CHAPTER 2

SETTLED IN QUEENSLAND

BY THE early twentieth century, a small number of Pacific Islander migrants had established themselves, at least in their view, as a permanent part of Queensland's population. This chapter examines this permanent settlement by Pacific Islanders in North Queensland. First, their location in the region and the possible number who identified themselves as permanent residents are considered. Following this, the occupational structure of those who had moved beyond unskilled wage labour in the sugar industry is discussed, and their living conditions compared with those of their compatriots on the plantations. The number of migrants with spouses (legal or common law) and the ethnic origin of the latter is then examined, since very often such relationships provided a strong reason against returning to the islands, especially together. The treatment and position of Islander women in this new country is also relevant, since many of the small number of women who recruited found advantages in their new lifestyle. The number of Islander children raised in North Queensland, it will be seen, was very considerable. Further evidence of a growing identification with Australia is found in the desire of Islander parents to give their children a European and a Christian upbringing.

IT HAD not been intended that Pacific Islanders would become permanent residents. This unexpected development, therefore, went largely unnoticed until the early twentieth century.¹ The regulations gazetted in 1896, under which time-expired Islanders were required, within one

¹ See for example Newspaper unknown, Sep. 1890, letter by 'One of the Unfortunate Planters', Newspaper Cuttings relating to the Labour Trade with Queensland 1890-5, collected by the Rev. Dr J.C. Paton, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau 30; Telegraph 9 Apr. 1892; CPD V, 1901-02, p.5918; Herald, A White Australia, pp.14, 83.
month of the expiry of their agreements, to enter into new agreements (of not less than six months' duration) or else to return home, may have been designed, at least partly, to stop the migrants moving into other industries and occupations. In the late 1890s and early 1900s local inspectors of Pacific Islanders were also more vigilant in enforcing the occupational restrictions on Islanders - only the 'ticket-holders' under the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1884, it will be recalled, were free to work at what and where they pleased.  

Pacific Islanders were located principally in coastal Queensland but there were also small settlements in northern New South Wales. In North Queensland, as illustrated in Map 1.2, the overwhelming majority resided in the coastal sugar districts from Port Douglas down to Mackay. There were small populations in the non sugar-growing districts of Bowen and Townsville and inland from Cairns on the Atherton Tableland. A very few were scattered throughout the inland western districts.

In 1902, according to an official estimate, there were 353 Pacific Islanders who were permanently resident in Queensland. Approximately one-third of these were in North Queensland, but no information had been obtained for the Burdekin, Herbert River and Cairns districts. This return was also a very conservative estimate. For example, in the previous year it had been calculated that there were 704 'ticket-holders', who were necessarily men and women resident for more than twenty years, still living in Queensland. Most of these people must surely have regarded the State as their permanent home.

In assessing the number in North Queensland who may have considered themselves to be permanent residents, a table prepared in 1906 from returns by local inspectors of Pacific Islanders is more useful. This

2. See Chapter 1; Appendix C.

3. See also Table 2.1.

4. This estimate was prepared by the Department of Immigration and presumably, therefore, the information was supplied by local inspectors of Pacific Islanders. Summary of Pacific Islanders apparently domiciled permanently in Queensland, AI 03/1694, AA.

5. CPP I, 1901-02, p.813; QPP II, 1906, p.669.

6. Ibid., p.903, Appendix XVII. Parts of this return are reproduced in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.
gave the number of Islanders in the coastal districts and their length of residence in Australia. Roughly one-quarter of the total number, or over 800, had been resident in Australia since 1891, and over 300 of these had arrived before 1886. Since the development of North Queensland had only begun in the 1860s and had not taken off until the late 1870s and 1880s, such men and women could rightly be considered as pioneers in the region and the majority of these most probably regarded Australia as their permanent home. For example, the Lifou Islander, William Seekis, had arrived in Queensland in 1871 and had been in the Mackay district from about 1874.\(^7\)

SUCH LONG-STANDING residents were prominent amongst those Islanders who had diversified economically. It required considerable enterprise on their part to extend beyond manual wage labour in the sugar industry. Unlike the Chinese and other non-European groups, the Islanders (with the exception of 'ticket-holders') were closely regulated occupationally – after 1884 they were legally restricted to unskilled labour in the fields in sugar and other tropical industries. While there were many evasions of these restrictions, the intention of this policy was achieved: few received any training in skilled or semi-skilled occupations.\(^8\)

In spite of these handicaps, some of the Islanders did improve their prospects. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the time-expired men were considered to be adept wage-bargainers. They were employed by non-European as well as European farmers. In comparison with indentured countrymen they were paid good wages – even if other non-Europeans and Europeans were paid more. Most were employed in sugar-growing and other tropical agriculture, but a small number were engaged in other industries, chiefly the pastoral, sawmilling and timbergetting industries.\(^9\)

---


8. As noted in H.D. Tonga to Winston Churchill, 26 Mar. 1906, Al 06/4761, AA.

Some enterprising Islanders contracted to cut cane, employing fellow Islanders and even other non-Europeans to assist them. At Plane Creek near Mackay in 1906, for instance, some 'ticket-holders' were employing other Islanders and also Malays to cut cane at 2s.9d per ton. Other Islanders were attracted by small-scale self-employment, such as clearing scrub, cutting firewood, fishing and carrying cargo. In the towns they ran boarding houses and small shops.

The obvious alternative to wage labour was to work on the land for oneself. Here again the Islanders faced legal obstacles. They could not be prevented from taking up leaseholds, but only naturalized aliens could own real property and only those Islanders who were French subjects could apply for naturalization. William Wombie from Lifou Island in the French colony of New Caledonia, for example, became naturalized. After years of working as a stockman, he acquired a property in the Gulf country stocked with cattle and blood horses; financial troubles later forced him to relinquish this station and take up a poorer selection known as Gum Hole Station.

Wombie was the only Islander grazier in the pastoral industry (in North Queensland, at least). There were, however, many Islanders who engaged in small-scale agriculture, principally in the sugar-growing districts, but also in other agricultural areas such as Bowen and the Atherton Tableland. The number of such farmers according to returns

---


12. See Chapter 1, p.19.


14. The Chinese were also attracted to small-scale agriculture. May, The Chinese in Cairns and District, p.209.
prepared by local inspectors of Pacific Islanders in 1906 is shown below in Table 2.1. The following brief discussion of farmers in each of these districts will compare these figures with other available information. 15

TABLE 2.1: Pacific Islander farmers in coastal North Queensland, 1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>NO. ISLANDERS</th>
<th>NO. FREEHOLDERS</th>
<th>NO. LEASEHOLDERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Port Douglas</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnstone R.</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert R.</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdekin</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boven</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proserpine</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3327</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: QPP II, 1906, p.903, Appendix XVII.

Mackay was the district with by far the largest number of Islander farmers. As shown in Table 2.1, there were said to be 163 farmers in the district in 1906, 8 on freehold and the rest on leasehold land. The earliest leases dated back to 1893 but the majority had been taken up very recently. 16 This is well illustrated by the evidence from nominal sources (that is, sources in which individuals are named), which provides a total of 129 Islanders (including 2 women and 2 native-born men) who were or had been engaged in farming by the end of 1907: at least 64, or

---

15. The return prepared in 1902 noted that there were Islanders leasing land but gave no figures. Summary of Pacific Islanders apparently domiciled permanently in Queensland, AI 03/1694, AA.

16. Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton, n.d. [1907], memo., AI 08/2939, AA. It had been wrongly asserted in 1894 that there were no Islanders in Mackay who were leasing land. SJTC III, 15 Sep. 1894, p.172, Editor's note to letter by 'Farmer'.
over half, had taken up farming since 1903 and chiefly in 1906. 17

According to the 1906 return, farmers represented seventeen per cent of the district's Islander population. In the neighbouring districts of Proserpine and Bowen, the number engaged in farming was much lower but their proportion of the population was much greater. As shown in Table 2.1, there were said to be sixteen farmers in Bowen and twenty in Proserpine, all on leaseholds, or forty-two and fifty per cent of the populations, respectively. The earliest date on which an Islander was known to be farming was 1891, when Harry Fraser from Aneityum in the New Hebrides was cultivating land at Murroona near Bowen. In Proserpine most of the leases had been taken up since the early 1900s. 18 A higher total is provided from nominal sources, according to which at least fifty-one Islanders (including four native-born) were farming in Proserpine and Bowen up to the end of 1907. 19

In more northerly districts the trend to farming was less marked. As Table 2.1 shows, there were said to be no Islander farmers in the Burdekin, Herbert River and Cairns districts, one in the Johnstone River district and a few in the Port Douglas district. This assertion is contradicted, however, by the evidence from nominal sources in all but the latter district.

In the Burdekin, nominal sources reveal that there were at least two Islander farmers - one was a tenant of Drysdale Brothers (later the Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd) and the other leased land from a local farmer. 20

17. The nominal sources for Mackay and other districts are varied, but are chiefly government publications (such as evidence presented to the royal commission of 1906), state school admission registers, church baptismal and marriage registers and archival sources.


19. For other estimates of the number of farmers, see ibid., p.698, Const. W.H. Ryan, p.716, G. Yasserie.

In the next sugar-growing area, the Herbert River district, there were at least twelve Islander farmers according to the evidence from nominal sources. These small farmers had been operating successfully since the early 1890s.  

In the far north, the only substantial numbers of farmers were in the Port Douglas district. There were at least ten farming leasehold land in the Johnstone River district, but eight of these only took up their leases in 1906. In Cairns and the Atherton Tableland from the late 1890s there were several Islanders leasing land but the names of only two individuals have been found. There were said to be thirteen leaseholders, or three per cent of the total Islander population, in the Port Douglas district in 1906 (see Table 2.1). Nominal sources reveal only eight. The pioneer amongst these farmers was Johnnie Nahlun, an Erromangan who had taken up a selection of eighty acres near the Daintree River in the early 1880s.

The combination of the evidence available from nominal sources and the 1906 return is sufficient to demonstrate that there were considerable numbers of farmers amongst the Islanders in North Queensland. Proportionally and absolutely the number of farmers was greatest in the Mackay, Proserpine and Bowen districts. That these were the districts with the highest proportion of long-standing residents was not coincidental. Apart from this factor, there were developments in the sugar industry which help to explain the concentration of farmers in these districts and the timing of their entry into farming.

From the early 1890s the pattern of large plantations with their


22. See Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton. Statements of Islanders forwarded by Brenan to Hunt, 9 Jul. 1907, AI 08/2939, AA.


own mills began to break down and to be replaced by a system of small farms and co-operatively owned central mills. This process occurred more rapidly in the established sugar districts such as Mackay where the hard work of clearing had been largely completed and small farmers could cultivate their farms with family labour. In the more northerly districts, and especially in the far north, the heavy task of clearing the land was still in progress and the trend was to greater rather than lesser reliance on Islander labour. A further development which may have encouraged Islanders to take up farming was provided by the policy of protection for the sugar industry instituted by the new Commonwealth Government.

In Mackay there were Islander farmers in the Homebush and Plane Creek areas but most were located on the north side of the Pioneer River. This was because the two largest companies, the Melbourne and Mackay Sugar Company and Farleigh Estate, chose to include many Islanders amongst their tenants when they sub-divided their estates in the early 1900s. In the Burdekin district this did not occur because the only large estate, Drysdale Brothers, had sufficient growers and therefore rejected the idea of leasing land to Islanders. In the far north the presence of large numbers of 'old hand' Chinese made them the obvious choice as tenants.

The threat of deportation in the early twentieth century also prompted Islanders to become farmers. It was believed that the possession


26. An import duty protected growers from foreign sugar, while an excise tax gave an additional bonus to European growers who employed European labour only. See Chapter 3, p.104. Some Islander cane farmers in Nambour wrote to Brenan to protest at the lower price they received over Europeans for their cane. See Nambour South Sea Islanders to Brenan, 18 Jun. 1903, PRE/87, QSA.

of a leasehold might exempt them from deportation. Henry Tongoa, a cane farmer in Mackay, made this clear to the royal commission appointed in 1906 to enquire into the sugar industry and the practical application of deportation: "we take lease because we want to stop". The commissioners, concerned that leaseholders who were deported might not receive compensation, advised Tongoa and his fellow Islanders not to take up further leases. 28

If the threat of deportation encouraged Islanders to take up leases, this was only an additional stimulus to the existing desire to secure financial independence. F.C. Hornbrook, the inspector of Pacific Islanders in Mackay, commented in 1906 that "this leasing land is no new thing, they have found out from experience that they can make more money and have a better and easier life by working for themselves ...". 29 If deportation had not taken place, presumably the number of Islander farmers would have continued to increase and in districts such as Mackay, settlements like those of Indian farmers in Fiji might have resulted. 30

The royal commissioners had been greatly surprised at the number of Islanders who were farming and historians have tended to refer to this trend only in passing. 31 Yet from the late 1890s various observers began to comment on this movement into farming, with some objections from European farmers, who believed that the services of the migrants should be preserved for European use exclusively. 32 The absence of any determined

28. QPP II, 1906, pp.618, 621, H. Tongoa. For similar opinions on the purpose behind leasing, see ibid., p.635, C. Sage, p.885, J. O'N. Brenan; Fraser to Brenan, 26 Jun. 1907, A1 08/2939, AA; Nielson to Kidston, 19 Apr. 1906, 01953, encl. in Brenan to Under Col. Sec., 23 May 1906, 2372 of 1906, mf 167(a), RSPS-PSEAH.

