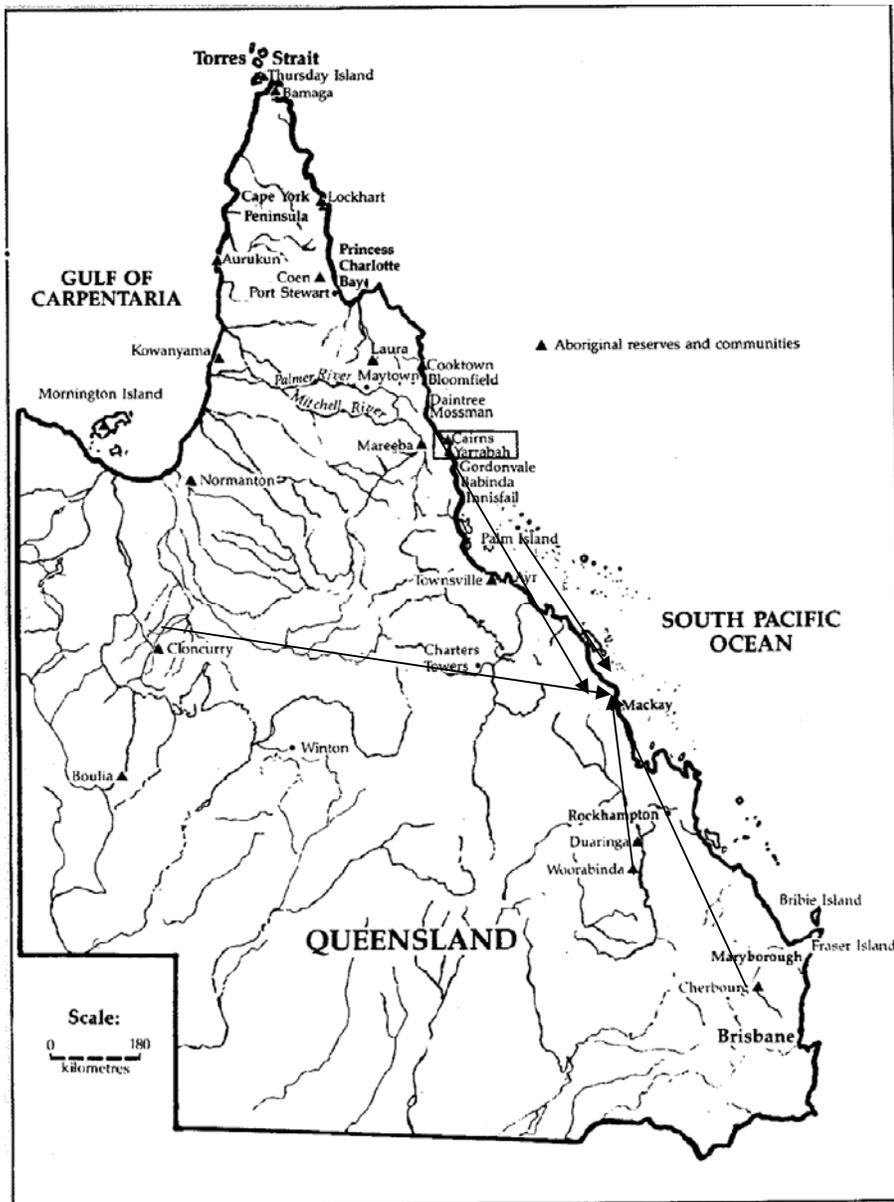
Waway Tapim confirmed that “at that time (1956) we not allowed to get married anywhere in Australia” and those of his generation “have to get permission from the Department of Native Affairs (DNA)”; the investigator assumes in his case from his Elders because on both occasions “I have to marry my own from Torres Strait”. Consequently, he had to get permission from Mr O’Leary, the Director of Native Affairs, before he was able to get married. Waway Tapim’s daughter Anna, a first generation Torres Strait Islander Australian, would no doubt not be under any prearranged or ‘promised’ marriages (Tapim, 2004). The investigator’s mother, a first generation Australian on her father’s side, was a ‘promised bride’ at nine years of age planned by her father, a South Sea Islander recruit from Vanuatu, and other people of that tradition from around Mackay where they lived. The father had been recruited from Buka Island for the sugar trade as a child but he was kept aboard the boat to work until he became an adult and came to the mainland at Mackay. The father had promised her, as a nine year old, to a much older man of South Sea Islander descent. However, it was the mother of the ‘promised bride’ who decided against that tradition. The investigator’s mother informs him that her mother had said that since they now lived in Australia this ‘promised bride’ tradition would stop at this child. Therefore, her mother went against the father’s tradition and allowed the daughter to choose her own partner similar to most other non-indigenous Australians.

Thirty years prior to 1970 most South Sea Islanders in Mackay were related in some way through marriage; by the early 1970s South Sea Islanders in Mackay were being encouraged to marry outside their people group due to a lack of non-related partners. They sought partners not only from the other two groups in this project but from the white community as well (HREOC, 1992, p. 34). The Aboriginal participant, Tim Kemp, did not have to seek permission from any group of people to marry his bride other than the parents of the bride. In Mackay from the 1970s to the present, Aborigines as individuals have been free to marry whom they choose. Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines are not as restricted as South Sea Islanders when it comes to marrying people of their own nationality. By the 1970s promised marriages

among the two islander groups had all but ceased in Mackay. For Aborigines in Mackay that activity may have ceased from the time Yuibera people were displaced from Mackay. This could be accounted for by their displacement across Queensland during colonisation when their traditions were depleted and fragmented (Blake, 2001, p. 237).

As with traditional marriage practices of the same period, traditional languages have also seen changes. Through the ongoing process of displacement, travel and mixing with each other and with mainstream society, the traditional languages of the three groups in Mackay have altered immensely. The depleted local Yuibera Aboriginal language requires resurrecting or enhancing by other invited Aboriginal groups in Mackay. South Sea Island language has been depleted in Mackay, with some prospect of being resurrected in the future. While Torres Strait Islander language continues as a strong traditional form of communication in Mackay, neither Tim Kemp nor his wife Nita suggested that there was a recognised Yuibera or other Aboriginal language in Mackay (Kemp, 2006). Indeed, the Aboriginal community in Mackay may have to encourage other Aboriginal language dialects into the region. There may be as Stuart Hall (1987, p. 141) suggests the opportunity for “cutting and mixing ... anything that is meaningful” such as language in this case and resurrecting the language from those Yuibera people who remained in Mackay, and from those who have returned from the settlements scattered across the state. In addition, any invitation to enhance the resurrection of language by other Aboriginal groups in the Mackay region would be beneficial to the Aboriginal community in Mackay, but only if the traditional Yuibera people were in agreement (Hall 1987, p. 141).

Map 7

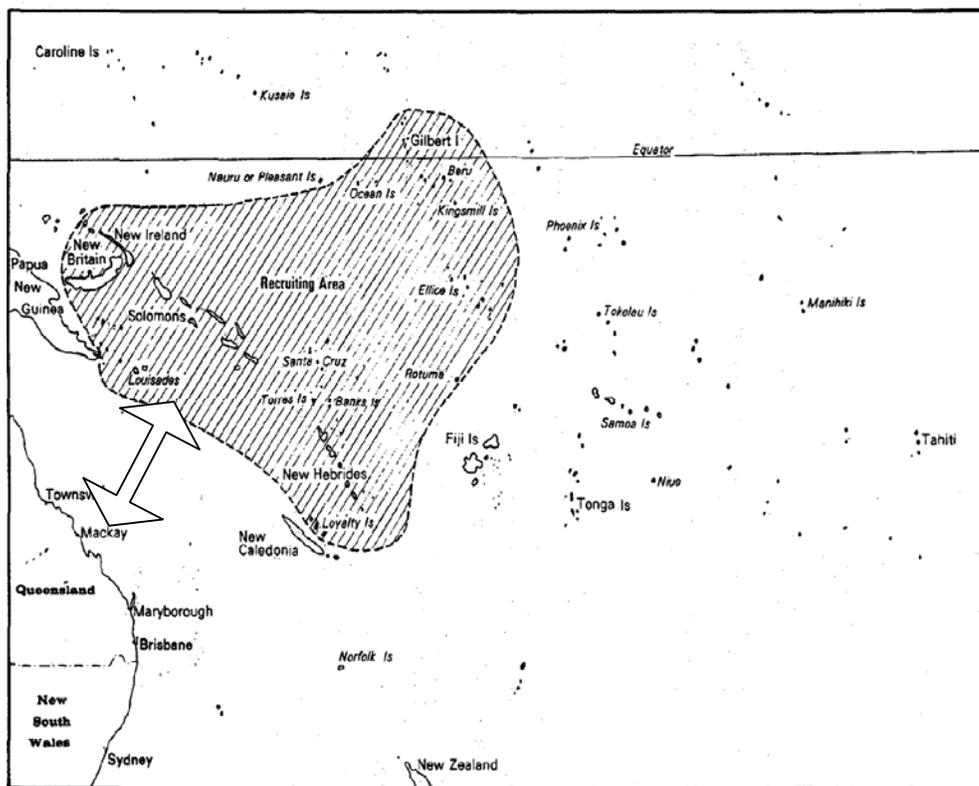


Reserves and other Aboriginal Communities in Queensland 1973  
Aboriginal culture reintroduced into Mackay to enhance a depleted Yuibera culture  
Source: Thomson, 1989, p. xxiii

Up to the 1970s most of the original South Sea Islanders in Mackay had been too poor to contemplate travelling back to the islands of their ancestors. In some cases, retribution for ignoring tradition in Australia, such as intermarriage, stopped people returning to their islands (HREOC, 1992, p. 36). The following generations of South Sea Islanders who are financial and do return to the islands see it as their tribute and respect to the grandparents

or the generations of 'indentured labourers' who were of the first people to arrive here in Australia (Barker, 1999, p. 69). These Australian South Sea Islanders are trying to link to their traditional lands. There are also people who do not know where their original land is situated in the island group. For example, Vanuatu people do not know which island group they belong to only that their ancestors are from Vanuatu. It could be argued here that Hall's (1987, p. 137) suggestion "the assimilation position did symbolic violence to people of other cultures" to the point that South Sea Islanders have only a vague memory of where their ancestors originated from.

Map 8



Contemporary cultural contact between Mackay and the Pacific islands  
Source: Dutton, 1980 p. x

Although South Sea Islander language has been depleted in Mackay by the 1970s, there are remnants of songs, rhymes or names of items or terms for things. Winifred Boah returned to Vanuatu in 1978 accompanied by Cissie Tarryango the sister of her grandmother. Cissie Tarryango recited a rhyme, she had been taught as a child by her elders in Australia to the people who

came to visit them on Vanuatu. The rhyme was recognised by the visitors and they identified what island group she belonged to from the rhyme. Travel to the traditional island by Australian South Sea Islanders during the 1970s was now continuing with greater frequency. In a manner similar to Beckett's (1987, p. 11) writings regarding Torres Strait Islanders, travel to Australia by South Sea Islander youth groups, church groups and elders on cultural visits has opened the door to the revitalisation or transportation of South Sea Islander language into Mackay (Beckett, 1987, p. 11). Those Torres Strait Islanders from the islands living in Mackay speak their traditional language as a first language in public and at home. It is only when the person being addressed cannot understand them that they will revert to the second language, English. First generation Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay are beginning to master the English language through their years at school and generally mixing with the multicultural population in Mackay. Since travel is accessible and there are no longer government restrictions on mobility, Torres Strait Islanders have had greater opportunity to transplant and use their traditional language (Beckett, 1987, p. 11).

Access to travel has made it possible for Aborigines to marry into different Aboriginal groups, either state or interstate. It is a similar situation for those Torres Strait Islanders who select partners from the different island groups in the straits or inter-state. While South Sea Islanders still place restrictions on marriage partners, Aborigines in contrast, have a large population from which to choose partners. It is interesting to note that the Woorabinda community in central Queensland has strong marriage ties with Mossman Gorge Community in the far north of Queensland and with Cherbourg in the southern end of the state. People linked by marriage travel to and from communities throughout the year for birthdays, marriages and funerals, generally, accommodating and acquainting themselves with their in-laws over several weeks. A similar pattern applies to Aborigines living in Mackay (Horner, 2004, p. 145).

Torres Strait Islanders in the period 1970 to 2000, have few problems with choice of marriage partners from their Islander population. For first

generation Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland and those living in the straits, travel between islands and the mainland is accessible, convenient and affordable. In contrast, for Australian South Sea Islanders, lack of finance for flight fares and in some cases a lack of ancestry knowledge militates against their returning to traditional lands and meeting their cultural group. Until this period, from the 1970s there have been several instances of Australian South Sea Islanders marrying or becoming engaged to a partner from the South Sea Islands. As suggested in Chapter One it is common for inter-marriage between the three groups in this project. However, intermarriage that would include a participant from the Aboriginal, South Sea or Torres Strait Islander groups to a partner from the South Sea Islands in the Pacific group were rare.

