

# Fantome Island Lock Hospital

1928 – 1945

## Details

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The Fantome Island Lock Hospital, in the Palm Island Group off the coast of Townsville, was established for the detention and treatment of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander people who suffered from sexually transmitted infection (STI). Run by the State government, it opened in 1928 and closed in 1945.

The published resource 'Fantome Island Lock Hospital and Lazaret Sites' [2013] writes:

Fantome Island was the site of Queensland's only purpose-built island lock hospital. A leprosarium also operated on the island between 1939 and 1973. The State government adopted a policy of isolating Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander people who suffered from sexually transmitted infection (STI) and leprosy. Aboriginal people were removed to Fantome Island under the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897.

The Lock Hospital operated on Fantome Island between 1928 and 1945. Past Queensland governments sent non-European STI patients to the island, while European patients were detained on the mainland under health regulations.

By 1932 there were 156 patients in the lock hospital, which included women and children, as well as four newborn babies.

The government Director-General of Health and Medical Services within Queensland's Department of Health and Home Affairs, Raphael Cilento, suggested using nuns from the nursing branch of a religious body to overcome the difficulty of finding staff willing to work with Hansen's disease (Leprosy) or STI patients.

On 1 March 1940 four nuns of the Order of Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHC) arrived on Fantome Island to assist with the medical treatment of patients. In December 1944, seven nuns of the Order of Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) replaced the OLHC nuns on Fantome Island.

In September 1941 Fantome Island was divided into two reserves. The northern portion became a reserve for people with leprosy; while the central and southern portions became a reserve for Aboriginal people suffering from venereal disease.

The Fantome Island Lock Hospital closed on 31 August 1945 and the remaining 13 patients were transferred to the existing hospital on Palm Island.

Remains of the Lock Hospital and Lazaret are still visible on the island.

## Gallery



## Aboriginal Lock Hospital, Fantome Island (from Gardens)

**Description:** This is a photograph of the Lock Hospital at Fantome Island. It shows two medium-sized buildings near the beach, with several smaller buildings and sheds nearby. The photograph was taken from gardens on a small hill inland from the hospital, looking towards the beach, with Orpheus island in the background. This photograph was taken by Edward Michael Hanlon on a tour of North Queensland during his term as Queensland Home Secretary. It is part of an album that contains other images taken at Palm Island, Yarrabah, Fantome Island, and Mona Mona mission.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Health and Home Affairs Department \(5 December 1935 - 26 September 1963\)](#)  
Date: 1935 - 1945
- [Home Secretary's Office \(6 August 1896 - 5 December 1935\)](#)  
Date: 1928 - 1935

#### Related Legislation

- [Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897, Queensland \(1897 - 1939\)](#)  
Aboriginal people were moved to Fatome Island under the provisions of the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act.

#### Related Organisations

- [Franciscan Missionaries of Mary \(1941 - current\)](#)  
The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary cared for the patients at the Fantome Island Lock Hospital
  - [Fantome Island Lazaret \(1939 - 1973\)](#)  
Fantome Island Lazaret and the Fantome Island Lock Hospital were co-located on Fantome Island between 1939 and 1973
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