29. Hornbrook to Brenan, 16 May 1906, encl. in ibid. For similar comments, see Rannie to Hornbrook, 15 May 1906, ibid.; Hornbrook to Brenan, 5 May 1906, ibid.; NM 13 Oct. 1904.


31. See Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.126; Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, p.452; Scarr, 'Recruits and Recruiters', p.232. The exception to this was J.A. Nilsson, who noted that leasing was a widespread practice amongst Islanders in Mackay in the 1900s. History of Mackay, pp.134-35.

opposition from this, or any other quarter, may be because this movement only took on significant proportions in the years immediately before deportation.

Queensland officials were certainly well aware of the trend to farming amongst Islanders. In 1894 Brenan, the immigration agent and officer in charge of Pacific Island labour, sought and received advice from the attorney-general, T.J. Byrnes, that an Islander could not be legally prevented from "genuinely taking a piece of land on lease and working it for his own profit". Thus while Brenan and local inspectors of Pacific Islanders sought to discourage Islanders from taking up leases, no official policy of interference was followed. 33

Brenan and his inspectors were, however, concerned at the scope for exploiting the Islanders, since leases had to be registered officially for any protection against the land being sold or a mortgage foreclosed. 34 Like the Chinese, the Islanders tended to be given 'clearing leases', and therefore ran the risk of an unscrupulous landlord getting their land improved at no cost by resuming possession once the land was cleared. A similarly hard-headed arrangement was made by the Melbourne and Mackay Sugar Company with its Islander tenants, who were given land along the riverbank which could only be broken up with hoes (and corresponding physical labour) rather than with ploughs. On Farleigh Estate only the European tenants, significantly, had the option to purchase their land. 35

In the years after 1908, the pattern was continued of giving the Islanders land along the riverbanks and on the hillsides, which Europeans were not prepared to cultivate. 36

33. QPP II, 1906, pp.884-85, J. O'N. Brenan; Brenan to Under Chief Sec., 2 May 1906, 02010, 2372 of 1906, mf 167(a), RSPS-PSEA. Hornbrook himself leased land to Islanders, a practice for which he received official censure. Hornbrook to Brenan, 25 May 1906, encl. in Brenan to Under Chief Sec., 23 May 1906, ibid.


36. See Chapter 7.
In addition to being vulnerable through the conditions of their leases, many Islanders held leases which were merely verbal or at best simple written agreements. In a few cases, and usually at the Islanders' insistence, the leases were drawn up correctly. Those who engaged in mixed farming or market gardening usually paid an annual rent of so many shillings per acre, depending on the quality of the land. Amongst those growing cane (who were the majority of farmers), the standard lease was for three to five years at a royalty of 1s. per ton.

Only a tiny number of Islanders held freehold land. The legal obstacles to this have already been mentioned. In 1906, as shown in Table 2.1, there were said to be eight freeholders in the Mackay district, but no details on these individuals have been discovered. In the Port Douglas district, there were a further four Islander freeholders. One of these was Johnnie Nahlun, who in 1887 had satisfied the requirements of five years' residency and improvements to a certain value on his Daintree selection.

There is very little information on the size of these farms, leasehold or freehold. Nahlun's selection comprised eighty acres for mixed farming, but it appears that most Islanders growing such crops occupied only a few acres. The largest cane farm was 160 acres, worked by Willy Ipi and Harry Lifu in the Port Douglas district. Other known acreages are the farms of Henry Tongoa, William Seekis and Noah Sabbo in


38. Fraser to Brenan, 26 Jun. 1907, A1 08/2939, AA; J. Hamilton to Chief Sec., 26 Sep. 1898, 01934, M435, POL/J29, QSA.


40. File for Selection No.155, LAN/AG613, QSA. For the others, see QPP II, 1906, p.896, Appendix XVII; Staines to Brenan, 8 Jul. 1907, Summary, p.478, CPS 12E/G2, QSA.
Mackay and Taller in the Burdekin, comprising eighty, fifty, thirty-five and seven acres, respectively. Since the first three were well-established farmers, the average acreage held by other Islanders was probably more in line with Taller's holding. The average holding of European cane farmers in North Queensland in 1905 was around 100 acres.

Little is also known about the capital investment made on these farms. Some Islanders were said to have spent considerable sums, both their own funds and loans from countrymen, on such assets and improvements as houses, fences, horses, drays and ploughs. Others were dependent on rations provided by the landholder or cash advances on their crops from the mills. Farmers in Proserpine in 1906 must have been anxious when informed by the manager of the Central Mill that they could no longer obtain cash advances; however, he arranged for orders on the storekeepers for their rations.

Partnerships between Islanders were not unusual. The example of Ipi and Lifu in the Port Douglas district has been cited. In Mackay there were many more farmers than lessees. Typically two or more men (usually single) pooled their resources in one leasehold; for instance, the thirty tenants on Farleigh plantation occupied only eight leases.

41. QPP II, 1906, p.896, Appendix XVII, pp.617-18, pp.669-70, p.845. Amongst twenty Islander cane farmers in Nambour in 1903, the average number of acres was just over eleven, and ranged from twelve to five acres. Nambour South Sea Islanders to Brenan, 18 Jun. 1903, PRE/87, QSA.


43. Ibid., pp.617-18, H. Tongoa; Summary of Pacific Islanders apparently domiciled permanently in Queensland, Al 03/1694, AA.

44. Smart to Manager, 7 May 1906, Melbourne and Mackay Sugar Company, Alexandra Plantation Letter Book (reference supplied by C.R. Moore); MM 28 May 1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting.

It was also common for Islanders to lend money to countrymen with leases to enable them to purchase implements and other necessities. While such loans were probably based on verbal guarantees, the recipients had a strong moral obligation to repay such debts in full. These farmers also relied heavily on other Islanders for physical assistance. According to F.J. Stevens (a local farmer) and Hornbrook, an Islander's 'mates' usually worked for him on shares. In 1906 a petition against deportation sponsored by the Mackay-based Pacific Islanders Association (an organization formed to fight against deportation) included amongst its signatories forty-six labourers working for twenty-three of the Islander farmers in the district. Over half were working for countrymen, that is, men from the same island of origin; Thomas Toloa for example, had six fellow Malaitans and one other Islander working for him. In other districts also the farmers depended upon fellow Islanders for assistance.

Since the threat of deportation had encouraged Islanders to take up leases, it is not surprising to find that the Pacific Islanders Association, although primarily concerned with deportation, also represented the farmers' interests. Indeed, Hornbrook referred to it as the 'Mackay Kanaka Farmers Association'. Tongoa was the first president, and prominent amongst its members were other farmers, some of whom had declined to join the local Pioneer River Farmers' and Graziers' Association on the grounds that their interests were well represented by their own Association. Under the by-laws of the articles of association, for

46. See ibid., p.617, H. Tongoa, p.625, F.C. Hornbrook; Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton, memo., n.d. [1907], Al 08/2939, AA.

47. QPP II, 1906, pp.620, 625, 666; Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, Al 06/6324, AA. See also QPP II, 1906, p.618, H. Tongoa.

48. See SJTC III, 15 Jun. 1894, p.107, letter by 'Farmer'; Register of Agreements, Harry LiEu, p.429, IPI 12/1, QSA.

49. Hornbrook to Brenan, 16 May 1906, encl. in Brenan to Under Chief Sec., 23 May 1906, 2372 of 1906, mf 167(a), RSPS-PSEAH; MM 18 Apr., 1 May 1906, Pacific Islanders Association meetings. This Association is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.
example, loans (at current bank interest rates) could be made available to members who were farming.  

These farming pursuits clearly differed from the traditional subsistence agriculture of the shifting cultivation type practised in Melanesia. Certainly in Queensland Islanders grew at least some of their own food, and kept livestock and poultry. But even those growing fruit and vegetables kept aside a portion of their crop for sale. The cane farmers had clearly embarked on cash cropping, even if on a small scale and with implements such as hoes and mattocks, which were not unlike the tools used (mostly by the women) for digging their gardens at home. Moreover, in Queensland the Islanders functioned as independent farmers, without the ties and obligations created by the system of group assistance which governed village life. Other Islanders may have willingly supplied their labour when needed, and the farmers may have given assistance (as in free board) to unemployed friends and widows with dependants, but the pressure or need to provide such support was greatly reduced in Queensland.

The migrants were engaging in different patterns of agriculture from those in the islands. Yet it is doubtful whether many achieved success by European standards. Most appear to have been struggling small farmers, dependent on rations or cash advances from the mill. Most of

50. Evidence of James Bookie, Rex vs Harry Tongoa, No. 19 of 1907, A/18353, QSA; Articles of Association and Bye-Laws of the Pacific Islanders' Association, encl. in ibid.


52. See SJTC III, 15 Jun. 1894, p.107; Pacific Islanders Association Scheme, p.4, 31 Aug. 1906, A1 06/6324, AA; Elizabeth Norra, Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, ibid. For a comparison with independent farmers in Fiji, see Frazer, 'The Fijian village and the independent farmer', p.92.
their farms were smaller, usually much smaller, than the average European land-holding. They were given land which was not cleared or which could only be arduously cultivated by hoe. The area under cane and therefore their return was small. Tongoa, for example, leased fifty acres but only ten were under cane and this had yielded forty-five tons of cane in 1905. 53 Sage, the missionary in charge of Selwyn Mission, asserted in 1906 that the Islanders did not plant sufficient cane to pay expenses and that some had already forfeited their leaseholds. 54 There may have been some truth in this. While the Islanders were experienced in cultivation, few were literate or knowledgeable in business methods such as the proper keeping of accounts. However, it must be remembered that most of these farmers had taken up their leases very recently. There were contemporaries, such as John Smart (the manager of Palms plantation for the Melbourne and Mackay Sugar Company) who considered that the Islanders were making a success as small farmers. The continued presence of such farmers in the years after 1908 was a further indication that they were not completely unsuccessful. 55

MOST ISLANDERS had achieved a standard of living in Queensland which was in material terms far above that in their original villages. Moreover, by comparison with the cost of living in countries such as England an individual or couple could live well fairly cheaply. 56 Time-expired Islanders and 'ticket-holders' had very superior living conditions over the 'new chums'. On the plantations and even on the small farms, married

54. Ibid., p.853, G. Frodsham.
couples had their own quarters, separate from the single men. They had acquired "the household customs of civilisation", with a kitchen, livingroom, bedroom and furnishings such as beds, tables, chairs and pots and pans. Many cultivated their own vegetable gardens and rations were provided raw for the women to cook. Those who lived off the plantations built or rented houses. Observers commented upon the tidiness and cleanliness of the Islanders' living habits. Great store was placed on the acquisition of possessions. A further sign of their relative prosperity was provided by the horses, bicycles, buggies or spring carts which they used for transport. Europeans considered that non-Europeans had lower living costs (and standards) than themselves; this was true to the extent that the latter usually had no dependants, produced much of their own food and lived in cheap housing.

This degree of comfort in their living conditions was both an inducement to remain in Australia and an indication of a desire to do so. Those Islanders intent on returning to their homes were more concerned to build up their savings than to acquire the trappings of a European lifestyle.


58. File for Selection No.155, LAN/AG613, QSA; Tomkins to Frodsham, 27 Jun. 1907, A1 08/2939, AA; Nielson to Kidston, 01953, encl. in Brenan to Under Chief Sec., 23 May 1906, 2372 of 1906, mf 167(a), RSPS - PSEAH; Brenan to Under Chief Sec., 24 Mar. 1900, 02341, 448 of 1900, ibid.


Another development which provided an incentive to remain and bespoke such an intention was the contracting of relationships which transgressed traditional marriage rules. As will be seen, a significant proportion of those migrants with marital partners were in this category. 'Partners' is used here to cover both legal and common law relationships.

The proportion of Islanders with partners was always very low amongst the men and much higher amongst the women; in terms of the sex imbalance of this population (that is, the tiny number of women), this is easily understood. According to the Queensland census of 1901, just over four per cent of men aged over fifteen were married in contrast to sixty per cent of the women. In 1906, according to returns prepared by the inspectors of Pacific Islanders, nearly four per cent of Islander men in North Queensland had partners; no figures were given for the women (see Table 2.2). This percentage was noticeably higher amongst the small,

TABLE 2.2: Pacific Islanders in coastal North Queensland, 1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>NO. MALES MARR.</th>
<th>SAME IS.</th>
<th>DIFFERENT IS.</th>
<th>AB. &amp; 'HALF-CASTE'</th>
<th>EUR.</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
<th>NO. CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT DOUGLAS</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIRNS</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHNSTONE R.</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERBERT R.</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURDEKIN</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOWEN</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSERPINE</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACKAY</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3248</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: QPP II, 1906, p.903, Appendix XVII.

61. QPP II, 1902, p.1116.
established populations in Bowen and Proserpine, and generally lower in the districts in the far north.

As shown in Table 2.2, some sixty per cent of relationships were with Islander women, with over half of these between men and women from the same island. By no means all of these relationships, however, would have satisfied the strict marriage rules applied in Melanesian societies. Even amongst those couples who had recruited together there were some who had eloped and for whom therefore it would have been dangerous to return. The number of women in Queensland was always very small and the women were predominantly New Hebridean. Relationships were often formed in Queensland between men and women from different islands, even different island groups - many Solomon Islander men married New Hebridean women. A feature which became more marked after 1907 was that of marriages between migrants and the native-born women of full or part Islander descent.