### **Assimilation and alliance to country**

An Australian South Sea Islander census was conducted in 1992 and it was estimated at that time there was a maximum of 12 000 Australian South Sea Islander persons (HREOC, 1992, p.28). Four years later and according to a 1996 census HRSCATSIA (1997, pp. 88 & 103) quoted that there was a total of “23100 Torres Strait Islanders who live on mainland Australia”, of this same group “some 10,100 Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland have shared Torres Strait and Aboriginal ancestry”. While in the Torres Straits there were 6231 Torres Strait Islander persons of which 564 share a mixed heritage with Aboriginal people. South Sea Islanders from Australia who have migrated to the Torres Strait Islands are accepted as part of the indigenous population and access all government services (HRSCATSIA, 1997, p. 8).

Without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners South Sea Islanders in Australia would have had major problems with population growth during the earlier years (HREOC, 1992, p. 34). Similarly, for Torres Strait Islanders after colonisation and the war in the Pacific, population growth suffered severely without intermarriage. After the 1970s Aboriginal intermarriage as well has bolstered the Torres Strait Islander population enormously on mainland Australia (HRSCATSIA, (1997, p. 103). The investigator suggests that Torres

Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders have benefited from the intermarriages and from Aboriginal interaction that had led to: population growth for both groups after the years of near extinction or population numbers around the 2000 mark.

Table 3  
Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander population in Queensland from 1970 to the present 2000.

	1976	1986	1996
Aboriginal	31948	48 098	74394
Torres Strait Islander	9396	13170	16346
South Sea Islander			10000

**Sources:**

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1990, *Queensland year book 1991, No 49 ABS catalogue No 1301.3*, Brisbane, Queensland office of Australian Bureau of Statistics, page 83; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, *Queensland year book 2001*, Canberra, Brisbane Queensland office of Australian Bureau of Statistics, page 58; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1992, *The Call for Recognition, A Report on the Situation of Australian South Sea Islanders*, Sydney, New South Wales, Alkenpress Pty Ltd, p. 18

It would seem some people groups are disregarded or miscalculated at the expense of other people groups. In the table above there are decades where South Sea Islanders are not counted. The result of, being excluded from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander funding bodies and also a lack of identifiers to register as South Sea Islanders. It could be argued that this has been ongoing since 1901 up to 1994 (Mullins, 1996, pp. iii-iv).

HREOC, (1992, p. 36) then asks the relevant question: where will those Australian South Sea Islander people call home? HREOC (1992, p. 36) claims that when Australian South Sea Islanders are asked why they do not become South Sea Islander citizens, they reply it is because “we’re Australian now”. As Hall too (1987, p. 138) implies, where is the alliance of descendants of the immigrants, in this case of Australian South Sea Islanders: it is to Australia. For the Aborigines there is no such question of loyalty to Australia because this is their country first and foremost; although it refers to a

traditional piece of land, they recognise this country as theirs (Hall, R. 1989, pp. 69 & 74). Torres Strait Islanders consider Australia as their country although it is separate to the mainland. Waway Tapim (2004) when finishing school stated "I was sixteen years of age" and along with other young Islander men told the recruitment officer that "we help to, join to help our, fight for our country". At the time the legal age for recruitment was eighteen years of age. As a soldier Waway Tapim (2004) and those young men who joined with him, at sixteen years of age, witnessed aerial warfare "we could hear them fighting on top, we was in the trench". Although Waway Tapim and his fellow soldiers were on Thursday Island in their trenches they were within earshot of bombing approximately one and a half kilometres away. Waway Tapim and the young men with him at the tender age of sixteen recognised the danger to "their country", extending beyond the straits, and they deliberately put their age up to eighteen to enlist in the Australian army. Their allegiance today stems from a commitment to the commonwealth. As suggested by Hall they have zealously adopted colonial rule and lifestyle for the benefits of protection to their people. Christianity, education, employment and travel are among those benefits. However, the protection of their culture remains strong today (Beckett, 1987, pp. 211- 214).

Christianity continues to influence traditional Islander activities and in some cases it is responsible for replacing tradition. Families adhere to or shift denominations in regards to issues such as dancing and men wearing the traditional wrap around cloth called the lavalava. Those people who do not dance on the grounds of religion still recognise dance as their culture. As an Islander person (Beckett, 1987, p. 209) commented "if we lose dance who are we?" On the mainland and in Mackay most Torres Strait Islanders do not attend church on a regular basis. The Islanders maintained their traditions by interweaving them into contemporary society. As a first priority Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland maintain their culture and tradition so that if all else fails they can return with dignity. However, to survive on the mainland they have adapted mainland lifestyles (Beckett, 1987, p. 212). Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders demand and expect to be included and treated as Australian citizens for two reasons. The first expectation was seen as a

reward for service gained through military service during both world wars. The second expectation is due to their status as Australia's indigenous people and their entitlement (Beckett, 1987, p. 207). South Sea Islanders have the same expectation of citizenship and a unique place in Australian history. However, their expectation is founded upon the hard physical labour activities of their forbears who helped establish the sugar industry in Mackay. Generally, the three groups see themselves as Australians, as a cultural group and also as a group within that cultural group (Kennedy, 2002, p. 39).

Colonial education has been a part of the assimilation process for Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders in Mackay (Hall, S. 1987, p. 137). Australia's education system has encouraged opportunities for integration, assimilation and advancement in colonial society that have carried over into the 1970s for all three groups. In addition, competence in the English language and education attainment are the goals for children of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders into the future (Hall, 1987, p. 137). Mullins (1996, p. 24) suggests that for the three groups the government was aware of "the connection between low education standards, poor employment opportunities and poverty." However, by the 1970s and beyond, each group was looking to employment opportunities for their children beyond domestic and labouring duties. Consequently, their culture and traditions give way increasingly to urban living, which, for children, necessitates five days a week at school, while the adults go to work (Beckett, 1987, p. 232).

Tim Kemp, Robert Boah and Waway Tapim each understand the importance of education for their children. They are aware that education is the means to employment that results in a comfortable lifestyle. Each participant was supportive of their children and encouraged them at school. From the 1970s onwards, the ABSTUDY program was in place for their children. ABSTUDY was available for Aborigines, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander students as confirmed by Kemp. Children who attended primary, secondary school and those contemplating university opportunities such as university link courses and undergraduate studies were financially supported. For the

children of the three groups to take their place within Australian society, education was the tool (Hall, S. 1989, p. 137). Cultural activities for the period in question were dependent on the amount of time parents were prepared to participate. In the early 1990s and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council (ATSIC) generated a greater community, state and Federal Government support of cultural issues for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. At this point in time ATSIC, subject to government policy, began the identity process that excluded South Sea Islanders from services or funding for cultural activities aimed at Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (Mullins, 1996, p. 26). The consequence of the exclusion for South Sea Islanders was a lack of finance to revive and transplant culture from the traditional South Sea Islands.

### **Contemporary culture and tradition**

Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders in Mackay continue their practices and history of integration. Traditional activities that Aborigines practise in Mackay have been encouraged by institutions and government, while human rights intervention led to the restoration of Aboriginal cultures across Australia. In Mackay Aboriginal culture remains strong to the point of organisations being formed to instil culture and tradition. Torres Strait Islanders have formed dance groups with family and island participation. After the call for recognition, South Sea Islanders, as stated in Chapters One and Two, also formed groups for performing traditional dances and other traditional activities.

However, only on invitation from elders or group organisers will individuals perform in the other groups' cultural dances or activities. Each culture separates when it is time to perform their traditional dances, songs or cooking activities. Each cultural group that attends an event encourages the other's performances but individuals do not infringe on each other's cultural activities. This is because of the respect that each cultural group has developed over years of integration with each other in Mackay. There is no combined indigenous cultural event in Mackay. There are days, for example, the

National Aboriginal and Islander day of celebration (NAIDOC), of which the two cultures will come together. However, there are obvious differences in their traditional activities. At weddings or birthday parties, if the person concerned is of mixed descent, then those cultural groups will perform their traditional activities (Kemp, 2005). For example, a wedding between a Torres Strait Islander woman, a niece of the Torres Strait Islander participant, and a South Sea Island man occurred recently where dancers from both traditional groups performed. Ultimately it was the Torres Strait Islanders who had greater involvement. They supplied the traditional turtle meat, used traditional island cooking and dishes, had people seated according to Torres Strait Islander status, had gifts of money presented in Torres Strait Island tradition and performed traditional dances well into the night. It was obvious that Torres Strait Islander tradition was the mainstay of the celebrations. The Torres Strait Islander participant, Waway Tapim and his daughter agree that they often see and identify other young indigenous people by the traditional dance or activities in which they perform (Tapim, 2006). Mixed marriages resulted in differences in face features, skin colour, hair colour and structure and also body structure of the people in this project. Therefore, a young person may have the features of either group but that person then makes his or her choice as to which tradition they will adapt. In some cases indigenous offspring from the three groups are as white in skin colour as a non-indigenous person. It is the traditional activity that person chooses to perform which will identify and explain their links and associations of that individual in the Mackay region (Tapim, 2006).

Anna, the eldest daughter of Waway Tapim explained how, when she is in public, that South Sea Islanders will wave and speak to her either in Mackay or in other towns, for example in Townsville, where once when she was holidaying. Although, at times they will be people she has never met, they acknowledge her link with themselves. Friends who are with her at the time often ask who was that person and she will respond: "I do not know but they are my mother's South Sea Islander relatives". Therefore, Anna has a choice as to which tradition she will practise and she is welcomed and has been acknowledged in both cultures of Torres Strait Islander and South Sea

Islander groups (Tapim, phone interview, 2006). As Hall's theory (1987, p. 141) would suggest, this is a process by which both indigenous groups outside their traditional territory integrate and create a different modern identity. In this case, both indigenous groups have come to an unwritten agreement. As Tim Kemp (2005) recalls that, in the earlier years of the communities, if you said "you were a murri or black fella in the mission ... you were then accepted by Aboriginal people". It seems that the practice continues among the three groups. They are aware that over the years government authority and colonisation policies has affected each other in similar ways. Once again, acknowledgement of and acceptance of each group is practiced but the keeping of individual culture and tradition is separate.

On the mainland, including in Mackay, only a small number of Torres Strait Islanders are committed to a Christian organisation as the link to participation in island society. Experiences of migration have identified the church as a gathering place and a place for news from the islands to be passed among mainland people. The majority tend to gather at birthday parties, weddings, funerals and tombstone openings to fulfil their participation and their link to island society. Travel and interaction on the mainland, have impacted upon culture and tradition (Beckett, 1987, p. 232). In keeping with Hall's theory (1987, p. 141) that "nobody moves from one place to another ... without being changed by the experience". The constraints and commitments of mainland life required an adaptation that provides the link with island identity. Constraints and commitments include curtailing traditional dancing into the early hours of the morning in the suburbs, work routines that take men away until the weekend and major events being postponed until the Christmas period. Torres Strait Islanders have tried to provide a selective version of their culture subject to those restraints of life on the mainland (Beckett, 1987, p. 232). The adaptation is evidenced through the tombstone opening ceremony. The absence of community structure, as on the islands, makes way for kinship supervision. Consequently, tombstone opening is of major importance on the mainland and draws people to the mainland from the straits, across the country and also transcends religious divisions. A

tombstone opening ceremony on the mainland, states Beckett, (1987, p. 233), “is not just an empty folkloric gesture or exercise in nostalgia”. At the present time, it resembles events like the National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) that rely on participation by volunteers. In contrast, tombstone involves kinship obligations. In centres like Mackay tombstone opening is the foundation for social organisation and includes the process of kinship and obligation. Tombstone ceremonies are also considered as an extension to include the growing number of non-islander partners (Beckett, 1987, p. 233).

This parallels the group labour ethos discussed in Chapter Three. Social organisation also occurred through command and structure of railway gangs as in the case of Waway Tapim. As a supervisor he was instrumental through his marriage and it was made possible through association with his gang of Torres Strait Islander men who accepted the South Sea Islanders and Aboriginal men working alongside them in prior decades. The participant Tim Kemp, an Aboriginal man, for example was a member of a gang under the supervision of Waway Tapim (Telephone interview, 2006) during those earlier years.

According to Beckett (1987, p. 233) tombstone opening is now considered to be the major traditional activity on the mainland for Torres Strait Islanders. There is a major transplantation of tradition from the straits to the mainland, in particular to Townsville and Cairns. These major coastal cities are considered by Islanders as the new centre of ‘Islander culture’. As a Torres Strait Islander person quoted (Beckett, 1987, p. 233) “Townsville carry all that custom bilong *yumi*, no more island” implying that Townsville is the town for tradition and not so much the islands in the straits. The statement supports the theory that there is greater participation at tombstone openings on the mainland than on the islands. Mainland participation is encouraged by kinship participation or obligation that results in organised work gangs, numbers for church congregations, and inclusion of non-islander partners to kinfolk, hospitality and support for mainland visitors and the return of islanders to their traditional islands (Beckett, 1987, p. 233). The tombstone tradition on the

mainland supports Hall's (1987, p. 143) theory that "culture is fluid, forever changing, picking and mixing". The tradition and changes are accepted by mainland islanders and islanders who remain on their traditional land in the straits.

