

# Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement

1 April 1918 – 1975

**Other Names:** • Palm Island Dormitory

## Details

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The Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement was run by the Queensland Government. It was gazetted as an Aboriginal Reserve in 1914 but was not properly established until 1918. In 1922 an Industrial School license was issued and the island's children were rounded up and confined in segregated dormitories. The dormitories closed in 1975 but it was not until 1985 that the Queensland Government handed control of Palm Island to a Community Council via a Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT).

Palm Island is situated 65 kilometres north east of Townsville, in the Palm Island Group. It was proclaimed an Aboriginal Reserve in 1914. In 1922 Palm Island was licensed as an Industrial School.

In 1923 the Lucinda Point boatshed was relocated and converted into a girls' quarters. A new larger girls' quarters was ready for occupation in early 1928 along with a dormitory for babies and young mothers.

According to reports in the 1930s, both the girls and boys dormitories were sub-standard in both condition and bed capacity. This led to the erection of new dormitories in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

In 1962 a new boys' dormitory that accommodated 40 boys was completed and a larger girl's home opened in 1965. Around 71 children were housed in dormitories in 1966.

A report from the Government Liaison Officer in 1971 highlighted the fact that of all the children admitted into the dormitory system, the majority were sent by the Children's Services Department. Additionally, the number of children admitted through the Children's Services Department was on the incline.

Due to changing ideas related to the care of young people, by 1975 only 27 children were housed in the dormitories on Palm Island. On 5 December 1975 the dormitories officially closed.

Palm Island Dormitory was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

## Gallery

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**Boy's dormitory, Palm Island**

**Description:** This image shows a group of approximately 35 children and adults standing in front of the boys dormitory buildings at the Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement. The photo was taken during an inspection tour of Aboriginal Stations on Torres Strait Islands, Cape York Peninsula and the East Coast conducted by the Home Secretary Hon. J C. Peterson in June 1931

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### Girls' dormitory, Palm Island

**Description:** This image shows a group of approximately 20 women and girls standing in front of the girls' dormitory buildings at the Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement. The photo was taken during an inspection tour of Aboriginal Stations on Torres Strait Islands, Cape York Peninsula and the East Coast conducted by the Home Secretary Hon. J C. Peterson in June 1931

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### Girls' Home, Palm Island Settlement

**Description:** This is a photograph of the Girls' dormitory at the Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement. It shows a wide, single-storey building with open front verandahs. The building is set among palm trees, and there is a road bordered with white stones running in front of it. Two girls or women are walking in front of the dormitory, and a man wearing a suit is standing next to a palm tree close to the photographer. 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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### View of the Aboriginal Hospital, Palm Island Settlement

**Description:** This is a photograph of the hospital at the Palm Island Aboriginal Settlement. It shows a large single-storey cottage-style building with two front-facing verandahs. The building is set back from a road lined with stones. Several people can be seen standing on the verandahs, and another man can be seen standing in gardens to the side of the building. 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. The photo was originally captioned as 'Native Hospital, Palm Island Settlement'.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Run by

- [Aboriginal and Island Affairs Department, State Government of Queensland \(28 April 1966 - 16 January 1975\)](#)
- [Director Of Native Affairs Office, State Government of Queensland \(12 October 1939 - 28 April 1966\)](#)
- [Chief Protector of Aborigines Office, State Government of Queensland \(25 March 1904 - 12 October 1939\)](#)

### Resources

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, [Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families](#), 1997. *Relevance:* Palm Island Dormitory was mentioned in the Bringing Them Home Report (1997) as an institution that housed Indigenous children removed from their families
- [Chief Protector of Aborigines Office \(Agency ID 135\)](#), Queensland State Archives website, No date
- [Right Wrongs](#), ABC Open, 2017

## Records

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For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

## Records

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Records \(1880s - current\)](#)
  - [Gribble, E.R.B. \(Ernest Richard Bulmer\) 1868-1957, Collected Papers, 1892-1970 \(1892 - 1970\)](#)
  - [Peter John Sutton Papers, Aurukun Mission, Palm Island Mission and Hope Vale Mission \(1974 - 1980\)](#)
  - [Registers of Residents - Palm Island \(1966 - 1969\)](#)
  - [Birth Registers - Palm Island \(1942 - 1984\)](#)
  - [General Correspondence Files - GF Series - Palm Island \(1939 - 1998\)](#)
  - [Miscellaneous Items and Correspondence - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander files \(1859 - 1997\)](#)
  - [General Correspondence Files - Un-numbered, Palm Island Settlement correspondence \(3 June 1947 - c. 31 December 1981\)](#)
  - [Health & Home Affairs/Education Department Batch Files \[Correspondence\] - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander files \(1884 - 1970\)](#)
  - [Correspondence Files \[Offices of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals and Director of Native Affairs\] \(1901 - 1944\)](#)
  - [Correspondence - Alphanumeric Prefix - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs \(1909 - 1992\)](#)
  - [Social History Cards - Palm Island \(1935 - 1980\)](#)
  - [Child Endowment Cards - Palm Island \(1960 - 1968\)](#)
  - [Admission Sheets - Children in State Care \(1959 - 1973\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/palm-island-aboriginal-settlement/>