The proportion of partnerships which had a legal basis in European terms was probably not very high. Certainly there were many church and civil

62. In the Pacific Islanders Association petition, eleven of the fifteen couples in Mackay were both from the same island. Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, AI 06/6324, AA. See also Table 4.7.


64. See Chapter 1, pp.10, 12.

65. In Mackay between 1878 and 1907 there are twenty-eight marriages of migrant men in the marriage registers of the Anglican church; at least fifteen of these were to women from other islands. For examples of marriages between Solomon Islander men and New Hebridean women, see QPP II, 1906, p.844, CumCum, p.845, Ferrugie; Johnny Nangway and Nellie Tayhay, AMR, Mackay, 31 Jul. 1898; David Vanolla and Elizabeth Assassoona, ibid., 15 Jan. 1899; James Corsay and Lizzie Nego, ibid., 30 Sep. 1900.

66. See Henry Mie and Hannah Mickey, ibid., 3 Mar. 1903; Andrew Bobongie and Joy Kwau, ibid., 13 Nov. 1906; Jack Ware and Ellen Load, AMR, Bowen, 23 Jan. 1897. See also Table 4.7.
marriages\textsuperscript{67}, but most couples, especially those who had recruited together, seem not to have gone through this legal formality. At the Walkerston Mission, for example, McIntyre distinguished clearly between those married "according to Island rites" and those married legally.\textsuperscript{68}

Bride-price, the custom of providing an agreed exchange to the bride's relatives, appears to have been practised in Queensland, if to a limited extent and in an attenuated form. Money replaced such currency as shell valuables. In Mackay in 1907, for instance, an Islander offered £10 to the brother of a native-born Islander girl whom he desired.\textsuperscript{69} Partnerships which did not satisfy traditional marriage rules may sometimes have been set aside if the man or woman found a partner from the correct kin categories.\textsuperscript{70}

As shown in Table 2.2, there were also many relationships formed between Islander men and non-Melanesian women. Roughly half of these were with European women. For example, Jimmy Sura from Guadalcanal married a Scottish woman, Agnes Brown, in Mackay in the 1880s.\textsuperscript{71} There were also

\textsuperscript{67} See M.M. Bennett, \textit{Christison of Lammermoor} (London, 1927), p.153; \textit{AYB}, 1905-6, p.75; \textit{QPP II}, 1906, p.634; \textit{J. McIntyre}, p.730; \textit{J.R. Edmonds}, p.750; \textit{W.P. Wilson}, p.795; \textit{C.W. Tomkins}, p.845; \textit{Tarrim Dooley}; \textit{Statement of Johnny Lefu, Inquest No. 654 of 1934, Nellie Lefu, JUS/N987}, QSA. Access to the State marriage registers was denied. Marriage registers kept by the churches up to 1907 have many gaps and are complete only in Mackay, Bowen and Cairns, where they recorded twenty-eight, six and nil marriages of Islanders, respectively. See Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{QPP II}, 1906, p.634.

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{MM} 28 Mar. 1907, NPC. For other examples see W 6 Jul. 1901; Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton, memo., n.d. [1907], Al 08/2939, AA; \textit{Herald, A White Australia}, pp.36, 82. For a case in which a return on Tanna rejected the bride-price custom, see \textit{Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides} No.62, Oct. 1908, pp.11-12. See also Chapter 4, p.169.


some cases of Islander women marrying Europeans; one of these was a Solomon Islander woman, Annie Barslo, who married a Herbert River cane farmer, George Gosling.\footnote{Evelyn Gosling, AMR, Ingham, 31 Mar. 1912. For other examples see Summary of Pacific Islanders apparently domiciled permanently in Queensland, A1 03/1694, AA; Table 4.7.} While Europeans disapproved strongly of such marriages, there were no official attempts to prevent them.\footnote{See QPP II, 1906, p.680, E. Dark; MH 5 Jan. 1904; QPD XLI, 1884, p.240; Markus, Fear and Hatred, p.224. There appear to have been no marriages between Europeans and Aborigines. Loos, Aboriginal-European Relations, p.417.} In a small number of cases, the Islanders found partners from amongst other non-European migrants such as the Chinese.\footnote{See Table 2.2; Table 4.7; Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, A1 06/6324, AA.} In many more cases, the partners were Aboriginal women. This was most common in the Herbert River and other northerly districts, where the number of Islander women was very low.\footnote{This was more common in North Queensland than in Southern Queensland. See QPP II, 1906, p.903, Appendix XVII.}

In view of the tiny number of Islander women, Aboriginal women were the obvious alternative for both casual and more permanent liaisons. It was not uncommon for Islander men to forcibly abduct Aboriginal women from the camps. On many occasions they made bride payments for these women. Eight Islander men in Innisfail for instance, had given a bride-price ranging from £1 to £10 to the relatives of their Aboriginal partners. Not surprisingly, European sensibilities were offended by these 'sales'.\footnote{See Fussell, A Kanaka Slave, pp.58-59; Tomkins to Frodsham, 27 Jun. 1907, A1 08/2939, AA; Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton. Statements of Islanders forw. by Brenan to Hunt, 26 Jun. 1907, ibid.; Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, p.344.} It was alleged that Aboriginal women were sometimes 'sold' to other Islander men, and certainly there were cases in which Islanders forcibly dispossessed
fellow Islanders of their Aboriginal partners. There were also claims that Pacific Islanders used these women for 'immoral purposes', that is, prostitution. While at least some of these accusations appear to have been ill-founded, they reveal clearly the potential - and not only for the Islanders - for exploiting Aboriginals. The Islanders, as pointed out in Chapter 1, looked down upon Aborigines and relations between the two groups were commonly marked by violence.

Yet long-term relationships between the men and Aboriginal women generally did not fit this pattern of abuse and violence. Such common law relationships, according to some knowledgeable observers, were regarded as permanent and respected by the men. Many couples married after several years of living together. Proof of the enduring and affectionate nature of these unions was provided during deportation in the distress occasioned by attempts to deport the men. As the next chapter will show, many Aboriginal women accompanied their men to the islands.

Aboriginal women living with Islander men were usually considered to have improved their situation. To Europeans, they had exchanged the unhygienic, squalid and precarious camp lifestyle for clean comfortable surroundings and steady, hard-working partners. Nevertheless, marriages

77. Fussell, A Kanaka Slave, p.60; Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton, memo., n.d. [1907], Al 08/2939, AA; Brenan to Hunt, telegram, 29 Aug. 1907, ibid.; Fraser to Brenan, 13 Jan. 1908, ibid.

78. See Bamford to Actg Prime Min., 8 Jun. 1907, ibid.; Fraser to Brenan, 30 Jun. 1907, ibid.; Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton. Statements of Islanders forw. by Brenan to Hunt, 26 Jun. 1907, ibid.


81. See Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton. Statements of Islanders forw. by Brenan to Hunt, 26 Jun. 1907, Al 08/2939, AA; Tomkins to Frodsham, 27 Jun. 1907, ibid.

82. See Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton. Statements of Islanders forw. by Brenan to Hunt, 26 Jun. 1907, ibid.; Tomkins to Frodsham, 27 Jun. 1907, ibid.; AYB, 1905-6, p.75.
between Aborigines and Islanders were not encouraged by the authorities. In summary, it has been shown that few of the migrant men had partners, at least during their stay in Queensland. The majority of the women, however, did have partners. Most relationships were formed with Islander men or women, although many of these would have transgressed traditional marriage rules. Other partners were drawn principally from the Aboriginal and European populations. Abuse and violence marked many of the liaisons between Islander men and Aboriginal women, but there were also cases of enduring and affectionate relationships.

IN THE treatment and position of Islander women in Queensland, there were important differences from conditions prevailing in their island societies. Social restrictions on young women and their role in village life ensured that only small numbers of women recruited. Most who did recruit went with their husbands or seized the opportunity to elope with other men, but there were also some (despite the regulations) who came unaccompanied (see Plate 2.2).

During the voyage to Queensland the women ran the risk of sexual attack by either the male recruits or European men on board. In the colony too, they found themselves in a vulnerable position. Their small numbers increased their desirability for sexual and status purposes. Quarrels over women provoked most disputes on the plantations. Traditionally


84. For examples, see T12Bsa:1-2; Ty2Bp.1; MM 7 Feb. 1880; CMP 22 Jul. 1897; Smith, The Kanaka Labour Question, p.82; Cromar, Jock of the Islands, p.96; J. Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts: Notes of Personal Experiences in the Western Pacific (London, 1887), pp.334-35. See also Chapter 1.

PLATE 2.1: John Kwailu (Fatnowna) and Orrani from Malaita, with their children Joy, Lucy, Cicily, Harry and Eva (the youngest), Mackay, c. 1900.

PLATE 2.2: Katie Marilla working as a domestic on A.E. Innes’ farm at Pratolina near Mackay, c. 1900. She was brought from Aoba as a young, single girl.
Melanesian men held little respect for women from another district or island. Sexual assaults on women in Queensland were frequent and often brutal, and sometimes produced vengeful attacks by the woman's countrymen on the perpetrators. 86 In the 1890s and 1900s, the predominance of Solomon Islanders exacerbated this situation, since the great majority of the women were New Hebrideans. The incidence of assaults may have been higher in the far north, where there were large numbers of 'new chums' (and, correspondingly, Solomon Islanders), than in established districts such as Mackay. 87

The victims of sexual assault could expect little support from Europeans, either in the form of legal redress or intervention to prevent such attacks. 88 Islander women were regarded, like their European contemporaries, as the virtual property of their spouses. Women who eloped, if discovered by the Queensland authorities, faced the risk of being returned to their islands, notwithstanding the great danger this posed to their lives. 89 Even in Queensland these women were not always safe from retribution by kinfolk: two Tannese men, for instance, were sent to the

86. Forster to McDonald, 16 Nov., 26 Nov. 1885, 9527 of 1885, COL/A448, QSA; Herald, A White Australia, pp.36, 45-46; Maryborough Chronicle quoted in Rockhampton Morning Bulletin 19 Nov. 1884; War Cry 7 Nov. 1896, p.6; Saunders, 'The Black Scourge', pp.205, 216-17. See also Chapter 1, pp.34, 49.

87. For example, Davitt who visited Mackay in the late 1890s commented that the women were not molested at work or in leisure hours by the Islander men, whereas in 1901 W.T. Reay, the special commissioner for the Herald, reported that sexual assault was common in the Cairns district. Davitt, Life and Progress in Australasia, p.273; Herald, A White Australia, pp.36, 45-46.

88. See NM 23 Nov. 1886; Herald, A White Australia, p.84; Saunders, 'Melanesian Women in Queensland', pp.676-77.

89. For examples of this attitude, see Woodford to Brenan, 9 Jan. 1903, 01793, 4923 of 1903, mf 167(a), RSPS-PSEAH; Brenan to Actg Under Chief Sec., 10 Mar. 1903, ibid.; Scarr, Fragments of Empire, pp.158-59n.
colony to bring back two countrywomen on a Maryborough plantation who had recruited without the elders' permission.90

Like the men, the women made important adjustments to the life in Queensland. Their appearance was greatly altered by the wearing of European dress, in the form of modest high-necked, long-sleeved and full-skirted dresses or blouses and skirts and heavy boots (see Plates 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3). They learnt to dress their hair in a European manner and to wear hats, jewellery and other fashionable adornments (see Plate 1.6).91

Islander women were accustomed to monotonous, constant labour in their gardens. Thus plantation work was less unfamiliar for them than for the men. Women worked in the fields, often in women's gangs, but usually at the lighter tasks such as planting. The sensibilities of European visitors were greatly offended by the sight of these women labouring in the fields.92 Pregnant women worked up till or very close to the birth and returned soon after, usually with their infants, who were often carried on their backs in slings.93

Not all women worked in the fields. Until strict occupational restrictions for Islanders were stipulated in 1884, and even after, they were often employed as cooks, domestic servants and children's nurses (see Plate 2.2).94 They learnt domestic skills from their female employers

91. See NH 7 Mar. 1903; WC 1 Jan. 1907; Argus 23 Feb. 1884, 'The Vagabond'; Blake, 'The Kanaka', p.82; Photographic Album, I, Nos.19-21, 41, 43, II, Nos.36, 63.
94. See Bernays, Queensland Politics During Sixty Years, p.65; QPD LXVII, 1885, p.1087; QWP II, 1892, p.1215; QPP II, 1902, p.1257; Caulfeild, 'Adventurous Life of Henry Caulfeild', 1 Jun. 1937, p.48; Forbes, 'The Kanaka in Queensland', p.647; Elizabeth (Lucy) and Clara, ABR, Bowen, 17 Dec. 1899.
PLATE 2.3: Sarah Lemarla from Tongoa with her daughters Rhoda and Esther (on her lap), Herbert River district, c. 1910.

PLATE 2.4: Jack Meredith, one of the few Malaitans who remained in the Herbert River district after 1908, c. 1900.
or experienced fellow Islanders, and also in mission classes. In the mid-1900s, significantly, the occupations of married women (particularly those whose partners were farming) began to be given as 'domestic duties' rather than 'plantation labourers'; this trend to working only in the home became more noticeable in later years.

European contemporaries described Islander women as pleasant-tempered and neat in appearance. For many, the work in Queensland must have been less demanding than, and their living conditions superior to, those in their villages. On Tanna, women who had returned remembered life in Queensland thus: "Plenty MAMO (dress); plenty KI-KI (food)". In Queensland they could complain to the inspectors and bring charges if they were maltreated, even if their chances of securing convictions were slight. Moreover, they gained a measure of economic freedom through the wages they earned, and a number enjoyed the independence of savings bank accounts in their own names. At least three women took the further step of farming on their own account, such as Kate Suvalissie, a Malekulan widow with five daughters, who was farming on leased land near Palms in 1906.