There are similar inversions of the diasporic process for Aborigines and South Sea Islanders in Mackay. Early chapters of this thesis explored the impact on Aborigines and South Sea Islanders through travel away from their traditional lands and settlement in a new environment. Now after many years there is a return to the traditional lands. Aboriginal Yuibera people have returned after the last displacement up to the 1970s, an estimated fifty-eight years on, and by 2000 eighty-eight years on over two generations. For South Sea Islanders in Mackay there is an estimated one hundred and thirty-three years of Mackay settlement to the year 2000. Generally, an estimated three generations of Australian South Sea Islanders in Mackay up to 2000. For Aborigines, Yuibera in particular there may be two generations of absence if not physically then culturally. Consequently, the diasporic inversion witnesses a return to culture and tradition and its enhancement from Aboriginal groups throughout the country and the resurrection of a depleted Yuibera culture. It could be argued here that Hall's (1987, p. 143) theory "culture is fluid, forever changing, picking and mixing" relates to the Yuibera people of Mackay. There has been a changing and fluid movement of culture injected by other Aboriginal groups to enhance the depleted traditional group. It would seem that Yuibera people have to pick and mix from the other Aboriginal cultures to enhance their own traditions. The argument that Yuibera tradition remains as unchanged, constructs, a notion of cultural purity that has been subject to time, government restrictions and colonialism and consequently as Hall (1987, p. 143) argues, is lacking in validity. For example, Torres Strait Islanders and their tombstone opening ceremony in Mackay from 1943 to 2000, estimated at fifty years and over one generation, have brought a major redevelopment in that it is recognised as a major event on the mainland.

It is during the 1970s that individual Australian South Sea Islanders began travelling back to the South Sea Islands to look for their relations and;

traditional islands either in the island group of Vanuatu or in the Solomon Islands. It is this reversal of the diaspora and the automatic excitement of rekindling their culture, traditions and language that excites the South Sea Islanders in Mackay. Australian South Sea Islanders suspended a depleted traditional culture and adopted the colonial culture. Groups of Australian South Sea Islanders travel to learn who their people are and how they live. The constraints and commitments of Australian lifestyle will require an adaptation or a mix that will provide the link with South Sea Islander island identity and culture. The present traditional South Sea Island culture from the islands, either Vanuatu or Solomon Islands, will most certainly contain elements that will clash with urban commitments and Christianity of Australian South Sea Islanders. For example, the traditional building of an extra house for boys beside the family house in Australia is too expensive, while the spirits acknowledged in dance and song clash with Australian Christianity views.

### **Ethnogenesis**

Urban commitments continue to affect the culture of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders in Mackay. However, from 1970 onwards what has been identified, restored or transplanted as culture or tradition associated with each group has been more ethnically distinct. Following, Jones and Hill-Burnett (1982, p. 215) practice where such groups involved in ethnogenesis “seize on traditional cultural symbols as a definition of their own identity”. In this project the three groups see themselves as ethnically distinct from the each other while at the same time being distinct from colonial society. Generally, the three groups see themselves as Australians, as a cultural group and also as distinctive within that cultural group. For example: as Australians, then as Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders or South Sea Islanders, then broken down into an Aboriginal group for example Yuibera for Aborigines in Mackay; for the Torres Strait Islanders they are broken down into island groups such as eastern or western island group. For the South Sea Islanders they are then broken down into Vanuatu or Solomon Island groups and then into smaller language groups such as Tanner Island in Vanuatu and Buka in the Solomon Island group. The Mackay experience

suggests that the majority have replaced their culture with Australian mainstream culture while maintaining or reviving their former activities as part of the process of identity formation and cultural maintenance. In this way they also pay tribute to the first people who arrived, maintain memories of their traditional land and endeavour to maintain the memories of culture (Barker, 1999, p. 69).

Mullins (1996, p. 18) suggests that the three groups in this project work “towards three distinct common cultures” in Mackay. However, and “in general ... considerable goodwill between the groups” is evident in Mackay. This supports the comment by a South Sea Islander person (Mullins, 1996, p. 18) “that before 1967 ... they were ‘all little black kids together’”. The goodwill between the three groups in the project is similar to what “black American soldiers and Aborigines experienced during World War Two. The two groups were attracted to each other as Hall (1989, p. 75) would suggest through their “common experience of racism”. That goodwill from that ‘common experience’ remains between individuals and families of the three groups in Mackay. It could be suggested that in Mackay ‘all little black kids together’ and including adults are linked by colour and the result of racial abuse. Tim Kemp (2005) maintains “there is no animosity amongst them (the three groups in this project) and I’ve noticed that now since I have been here”. The ‘togetherness’ changes when; identification for services is required, when cultural and traditional practices are funded by government bodies (Beckett, 1987, p. 208).

Of late Mullins (1996, p. 18) states that “especially the young, who tended to identify as part of an homogenous black youth culture” on the mainland supports the theory of goodwill continuing between the three groups in Mackay. The young Torres Strait Islanders, South Sea Islander and Aboriginal school children on the mainland tend to refer to themselves as murri. There are those leaders (Beckett, 1987, p. 208) who say “we supposed to be one”. But, the mainland process for gaining access to funds and services Mullins (1996, p. 18) suggests has resulted in “the drawing of boundaries the defining of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ is to be expected, and

some tension must result". Drawing of boundaries causes the individual from mixed unions to identify by accepting a culture or in some cases accepting the three cultures as their choice of ancestry. Tim Kemp (2005) supports this by adding "yeah, they are still divided. But it's not anything bad about it. It's just that they stick to their own culture".

However, the general goodwill and intermarriage between the three groups in Mackay suggests there is a hybrid result as Hall (1987, p. 142) writes that:

hybridity the intermixing of disparate elements associated with 'cross-breeding', and diaspora, the space of dispersed populations, originally referring to wandering Jews from Israel.

In Mackay there is the intermixing of the three cultures and there are cultural activities that are so unlike each other. However, with intermixing and interaction of marriage, workplace, racial discrimination and colour of skin there are hybrid outcomes. The three groups have not adopted a hip hop or rap type music similar to the black African American experience. The rap lyrics that as Hall (1987, p. 144) states are "pervasive ... glorification of macho violence" it has however been adopted and considered to be a valuable tool for the disempowered black American race. Moreover, it is this vehicle called rap that has transported political, living experiences and concerns of urban American blacks. The groups in this project do not use hybrid music. While two of the group communicates with separate music styles to impart their life issues the other has no music to communicate to the public. Torres Strait Islanders have music that has a tropical island flavour with blues similar to that which Seaman Dan writes today and is considered contemporary music (Torres News 27 December, 2006 - 2 January, 2007, p. 8). Aborigines use the country and western style music such as Jimmy Little and also moved onto rock and roll such as Yothu Yindi. In comparison, South Sea Islanders do not have music relevant to their culture that they promote in Australia. Therefore, there is no hybrid music that the group uses that could be compared to the black American experience or the Australian indigenous people.

A common thread through the three groups related to a hybrid theory is skin colour or being black. As Stuart Hall (1987, p. 142) writes “black and British, black and European, black and American” there is the notion of black and Aboriginal, black and Torres Strait Islander, black and South Sea Islander. There is hostility in Hall’s academic profession towards notions of black or white purity. In Australia or the Mackay experience, it could be argued that being black is one form of hybrid identity that the three groups can relate to. This theory is similar to the black American soldiers who were drawn to the three groups during World War Two, suggesting, a hybrid formation in the face of exclusion and oppression from a white colonial majority. Evidence has also been demonstrated with the black American soldiers during World War Two. Hall (1989, p. 75) highlights this by stating “black American soldiers and Aborigines ... were drawn together through their common experience of racism”. Len Watson recalls black American soldiers socialising with Aboriginal people in north Rockhampton. Len claims his father and other black people discussed witnessing black American soldiers being physically attacked by white American soldiers. After witnessing those occasions Len’s father and friends had compassion for them as they understood the antagonistic feeling they were subjected to.

Hitherto, the Aborigines believed they were the only race subject to this form of racism. Therefore, it can be understood why their skin colour had drawn them together (Hall, 1989, p. 75). In Mackay the hybridisation continues with respect for skin colour. Writing in the same vein Beckett (1987, p. 234) highlights that the three groups in this project view themselves as “part of a black underclass for whom Australian citizenship is meaningless”. As Mullins (1996, p. 18) writes about “the considerable goodwill between the groups, especially the young, who tended to identify as part of an homogenous black youth culture”. Furthermore, outside of Mackay a South Sea Islander family (Mullins, 1996, p. 18) stated that their children went to a university in Victoria “because everyone’s a Koori down there” suggesting skin colour designates identity in Victoria. HREOC (1992, p.51) observed that the school “just counted the black faces” as an identifier supports that hybrid theory of black skin as the common thread throughout Mackay. It should also be noted that

the South Sea Islanders have been the only group in Australia to be identified as and to be treated as Australian Aboriginal people and supports the theory of hybrid skin colour (Mullins, 1996, p. 29). In Mackay there is no overlapping of culture or tradition that allows for a strong and obvious hybrid culture, however, each group is protective of their ethnogenesis, culture and identity (Hall, 1987, p. 142).

Common phrases and usage support the theory of hybridisation in regard to the three groups in Mackay (Hall, 1989, p. 75). A common word, familiar to the investigator and his peers and also used by the generation before them, is “whichway” and when spoken to a person from any of the three groups can mean ‘hello, how are you’ and the response is “sameway” which means “I am well and nothing has changed dramatically”. Or else, the individual will explain what dramatic events have taken place since they last spoke to each other. Or, “whichway” can be asking for advice about what is happening with this situation here and now. Another example is “which way you facing” means whose side are you on in this situation here and now. A familiar word that has been acknowledged by white and black people in Mackay is “gammon” which can mean a person is telling a lie “you gammon”. Or, that person is “gammon” means he or she is an unreliable individual or the person is struggling to do something that they are not able to do, while they believe and act as if they have mastered the activity, like driving a car or dressing in a certain fashion. The word ‘gammon’ remains one of several common words between the three groups into 2000.

Mainland Torres Strait Islanders, including Mackay residents, did not respond to urgings by government to find a common cause with Aborigines. To counteract this, Torres Strait Islanders have focused their energies towards cultural activities. Tim Kemp (2005) states that:

the fella that was in Woorabinda from the Torres Strait was Jeffery Doolah (who) came to Woorabinda as a school teacher and he was teaching the young fellas there to do the island dance.

Torres Strait Islanders have been involved in cultural activities from the early 1930s. These activities consist of dancing, singing, cooking, making artefacts

which are also welcome at multi-cultural events, schools and in other cases at private functions. Support has come in the way of scholarships to study at the Sydney-based Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre to develop traditional dancing as a career. How much then is considered traditional when contemporary dance is added and how much influence will non-Torres Strait Islander instructors have over performance? Traditional dancing is the way in which Torres Strait Islanders present themselves on the mainland (Beckett, 1987, p. 208).

South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders along with Aborigines had experienced the diaspora process in Mackay up to the 1960s; however by the 1970s things did change. Culture and tradition had changed for the three groups who had moved outside of their former territory to the point that culture had been either suspended or depleted like the local traditional Yuibera Aborigines. Or similarly Torres Strait Islanders suspended their culture for two to three years on the mainland. Or, voluntarily suspended or depleted as the South Sea Islanders did in Mackay. Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland were in a diaspora during and after World War Two. Local Yuibera Aborigines living on the land of neighbouring Aboriginal groups experienced an inevitable change of culture. Or in Mackay Yuibera people married into South Sea Islanders or other people groups and suspended identity and culture because of the restrictive and detrimental government policy (Hall 1987, p. 135). For Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland the state of diaspora; would last two to three years at the most, after which their culture was transplanted onto the mainland, although slightly changed to fit with urban living. From the 1970s onwards, human rights for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders continually lifted restrictive and detrimental government policy and it became beneficial to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Consequently, people who had migrated back to Mackay or those who had not been forced from Mackay now formally identify as Aboriginal (Bennett, 1999, p. 131).

Jones and Hill-Burnett (Howard, 1982, p. 219) point out that Aboriginal people suffered “oppression, discrimination and exploitation”. Similarly Torres Strait

Islanders and South Sea Islanders have experienced the same unfairness, inequalities, intolerance, and discrimination by the white population of Australia. That treatment has resulted in a hybrid identity of skin colour which has drawn the three groups in this project together. The Mackay experience is not an all consuming hybrid process because each of the groups had to use the ethnogenesis process from the 1970s to obtain their government services. Consequently, what transpires is the three groups are seen as hybrid in colour but all other aspects of each group practise ethnogenesis that is distinct from each other and the groups earnestly protects that process (Howard, 1982, p. 219). Similarly, for Aborigines Jones and Hill-Burnett (Howard, 1982, p. 218) point out:

A great deal of diversity exists among Aborigines ... each different in outlook ...government policies rest on the assumption that Aborigines are one people ... a fundamental element in bringing about the formative stage of Aboriginal ethnicity.