96. See Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, A1 06/6324, AA. See also Chapter 9.


98. MS 29 Jan. 1889, MPC; Australian Christian World 3 Nov. 1892, letter to Ed. by Lizzie Donaldson; Q 5 Jun. 1926, p.6.

99. See for example Bill Ridding, p.20, Matlove (Maggie), p.37, Barra nigh gar, p.190, Coarly, p.179, Natoowon, p.258, IPI 12/L1, QSA; Topsy, p.116, Annie, p.131, Lemala, p.226, IPI 11/2, QSA.

100. QPP II, 1906, p.634, J.M. McIntyre. For the others see Fanny Nellow, Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, A1 06/6324, AA; Summary of Pacific Islanders apparently domiciled permanently in Queensland, A1 03/1694, AA.
Unlike their menfolk, the women readily made friends with other Islander women, even those from different islands. The women seem also to have more easily formed an attachment to their new country. There are several cases in which women remained in Queensland after their partners had returned to the islands. In view of their vulnerable position it is not surprising to find that these women, and also most widows, found new partners within a short space of time. Some women who returned were unable to re-adjust to village life and returned to Queensland: Katie Marlla, for example, took her young daughter back to Aoba but came back to Mackay after a few months and did not leave again.

The life in Queensland was easier and freer for Islander women, if lacking in some of the warmth and security of close communal society. It was not possible here to observe rigidly the traditional taboos, especially those relating to sexual separation. Not many couples seem to have kept up observances such as the women withdrawing during menstruation and childbirth. Women also took a larger part in public life. This was particularly noticeable during the campaign against deportation in the 1900s, when Islander women (both migrant and native-born) were present in deputations and amongst the signatories to petitions. In Mackay in 1904 seven young native-born women presented a petition against deportation to the governor-general, Lord Northcote. There were women in attendance at


102. See Maggie Fatnahoona, AMR, Mackay, 27 Aug. 1906; W 6 Jul. 1901; T19Bsb:1; Ty2B p.1; Scarr, Fragments of Empire, pp.158-59 n; Evidence of Jessie Solomon, Rex vs Manboro, No.44 of 1913, A/18381, QSA.

103. See Ty2B p.1; Scarr, Fragments of Empire, p.159 n.

104. Saunders, 'Melanesian Women in Queensland', pp.673-74. See also Chapters 1 and 8.
at least one of the meetings in Mackay of the Pacific Islanders Association. 105

Pacific Islander women in Queensland were generally regarded as 'respectable' women. There is no reliable evidence of promiscuity or prostitution amongst them. 106 The prostitutes with Islander clients were non-Melanesian women, generally European or Japanese. 107 While Islander women, particularly those employed as domestic servants, were vulnerable to sexual exploitation by European men, cases of seduction (and subsequent pregnancies) appear to have been unusual 108 - a feature which may be accounted for partly by the low proportion of single women amongst them.

Islander couples were considered to be faithful and devoted. 109 In Queensland such couples were thrust much more into one another's company. The single family household which formed the basis of European society was the new principle of social organization.

IN FIGURE 4.1(a) the age and sex imbalance of the Pacific Islander population in Queensland in 1901 are illustrated. 110 The bulge in the

105. See MM 23 Jul. 1904, 18 Apr. 1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting. For similar examples see Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.126; BC 23 Mar. 1903; Photographic Album, I, No.43.


108. See Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, p.342; T22Bsa:3.


110. See also Chapter 1 and Chapter 4.
male population was created by the predominance of young men, and the male/female ratios were grossly distorted by the tiny number of Islander women. Most of the men, it has been seen, were unmarried whereas this was true only of a minority of the women.

The number of (full or part) Islander children in the State in 1901 was said to be 748, and 252 of these were in North Queensland. The only other official estimate of the number of these children was made in 1906, when there were said to be 246 in the coastal districts of North Queensland (see Table 2.2). It is clear that these official figures were a significant underenumeration. The Immigration Department, for example, did not keep records of the number of Islander children in Queensland. However, it is possible from nominal sources to calculate total figures for the numbers of Islander children in the coastal districts of North Queensland up to 1907. The chief disadvantage of such a tally is that it does not give a measure of the population at any one time; for instance, a direct comparison cannot be made with the census figure in 1901, since some children had died, returned to the islands or had not been born by this date. Nevertheless, it is clear that the total from nominal sources is itself a very conservative figure.

The tally from nominal sources reveals that at least 419 full and part Islander children had been or were living in coastal North Queensland up to the end of 1907. The district with by far the largest number of

111. QPP II, 1902, pp.965, 1051. These included those with an Aboriginal or European parent.


113. These figures are not presented in the form of a table because they are clearly very conservative. The sources used were principally the church baptismal and marriage registers, the state school admission registers, cemetery records, funeral records, hospital records, government publications and archival sources (such as the Pacific Islanders Association petition). The local records are incomplete and the State birth registers were not available. Information is particularly incomplete for the districts in the far north.
children, 185, was Mackay (see Plates 1.4 and 2.1). Other districts with large numbers were the Herbert River and Bowen (including Proserpine), where there were at least seventy-five and sixty-six children, respectively (see Plate 2.3). In the Burdekin there were some twenty-eight Islander children. Very few Islander women were ever present in the districts north of the Herbert River, and therefore most of the children born there were the offspring of Aboriginal mothers and Islander fathers. According to the evidence from nominal sources, there were at least thirty-eight, thirteen and eight children in the Johnstone River, Cairns (including Atherton) and Port Douglas districts, respectively. However, information on all these districts is scanty and particularly on the Port Douglas district, where the 1906 return counted twenty-three children (see Table 2.2).

Clearly there were considerable numbers of children amongst the Islander population in North Queensland in the years before 1908. As with farming by the Islanders, this was a feature which received belated recognition in the 1900s as a result of the threat of deportation.


116. For references to such children, see Ayrshire Chronicle quoted in Herald, A White Australia, p.83; QPP II, 1906, p.842, T. Connell, p.844, Cum Cum, p.845, Ally Keena, Ferrugie.

117. For references to children in these districts see ibid., p.730, J.R. Edmonds, p.744, N.P. Petersen, p.754, H. Niven, p.780, Keeseree, p.782, J.D. Sullivan; Const. McKenna to Insp. of Police, 23 Aug. 1901, VOL/II7, QSA; Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton. Statements of Islanders forv. by Brenan to Hunt, 9 Jul. 1907, AL 08/2939, AA; Port Douglas Chronicle quoted in NH 22 Aug. 1885; Staines to Brenan, 8 Jul. 1907, Summary, p.478, CPS 12E/C2, QSA; Kerr, Northern Outpost, p.47, plate.
Children had in fact been present on the plantations for several decades. Some came to Queensland with their parents, despite the regulations prohibiting this. Most were born in North Queensland, often on the plantations. Plantation owners who objected to the presence of children seem to have been more the exception than the rule; food and clothes for children were thrown in with their parents' rations.

Most couples, as shown, lived in common law relationships or were married according to customary rites. Therefore it can be presumed that a high proportion of children were illegitimate, in the legal sense. This was made evident on a number of occasions when couples with one or more children married. Pressure to marry, at least in Mackay, may have been applied by missionaries and local clergy who were unwilling to baptise

118. See Cromar, Jock of the Islands, pp.11, 242; Ty2Bp.1; Ole Matsen, Diary II, p.86 (reference supplied by C.R. Moore). Over the years there were children accompanying their parents amongst the returns on the labour ships. See MM 7 May 1881, 27 May 1885; PDMR 12 Nov. 1902, 12 Jan. 1906; PDT 13 Apr. 1907; CNP 2 Mar. 1907; BC 19 Oct. 1901; NC 1 Jul. 1907; Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides No.41, Jul. 1903, p.6; QPP II, 1906, p.885, J.O'N. Brenan.

119. This was from as early as 1870. See for example T3Bsa:2; MM 23 Jul. 1904; Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides No.68, Apr. 1909, p.21; Elizabeth (Lucy), ABR, Bowen, 17 Dec. 1899; Argus 23 Feb. 1884, 'The Vagabond'; Jacob Low, Hinchinbrook CR, 19 Dec. 1904.


121. This was probably true of the children of Aboriginal and Islander parents in particular. See for example Jones, Hurricane Lamps, p.302.

122. There were thirteen cases in Mackay of children who were identifiably illegitimate, six in Bowen and two in the Herbert River. The following examples are of cases in which the families did not remain in Queensland. Nellie and William, ABR, Mackay, 26 Jun. 1892; Andrew Wesick and Sarah Larllo, AMR, 12 Jun. 1892; William and Andrew, ABR, Mackay, 31 Mar. 1894; Thomas and Topsy, AMR, Mackay, 31 Mar. 1894.
children whose parents were not legally united. Another traditional practice which continued was that of adoption. In Melanesian societies childless couples or widowers very often adopted the children of kinsfolk, and the consent of the children's parents was not necessary. In North Queensland in the years up to 1907, eight cases of adoption—presumably without legal backing—have been discovered: five of these children, significantly, were adopted by single men. For instance, in Mackay John Mackeleo from Epi adopted a young child, Sandy, whose parents had returned home. Usually the children were illegitimate, of mixed 'race', or had been abandoned.

In the years after 1907, Islander families were characteristically large. Information on families in this earlier period is too incomplete for judgments on the average completed family size. There were some large families (see Plate 2.1). Charles and Sarah Tallis in Bowen, for example, had a family of nine children. In Mackay Jimmy Surah and his Scottish wife Agnes had seven or eight children. These

123. See QPP II, 1906, p.634, J. McIntyre. As is apparent from the examples cited in the previous footnote, the children were baptised on the same day as or soon after their parents were married. Further evidence of the pressure placed on Islanders to marry is provided in the many cases in which couples were baptised and married on the same day. See for example Harry Sunga and Rose Kateer, AMR, Mackay, 7 Jan. 1894; Harry Sunga and Rose Kateer, ABR, Mackay, 7 Jan. 1894; Harry Conn and Sarah Limmally, AMR, Mackay, 16 Dec. 1894; Harry Conn and Sarah Limmally, ABR, Mackay, 16 Dec. 1894; War Cry 7 Nov. 1896, p.6.


125. For example, younger or older children may not have been baptised and still born babies and infants were often buried without any ceremony or official recognition. See also Chapter 4.

126. Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, Al 06/6324, AA; Charles Tallis, ABUR, Bowen, 20 Jul. 1904.

may have been exceptional. The number of children in many families ranged from one to four: amongst Islanders attending the Selwyn Mission in Mackay in 1906, for example, there were forty children in fifteen families (or 2.7 children per family). 128

Unions between Islander men and Aboriginal women were less fertile. Very often couples were childless: in Innisfail in 1907, for example, there was only one child amongst eight Aboriginal women living with Islander men. 129 All of these women were young, but in other cases the women might have been past the age of child-rearing. However, not all Islander and Aboriginal couples were childless and some, especially in the Johnstone River and Port Douglas districts, had several children. 130

Infant mortality amongst the Islanders is another subject on which the information available is too sparse for statistical purposes. Most deaths of infants or children would not have been recorded. In the Herbert River district, for example, there were said to have been dozens of deaths of young children from the 1870s, yet in the cemetery registers less than half-a-dozen such deaths were recorded. 131 In view of the staggeringly high mortality rate amongst the adult Islanders, however, it


129. Deportation of Kanakas at Geraldton. Statements of Islanders forw. by Brenan to Hunt, 9 Jul. 1907, Al 08/2939, AA. For similar examples see Statement of Johnny Lefu, Inquest No.654 of 1934, Nellie Lefu, JUS/N987, QSA; OPP LI, 1906, p.780, Keeseree, Harry Delamo, p.844, Cum Cum; Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, Al 06/6324, AA.

130. See OPP LI, 1906, p.845, Ally Keena; Charlie Now, AMR, Innisfail, 4 Dec. 1922; Ellen Now, MNR, Cairns, 8 Nov. 1922; Millie Now, ibid., 4 Dec. 1926; Ruth Eliza and Elizabeth May Eubi, ABR, Ingham, 9 Aug. 1908; Staines to Brenan, 8 Jul. 1907, Summary, p.478, CPS 12E/G2, QSA.

can be presumed that infant mortality was also very high, and certainly much higher than that amongst the European population.  

In Islander families, as also in contemporary European families, it was not unusual for at least one child not to have survived infancy or childhood. In the Herbert River district, for instance, the eldest son of Tom and Annie Lammon died at the age of three. The causes of death are not hard to discover. Childbirth was a dangerous time which either the mother or baby, or both, might not survive; very young children were also particularly at risk. There is evidence that some parents did not welcome their new-born babies, and that their deaths were brought about by exposure after birth or poor maternal care. There are also documented cases in which parental neglect was the fault of their employers - as, for instance, when parents were given no alternative but to leave their children all day in their quarters unattended.

Infectious and contagious diseases such as measles, diptheria, pneumonia, influenza, whooping cough, dysentery and enteritis accounted

132. However, the infant mortality rate was probably comparable with or even lower than that prevailing in the islands. See McArthur and Yaxley, Condominium of the New Hebrides, pp.9, 11; Herald, A White Australia, p.27; Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides No.63, Jan. 1909, p.14.

133. Dutton, Queensland Canefields English, p.115. For other such examples see Surah, Mackay District Hospital Admission Register, 13 Apr. 1895 (reference supplied by C.R. Moore); Charles Tallis, ABUR, Bowen, 20 Jul. 1904; Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides No.64, Apr. 1909, p.21; QPP II, 1906, p.526, Naluni; Ruth Ambrym, ABUR, Ingham, 12 Feb. 1904.

134. See for example Unnamed, Hinchinbrook CR, 19 Jan. 1890; Roahlayer, ibid., 16 Dec. 1889; Newspaper unknown, n.d. [1892?], Newspaper cuttings relating to the Labour Trade with Queensland 1890-5, collected by the Rev. Dr. J.G. Paton, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau 30; Cardwell Death Registers, 1887 (reference supplied by D. Jones).


for most deaths of Islander children. Some but not all of these diseases were also potentially fatal for European children. Like their parents, Islander children had little resistance to European diseases and were particularly susceptible to tubercular complaints. The incidence of venereal disease amongst the Islanders increased from the 1880s; in Innisfail there were two cases of children who died from congenital syphilis.

Islander parents were said to be very affectionate towards their offspring, but otherwise information on childrearing practices is lacking. From evidence concerning the later period, however, it can be presumed that strict discipline and behavioural controls were imposed, but that this was tempered by the warmth and security of family and kinship patterns. Wife and child desertion was unknown amongst the Islanders, and marital breakdowns seem to have been uncommon.

137. See for examples Johnnie, Mackay CR, 3 Jan. 1884; Surah, Mackay District Hospital Admission Register, 13 Apr. 1895 (reference supplied by C.R. Moore); Shepherd, The Herbert River Story, pp.207, 216; Cardwell Death Registers, 1887 (reference supplied by D. Jones); Nancy Ourri, Hinchinbrook CR, 19 Jan. 1900; Jacob Low, ibid., 19 Dec. 1904.

138. QVP II, 1901, p.1361. See also Chapter 1, p.28. Not surprisingly, the mortality amongst children born in Queensland who returned to the islands was high, and was attributed chiefly to the change of diet and incidence of malaria. See QPP II, 1906, p.483, H.E. Young, p.488, J. Clark, p.617, H. Tongoa, p.627, F.C. Hornbrook; Corris,'White Australia' in Action', p.248.

139. Cardwell Death Registers, 1888, 1890 (references supplied by D. Jones); Jones, Hurricane Lamps, p.167.

140. Argus 23 Feb. 1884, 'The Vagabond'.

141. See Chapter 9.

142. One case of a marital breakdown has been discovered. See Crimes Committed by Kanakas and Male Whites in Queensland During Ten Years ending 31st December 1900, PRE/88, QSA; Woodford to O'Brien, 10 Apr. 1899, No.17, Western Pacific High Commission (reference supplied by J.A. Bennett); MS 23 Oct. 1891, MPC.
The proportion of parents amongst those Islanders who had improved their economic position was much higher than that amongst those who continued to labour on the plantations. This was convincingly demonstrated in the Pacific Islanders Association petition in 1906: in Mackay, eleven of the twenty-three men and the two women with dependants were farmers; in Bowen and Proserpine fifteen of the twenty men with dependants were farmers. 143

Those Islanders who were farming on their own account and who had families had a two-fold reason for wishing to remain in Australia. Evidence of this desire can be found in their eagerness to give their children a European education.

In the Queensland census of 1901, it was stated that 159 Islander children were attending schools throughout the State and a further 5 were being taught at home. This represented slightly over half the number of school-age children. 144 However, this was apparently an underestimation. School admission registers, while they have not survived for all state schools in coastal North Queensland, are available for some of the schools in the Mackay, Proserpine and Burdekin districts and most in the Herbert River district. These indicate that up to 1907 at least 109 Islander children had attended school in these areas alone. 145 There is also evidence of children attending schools for which the registers are lost or incomplete. 146 In 1906 the royal commission investigating deportation

143. Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, Al 06/6324, AA.
144. QPP II, 1902, p.1257.
145. The Herbert River district is the only district for which almost all of the admission registers have survived, and the number of Islander children attending school here was at least 67.
146. See Woodford to O'Brien, 10 Apr. 1889, No.17, Western Pacific High Commission (reference supplied by J.A. Bennett); QPP II, 1906, p.670, N. Sabbot, p.730, J.R. Edmonds; Unknown newspaper, n.d. [1907], Newspaper Cuttings Vol.82, p.60; NN 12 Oct. 1932, letter to Ed. by H. Fatownma.
reported that most native-born Islanders had been or were being educated in state schools. 147

While the State Education Act of 1875 provided for the compulsory attendance of every child at a state or provisional school, truancy by Islander children is unlikely to have greatly concerned the authorities. 148 Clearly not all school-age Islander children attended school. In Mossman in 1901, for example, few of the offspring of Aboriginal and Islander couples were attending school. Distance from the nearest school prevented some Islander children in the Mackay district from attending. 149 Some may have left school to return to the islands with their parents, while others, like European children, may have been taken or kept out of school to help their parents on their farms. 150

Nor were Islander children always welcome in the schools. It has been claimed that Aboriginal children generally were denied admission to Queensland schools. 151 In North Queensland, however, up to 1907 only three cases of discrimination against Islander children have been discovered. In the Burdekin district, Eliza Epie left school because of the hostility displayed towards her by the European children. 152 The other two cases involved more organized resistance. In the Herbert River district, Islander children were excluded from the Halifax State School between 1904 and 1906

147. QPP II, 1906, pp.455, 458. The commissioners estimated (obviously incorrectly) that there were fifty Islander children attending state schools in Queensland.

148. 39 Vic., No.11, ss.28, 29; Loos, Aboriginal-European Relations, pp.751-52.


150. See ibid., p.693, R.Stubbin, pp.856-57, G.H. Frodsham; Labor in Canefields Conference, Townsville, reprinted from North Queensland Herald, 2 Mar. 1907, pp.18, 34.

151. Loos, Aboriginal-European Relations, p.752.

152. 1208sa:1.
by the school committee, allegedly because of a case of leprosy amongst them. The Department of Education had supported this action and only moved to form a temporary school for these children after strong remonstrances were made by Bishop Frodsham. In Mackay in the same year the parents of European children at Homebush State School had similarly voted to ban Islander children from the school, but this appears to have lapsed by the following year. As will be seen in Chapter 8, there were further attempts in the years after 1907 to prevent Islander children attending state schools.

School admission registers provide direct evidence on the length of time spent at school but are less revealing in regard to educational attainment. Yet the number of years at school usually is related to the depth of education received. Nearly one-third of the 109 children cited above attended school for less than one year, sometimes only for one or two months. Many did not progress beyond the lower grades, despite their advanced age and number of years at school - one Malekulan child who had three years of schooling, for example, was still in the first grade (at the age of nine) when he left.

Most Islander children may not have achieved even basic literacy. According to the census in 1901, just over one-half of the Islander children aged between five and fifteen could read and write or read only. There were, however, some who acquired a good standard of education. Two of Jimmy Surah’s daughters who returned to the Solomons with him had attended school in Mackay and spoke English perfectly; the oldest girl


154. Tommy Mallicola, Ingham SSAR, 22 Feb. 1898, Ripple Creek SSAR, 16 May 1898, Halifax SSAR, 23 Oct. 1900. For similar cases see Mickey Booka Booka, Ripple Creek SSAR, 7 Aug. 1905; Nellie Querro, Homebush SSAR, 18 Feb. 1907; Annie Tambo, Halifax SSAR, 23 Apr. 1894.

155. QPP II, 1902, pp.1099-1100.
was teaching the younger children. It was reported that the eldest child (aged twelve) of a Malaitan couple who left Mackay in 1906 could speak and write as well as the average schoolchild.156

The presence of many Islander children in the state schools demonstrates the importance attached to a European education by their parents. An argument against deportation used by the Pacific Islanders Association expressed this well: "the children learn in Queensland, but do not at the islands".157

APART from sending their children to school, Islander parents further revealed their attitude to their host country by the emphasis they placed on a Christian upbringing for their children. The number of baptisms of these children and their regular attendance at mission classes and Sunday schools well illustrate this. Their parents were themselves regular in their church attendance and often prominent in the missions.158 As has been suggested, families were more susceptible to Christian teachings (as a primary means of acculturation) than were the single migrants.159

Those Islanders who were long-standing residents, both couples and single men, were usually well-known and well-respected in their local communities. Under the threat of deportation in the early twentieth century, many Europeans were moved to support the right to remain of such people, whom they described as peaceful, law-abiding, hard-working and

156. Woodford to O'Brien, 10 Apr. 1899, No.17, Western Pacific High Commission (reference supplied by J.A. Bennett); Newspaper unknown, n.d. [1907], Newspaper Cuttings, Vol.82, p.60. For other examples see QPP II, 1906, p.455; T52Bsa:2-3; MM 12 Oct. 1932, letter to Ed. by H. Fatnowna.

157. QPP II, 1906, p.617, H. Tongoa. See also Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.147.

158. See Saunders, 'Melanesian Women in Queensland', p.675; Petition from Pacific Island Labourers to King Edward VII, encl. in PRE/87, QSA. See also Chapter 1.

They also recognized that these Islanders considered themselves to be permanent residents, and evidence from the Islanders themselves corroborated this view. Those who went home for a short stay did so in the same spirit as those Europeans who visited the 'old country'; Australia had become their home.

It is obvious, then, that by the early 1900s many individual migrants had broken the pattern of circular migration and were intending to live out their lives in Australia. These were still, however, only a small proportion of the total Islander population. Most were long-standing residents, even pioneers. In North Queensland such people were concentrated in the more established coastal districts of Mackay, Bowen, Proserpine and the Herbert River. Their intention to remain was manifested in various activities. Occupationally, many had extended themselves beyond wage labour in the fields in the sugar industry, usually by entering other branches of agriculture such as small-scale farming and self-employment in other areas. Some were married when they came to the colony but others found partners here, principally other Islanders or Aborigines but sometimes Europeans. Many of these couples had raised or were raising families. By the early 1900s there were in fact some native-born Islanders who had married and were raising families. The decision in 1901 to deport the Islanders jeopardized the continued existence of these groups of migrants. As Chapter 3 will show, such men and women were not prepared to leave their adopted country without a fierce struggle.


CHAPTER 3
DEPORTATION AND EXEMPTION

BY THE early 1900s, as Chapter 2 has shown, there were many men and women amongst the Pacific Island migrants who regarded Australia as their permanent home. Their continued presence was threatened by the enactment of legislation in 1901 designed to close the labour trade and deport almost all the Islanders. This chapter examines the decision to end Pacific Island immigration, the protests forthcoming from both Europeans and the Islanders themselves, and the administration of deportation. The number who gained exemption and who chose to remain in Australia is difficult to calculate precisely and there were a further number, not inconsiderable, who managed to stay behind illegally.

IN THE 1890s the process of dividing the large sugar plantations into small farms, using family labour and taking the cane to co-operative central sugar mills, gathered momentum. Whether this changeover would have produced, in time, a gradual transition to a European workforce, is a moot point. Certainly the numbers of European sugar workers had risen with the numbers of small farmers, especially during the depression of the 1890s.\(^1\) The cost of Pacific Island labour also rose, partly because of the increasing proportion of time-expired men who commanded higher wages. The incidence of strikes, cases of arson and other manifestations of resentment against the Islanders' unequal position also increased sharply.\(^2\) Yet this cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that Europeans would have eventually replaced the Islander workforce. The transition to small farms and the use of European labour was most advanced in the sugar districts of southern Queensland. In the far north, the hard work of clearing the land was not finished and dependence on Island labour had deepened rather than

\(^1\) See Chapter 2, pp.68-69; Hunt, 'Exclusivism and Unionism', pp.82-83; Markus, Fear and Hatred, pp.190, 245.

\(^2\) See Chapter 1, p.29; V. Burgmann, 'Capital and Labour: Responses to Immigration in the Nineteenth Century', in Curthoys and Markus (eds), Who Are Our Enemies?, p.30; Markus, Fear and Hatred, pp.192-93.
lessened: it is no coincidence that wage rates for Islanders were highest in Port Douglas, the most northerly district. Throughout North Queensland most small farmers continued to prefer to employ Islander and Asian labour over Europeans. Concomitantly, conditions of employment in the sugar industry remained at such a low standard that it was unlikely that large numbers of Europeans could have been attracted into the canefields, especially in the more trying climatic conditions in the north.