To conclude the events such as travel and dispersal promote a diasporic process that is not about fixed or absolute identities. South Sea Islanders have reversed the diaspora but not to the degree that Torres Strait Islanders have. For example, people in the Solomon or Vanuatu islands do not travel to Australia for weddings, birthdays or other major events in numbers similar to the tombstone openings that Torres Strait Islanders attend. Nor do Australian South Sea Islanders travel to the South Sea Islands in numbers similar to Torres Strait Islanders who travel back to the Torres Straits. However, both islander groups have used travel to their advantage in reversing diaspora. Travel for Aborigines outside of their geographical region is similar to travelling to another country. Aborigines have reversed their diaspora to a degree that culture had been transplanted from other regions and groups. Stuart Hall (1987, p. 135) states that identity is “no longer fixed once and for all” or absolute and culture is similar it changes to suit the urban environment. Consequently, Aboriginal groups migrating to Mackay have returned with culture and tradition to revitalise or enhance what has remained in Mackay for Aborigines.

## Chapter Five

### **Social and Economic Conditions 1970s – 2000**

This chapter begins by questioning the legislative changes that influenced social and economic conditions of the three groups during the decades 1970s to 2000. The 1967 referendum and identity issues are addressed in this first section of the chapter, followed by social issues, health and housing while the information presented relates to the Mackay area, it also takes into account what had occurred state wide and official attitudes towards the three groups.

The next section of the chapter explores employment, education and the ways in which each group addressed their work and employment conditions from 1970 to 2000. One relevant aspect of employment was mechanisation in the sugar industry witnessed by the investigator. The investigator discusses employment from his personal experience that aligns with the participants and their lives. Subsequently, the investigator narrates his recollections of work opportunities and of his own generation. The chapter then undertakes an investigation of the literature and the choices or opportunities which the workers from the three groups are experiencing today, in areas such as education. Although the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (ATSIC) was formed in 1989 towards the end of the project period, the investigator has included the participants' perceptions of ATSIC. To conclude, the chapter clarifies the participants' views concerning bureaucratic influence and its impact upon all three groups in Mackay.

#### **The influence of legislative change upon social and economic conditions**

During the 1970s the beneficial impact, upon Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, of the referendum legislation of 1967 was less marked in Queensland. For while the remainder of Australia's indigenous people became subject to federal government legislation, the Queensland state government continued to make decisions regarding indigenous people in

Queensland. In the 1960s black civil rights had been sought and presented to government bodies by the three groups as a single black movement. Legislation of the 1970s exhibited stricter identity criteria with the results that Australian and the immigrant Islander groups in this project endeavoured to identify as separate groups as a result of new policies. Obviously boundaries are blurred when the three groups intermarry as has been explained in Chapter One. Issues of mixed heritage force bureaucrats to address the issues and generate new policies. Unlike other states, Queensland had inherited two immigrant coloured groups, South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders, who were unlike any other in Australia. Consequently, they became closely identified or classified as Indigenous Australians which was correct for Torres Strait Islanders, while South Sea Islanders came under Islander status until government policy excluded that group. Consequently, identity and access to services became an issue for the three groups at this period. Self-determination programs were being conducted, while in Mackay the three groups began promoting their civil rights, including access, as two distinct groups, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations on one hand and Australian South Sea Islander organisations to health and housing on the other.

After the referendum, the Queensland government did not allow the federal government to take control of Queensland's Aboriginal affairs. Joh Bjelke-Petersen, Premier of Queensland, met with the Australian Prime Minister William McMahon to discuss Queensland's legislation. The result of the meeting was that Queensland's discriminatory legislation in regards to indigenous Australians was not to be viewed as discriminatory. The suggestion at the time was that the Queensland government knew what was best for Australia's indigenous people living in Queensland (Lunn, 1987, p. 150). The referendum of 1967 had implications for the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act 1965 (Qld). Both sets of policies were "based on humanitarian grounds" and their conceptions and strategies "(were) a positive attempt to help" Aboriginal people (Blake, 2001, pp. X1, 237). The Protection Act sought the direct involvement of state governments and excluded involvement by mission societies and benevolent associations (Blake, 2001,

p. 238). This paternalistic and authoritarian rule continued during the Bjelke-Petersen era in Queensland. The major change from earlier policies as a result of the 1967 referendum was that the Australian people voted for the granting of complete control of Aboriginal and Islander affairs to commonwealth government. During the 1970s Queensland was the only state that did not recognise and did not abandon the laws and policies that discriminated against Australia's indigenous people. As in the previous decades Aborigines in the Mackay region were the assumed target group as recipients of the referendum outcomes. Torres Strait Islanders were also genuine recipients due to their status as indigenous Australians; immigrant South Sea Islanders, on the other hand, were granted access due to their "Islander" status (HREOC, 1992, pp. 23-25).

The Queensland government, however, was aware of South Sea Islanders' situation and political officers had made unofficial provision for them to share the benefits that the two Australian indigenous groups accessed (HREOC, 1992, p. 24). Rosemary Kennedy (2002, p. 19) wrote of this development that:

mixed family-heritage descendants of Pacific Islanders and Aborigines claimed multiple identities. They were at ease assessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander funded services.

Torres Strait Islanders have similar issues with mixed family heritage and their access to services on the mainland but not so much in the Torres Strait. A report written in 1997 estimated that approximately 10,100 Torres Strait Islanders residing on the mainland have a shared heritage with Aborigines. This issue arose from the development of a new organisation such as ATSIC whose role was to represent Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland. The fact that the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) currently represents Torres Strait Islanders in the straits prevented the establishment of a similar organisation from being formed there (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 1997, pp. 11, 103-104). However, the issue of mixed heritage was analysed by one Torres Strait Island person (House of Representatives Standing

Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 1997, p. 103) who stated:

I do not want to be a lost generation and I do not want to be forced into a position where I have to choose between my mother' and my father' identity.

It is Torres Strait Islanders who, over the years, have maintained a passionate and determined effort to convince officials of their separate identities. In regards to the statement above, it would suggest that, there is a lost generation of people who have given up their identity as Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander identity. Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland are blessed with dual access to services as identified islanders and as members of the general public. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HRSCATSIA) (1997, p. 104) suggested:

People in the Torres Strait region focus on services while, for those on the mainland, the focus is on culture. Also people living on the mainland have access in many cases to mainstream services not necessary available to people living on the islands.

On the mainland, Torres Strait Islanders, like South Sea Islanders of mixed heritage, can choose to use mainstream services. Torres Strait Islanders are not as pressured when it comes to identification. They are naturally permitted to access all services to which Aborigines are entitled. Similarly those South Sea Islanders who have no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage use mainstream services. For Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland the problem was the lack of representation by their people within the organisations such as Aboriginal Advancement and ATSIC. Most staff within the organisations on the mainland consisted of Aborigines and there were times when South Sea Islanders were accused of taking jobs from indigenous Australians (HRSCATSIA, 1997, pp. 102-103). The issue of identity for South Sea Islanders is that they are assumed to be Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders by non-indigenous people in Mackay and are generally advised to accept Aboriginal programs (Mullins, 1996, p. 25). Generally, South Sea Islanders in Mackay are of the same status in regards to employment and education and are not financially ahead of the other two groups. There is therefore, the

opportunity for South Sea Islanders to access the same service where cultural sensitivity is catered for. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have achieved positive outcomes in housing, employment, health and legal representation in Mackay (HREOC, 1992, p. 68).

Descendants of the first immigrant South Sea Islanders have worked alongside Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders for black civil rights during this period. Establishing identity in Mackay, for the three groups in the project, at present can create frustration and cause friction between individuals, families, the three groups and departments. However, after the formation of ATISC and target groups encompassing Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, identity became more restricted. At times there are bureaucratic processes and obstacles operating with blurred boundaries for the three groups under discussion (HREOC, 1992, p. 67). Issues pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity surfaced in situations where their Aboriginality resulted in problems (HREOC, 1992, p. 66). During 1997 for example, the investigator's wife who is of Aboriginal and South Sea Islander descent had to confirm her Aboriginality in the township of Mossman to apply for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions in the Rockhampton region. After several enquiries she applied in Mackay where her mother was raised and an Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander man Tony Irelandes acknowledged the family's Aboriginal identity and authorised her application there for Aboriginal identity (Mullins, 1996, p. 26). HREOC (1992, p. 67) states "developing programs based on race will always involve complex problems" and furthermore there are "blurry boundaries" such as mixed heritage. It would seem that such is the case in Mackay where the Torres Strait Islander person would support a known Aboriginal application.

Identity within the defence force and enlistment remained the same as before World War Two for South Sea Islanders. During and after the Vietnam war and into the 1970s, South Sea Islander men were identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons when entering the defence force. A local Mackay South Sea Island man, Francis Fewquandie, died in action in the Vietnam war. Francis had been identified as a Torres Strait Islander. There

were two other South Sea Islander men from other parts of the state who died in action in Vietnam, both of whom were also identified as Torres Strait Islander men (HREOC, 1992, p. 69). The suggestion is that South Sea Islanders during the Vietnam war were again denied enlistment as South Sea Islanders because there was no recognition of their group until 1994 (Mullins, 1996, p. 2). It was convenient for South Sea Islanders to enlist as a person of Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal descent because they were viewed as and treated similarly by mainstream people (HREOC, 1992, p. 67).

Of further interest, the investigator recollects Noel Fatnowna an identified South Sea Islander working for legal aid and with a housing group in Mackay during this period. Now, however, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders reap the benefits of the earlier work that the three groups accomplished together. Since definitions of identity restrict participation by Australian South Sea Islanders, they have felt unfairly treated. South Sea Islanders are now denied access to services for which they lobbied with the two indigenous groups because they are not officially recognised participants or do not fit the criteria to participate officially (HREOC, 1992, pp. 67-68).

During 1972, commonwealth government policy was for indigenous people to practise self-determination. Nevertheless the commonwealth government under Prime Minister Whitlam in 1973 could not wrest authority for Aboriginal Affairs from the Bjelke-Petersen Queensland government. It was advantageous for Bjelke-Petersen to retain control, not least because, as he argued, the Cherbourg Aboriginal settlement in his electorate, the largest in Queensland, gave him a majority vote. At the same time it is common local knowledge that Bjelke-Petersen operated his peanut farm in Kingaroy and had conveniently employed many Aborigines from the Cherbourg community to harvest his crops. Meanwhile, throughout the state, his government worked with pastoralists, mining industries and business enterprises rather than ameliorating working conditions (Lunn, 1987, p. 151).

It was because of the state government's paternal attitudes and procedures that the three groups in this project continued to live on the fringes of society

at this time. Aborigines in Mackay during the 1970s formed Aboriginal and Islander lobby organisations that were sub-branches of federal and state bodies. Tim Kemp and his wife Nita were associated with such organisations. There were also prominent Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay associated with the same organisations. Tim Kemp (2005) states that he was chairperson of “One People for Australia League (OPAL) ... OPAL was a black organisation” and “spoke about housing”. Robert and Winifred Boah were also at the first stirring meetings in the 1970s when South Sea Islanders gathered together to request recognition. The group also wanted to access the same services for which Australia’s indigenous people were eligible. They as project participants may not have been members of the same organisation but they were each pressing their case for black civil rights (Mullins, 1996, pp. 9-10).

At the local level, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were now engaged in self-determination programs. There were programs that addressed issues such as housing and legal representation (Kemp, 2005 and Boah, 2004). Although these strategies were in place it was still the paternalistic Bjelke-Petersen era. In settlements like Mapoon in the far north of Queensland, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were being rounded up by authorities at the government’s insistence, forcibly moved from their houses, their houses destroyed and subjected to physical abuse by those removing them (Roberts, Parsons and Russell, 1975, pp. 54-61 and Bennett, 1999, pp. 88 &118). There was however an Aboriginal and Islander housing cooperative operating in Mackay during the early 1970s. It can be assumed that this was the organisation that Winifred Boah referred to, when speaking about the alternative that the Mackay Council offered those South Sea Islanders who had a “99 year lease” on land at Dumbleton. The people in question were ordered to remove houses from the land they had leased and they were given houses elsewhere that were part of the Aboriginal and Islander housing program (Boah, 2004). This was a classic example of local council bureaucracy aligned with the state government attitude that they knew what was best for the indigenous people in Queensland. The situation was that houses under a government program for Australia’s indigenous people were

being allocated to a distinct non Australian indigenous group (Fatnowna, 1989, p. 175. HREOC, 1992, p. 41).

The investigator recollects being imprisoned in the Mackay jail in 1972 alongside other South Sea Islanders and Aborigines. Noel Fatnowna, the South Sea Islander person working with legal aid for Aborigines and Islanders, arrived at the prison to organise legal representation at our request. It is important to note that Tim Kemp (2005) states he was “one of the first four or five ... getting legal aid here ... about 1965” from Townsville. Other representatives of the group were Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders who went to Townsville to request assistance to get a local service operating. At that time the investigator did not understand the legal process Noel Fatnowna offered and declined the offer. However, such a service was in operation from this time until 2000. After Noel Fatnowna vacated the position, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person would certainly have taken that position. The investigator recollects a well known and respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Tony Irelandes, being one, if not the first, officer to hold that position at a time when it was groundbreaking in the Mackay region and black civil rights were being advanced for indigenous people. As the investigator stated earlier, Tony Irelandes went on to manage a successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing co-operative that continues today.