By the turn of the century, it was by no means certain that a transition to a European labour force in the sugar industry would be effected voluntarily. The labour movement throughout Australia, however, was practically unanimous in its support of legislation to prohibit the entry of non-Europeans. It claimed the Queensland results at the 1901 federal election, when seven of the nine men elected to the House of Representatives were opposed to the labour trade, was an unambiguous victory for 'White Australia'. But the abolition of the labour trade and the repatriation of Pacific Islanders was not a foregone conclusion. Certainly the vote in North Queensland in 1899, which had ensured that Queensland supported federation, did not indicate a consensus of opinion against Pacific Island labour; the cane farmers and planters had sought free entry for their sugar to Australian markets and protection against imported sugar. In the election campaign of 1900, Edmund Barton advocated an end to the labour trade but left the question of timing and implementation deliberately vague, except in a speech at Toowoomba where he referred to an adjustment period of ten years. His opponent, George Reid, refused to commit himself at all and thus attracted the support neither of those who


5. For an opposite view, see Burgmann, 'Capital and Labour', pp.30-31.

6. Four of these were Labor men. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p.248; Markus, Fear and Hatred, p.228.

wanted to abolish recruiting immediately nor of those who wanted a transition period. 8

On 2 October 1901 the second reading of the Pacific Island Labourers Bill was moved by Prime Minister Barton in the new Commonwealth parliament. Sugar growers and others with a vested interest in the industry felt betrayed. Within both the House of Representatives and the Senate a few members opposed the legislation on economic grounds, but the bill had an easy passage. 9 The Act was short and simple. There was to be a proportional reduction in the number of Islanders introduced until recruiting ceased on 31 March 1904. All Islanders still in Australia on 31 December 1906 were to be deported and after this date no agreements with them would remain in force. Only those Islanders who held exemption certificates under the 1884 Act, the crews of ships and those with temporary certificates of exemption under the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, were excluded from the operation of the Act. Those born in Australia were also exempt by virtue of their birthplace. It was argued that no hardship would be inflicted by deportation, since this had occurred since recruiting began and since it had never been intended that Pacific Islanders should become permanent residents. 10


The Pacific Island Labourers Act provoked a flood of protests from such public figures as the premier of Queensland, Robert Philp, and the lieutenant-governor, Griffith, from sugar producers and planters, from conservative newspapers such as the Brisbane Courier, and from organizations such as the agricultural associations and chambers of commerce. Such opposition to the legislation was most noticeable in 1901 but despite talk of secession and civil war, fell away rapidly after that, apart from pessimistic predictions of the inevitable collapse of the sugar industry after deportation. This decline in protests on economic grounds was clearly related to the subsequent provision of fiscal protection and 'white' labour incentives for the sugar industry. A protective duty of £6 per ton was placed on sugar imports and, to encourage the employment of European labour, £2 of a £3 per ton excise placed on Australian-produced sugar would be refunded as a bounty on sugar manufactured from cane grown and harvested solely by Europeans. This rebate was initially to be paid only until 1906 but in this year it was extended until 1911.

Where the campaign by vested interests fell away after 1901, protests on humanitarian grounds against the Pacific Island Labourers Act gained impetus in the following years. Europeans from many different spheres, from without as well as within Australia, were appalled at the decision to deport almost all Islanders in the country. The churches were deeply concerned at the potential cruelty and hardships which would


13. Birch, 'The Implementation of the White Australia Policy', pp.204-7. The rebate was then increased to £3 and the excise duty to £4 per ton.

14. Corris, 'White Australia' in Action', p.238. During debate in the Senate, a few of the Queensland members had protested that deportation would cause hardship to those Islanders who were long-standing residents. Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, pp.444-45.
be incurred if most Pacific Islanders, especially those who had been converted, were sent back to their 'uncivilized' homes. The Presbyterian General Assembly in 1906 passed a resolution, later forwarded to the premier and the prime minister, which urged that those who were long-standing residents or married should be allowed to stay. Both Bishops White and Frodsham, the Anglican bishops of Carpentaria and North Queensland, campaigned strongly against the return of Christian and married Islanders to villages where their lives would be in danger. Frodsham urged the formation of an agricultural community under Christian influence at Fiu on Malaita, where returning Solomon Islanders could be sent. 15 Individual clergymen, such as Pritt of Gairloch and James Gillespie at Walkerton, were also vocal in pleading the Islanders' cause. 16

Lay persons sympathetic to the Islanders, especially planters, newspaper editors and politicians, similarly entered strong protests against wholesale deportation. 17 One of the Queenslanders' correspondents reviled deportation as "a lasting blot on the Commonwealth as a nation, and a disgrace to all our teachings of Christianity and brotherly love, which we have gone out of our way to instil into the minds of this people". Pointing out that the Islanders had no sovereign to defend their interests, the Brisbane Courier argued that deportation was a question "not so much of law as of humanity, not of legal rights so much as the exercise of these rights". The governor of Queensland, Sir Herbert Chermside, was of the opinion that the relaxation of the conditions for exemption from deportation would not contravene the principle of the Act. 18

15. Kerr to Deakin, 31 May 1906, AI 06/3763, AA; BC 12 Oct.1901, interview with Bishop White, 3 May 1906, Presbyterian General Assembly; Frodsham to Kidston, 8 Mar.1906, PRE/84, QSA.


18. Q 1 May 1902, letter to Ed. by 'Bulleta', Bertie Newspaper Cuttings, Vol.71; Newspaper cutting, BC 3 Oct.1906, encl. in AI 07/293, AA; Chermside to Sec. of State for the Colonies, 23 Jun.1902, Qld. No.57, AI 03/1694, AA.
Since most of these planters, politicians, newspaper editors and even churchmen were known to be supporters of the labour trade, their impartiality was somewhat suspect. Europeans with experience of life in the islands, however, were also anxious about the result of deporting large numbers of Islanders. Charles Woodford, the resident commissioner in the Solomon Islands, was concerned with the dangers of returning home for those who had recruited in order to avoid punishment for misdeeds and those whose marriages did not satisfy local marriage rules (as when a partner came from a different island of origin). Other British officials and residents in the islands were concerned that the Islanders would resist deportation and also at the prospect of Queensland-born children being brought back to 'heathen' societies. Some of the New Hebridean missionaries, however, did not share these anxieties; as long-standing opponents of recruiting, they welcomed deportation which would, moreover, greatly augment their 'flocks'.

As a result of such protests and of the uncertainty felt concerning the future of the sugar industry, a royal commission was belatedly appointed in April 1906 to investigate the practical application of deportation and the availability of a labour supply to replace the Islanders. The commissioners took evidence at twenty-seven centres (sixteen in North Queensland) between April and June 1906. White and Frodsham, the Anglican bishops, appealed once again for a humanitarian application of the Act. The majority of farmers and other local residents interviewed, even those who endorsed the 'White Australia' policy, were concerned for the fate of those Islanders who had settled in the State or who had valid reasons

---

19. Woodford to Chermside, 10 Aug.1902, encl. in Chermside to Sec. of State for the Colonies, 10 Sep. 1902, Qld. No.71, ibid.; Q 22 Dec.1906, p.3; Rason to im Thurn, 15 and 16 Dec.1905, encl.in im Thurn to Gov. of Qld., 22 Jan.1906, 522, PRE/84, QSA: im Thurn to Lieutenant Gov. of Qld., 27 Nov. 1905, 118, ibid.


21. In North Queensland they visited the districts of Mackay, Proserpine, Bowen, the Burdekin, Townsville, the Herbert River, the Johnstone River, Cairns and Port Douglas.
(such as farms, marriage or families) for not returning home. David Coyne, a Mackay cane farmer, urged that the Islanders should be treated as human beings, and not as animals, or as creatures beneath contempt. Although they are black, they have bodies and souls the same as I have, and in days to come I would not like it to be said that the Commonwealth had not treated them with humanity.

EVIDENCE collected by the royal commission and letters to the newspapers and to government officials clearly demonstrated that many Europeans were cognizant of and sympathetic to the plight of the Islanders. However, those Islanders who wished to stay were also prepared to campaign for themselves. As will be seen, some made individual pleas to the royal commissioners and to the prime minister and other politicians. Others united in organized protests, through deputations, petitions and, above all, in the Pacific Islanders Association.

As early as 1901, Mrs. Robinson of Selwyn Mission received a letter from an Islander adherent, who wrote on behalf of his countrymen to ask if it was...

really true that white people want to send all boys back to islands,... We been work well in this land for white people, then why they want to turn us out?

In 1902, a group of Islanders in Rockhampton met with K.M. Grant, the local MLA, and also J.G. Drake, the MHR and cabinet minister, to plead...

---

23. Ibid., p.660.  
their case to remain in Australia. In this year also, a petition purportedly signed by 3,000 Islanders was forwarded by Chermside to Joseph Chamberlain, the secretary of state for the colonies. Despite Chermside's and Philp's assurances that the petition was genuine, it certainly bore the stamp of European involvement. Alfred Deakin, who had succeeded Barton as prime minister, believed that the petition could not be bona fide, in view of the scattered nature of the Islander population and the 'racial' differences which divided them: "they are taught to act at the bidding of their employers, and no doubt have done so in this instance". Philp's endorsement of the petition and its direct transmission to Chamberlain no doubt also influenced Deakin's hostile reaction. Although Deakin's attitude was patronizing, there is strong evidence which indicates that the petition had been European-sponsored. Europeans appear to have couched the legalistic arguments employed in the preamble and were prominent in collecting signatures; and at Philp's direction, the inspectors of Pacific Islanders were instructed to assist those who were collecting signatures. Nevertheless, the Islanders gave their support: W. Kidston, the MLA for Rockhampton, knew of two hundred who had signed in this district alone.

While the authenticity of the 1902 petition is open to some doubt, two further petitions against deportation, which were presented to Chermside when he visited Rockhampton in March 1903, were obviously

25. Grant to Prime Min., 2 Apr.1902, Enclosure C in Deakin to Governor-General, 29 Sep.1902, Al 03/1694, AA; Newspaper cutting, Telegraph 13 Dec.1902, encl. in ibid.; CPD XXXV, 1906, p.6446, Reid.

26. Deakin to Governor-General, 29 Sep.1902, Al 03/1694, AA; Chermside to Sec. of State for the Colonies, 23 Jun.1902, Qld. No.57, ibid.; Philp to Chermside, encl. in ibid.; BC 18 Jun.1902; Q 21 Jun.1902, p.1392; Wright, 'The Expulsion of the Kanakas', p.12. I have not been able to locate the signatures to this petition, to check their authenticity.

genuine. One was from twenty-two adults and the other was from fifty-four native-born Islanders, who were themselves exempt, but who were appealing on behalf of their parents. When the governor-general, Lord Northcote, visited Rockhampton in 1904, he also met a deputation of Islanders who were appealing against deportation. In Mackay, Northcote was presented with two petitions, one from seventy-one adults and another from twenty-six native-born Islanders. The address from the adults was presented by Joseph Barramulla, a lay teacher in the Selwyn Mission, and the five men who accompanied him were also members of the Selwyn and Walkerston Missions. Lucy Fatnowna, the young woman who presented the other address, was accompanied by two of her sisters and four other young women.

The most sustained and articulate protests were made by the Pacific Islanders Association, which seems to have been formed in Mackay in 1904. A Tongan known as Tui Tonga, who claimed to be the son of King George Tupou I of Tonga, had been campaigning for the formation of such an association since 1901. He became the first chairman but after his death in December 1905, Henry Tongoa was elected as chairman in the following February. Under Tongoa's leadership, the Association took on a new vitality and gained national as well as local publicity. Between

28. BC 23 Mar. 1903; Copies of the Adult Islanders' Address and the Young People's Petition, PRE/87, QSA; Tennyson to Chermside, 9 Apr. 1903, 03048, ibid. Corris and Saunders made some small errors in connection with these petitions: Corris states that there were fifty-three names in the Young People's Petition and that the petitions were forwarded to the governor-general in February 1903 when in fact there were fifty-four names and they were sent on 4 Apr. 1903; Saunders, who also uses the figure of fifty-three, incorrectly states that the petitions were received in 1902 and mistakenly confuses the number of years spent in Queensland given in the adults' petition with their ages. Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p. 126; Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, p. 447.

29. MM 23 Jul. 1904; MS 25 Jul. 1904; Q 16 Jul. 1904, p. 3; Photographic Album, I, No. 43. For the dates of baptism and mission involvement of the men, see NC 7 Apr. 1903; AHB, 1905-6, p. 25; MM 7 Jan. 1907; Jimmy Corsay, ABR, Mackay, 30 Nov. 1890; Sam Marca, ibid.; Frank D. Arbans, ibid., 14 Aug. 1894.

30. MM 16 Nov. 1901, 18 Jan. 1906; Tui Tonga, Mackay CR, 31 Dec. 1905. 'Tui' is a royal title but no evidence has been found to substantiate Tonga's claim to be of royal blood. Tonga had been in Mackay since 1879 or earlier and had assisted the police as an interpreter and an informer in 'sly grog' cases. MM 27 Mar. 1880, 21 May 1884, 4 Apr. 1885, NPC; MS 20 May 1889, 23 Apr. 1890, Supreme Court.

31. MM 10 Feb. 1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting. Corris states incorrectly that Tongoa was chairman when the Association was formed in 1904. Passage, Port and Plantation, p. 127. However, it is evident that under Tongoa’s leadership the Association became virtually a new body.
February 1906 and March 1907, the Association held at least eleven meetings in Mackay at irregular intervals and different venues such as hired halls and an Islander's boarding house in town. Attendance ranged widely, from 16 to 200. A substantial joining fee of 5s. was charged and new members were sought enthusiastically.

Under Tongoa's direction, the Association also extended its influence into other districts. In May 1906 Tongoa and David Boymerie travelled up to Proserpine, in answer to a request from local Islanders, and chaired a meeting at which a new branch was formed. A meeting was held in neighbouring Bowen on the next day, at which delegates were appointed to the committee of the Proserpine branch. Later in the year, in November, Tongoa addressed a meeting of Islanders in the Tweed district in southern Queensland and another branch was established. There were then said to be 426 members in the Association's North Queensland branches.