### **Health and housing**

Socially the three groups in this project continue to be subject to the same racial discrimination by mainstream society in regards to accommodation. If not blatantly then it remained a subconscious act that was continued in other areas such as the law and social acceptance. For example, the lack of skills for employment results in work that pays poorly: poorly paid jobs result in poor housing conditions and poor health issues. In addition, lack of legal representation results in imprisonment (Mullins, 1996, p. 2). As stated above, Winifred Boah and her brother Marshall Miller owned the lease to house and land along the Dumbleton area of the river (Boah, 2004). The investigator

recollects South Sea Islanders living in the Dumbleton area in the late 1970s and during the early 1980s. This housing program was a major issue for the South Sea Islanders, because, it involved their homes and land that were leased by people belonging to the group. In some cases they lived in other areas of Mackay. For example, Winifred Boah and her brother Marshall Miller lived in the Pleystowe area. The government official who lobbied for the South Sea Islanders had to approach the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group and obtain houses from them for South Sea Islanders to live in.

Winifred Boah (Boah, 2004) states the council approached:

the Aboriginal and Island Department ... because they (Mackay Council) hadn't their own housing department at the courthouse.

The council obtained houses in Mackay for the Islanders who were lease holders, renting or squatting in the Dumbleton river area.

In regards to the late 1980s, Kelly and Lenthall (1997, p. 11) stated:

(In) 1988 Britain's anti slavery society visited Australia and commented on the third world conditions in indigenous communities and suggested they were similar to those faced by "blacks" in South Africa.

Governments controlled indigenous communities, according to these outside observers, without changing them for the better. How much more could the social conditions of black people in Mackay be changed? In relation to health for Aborigines Kelly and Lenthall (1997, p. 11) suggested during the 1980s that the:

1989 Death rate was four times greater than ... the general population. Life expectancy for Aboriginal people ... 22 years less than other Australians

Mullins (1996, p. 10) states that research in 1991-92 identified problems with "employment skills, home ownership and health" for South Sea Islanders. This research placed the group well below the rest of the Australian people. Health and housing statistics for South Sea Islanders exhibited very negative ratings compared to the national average for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Since 1992, housing cooperatives run by South Sea Islanders have improved accommodation issues. Consequently, it has added impetus to their shift to self-determination. In addition, it has provided them with

experience in organisational behaviour and management. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing waiting lists are not as long as mainstream waiting lists. With waiting lists of forty-two to forty eight months in the Mackay area it is understandable that South Sea Islanders would be trying to obtain houses more quickly through the Aboriginal programs (Mullins, 1996, p. 50).

Table 4  
Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander population in Mackay from 1986 to the present 2000

Aboriginal	1161 (1986) 1457 (1991)
Torres Strait Islander	1060 (1986) 1090 (1991)
South Sea Islander	4000 (2000)

Sources:

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1990, *Queensland year book 1991, No 49 ABS catalogue No 1301.3*, Brisbane, Queensland office of Australian Bureau of Statistics, page, 84; Jupp, J. 2001, *The Australian people*, Oakleigh, Victoria, Angus & Robertson publishers, Cambridge University Press (p. 612); Mullins, S. 1996 *After Recognition: access and equity for Australian South Sea Islanders*, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Qld, Rural Social and Economic Research Centre (p. 46)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in Mackay are similar as Table 4 illustrates. Prior to 1922 Aborigines were visible in Mackay and then again only after World War Two when labouring jobs were in demand. The end of World War Two Torres Strait Islanders also became more visible as residents in Mackay (Boah, 2004). In comparison, South Sea Islanders have remained the larger of the populations, of the three groups in this project, from the late 1800s to establish the sugar industry and again what remained after repatriation in the early 1900s. The period that the other two groups in the project were not visible South Sea Islanders continued to multiply and become established to the point that they double the population of the other two groups in Mackay (Jupp, 2001, p. 687).

Basic housing and health services are not the issues with which most non-indigenous people in Mackay are concerned. Rosemary Kennedy (2002, p. 38) suggests that “Mackays’ social hierarchy is top heavy with people from private enterprises” including medical practitioners from the private sector. However, it tends to exclude government employed practitioners. With the result, they are not offered the opportunity to mix with medical practitioners operating in private practices. Those in high paying jobs in the sugar industries, farm owners in the Mackay area and mining employees from the hinterland are able to access and register with lucrative private health insurance. These people use the medical practitioners from the private sector and private hospitals in the Mackay district. Rosemary Kennedy (2002, p. 38) suggests that Mackay’s social hierarchy has no interest in “who or what happened in Mackay Base Hospital”. The social hierarchy in Mackay is compartmentalised and they do not include even non-indigenous people from outside their circle. Obviously, high paying positions in the fields above and high health insurance are beyond the reach of the majority of people from the three groups in this project. Consequently, they are pushed further down the social ladder (Kennedy, R. 2002, p. 38).

### **Employment and Education**

This section of the chapter addresses employment, education and responses to work and employment conditions from 1970 to 2000. Of significance for the three groups in the project was the loss of many manual labouring opportunities owing to the introduction of machinery into the sugar industry. The investigator’s personal experience, his parents’ and the participants’ were all subject to the effect of mechanisation in their working lives. The investigator’s father left the cane fields for railway work: similarly and in earlier years the Torres Strait Islander participant also joined the railway industry. Both other participants in this project had worked on the railway during their working lives. It is also interesting to note that the investigator and the Aboriginal participant were both working under the supervision of the Torres Strait Islander participant at different decades during their working lives. At the same time work opportunities for the new generation changed as

education was promoted and people from the three groups became involved in new areas of employment such as administration, mechanised industry and professional sports.

### **Employment patterns and changes**

Horner (2004, p. 86) states that mechanised farms resulted in Aborigines and South Sea Islanders having “to travel further a field to find work” in areas such as fruit in Shepparton Victoria and grapes in Renmark South Australia. Victoria and South Australia continue to be employment destinations for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders even to the present day. Mullins (1996, p. 54) suggests “many worked in seasonal industries”. During the 1970s and 1980s as in the previous decades, Aborigines and South Sea Islanders worked in the sugar industry during the crushing season from June to November - December. Once the season was completed workers from the three groups would migrate south after Christmas usually arriving in the southern states in January ready to pick grapes, pears, oranges or cherries. Generally, the workers returned to Queensland just before Easter, in April, by which time fruit crops were mostly harvested. This was the beginning of winter when it got very cold and the workers were not accustomed to the cooler temperatures. When they arrived back in Mackay it was time for local work, planting cane, which lasted to the beginning of cane crushing in June. A few workers travelled further south of Shepparton to the apple orchards outside of Melbourne. However, the workers made sure that they arrived back in Mackay for the cane crushing season. This migration pattern for workers continues today. The investigator’s brother has a son who continues to work to this calendar. The migration pattern suggests such workers undertake three jobs each year (HREOC, 1992, p. 56). History has repeated itself by forcing South Sea Islanders away from the sugar industry (HREOC, 1992, pp. 19-21).

By the early 1970s, the investigator’s father had left the sugar industry and had been working for the Queensland railways as a maintenance worker. He worked on the branch line from Mackay to Finchatton where he died in 1980.

The investigator recollects that Robert Boah also worked on that section of line for a period of time during the 1970s. The investigator recollects working in and witnessing maintenance railway gangs of between seven men and also large railway gangs of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islander men numbering up to fifty working outside of Mackay and down to Rockhampton and as far north as Proserpine. Obviously there were gangs that operated further north to Cairns and out west to Mt Isa and there was a mixture of non-indigenous people in those gangs. This is also still seen up till the present day, although large gangs are fewer now that mechanisation has been adopted on large sections of railway track (Hall, 1995 p. 17). In this way, people from the three groups in the project continue to move out of the cane industry. However, they still experience limited employment opportunities in areas such as the trades, white collar work or management. The majority of the three groups continue to be employed in menial and manual labour work (Fatnowna, 1989, p. 175).

The investigator recollects Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders who acquired work in the hospitality industry on the islands off the Mackay coast such as Brampton and particularly Linderman Island. On Linderman Island there were a large number of the investigator's older female relatives working during the early 1970s and into the 1980s. This confirms that there were people, from the three groups in the project, who moved away from Mackay from the local domestic scene to become domestics in hospitality on the islands. It was not simply that Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders were not completing an education. Even the majority of those who, during the 1970s, did complete year ten or the junior standard at school, like the investigator's younger brothers were overlooked when trade apprenticeships became available. This overview concurs with Mullins (1996, p. 55) writings that the Islanders were employed in less skilled work and suffer the same racial discrimination as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

A mechanised gang using railway machines on a contractual basis was formed in Mackay during the early 1980s. This gang is similar to the system used on the coal lines in Western Australia. Many men from the three groups

in this project were employed in this gang. They travelled from Goondiwindi in the south to Cairns in the north and along many of the inland railway tracks. Many men from the same three groups living in Mackay joined this gang and received wages of \$60,000 a year or up to \$1,000 dollars a week. This involved ten to twelve hour six day working weeks along with interstate travel. The gang has machinery to complete three miles of track a day. The investigator has witnessed many Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander men who have advanced financially and socially from this kind of work. Many of Robert Boah's children, nephews and grandchildren work on this rail construction crew. Robert Boah's second son, Franklin, travelled to India with several other selected operators and their machines to instruct Indian workers on how to use the machines and to lay track for a company in that country (Boah, 2004).

During the 1980s the investigator recollects young school leavers of the three groups acquiring trades or skilled labouring positions. There was at this time a strategy to move away from general farm hands, labouring positions in the council or railway. In the Mackay region, Queensland Railways had employed several men from the three groups in trade and skilled labouring positions. Several Torres Strait Islander men became train drivers and train guards for the Queensland Railways. Two were from the same family. Several Aboriginal and South Sea Islander men were carriage shunters for the Queensland Railways in the Mackay station. In the sugar mills around Mackay the investigator remembers one South Sea Islander, a few years older than himself, who did his trade as a boiler maker. During the crushing season several Aboriginal and South Sea Islander men drove cane trains. During the 1980s a Torres Strait Islander family in Mackay owned, operated and continues to operate a well established crane and rigging service. The investigator also recalls during this decade that several Torres Strait Islander men were employed in very well paid jobs as deck hands and drivers of the tug boats docking ships in the Mackay harbour and the coal loading facility just 12 kilometres from Mackay. One Torres Strait Islander man owned a prawn trawler.

By the 1990s education for the three groups did create opportunities for employment in the trades and other areas beyond labouring work. However, statistics for the three groups would suggest that education was not a service that the three groups used to their advantage. Prior to the 1990s the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) was introduced at the national level in 1977. At the time it operated on isolated rural indigenous communities as a work for the dole scheme. By 1987 it was introduced into rural and urban townships where large numbers of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders lived and could access the program (Bennett 1999, p. 5). Mackay still had an effective CDEP program operating into the year 2000.

Mullins (1996, p. 54), quoting a 1992 report, states that “as a group Australian South Sea Islanders are probably as poor as Aborigines”. Bennett (1999, p. 4) quotes a 1996 source suggesting that Aboriginal unemployment levels are “three times the national average”, with one third of the Aboriginal population unemployed. However, Mullins (1996, p. 55) suggests that Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland during the decade of the 1990s have an employment rate that is “close to the national average” suggesting, that of the three groups, Torres Strait Islanders have the most positive result. ABS (1996, p. 30) statistics suggest that Queensland Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders have a “labour force participation rate of 59% for persons aged 15 years and over” and an “overall unemployment rate (of) 33%” and that “an estimated 6% (26% nationally) of employed persons were working in a Community Development Project (CDEP) scheme” ABS (1996, p. 31) adding that “an estimated 56% receive an annual income of \$12000.00 or less while 11% receive more than \$25000.00”. Mean annual income was \$14390.00 (ABS, 1996, p. 31).

### **Workplace interaction and seasonal travel**

Before the investigator changed his career path to education he recollects how his generation moved for work and how the Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander project participants featured in the early period of his training. As mentioned earlier in the project the investigator was a junior

employee on the railway with Waway Tapim as his Supervisor (Ganger) from 1971 for 2 years. Those years with Waway Tapim contributed to his confidence and his participation in senior duties in later years. During the early 1970s Robert Boah and his family travelled to South Australia for the grape picking season in Berri. Robert Boah and his family were contracted by a farmer to harvest his grape crop. It was there that the investigator, on his first trip south with another South Sea Island family, recollects being invited by Robert Boah to join his family to help harvest the grape crop. Robert Boah and his family travelled south to the same farm over several years. It was on the same farm a few years later that the investigator recollects meeting the Boah family again as they participated in this annual event. Many South Sea Islander families and single people, including Winifred Boah's two sisters their husbands and families, made the same migration over many years. The investigator also worked with the sons of those two families during the years he took part in the annual migration south to pick grapes in Renmark. As a result of those migrations, after the 1970s, there were several South Sea Islanders, single and married, who have settled in the grape and fruit harvesting areas of Renmark in South Australia and Shepparton in Victoria (HREOC, 1992, pp. 56 and 90).