The benefits of unity were apparent to Association members. Tongoa spoke to the Tweed meeting on the need for a strong organization because their leaders in the islands were "kings of coconuts", powerless to help them. In Mackay, members referred to potential benefits not only for themselves but also for their children. Sandy Tanna explained this metaphorically:

32. See NN 10 Feb., 27 Feb., 20 Mar., 27 Mar., 18 Apr., 1 May, 14 May, 4 Jun.1906, 5 Jan.1907, Pacific Islanders Association meetings, 7 Mar.1907, MPC. Corris states that monthly meetings were held at the Association's headquarters, a hired hall in Mackay, but this does not accord with the evidence I have found. Passage, Port and Plantation, p.127.

33. Jack Cora and John Bomassie who were appointed as canvassers in the district were paid a commission on each person enrolled. For reports of the numbers of new members enrolled, see NN 20 Mar., 27 Mar., 18 Apr., 1 May, 14 May 1906, Pacific Islanders Association meetings, 7 Mar.1907, MPC.

34. NN 27 Feb., 14 May, 28 May, 4 Jun., 27 Jun.1906, Pacific Islanders Association meetings; O 1 Dec.1906, p.17.
There might be a big log on the road. Five men can't lift that log, because it too heavy. Five more might, perhaps, ten altogether can lift that log on their shoulders and carry it away, because it no heavy then. That's the way with us, we can do something altogether; but one or two men can do nothing. 35

Under Tongoa's leadership, the Pacific Islanders Association wrote letters of protest to prominent public figures such as Winston Churchill, then colonial under secretary, and Kidston, now premier of Queensland. 36

A dramatic prelude to Tongoa's meeting with the royal commission on 17 April 1906 was made when Association members with Tongoa at the head marched in procession through the town to the courthouse, with large numbers of other Islanders following them on the footpaths. There Tongoa gave evidence on his own situation and that of others, and read a short petition from the Association which listed their reasons for desiring to stay on in Australia and ended with a plea for exemption for the small numbers who wished to remain. 37 Tongoa was also somewhat belligerent, disturbing the commissioners with a threat that "if the 'boys' have to leave Queensland then the white men will have to leave the islands". 38 Two other Association members, Noah Sabbo in Mackay and George Yasserie in Proserpine, who were both native-born Islanders, were also interviewed by the commission and stated that it was their countrymen's wish to be allowed to remain in Queensland. 39

35. Ibid.; MM 14 May 1906. For similar remarks, see MM 18 Apr., 14 May, 4 Jun., 27 Jun.1906, Pacific Islanders Association meetings, 5 Jan.1907, MPC.


37. MM 18 Apr.1906; OPP II. 1906, p.617. At Tongoa's suggestion many of his fellow farmers met the royal commission with him.

38. Ibid., p.618; Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.129; Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, p.455. The same threat was made at a meeting of the Association. MM 18 Apr.1906.

39. OPP II. 1906, p.670, p.716. Sabbo consulted with other Islanders who attended the hearing.
The Association's campaign against deportation did not end with the royal commission. On 13 September 1906 Tongoa and Alick Mallicoola arrived in Melbourne to present "a largely signed petition" dated 31 August to Prime Minister Deakin. They spoke with Deakin and Atlee Hunt, the secretary of the Department of External Affairs, on 17 September and 1 October (see Plate 3.1). The document which they tendered outlined an alternative scheme to forcible repatriation, in that all Islanders wishing to remain in Australia would be allowed to do so, made naturalized British subjects and placed on a reserve set aside for them in North Queensland or the Northern Territory. In such a separate settlement they would not compete with Europeans but would assist in the country's development, and "their long experience of tropical cultivation" would help them to become self-sufficient. It was also suggested that the monies held by the Queensland Government in the Pacific Islanders fund should be distributed to the relatives of any Islander who had died in the State or, where no such relatives could be found, placed in a fund which would be used to assist any Islanders who were unable to work due to infirmity or physical disabilities. This scheme was followed by a petition from 426 Pacific Islanders, 362 of whom were resident in Mackay and the remaining 64 in Bowen and Proserpine. Although the signatures were all in the one hand, Tongoa explained that the Islanders were unable to sign themselves but were anxious to have their names recorded.

40. NM 5 Sep.1906; Age 18 Sep.1906; Sydney Morning Herald 2 Oct.1906; Hunt to Tongoa, 15 Sep.1906, Al 06/6324, AA: Hunt to W.E. Campbell, 1 Oct.1906, ibid. At the first meeting, Tongoa and Mallicoola were accompanied by two Melbourne residents, one of whom managed the boarding house in which they were staying. The cost of the trip to Melbourne was met by the Association. NM 7 Mar.1907, NPC.

41. Pacific Islanders Association Scheme, 31 Aug.1906, Al 06/6324, AA. A similar suggestion had been expounded in the letter to Churchill. W.D. Tongoa to Winston Churchill, 26 Mar.1906, Al 06/4761, AA.

42. Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, Al 06/6324, AA; Age 15 Sep.1906.
PLATE 3.1: Pacific Islander deputation to Prime Minister Deakin in September 1906. The Bulletin is highlighting the way in which the Islanders' protests served conservative interests: the man on the left is George Reid, leader of the Opposition in the Commonwealth parliament; the identity of the other three Europeans is not known.
In view of Deakin's attitude to the 1902 petition, his reception of the Mackay delegates was predictable. He was cordial but patronizing, informing reporters that he had explained to them "as simply as he could" the intentions of the Government to relax the original requirements for exemption and the alternatives open to those being repatriated who did not want to return to their original villages. The Age was similarly condescending, describing the Association as a 'kanaka' body promoted by certain politicians, planters, philanthropists and religious folk at Mackay. Yet Tongoa had strongly discounted any suggestion of a European impulse behind the petition. While individual Europeans lent their support in occasionally attending the Association's meetings, taking the minutes, and helping to collect signatures for the petition, the reports of the meetings reveal that the Islanders themselves were in control and made the important decisions.

By the time Tongoa reported on Deakin's reception to an Association meeting in Mackay on 1 January 1907, he had been replaced as chairman. Despite the appreciation extended to him for his work in establishing and promoting the Association, there was apparently disaffection with his leadership. Just two months later, no longer a member of the Association, he was charged with stealing membership fees to the value of £8.2s. Acting in his own defence, Tongoa claimed that the chairman was entitled to an annual salary of £100 which he had not received, but on the basis of evidence of his financial dealings given by other Association members he was committed for trial. No true bill was found, however, and he was discharged.

43. RC 2 Oct.1901; Age 17 Sep.1906. Hunt reiterated Deakin's remarks. Hunt to Secretary of Pacific Islanders Association, 2 Oct.1906, A1 06/6324,AA.
44. See MM 1 May 1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting, 7 Mar.1907, MPC; OPP 11. 1906, p.666, F.J. Stevens.
45. In November Tongoa was still chairman but by January he had been replaced by the man who had stood against him when he was originally elected in February 1906, David Boymerrie (Sandwich). MM 5 Jan.1907; H.D. Tongoa to Kidston, 17 Nov.1906. 6181, PRE/84, QSA.
46. Tongoa had left his farm to work for the Association. MM 5 Mar., 7 Mar.1907, MPC; Rex vs Harry Tonga, No.19 of 1907, A/18353, QSA: Deposition Book, 26 Mar.1907, A/18356, QSA. Earlier, in April 1906, there had been suggestions of financial misappropriations in regard to the money collected by Tui Tonga's old Association: at Tongoa's instruction, A.G. Stuart the solicitor had detailed how this money had been expended. MM 18 Apr.1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting.
The trial gave unfavourable publicity to the Pacific Islanders Association, already split probably by Tongoa's fall from power.\textsuperscript{47} With the extension of the criteria for exemption, its raison d'etre was gone. The Islanders were either applying for exemption or had left or were preparing to leave the country. There is no evidence of further meetings of the Association.

Tongoa was the driving force behind the Association during its most active period. From the tiny New Hebridean island of Tongoa, a successful boarding house keeper and farmer in Mackay, he was single, thirty-two, and had been in Queensland twenty-six years in 1906. He was, as Corris comments, "perhaps the most literate and articulate Pacific Islander in Queensland at this time".\textsuperscript{48} Such skills were evident not only in his interviews with the royal commission and Deakin and his letters to Churchill and others, but also in the utilization of European organizational methods. Thus the Association retained legal advice, had articles of association and by-laws, a receipt book for membership, a roll and certificates for members, kept minutes of each meeting which were read and confirmed at the next, and held elections for vacant positions. Tongoa himself contributed reports of meetings to the \textit{Daily Mercury}, until he accepted their offer to send along a reporter.\textsuperscript{49} Not all Association members, however, were so familiar with European proceedings; George Bargo Tonga, the treasurer, and Sandy Tanna, a committee member, admitted that they did not understand the articles and by-laws of the Association. Tongoa, perhaps to impress Europeans, had sought to build a completely Europeanized organization, but traditional skills, such as oratory, had obviously

\textsuperscript{47} See Sun quoted in PDNR 12 Apr.1907. In November 1907 Tongoa charged another Islander, Robert Hassan, with assault, but the case was dismissed; it is possible that this incident was related to Tongoa's dismissal from the Association. MM 26 Nov.1907, MPC.

\textsuperscript{48} Corris, \textit{Passage, Port and Plantation}, p.127; Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, A1 06/6324, AA; Saunders, \textit{Uncertain Bondage}, p.447.

\textsuperscript{49} MM 14 Apr.1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting; Corris, \textit{Passage, Port and Plantation}, p.127. A copy of the articles of association and by-laws of the Pacific Islanders Association, printed in Mackay in 1906, is enclosed in Rex vs Harry Tonga, No.19 of 1907, A/18353, QSA.
remained more important to many members.

An important reason for the demise of the Association may have been the New Hebridean control which Tongoa had helped to build up. New Hebrideans predominated in the nominated and elected positions in the Mackay, Bowen and Proserpine branches and also amongst the signatories to the petition presented to Deakin. In February 1906, for instance, there was only one Solomon Islander, Dick McKeehar, on the four-man Mackay executive and probably none on the more numerous committee. Since well over half of the Islander population in Mackay was from the Solomons, such a bias most probably alienated their support. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the experiences of Islanders in Queensland had fostered the growth of a strong identification by island group, and Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans tended to be mutually suspicious and antagonistic. Moreover, the Association under Tongoa's chairmanship had ambitions of extending its influence into other districts and, if established, of becoming the governing authority.

While such conservative journals as the Daily Mercury and Brisbane Courier reported on the Association in a respectful manner, other newspaper comment, especially in the southern press, tended to be snide and

50. *MN* 7 Mar.1907, MPC. Like the Maoris in New Zealand, Tongoa may have sought to present the Government with a power equal to their own, in the sense of giving the authority of written records to meetings and decisions. See N.D. Jackson, 'Literacy, Communications and Social Change: A Study of the Meaning and Effect of Literacy in Early Nineteenth Century Maori Society', in I. Kawharu (ed.), Conflict and Compromise. Essays on the Maori since Colonisation (Wellington, 1975), p.40.

51. The canvassers Cora and Bomassie were New Hebrideans and New Hebrideans were also predominant in the branches at Bowen and Proserpine. *MN* 27 Feb., 28 May, 27 Jun.1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting; Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, Al 06/6324, AA.

52. OPP 11, 1906, p.904, Appendix XVIII. But in Bowen and Proserpine New Hebrideans formed the great majority of the populations.

53. See Pacific Islanders Association Scheme, 31 Aug.1906, pp.2, 4, Al 06/6324, AA; H.D. Tongoa to Winston Churchill, 26 Mar.1906, Al 06/4761, AA.
patronizing (see Plate 3.1). Yet the Association had made a significant contribution towards publicizing the Islanders' cause. Its letters and petitions could not be so readily dismissed as European sponsored and politically inspired as the 1902 petition had been.

Apart from the organized efforts made by the Association and individual Islanders to demonstrate the inhumanity and injustice of deportation, the chief source on how the Islanders themselves regarded deportation is the evidence taken by the royal commission in 1906. In North Queensland, twenty-one migrant and two native-born Islander men were interviewed, as well as missionaries, clergymen, inspectors of Pacific Islanders, farmers and others in close contact with the Islanders. Unfortunately no Islander women were interviewed and there was a serious imbalance in the distribution of the men interviewed: eleven, or nearly half, were in the far north and mostly in Cairns, six were in the Burdekin district and only four were in the more established districts of Mackay and Proserpine.

In view of this imbalance in favour of the more northerly districts, it is not surprising to find that fifteen of the twenty-three did not desire to remain in Australia permanently. Generally these men were living in the far north and had been in Queensland for only a few years. Soona Dabie from Malaita, for example, had been brought to Cairns five years ago and was now ready to return home. There were also a few married couples, including some with Aboriginal partners, who were prepared to leave the country. It is significant that many of these people, both single and married, were unemployed. As will be seen, it became increasingly difficult for the Islanders to obtain employment. European witnesses also claimed to know of many Islanders who would depart


55. OPP 11, 1906, p.780. For other such examples, see ibid., p.749, Assool, Tom Low, p.781, Ererow.

56. See ibid., p.782, J.D. Sullivan, p.844, Cum Cum, Tarrie, Ally Keena, p.845, Tarrim Dooley.
voluntarily: in Cairns, for instance, it was said that nearly all the Solomon Islanders were willing to return to their homes. 57

In some cases the men interviewed were ambivalent or confused. Amongst those who were unemployed, many were only prepared to leave when they had sufficient money for a box and trade goods. 58 Some wanted to stay on for as long as they wished, usually a few years: "we want to go home when we wish to". Others were more philosophically resigned, and were prepared to leave if they had to or stay if they could. 59

Roughly a quarter of the interviewees wanted to remain in Australia. Most were long-standing residents and some were married, and the four in Mackay and Proserpine were farmers. 60 European witnesses also knew of many who preferred to stay in Australia, such as a number of Islanders in Innisfail who were living with Aboriginal women. 61 As was pointed out, some migrants had been so long in Australia that their relatives were dead and they had lost contact with their people; others, like certain Malaitans in the Mackay and Herbert River districts did not dare to return home because they had fled their islands to escape punishment for offences they had committed. 62


The Islanders' own evidence demonstrates that there were clear, if not rigid distinctions between those who wished to remain permanently and those who were willing to leave immediately or at a later date. The first group were composed in general of long-term residents, most of the married men and those who had special reasons against returning home. In the second group, single men who had been in Queensland only for a few years and who were experiencing difficulties in securing employment were predominant. There was also a correlation with physical location, in that those in the more northerly districts tended to be more prepared to accept repatriation.