During the mid 1970s the investigator recollects meeting and working with Robert Boah's eldest son Keith in Victoria in an area called Shepparton. It was there that many single members and families of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders, from Mackay and all along the northern coast of Queensland to Mossman in the far north, gathered to harvest stone fruit. Robert Boah's son, Keith, also migrated over many years to Shepparton for the fruit harvest. In the same manner, the brother of the investigator's father travelled south over many years from Babinda in the far north of Queensland to participate in the harvest. His two daughters have married Aboriginal men and settled to raise their children in the Shepparton area (HREOC, 1992, p. 90). The investigator recollects witnessing similar groups of non-indigenous people from the same areas of the Queensland coast involved in the harvest in this area. In the investigator's experience many

non-indigenous people were also involved in this social pattern of annual migration to the south for fruit harvesting, particularly in the Shepparton area.

### **Contemporary work choices and opportunities**

Workplace interaction around Mackay began to change during the late 1980s and during the 1990s. The majority of unskilled workers continued the seasonal work migration cycle as they had in the 1970s. However as there were visible and numerous indigenous organisations, positions as indigenous liaison officers, other service deliveries and equal employment positions also became available within many government and large industries nationally and in Mackay as well (MRSATSIC, 1997, p. 225). Mullins (1996, p.11) in his report requested “the government should make specific allocation” for South Sea Islanders as had been available for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders during earlier decades. The Aboriginal Advancement and ATSIC department procedures required indigenous administrative workers. In Mackay, these positions were taken up by people from the three groups in the project (HREOC, 1992, p. 68).

Queensland Railways remains a major employer of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Mackay. Many relatives and friends of the participants are employed or subcontracted by the railways. The investigator has accumulated experience over ten years, working with the railways in the Mackay area as a labourer within numerous maintenance gangs. The participants and those of the same generation as the investigator would agree or people who were employed in senior labouring positions, were looked upon in awe. They were considered as ‘the people with brains’ and were regarded as people who were ‘making big money’ and as having status in their communities. From the 1970s until 2000, Mackay people from the three groups in the project have been employed beyond track maintenance work where most of the groups from this project were employed. In the investigator’s experience and the participants’ knowledge, a list of more senior positions would include: track inspectors, trades people and train crews.

Several of this group are employed on the coal mining branch that services the mines in the area in which award wages are higher than mainline wages.

Within the mining industries around Mackay there are also people from the three groups employed. Robert Boah's brother in-law, a friend who lived close by and several other South Sea Islander families are employed by mines in the area. The investigator's wife has Aboriginal relatives employed at the mines along with families of mixed heritage with South Sea Islander partners. The investigator's brother, his wife and a person of mixed heritage that includes Torres Strait Islander heritage and is extended family to the investigator, are employed at the same mine outside Mackay. The investigator, in his work as a recruitment person for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, is aware of Torres Strait Islanders who are mine workers. Their children have enrolled at Central Queensland University. In addition, there are also Torres Strait Islanders who work as contractors for the mines.

An avenue where it is expected that people from the three groups in the project excel is sport. Several gifted sports people from the Mackay area have successfully participated in the professional sports arena. Well known Mackay rugby league personalities such as Aboriginal man Dale Shearer, Torres Strait Islander man Wendell Sailor and South Sea Islander man Butch Fatnowna engaged in this profession at elite level around the same period as Mullins (1996, p. 34) points out in his work. During the rugby league season from March to September each year, the investigator reads a weekly magazine, known as *Rugby League Week* that provides information about players, clubs and other information related to the players. There are many other local men, from the three groups in the project, who try out and are employed professionally in rugby league, interstate and internationally. Rugby league offers employment, publicity, fame, large sums of money and travel either interstate or nationally.

Mullins (1996, p.10) points out that on the basis of 1992 statistics, that South Sea Islanders in Mackay have difficulties gaining employment. In Mackay and

Rockhampton alone during 1995 their unemployment rate was 11.7%. The average was 9.7% throughout Queensland. However, South Sea Islander unemployment in the Mackay-Rockhampton area was 2% above the Queensland average. At the same time a five year report (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission, Monitoring and Reporting Section, 1997) revealed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics for the Australian public service reached 2.1% in 1996 ahead of the 2% goal projected for 2000. Although Australian public service statistics are not an overall employment statistic, these figures favour Australia's indigenous peoples above their South Sea Islander counterparts (MRSATSIC, 1997, p. 226). According to the same source, employment statistics for Torres Strait Islanders correspond to the national average. However, the three groups combined have unemployment figures above the national average. Mullins (1996, p. 56) suggests this is because the three groups in this project "share a similar history, face the same racial discrimination and live in similar circumstances".

### **Educational opportunities**

By the 1970s access to education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders was part of equal opportunity with programs continuing through to the present. ABSTUDY has been accessible for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Queensland at institutions such as secondary school, TAFE and universities. In Mackay, South Sea Islanders have participated in ABSTUDY programs like the other two groups (Mullins, 1996, pp. v & 36). As stated earlier in Chapter One of this project, education was a transformative process for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders moving from their traditional societies into colonial society. The aim at that time was to develop a healthy people that could communicate and fill the gap in the labour force. In Queensland and Mackay, this aim continued from the 1970 into the late 1980s under the Bjelke-Petersen state government. Employers continued to access the established peasantry within easy access. What continued in Mackay was the assumption that the three groups from the project were not going to ascend into business or trades (Blake, 2001, p.65).

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are recognised as a single equity group alongside three other designated groups. These groups remain ahead of South Sea Islanders for equity access some twenty plus years later. Additionally, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody brought educational access to the fore for Australia's two indigenous groups (MRSATSIC, 1997, p. 225). In the wake of its recommendations, South Sea Islanders in Mackay and Rockhampton were also able to participate in similar education programs. Participation was made possible by mixed marriage. Non-indigenous administrators, who were not aware of the differences encouraged South Sea Islanders to participate in these programs (Mullins, 1996, pp. 25-26). The Aboriginal employment department set a target in 1987 to increase indigenous numbers entering the public service by 2000. It sponsored an Aboriginal cadetship program, a strategy that involves university graduates being employed by their sponsors on completion of their degree. The program in 1996 had 170 indigenous undergraduates participating with more undergraduates being added by the year 2000. Central Queensland University students participate in this program and often use the investigator as a link to sponsors (MRSATSIC, 1997, p. 225). Mullins (1996, p. 25) argues that "scores of South Sea Islanders graduated from James Cook University's Aboriginal and Islander Teachers' Education Program". This took place during the 1970s and 1980s and continued after 'Islanders' were recognised as both Torres Strait and South Sea groups. During this period South Sea Islanders were encouraged by administrators to participate and were accepted as Islanders. This increased frustration in cases where the two groups' descendants were not the result of intermarriage and consequently were not entitled to access. In addition, it added to complications when scrutinising statistics for the three groups and their educational achievement (Mullins, 1996, pp. 25-26).

### **Work opportunities and the new generation**

During the 1990s and into the following decade there was a renewed push for education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. At the TAFE level access for South Sea Islanders was granted for programs similar to those

which Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were able to access. Opportunities were available for foundation studies to enter tertiary level or foundation studies to move into the trade industries (Mullins, 1996, pp. 35-36). The investigator and his family travelled to Rockhampton to access the education facilities that were available. His younger brother and his family also arrived in Rockhampton for the same purpose. Both completed undergraduate degrees along with other mature age Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. The younger brother and others that graduated along with him at Central Queensland University are in professional positions throughout Queensland. Since 1990 the investigator has witnessed, as part of the public at TAFE and an employee of Central Queensland University, many Mackay Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders completing degrees or completing university courses and being employed by organisations throughout Australia (Bennett, 1999, pp. 7-8).

However, the decade of the 1990s and relevant statistics suggested that education was not an accepted career path for the majority of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (1996, p. 37) states that for school children aged 14 years, "the participation rate was 100%". A South Sea Island student survey estimated 97% of primary school age students were attending school during the early 1990s. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remained at school until the legal age for school leavers of 15 years and onto 17 years, after which numbers declined considerably. By the age of 17 years, 72% of Australia's indigenous people had left school leaving only a minority in schools (ABS, 1996, pp. 37-38). Similarly, South Sea Islander students who left school at 15-16 years were estimated at 50% of the total. During the decade of the 1990s, the participation rate for South Sea Islander students was slightly less than the national average, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student participation rates were significantly below the national average (HREOC, 1992, pp. 46-47). However, according to the Bureau of Statistics (2004, p. 3-4) there have been "significant gains" for "qualifications such as certificates and diplomas" from 12% in 1994 to 26% in 2002. In addition, there was an

increase in indigenous people holding a degree or above from 1% in 1994 to 3% into 2002.

The formation of ATSIC in 1989, although not established at the beginning of the period under examination brought many opportunities to indigenous Australians. The investigator has therefore included the participants' perceptions of ATSIC and the effect it had on the three groups in the project. How has ATSIC influenced the three groups in Mackay and what role did its bureaucracy play on behalf of the three groups? ATSIC organisations during the decade of the 1990s and beyond have become more stringent in regards to participation in programs targeting their groups. The result is that South Sea Islanders in Mackay are now excluded from education support in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs. This has affected retention of South Sea Islander students. Some students are handicapped by financial issues and therefore enrolment numbers fall considerably after 15 years of age (Mullins, 1996, p. 26). In regards to South Sea Islanders and education in Australia, this supports Mullins (1996, p. 29) suggestion that "no other group has been so closely identified" as Australia's Aborigines or been "at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder after more than 100 years of racial discrimination". South Sea Islanders are endeavouring to guide their children and their mature age people towards a career in education. They are now aware that education in the islands has resulted in their country men and women rising to the standards of professions, such as, doctors and dentists. South Sea Islanders of mixed marriages are progressing through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education programs while others, access the mainstream programs such as AUSTUDY. During the early 1990s the group's university participation declined (Mullins, 1996, pp. 31 & 35). However, towards the end of the 1990s the participation rate was a little below the national average.

The outlook for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders is promising. With programs such as ABSTUDY, private tuition, TAFE courses and university foundation courses the future seems brighter (Mullins, 1996, p. 29). Bennett (1999, p. 8) maintains that "there have been many changes, most notably in

the number taking out university degrees and there is a rapidly growing group of high-achieving Aboriginal role models for young people". However, there is still a way to go to maintain similar participation rates to non-indigenous students. The three groups continue to lobby and to depend upon the departments and the bureaucracy that allocate pathways and identify careers for them.

### **Relationships with the bureaucracy**

The arrival of the first fleet brought a colonial system of government that has been forced upon Aborigines on the mainland in subsequent years, while in the Torres Straits the Islanders suffered similarly. South Sea Islanders were sometimes introduced into Australia under bogus conditions. Strategies such as protection boards, police removal of children and now identity issues are controlled by bureaucracy. This is also the experience of the three Mackay groups (Bennett, 1999, p. 130). Commonwealth and state government organisations operate to fragment administrative responsibility. These bureaucracies continue to develop, introduce and implement programs for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders for equitable participation in mainstream society. Bureaucracies impact on all of Australian society. Non-indigenous and indigenous Australians access the bureaucracy for such things as passports and employment. However, for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia and in Mackay, their exclusion from mainstream society has left them dependent upon government bureaucracies to elevate them to equal opportunities in areas including education, employment and housing. South Sea Islanders in Australia have been a forgotten race and have survived under the cover of Australia's indigenous peoples. Or, they have integrated into mainstream society and have suffered similar exclusion to the two Australian indigenous peoples (Bennett, 1999, pp. 130-131).

Administering government organisations were generally unaware of the existence of three distinct groups in Mackay. Acknowledgement of the two Australian indigenous groups and the South Sea Islander group from 1994 by commonwealth and state administrators now exists. However, South Sea

Islanders in physical appearance can at times resemble both Australian indigenous groups. Generally, within the non-indigenous community in Mackay it is only those local people who interact with them on a daily basis, such as farmers, shopkeepers, taxi drivers and publicans who are aware of their distinctiveness. Therefore, the Mackay bureaucracy tends to exclude the Australian South Sea Islander group, in keeping with their previous experience (Boah, 2004). There are however, those people in the three groups, who strongly agree that if people do not want to identify as either Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders they should then not be eligible for the services that bureaucracy has set in place for the three groups. In this situation bureaucracy has, through identity classification, set in place determining criteria in negotiation with the two indigenous Australian groups (Mullins, 1996, pp. 16-17).

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders do not generate large numbers of votes during elections. Consequently, politicians generally do not wholeheartedly promote indigenous affairs in Australia unless they have a passion for the purpose. Australia's indigenous people have particular issues that include land rights and employment issues. Those issues, usually clash with farming and mining programs. Leading politicians and parties attract financial support and votes from the farming and mining industries. Therefore, their obligations and focus are directed by those industries. It is then left to the three groups to negotiate with the bureaucracy on behalf of their people (Bennett, 1999, pp. 115-120).

The exclusion and the limited social status of South Sea Islanders, after one hundred years, attracted support from government bureaucracy and the human rights department. The call for recognition of South Sea Islanders in Australia has come from people such as the participants, sympathisers and local people and explains where the group is today. The call for recognition involved asking government to acknowledge that the group exists in Australia and its departments to elevate the group to levels of equal opportunity for access to employment and education. Islanders expected a governing body

that would be similar to ATSIC in areas that addressed education, employment, health and housing (Mullins, 1996, pp. 14-16).

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) 1989**

To protect resources, the Commonwealth Government questioned whether Aboriginal affairs would have greater effectiveness under mainstream portfolios? Or would an overarching body operate their affairs effectively? In 1972 the government decided on the overarching body and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) was accepted followed by ATSIC in 1990. ATSIC was formed as a means to foster indigenous participation in decisions that affected them (Bennett, 1999, p. 143).

The federal DAA was to work in consultation with Aborigines and ATSIC operated as a coordinating body that dealt with representation and administration. The department was to advise on all levels of indigenous issues, advocate recognition of rights and deliver and monitor services to indigenous Australians. ATSIC as a department looked at the big picture and not at community differences. Consequently, throughout Queensland at community level including Mackay, the three common experiences of exclusion by mainstream society bonded the three groups. Yet there were three distinct entities associated with ATSIC with various levels of access; Aborigines as the target group, the second, vying for its own voice in the Torres Strait Islander group and the third affiliated yet excluded, on behalf of South Sea Islanders (Bennett, 1999, p. 143).

Waway Tapim was asked about the DAA and his opinion of that department by his daughter Anna. Waway Tapim (2004) thought for a long while in silence and stated "they treated us like dogs". Anna as a child was raised on the mainland and did not access the ABSTUDY program at all. Anna thought the reason was that her mother thought that they made too much money to be able to access the ATSIC benefits. Waway Tapim (2004) stated when asked about his thoughts of ATSIC that it was "not good". Obviously a man of few words, he has had however the opportunity to live between the cultures and

has had life experiences that extended to the frontline in war where colour is not recognised. Waway Tapim has not found it necessary to access the ATSI services since returning from the Korean War. Waway Tapim has been blessed with employment and good health to the point that at age 80 he is still working for Queensland Railway in Mackay. The Returned Servicemen League has supported Waway Tapim in areas such as health and housing (Tapim, 2004). It is worth noting that Torres Strait Islanders on the mainland were represented in two respects. The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) was established in 1994. TSRA represented people in the Torres Strait region. The other body which was operating within the ATSI organisation was the Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board (TSIAB) which “represents the interest of Torres Strait Islanders living outside the Torres Strait region” (HRSCATSIA, pp. 17 & 30).

In regards to his experience of ATSI services Tim Kemp (2005) states that he:

never had much to do with DAA it was going for a long time. ATSI was good but people started to abuse it. ATSI wasn't any good as it claimed to be they offered 4% interest loans for houses and that was only in for a while then interest went up. It was the government who wants white people to believe that (it was 4%) that idea was put across by the government for white people to believe”. A common statement by non-indigenous society was “you only have to be Aboriginal to get loans and houses.

Consequently, that misinformation made non-indigenous people envious and wary of Australia's indigenous people. Tim Kemp (2005) believes that the ATSI policy was fair because it suggested that South Sea Islanders:

were free people even when they were used as slaves they were never taken away and put on reserves like the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people. South Sea Islander people were classed as citizens. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people never got to vote and were never counted at census time.

South Sea Islanders and their declining socio-economic conditions, after one hundred years in Australia, again forced concerned community leaders in 1991 to lobby the commonwealth about their destitution. Leading up to this from 1970s and the South Sea Island movement Robert Boah (2004) states:

we started it off at the Parish Hall in Mackay just for the South Sea Islanders. We wanted to get recognised as a different group be recognised on our own. It all started with the housing, South Sea Islanders where in their houses (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) and classed as Torres Strait Islanders.

Robert Boah (2004) went on to say that in regards to the DAA and ATSIC:

They were all right (departments) but we did not want to get classed as one of them (Australia's indigenous people). It got to the stage with ATSIC that they were saying this is not for South Sea Islanders, only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. That was how we come to start our group we knew that (we did not fit the criteria) was going to happen. We were seeking the same rights as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but no land rights, we did not want that, we wanted interest loans and housing, which we got in place later on.

In 1993 a call for recognition was tabled in parliament. This report was acknowledged by the commonwealth and state governments during 1994. Recognition was accomplished at approximately the same time as the change of DAA, when it was easier for South Sea Islanders to access services, to ATSIC that excluded South Sea Islanders. The Australian South Sea Islander group was added to Access and Equity Strategy along with other groups such as religious groups, people from non-English speaking background and Australia's indigenous people. For South Sea Islanders addition to the equity target group is viewed as the answer to ATSIC. South Sea Islanders were content that they were receiving similar access to the basic things in life (Mullins, 1996, pp. 2 & 4).

To conclude this chapter, the investigator suggests this project is written on the assumption that memory and history are integrated. History today reconstructs and diminishes the emotions of memory. The project re-awakens memory supported by history as participants and academic writings bear witness of a tripartite interaction of the three groups in this project from the 1970s to 2000 in the Mackay area. From the 1970s Queensland was the only state that would not surrender Aboriginal Affairs to the commonwealth and continued the assimilation process. Torres Strait Islanders viewed issues regarding mixed family heritage with Aborigines and South Sea Islanders.

They endeavoured to implement several strategies to voice their needs as a separate entity with needs of their own on the mainland and in Mackay. During the paternalistic Bjelke-Petersen era Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the far north of Queensland were still being forcibly moved from their houses and suffering physical abuse. The three groups in this project in Mackay at that time were under the same regime and South Sea Islanders were being moved from their leased land along the Pioneer River. Mechanised farming resulted in local Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders employed in railway gangs in Queensland and onto Western Australia on the coal lines. During the 1990s and into the decade of 2000 there was a push for education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, South Sea Islanders were able to access similar programs but not to the full advantage of the two other indigenous groups. The late 1980s and the early 1990s saw a visible shift to administration work within indigenous organisations with positions such as indigenous liaison officers, staff for service deliveries. A target to increase indigenous numbers into the public service in 1987 by 2000 was accomplished. By this time the government accepted the DAA followed by ATSIC in 1990. During the early 1990s, Australian South Sea Islanders were included in access and equity strategies. Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders do not generate large numbers of votes during elections. Therefore, it remains with bureaucracy to negotiate and develop strategies, for people from the three groups in this project, for equity to access opportunities that mainstream Australians take for granted.

## Conclusion

The project involved the gathering of information from three participants who were residents of the Mackay area from the 1930s to the present 2000. These participants were selected as recognised members of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islander groups in Mackay. Chosen as examples of Elders who are cultural brokers they operated as cultural brokers operated between white and black people. And, imperative for this project they have also acted and continue to act as brokers between the three black groups in Mackay. The first task involved organising and participating in interviews with the participants. The interviews took up to one hour each with the participants. The Aboriginal and the South Sea Islander participants had their wives accompany them during the interview. While, Waway Tapim had his eldest daughter accompany him during the interviews. Because of their family status and familiarity with the investigator, it was appropriate for the participants to recollect their histories and convey their recollections and experiences their way. Those recollections further added to the knowledge base of which the investigator's own generation is at times unaware.

The three aims of the project included consulting in the first instance the secondary sources that laid the foundation for the project. The second aim clarified the similarities and differences of the three groups in regards to changing culture, social and economic conditions. The third aim compared the interactions of the three groups reflected by the participants through their interviews combined with the secondary sources.

In the process the project reviewed a hundred year history of intermarriage and the adaptation of the three shared cultures over that period of time. In the case of intermarriage it was useful to discover how much of each culture was kept and which culture was seen as influential on the other. The project intended to and had discussed the results of the interaction of the three societies, including the ongoing effect on the participants.

Fatnowna (1989), and Mullins (1996) effective use of oral history was adopted in this project. The project used research by Mullins (1987) as a foundation to inform and explain the cultural diversity of the three groups identified above. In addition, work by Fatnowna (1989) supported the participants' recollections. Oral history is seen by many of Australia's indigenous people as the power of the spoken word. Anderson (2002, p. 64) suggested that oral history offers a new insight, dignity, respect and a revelation of a hidden layer of social history. Moreover, this project brought into focus the lives of people whose lives have been ignored historically in favour of the general trend of gathering historical records from the more charismatic people. The work of Hamilton (1994) was used to support the expectation that oral history participants have an obligation, to recollect and bear witness for the generations following. And, the investigator proves that in regards to their Mackay origins and traditions (Hamilton, 1994, p. 16). Consequently, there is an awareness of oral history by people and institutions with local histories. Furthermore, the project took into consideration the cultural diversities of the three groups. Oral history allowed the three participants in this project to explain their historical interaction comfortably in their way (Anderson, 2002, pp. 64-65).

For theoretical purposes, the investigator used Hall's (1987) diaspora process in describing how diaspora affects people locally through travel and intermarriage to Mackay before the war. Although Hall's (1987) work does not address intermarriage, for the three groups in this project a similar adaptation to the host country and a degree of assimilation into the colonial system has been necessary for the purpose of survival. Hall's theory helps to explain why such groups modify their traditions under the influence of policy, repatriation and crisis.

Hall (1987, p. 141) suggested that culture is mobile, dynamic and unfolding. The project tested his theory against Australia's Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and South Sea Islanders. His work is the foundation for understanding the development of these social interactions. Hall (1987, p. 138) argued that race and culture involved more than biological issues. Moreover, it is no less about what nationality a person identifies, what place

(for example Mackay) a person comes to be in and also includes a consideration of the country that person identifies with. Therefore, race and culture are not simply about belonging, but rather about the cultural development which is in the process of being continually formed. Hall's (1987) significant work was most useful for the early chapters of this project. However this thesis went further than Hall in tracing the process of cultural replenishment through the reversal of diasporas in the later chapter of the study. Depletion and replenishment of cultures and traditions over time produced local leaders who stepped forward either voluntarily, as one of the participants did, or their character elevated them to that role like the other two participants in this project.

Stephenson (2002, pp 57-58) suggested that, when Australian history looks at mixed marriages or social interaction, the white/black or white/Aboriginal dichotomy usually prevails. A new trend in research suggests moving away from the usual white/Aboriginal and Anglo/ethnic and including Australia's indigenous people/ethnic. Moreover, there is a history of non-European migration that includes South Sea Islanders, Indians and Afghans who intermarried and socialised with Australia's traditional people. This project contributed to that knowledge base by identifying a three way communication process of social interaction between the three groups in this project. Many non-indigenous people would assume that all black skin people belong to the same race. Consequently, this project identified cross cultural exchanges as an ongoing dynamic for the three identified groups mentioned above and revealed ways that cultural diversity influenced these interactions. This project researched, traced and identified the process for the three targeted groups (Stephenson, 2002, pp 57-58). Mullins (1996) argued that it is the people who live the life that choose their identity. It is the individual who determines which tradition they will adopt, what they will keep and forfeit, as discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Four.

For the post war period, when the Torres Strait Islanders arrived in the Mackay region, Mullins (1996) work reveals the ethnogenetic process of distinctiveness at work between the three groups in the project, a process

elaborated upon in detail in Chapter Four of the thesis as part of the post immigration phase of cultural contact. In this regard, Jones and Hill-Burnett (Howard, 1982, p. 219) look at how Aborigines are assumed to be one people across the continent but are in fact many distinctive groupings. At the same time, research by Mullins (1996) and HREOC (1992) revealed that all three groups in this project were subjected to similar exclusionary treatment in Mackay at various times. Members of these three groups do at times adopt the hybrid skin duplication as they are attracted to each other because of the racism that includes exclusion from white society. Paradoxically, as later chapters argue, however, each group has maintained its distinctiveness in matters of traditional language, culture and tradition. It is of interest to note that the project revealed black American soldiers were also attracted to the three groups in this project because of their similarity in skin colour and racism. During war time they socialised with the three groups where possible, including in Rockhampton and along the Queensland coast, while they were on leave in mainland Australia.

Diasporic movement had begun from the time the Aborigines integrated with South Sea Islanders in Mackay which was addressed through secondary sources in Chapter One. The project began with the participants recollections of their childhood histories in regards to school and their first jobs. The investigator decided that the participants would remember their school days during the 1930s and would also recollect their parents' occupations continuing in Chapter One. Generally the parents worked in their allocated regions prior to World War Two, for example, Aborigines around their communities such as Cherbourg and Woorabinda, Torres Strait Islanders in the shell industry and South Sea Islanders in what was allowed them by unions in the sugar industry.

In Chapter Two the participants continued to discuss their employment opportunities and their integration at work sites. They recollected how policy differentiated the three groups. For example, Torres Strait Islanders are able to engage their language. Aboriginal people were denied theirs and South Sea Islanders voluntarily suspended their language. In contrast, Chapter

Three revealed a prosperous period for the three groups in the sugar industry in Mackay during the 1950s and into the 1960s. It was also during this period in Mackay that the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders were visible in greater numbers. Aborigines from across the state entered the region to add to those who were already there. However, those from the reserves were still obligated to their communities in regards to 'settlement maintenance'.

Chapter Four exhibited a reversing of the diaspora process as travel benefits were approved over the three groups in the project for the period 1970s to 2000. The evidence suggested that the three groups are now transplanting and building upon what remains of their current culture and tradition. Aborigines in Mackay are encouraged by government to participate in cultural activities as their people travel into the region as guests and as residents. Similarly, Torres Strait Islander residents' in Mackay, maintain a vigilant monitoring of their culture by travelling to and from the mainland. South Sea Islanders from the 1970s from Mackay travel to their ancestors' traditional lands at greater numbers than ever as far back as the repatriation period. Their relatives are invited back to Australia regularly as guests with traditional information to teach the Australian South Sea Islanders.

Chapter Five, in keeping with the concerns of Chapter Two, focussed on employment and social opportunity. From Mackay the three groups in the project from the 1960s to the present remain subject to the same employment and education opportunities. Mechanisation caused a downturn in employment in the sugar industry. Railway construction attracts the male majority of the three groups. Railway construction throughout Queensland and interstate, particularly Western Australia, continued to be the major employer of South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders from the Mackay region as outlined in Chapter Five. Many Aborigines have moved to office position as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander movement generates greater administration positions throughout the country and is similar to what is happening in Mackay. Chapter Five proposes that government institutions will continue to negotiate for the three groups in this project. Despite the dismantling of ATSIC the participants are aware that they are entitled to

human rights and equity. Therefore, equal opportunity to mainstream opportunities will remain the task of bureaucracy and bureaucratic negotiations for the three groups in this project into the future.

One obvious limitation of the project was its scope, limited as it was, to three participants from each of the three selected groups. Understandably, the participants could not speak for the traditional group they came from. This project was limited to the reflections of the resident elders as participants. The lived experience of the investigator was included to align with the participants' lives and to also add to their experiences and also support the theory that the investigator has lived among the participants and understands their history. It also proved that the investigator was a part of the three participants' histories. The participants were keen to retell the experiences of their earlier years. It was noticeable that years were not readily identified when experiences were retold. Most times the years had to be prompted from the participants. Major events were retold but without the relevant identified decades for example during the 60s or during the 1970s. Generally, time was identified as before or after the war. Or time was identified as after the government changed a particular policy. There is the afterthought that the questions developed by the investigator may have drifted away from what the participants wanted to recollect in their experiences. For example, after the 1970s the investigator asked questions about employment opportunities which would not be a major issue as they moved towards the end of their working careers. The Aboriginal and the South Sea Islander participants were keen to recollect their feelings for government policies into the later years of their lives. It is interesting to note the Aboriginal participant's work in the 1960s for the purpose of Islanders in the ABSTUDY support scheme. Of interest from the South Sea Islander participant is the acknowledgement that land rights were the coming issues and South Sea Islanders were to lose their Islander status because they were not indigenous to this country. The Torres Strait Islander participant had a wealth of knowledge in regards to his earlier experiences serving for his country.

Further work across the communities will be needed to determine if traditional languages have too be revived such as the Aborigines and the South Sea Islanders as an extension to Chapter One and Chapter four. Whereas Torres Strait Islanders maintain their traditional languages and traditions although modified to suit urban mainland living. Further work will also be required to determine, in regards to intermarriage between the three groups in the Mackay region, who determines social and cultural identity governments? Institutions? Elders? or individuals as an extension to Chapter Five?

There is interest across Rockhampton amongst Aborigines and South Sea Islanders in adapting the methods used in this project for a similar project to be completed in the Rockhampton region. There are a number of Torres Strait Islander families in Rockhampton who could justify a healthy representation of the three groups. Surprisingly, the investigator has met an inactive student who was attempting a similar project for the Rockhampton region. The methods in this project could be further used to explore diaspora along the Queensland coast using groups: as opposed to individuals, in regards to the three groups, anywhere from Bundaberg to Torres Strait where healthy numbers of the three groups are currently represented as suggested by Mullins (1996, p. 55).

It also stands to reason that further work in the tripartite area, or cross cultural field, that this project has touched on is strongly encouraged. There is a possibility it may help children of mixed marriages to understand their decisions in regards to identity processes. Peers of the participants in this project would argue that history has to be the same as their perceptions. Therefore, additional individual histories or group histories will add to the present information. The process also reawakens the memories and fills the gaps between what historians write and what oral historians remember of the past consequently supplementing each other that adds to the benefit of society in the future (Hamilton, 1994).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### Interviews

Boah, R. 2004, *Interview 5 May*, Mackay, Queensland.

Boah, R. 2006, *Phone Interview 25 May*, Mackay, Queensland.

Doolah, M. 2004, *Interview 4 May*, Mackay Queensland.

Kemp, T. 2005, *Interview 10 April*, Mackay, Queensland.

Kemp, T. 2006, *Phone Interview 24 May*, Mackay, Queensland.

Tapim, W. 2004, *Interview, 4 May*, Mackay, Queensland.

Tapim, W. 2006, *Interview, 11 July*, Mackay, Queensland.

#### Government Publications

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, Queensland*, Canberra, Australia Government Publishing Service, viewed 02 September 2007.

[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/65699E809F5B97CFCA2572250004958E/\\$File/41903\\_1994.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/65699E809F5B97CFCA2572250004958E/$File/41903_1994.pdf)

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*, Canberra, Australia Government Publishing Service, viewed 23 May 2007.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/AD174BBF36BA93A2CA256EBB007981BA?Open>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission, Monitoring and Reporting Section, 1997, *Five years on-Policy and programs: Addressing disadvantage*, Canberra, ACT, National Capital Printing.

Australian War Museum, 2006, *Second World War – Reserved occupations*, Encyclopaedia.

[awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/homefront/reserved\\_occupations.htm](http://awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/homefront/reserved_occupations.htm).

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 1997, *Torres Strait Islanders: A new deal, a report on greater autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1992, *The Call for Recognition, A Report on the Situation of Australian South Sea Islanders*, Sydney, New South Wales, Alkenpress Pty Ltd.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### Books

Barker, C. 1999, *Television, globalization and cultural identities*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Beckett, J. 1987, *Torres Strait Islanders. Customs and Colonialism*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press.

Bennett, S. 1999, *White politics and black Australians*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen and Unwin.

Blake, T. 2001, *A Dumping Ground. A History of the Cherbourg Settlement*, St Lucia Brisbane, University of Queensland Press.

Clarke, F. 1996, *Australia. A Concise Political and Social History*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace.

Dutton. T. 1980, *Queensland Canefields English of the late Nineteenth Century, (A record of interviews with two of the last surviving Kanakas in North Queensland)*, The Australian National University, Department of Linguistics Research School of Pacific Studies.

Evans, Raymond and Scott, Joanne, "Fallen among Thieves': Aboriginal Labour and State Control in Inter-War Queensland" in Ann McGrath, Kay Saunders with Jackie Huggins (eds) *Aboriginal Workers*, Sydney, Australian Institute for the Study of Labour History, November, 115-130.

Fatnowna, N. 1989, *Fragments of a lost heritage, edited by Roger Keesing*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson Publishers.

Hall, R. 1989, *The Black Diggers. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin.

Hall, R. 1995, *Fighters from the Fringe. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Recall the Second World War*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Horner, J. 2004, *Seeking Racial Justice: An insider's memoir of the movement for Aboriginal advancement, 1938-1978*, Canberra, Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Hall, S. 1987, *Minimal Selves in the Real me – Postmodernism and the question of identity*, London Institute of Contemporary Arts – Document 6. Reprinted in Gray, A. & McGuigan J., eds 1993, *Studying culture* London: Edward Arnold, in, McGuigan, J. 1996 “Culture and the public sphere”, Routledge, London.

Hamilton, P. “The knife edge: debates about memory and history” in Darian-Smith, K. & Hamilton, P. 1994, *Memory and history in twentieth-century Australia*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press. pp. 9-32.

Jones, J. and Hill-Burnett, J. 1982, *Aboriginal Power in Australian Society*, edited by Michael C. Howard, St Lucia, Brisbane, University of Queensland.

Jupp, J. 2001, *The Australian people*, Oakleigh, Victoria, Angus & Robertson publishers, Cambridge University Press

Kelly, K. and Lenthall, S. 1997, *An introduction to recent Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander history in Queensland*, Compiled by Kerrie Kelly and Sue Lenthall on behalf of the Cross Cultural Mental Health Awareness Facilitating Team.

Kennedy, K. 2002, *Mackay Revisited*, Mackay, Mackay City Council.

Laughton, K. ed. 1995, *Aboriginal, Ex-Servicemen, of Central Australia*, Alice Springs, Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) Press.

Lunn, H. 1987, *Joh. The life and political adventures of Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press.

May, D. 1994, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry, Queensland from white settlement to the present*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press.

Mercer, P. 1995, *White Australia Defied. Pacific Islander Settlement in North Queensland*, Townsville, James Cook University, Department of History and Politics.

Moore, C. 1979, *The Forgotten People. A history of the Australian South Sea Island community*, Sydney, The Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Moore, C. 1985, *Kanaka. A history of Melanesian Mackay*, Port Moresby, Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.

Mullins, S. 1996 *After Recognition: access and equity for Australian South Sea Islanders*, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Qld, Rural Social and Economic Research Centre.

Osborne, E. 1997, *Torres Strait Islander Women and the Pacific War*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Reynolds, H. ed. 1978, *Race relations in north Queensland*, Townsville, James Cook University of North Queensland.

Roberts, J. Russell B and Parsons M, 1975, *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*, Fitzroy, Vic, International Development Action.

Roberts, J. Russell, B and Parsons, M. 1975, *The Mapoon story: according to the invaders: Church mission, Queensland Government and mining company*, Fitzroy, Vic. International Development Action.

Rosser, J. 2002, *Community Matters Workshop 23-24 May 2002*, Association of Independent Schools Queensland.

Saunders, Kay 1993, *War on the Homefront: state intervention in Queensland 1938-1948*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press.

Saunders, Kay 1995 " Inequalities of Sacrifice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Labour in Northern Australia during the Second World War" in Ann McGrath, Kay Saunders with Jackie Huggins (eds) *Aboriginal Workers*, Sydney, Australian Institute for the Study of Labour History, November, 131-148.

Schedvin, B. 1988, *Australia and the Great Depression*, Sydney, Sydney University Press.

Sharp, Nonie. 1992, *Footprints along the Cape York sand beaches*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Thomson, J. 1989, *Reaching Back. Queensland Aboriginal people recall early days at Yarrabah Mission*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Thursday Island State High School, 1988, *Torres Strait at war: a recollection of wartime experiences*, Thursday Island, Queensland.

### **Newspapers**

Unknown Author, *Obituaries. 'City loses talented musician'*, *Mackay Daily Mercury*, Friday 30 September, 2005, p. 9.

### **Journal Articles**

Anderson, S. 2002, Australian indigenous oral history today: What's the story? Flinders University, New South Wales, Cultural Studies. Reprinted in *Crossings, The Bulletin of the International Studies Association: v 7. Nos 1, 2 and 3, 2002, pp. 64-71.*

Moran, A. 2005, *White Australia, Settler Nationalism and Aboriginal Assimilation*, University of Queensland and Blackwell Publishing. Reprinted in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*: v 51, no 2, 2005, pp. 168-193.

Sharp Nonie, *Culture Clash in the Torres Strait Islands: The Maritime Strike of 1936*, *Royal Historical Society Queensland Journal*, 24 June 1982, vol. 11, no. 3, 1981-1982, pp. 107-126.

Stephenson, P. 2002, *New cultural scripts: Exploring the dialogue between indigenous and 'Asian' Australians*. Reprinted in *Sojourners and shapers, Journal of Australian Studies*, No 77, 2002, pp. 57-68.

Wright, B. *Mackay and Queensland in the 1870s*, Typescript, 2005, in Ministerial, Regional, Community Forum, Mackay/Whitsunday Mackay & McEwen's Beach – 11 April.

### **Theses**

Hodes, J. 1998, *Torres Strait Islander migration to Cairns before World War 11*, Central Queensland University Rockhampton.

Kennedy, R. 2002, *Culture Identity Health Australian South Sea Islanders in Mackay*, Central Queensland University, Mackay.

### **Typescript**

Kerr, J. *Research notes on Aboriginals in the Mackay district*, Mackay Public Library, Typescript, 1992.

Kemp, Phillip. 2005, *Commemoration of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of Queensland's first Aboriginal Reserve near Mackay*, *Ministerial, Regional, Community Forum, Mackay/Whitsunday Mackay & McEwen's Beach –11 April*, Department of Communities Mackay and Whitsunday region, Typescript, 11 April.