THE CAMPAIGN against the Pacific Island Labourers Act conducted by sympathetic Europeans and the Islanders themselves, combined with the evidence collected by the royal commission, had created a groundswell of popular feeling which no government could wisely ignore. There were also wider political considerations in that Deakin had assured the British Government that deportation would be carried out with the utmost humanity.63 The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 and other discriminatory legislation had been severely criticised outside Australia by the Japanese and other Asian governments. A policy of wholesale deportation of Pacific Islanders in Australia at the end of 1901 undoubtedly would have provoked further international censure, and while the Commonwealth Government was not especially concerned to avoid offending Asians or other non-Europeans, it was reluctant to cause embarrassment to the British Government.64

In view of such considerations, Deakin may have recognized that the criteria for exemption would need to be liberalized well before the royal commission presented its report on 30 June 1906. The commissioners recommended that eligibility for exemption from deportation should be extended to the following groups: those who had been in the country for over twenty years; those whose wives were European or Aboriginal, or from

63. Deakin to Governor-General, 29 Sep.1902, A1 03/1694, AA.
another island and for whom it would be dangerous to return; those who were too old or infirm to earn a living; those whose children had been educated in state schools; or those who had acquired leasehold or freehold land. Acting in accordance with the advice of Brenan and Hunt, Deakin accepted most of these recommendations. An amending bill was introduced, passed and assented to in October 1906. This Pacific Island Labourers Act Amendment Act of 1906 provided that a general certificate of exemption was to be granted to any Islander who convinced the minister for external affairs that he or she either had been resident in Australia for at least twenty years by 31 December 1906, was too old or infirm to earn a living, had been married before 9 October 1906 to a man or woman from another island or to a woman who was not a Pacific Islander, or was the owner of registered freehold at 1 July 1906. As under the principal Act, those who held certificates of exemption under the 1884 Act were also exempt.

The royal commission's recommendations for exemption for those whose children had been educated in state schools and those with unexpired leases were not taken up, but Deakin promised that these would be considered in individual cases. All those people who were exempted under the provisions of the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901 or who obtained general certificates were free to work without an agreement and at any type of work. Special certificates which would remain in force only until 30 June 1907 were to be issued to those Islanders whom it was not possible to deport immediately after 31 December 1906.

65. OPP 1T, 1906, p.462; Brenan to Hunt, 2 Aug.1906, AI 15/19391, AA.
66. No.22 of 1906, s. 2.8A (2)(a)(i) - (vi).
67. CPD XXXV, 1906, p.6391: Newspaper cutting, Age 12 Sep.1906, encl. in AI 15/19391, AA. See also Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, pp.129, 130; Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, p.453; Huttenback, Racism and Empire, p.289-90; Wright, 'The Expulsion of the Kanakas', p.13.
68. s. 2. 8A (2)(b), (4); Hunt to Brenan, 3 Sep.1906, AI 15/19391, AA; Brenan to Hunt, 16 Aug.1906, ibid.
On the eve of deportation, the Commonwealth Government had legislated to modify - but not reverse - its policy in regard to Pacific Islanders, and thus remove any grounds for criticism for humanitarian reasons. It will be seen that a small but considerable number of Islanders gained exemption through this amending legislation. Yet the implementation of this modified policy was not a simple exercise.

During Philp's premiership, a policy of bitterly opposing the Commonwealth Government on the issue of deportation had been followed, and it was only when Kidston became premier in January 1906 that full co-operation between the State and Commonwealth Governments became possible. Kidston, who believed that it was the Commonwealth's responsibility to administer deportation, offered to provide the Commonwealth with the amount of £5 per head levied on employers to meet the cost of returning the Islanders, and the assistance of the Pacific Island Labour Branch, headed by Brenan, in carrying out deportation. Deakin accepted this offer and under Hunt's direction Brenan and the inspectors of Pacific Islanders administered the processes of exemption and deportation. Before considering these in detail, it is useful to consider first the contentious issues and practical difficulties which required resolution.

One of these was the question of alternative settlements for those who could not or did not wish to return to their island homes. In the Solomon Islands, Fiu in northern Malaita was promoted by the Melanesian Mission as a colony for Christian repatriates, and the Reverend A.I. Hopkins

69. Hunt to Sec., Pacific Islanders Association, 2 Oct.1906, Al 06/6324, AA; Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.130; Huttonback, Racism and Empire, p.290.

70. QPP II, 1906, pp.907-9; Wright, 'The Expulsion of the Kanakas', pp.12-13, 14; Brenan to Insps. of Pacific Islanders, Circular letter, n.d., Al 15/19391, AA. Brenan, Henry St George Califfeild and the inspectors of Pacific Islanders were appointed senior officer, assistant senior officer and officers, respectively, for the purposes of the Pacific Island Labourers Act and were empowered to bring before courts of summary jurisdiction any Islanders suspected of not being employed under an agreement. Commonwealth Government Gazette, 1906, pp.1053, 1142.
visited Queensland late in 1906 to make Solomon Islanders aware of this refuge. By then, however, the enthusiasm of Islander converts had diminished, and the best mission teachers had been recruited by the Anglican bishop of New Guinea, M.J. Stone-Wigg, for work in New Guinea. Another alternative offered to those who were unwilling to return home was employment on the sugar plantations in Fiji, and over 400 Pacific Islanders eventually took up this option.

The Pacific Islanders Association's scheme for a separate reserve for Islanders echoed similar suggestions made to the royal commission. George Yasserie, speaking on behalf of Islanders at Proserpine, said that they wanted land of their own at Seaforth to be set aside by the Government. Seekis in Mackay and Assool in Cairns were willing to live on a reserve if given land to farm, but other farmers in Mackay preferred to remain on their leaseholds. Some Europeans supported the idea of a separate settlement on the mainland, although Frodsham pointed out that a reserve had to be regarded "as a refuge or else as a prison..." The idea of a reserve was not considered seriously at this stage but it was revived in the 1930s.

72. In the Solomons Woodford was arranging to set aside certain areas for settlements for the returning Islanders. Woodford to Chermside, 10 Aug.1902, incl. in Chermside to Sec. of State for the Colonies, 10 Sep.1902, Qld. No.52, Al 03/1694, AA.
73. This offer by the Fijian Government provoked some disagreement between Deakin and Kidston. Wright states that 352 Islanders went to Fiji, but according to Corris 427 went in 1907, and there is also evidence of some leaving for Fiji in 1906. Wright, 'The Expulsion of the Kanakas', p.13; Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, pp.132-33; QPP 11, 1906, p.855, Frodsham; Wetherell, Reluctant Mission, p.115; MM 23 Jul.1904, 15 Mar.1906; NC 1 Dec.1906, p.6, 1 Jan.1907, p.5. See Chapter 8.
It was also suggested that those Islanders who did not wish to go back could be settled on an island off the Australian coastline. This idea was actually implemented. In 1907 a 'South Sea Islander' reserve was proclaimed in the village of Wag on Moa Island in the Torres Strait. In the same year the Anglican church accepted responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the new settlers, and was given an annual grant from the Queensland Government for this purpose. In 1908 Florence Buchanan was appointed as deaconess for the new reserve, known as St Paul's Mission. While the number in the reserve is not known, it was not great: by 1910 there was a total of seventy-four men, women and children, and the women were principally Torres Strait Islanders.

Another controversial issue was the fate of those non-Melanesian women married to or living with Pacific Islanders. Brenan and W.E. Roth, the northern protector of Aborigines, were opposed to Aboriginal women, especially those with children, being allowed to leave the country with their husbands, on the grounds that they might be maltreated or killed, but found that it was legally difficult to stop them. Under the amending Act, those Islanders legally married to Aborigines were eligible for exemption and in some cases at least pressure was put on them to stay in Australia. Voluntarily or otherwise, however, some Islanders left


80. See Argus 2 Jan.1907; OPP II, 1906, p.754, H. Niven, p.885, Brenan; Brenan to Hunt, 21 Dec.1906, PRE/84, QSA. For examples of Islanders granted exemption on the grounds of marriage to Aboriginal women, see Brenan to Hunt, 12 Feb.1908, ibid.; Watsevorey, Applications for exemption, IPI 11/1, QSA; Staines to Brenan, 8 Jul.1907, Summary, Johnson Tanna and Tabbiemillie, p.478, CPS 12E/62, QSA.
without their Aboriginal wives; Jimmy Chabba, for example, was sent back to Tanna, leaving behind Polly, the woman he had married in Port Douglas. In mid-1907 Tomkins and Frodsham protested strongly at the separation of Anglican Islanders from the Aboriginal women they had been living with in Innisfail. To forestall criticism, Hunt decided to allow these and other Islander men to stay provided the relationships were of one year's duration at least and that the Aboriginal women agreed to marry them.

The practice of European women accompanying their Islander husbands to Melanesia was strongly discouraged by the authorities. Europeans in the islands were uncompromisingly opposed to this practice, since the presence of such women would downgrade the colonists' image. Henry St George Caulfeild, the inspector of Pacific Islanders at Bundaberg, had dissuaded at least one European woman from going back with her husband, and Hunt promised Ernest Rason, the resident deputy commissioner in the New Hebrides, that no European woman would accompany her Islander husband to the New Hebrides. In 1905 Kokoumba and his wife Alice were intending to return to Malaita but the Queensland authorities were advised that she would not be allowed to land in the Solomon Islands protectorate; late in 1907, however, the Kokoumbas did manage to disembark in the Solomons. Alice died within a short time of their arrival. According to Woodford, this was the only case of such a couple returning to the Solomons.

81. CMP 4 Jun.1925, Atherton Police Court. For another example see OPP II, 1906, p.842, A. Fraser. For cases in which Aboriginal women returned with their husbands, see Hunt to Brenan, 15 Jan.1907, Extract from Govt Agent Wayland's Log, AI 07/317, AA; Brenan to Hunt, 8 Nov.1903, PRE/84, QSA; Q 15 Dec.1906, p.33; Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides No.99, Jan.1918, p.18; J. St G. Caulfeild to Woodford, 15 Mar.1907, AI 07/9881, AA.


83. OPP II, 1906, p.499; Hunt to Acting Sec., External Affairs, 10 May 1907, AI 07/5457, AA. For examples of such opposition from Europeans in the islands, see Repatriation of Kanakas. Interview between Sec. of Dept of External Affairs and Revs Paton and Macdonald, AI 06/3763, AA; Macdonald to Hunt, 18 Jun. 1906, ibid.; Woodford to Chermside, 10 Aug. 1902, encl. in Chermside to Sec. of State for the Colonies, 10 Sep. 1902, Qld No.52, AI 03/1694, AA.

84. Morgan to Reid, 15 Jun.1905, PRE/84, QSA; Reid to Morgan, 30 Jun.1905, ibid.; Under Chief Sec. to Woodford, 1 Jul.1905, ibid.; Oliphant to Under Chief Sec., 1 Jul.1905, ibid.; Woodford to im Thurn, 23 Feb.1908, Despatch No.48, Bundle 48 1/1885, CP 78/1, AA.
The cost of deportation was another problem for the parsimonious Commonwealth Government. Having failed to impose the burden of the extra cost of shipping the Islanders home on to their employers, the Government sought to make the Islanders pay any additional costs. This, not surprisingly, was deeply resented by the Islanders and many, such as Tarrie and CumCum in Ayr, refused to go back unless their passage was paid for them. There were also the issues of financial compensation for property and unexpired leaseholds held in Queensland and of the return of moneys belonging to deceased Islanders in the Pacific Islanders fund. These issues had been raised in the petitions in 1902 and 1904 and also by the Pacific Islanders Association. One Islander in Mackay, Alick, argued that compensation should be given not only for their farms, crops and horses, but also for their contributions towards the mission schools. Compensation for the value of crops on leaseholds had not been written into many agreements. While the holding of unexpired leaseholds was not included amongst the criteria for exemption, Deakin had promised to consider individual cases and a short period of grace was granted to such farmers. In 1908 there were fifty-one Islander farmers (of whom there were twenty in Mackay and two in Proserpine) who had been granted temporary certificates of exemption, so that they could stay until after the next harvest.

85. QPP II, 1906, p.844. Burns, Philp and Company contracted to return Solomon Islanders at £5 a head but there were additional costs involved in bringing Islanders to the ports of exit. Smart, the Melbourne and Mackay Sugar Company's manager, successfully challenged the Government's attempt to impose these extra costs on employers. See ibid., p.845, Tarrie Dooley, p.751, W.P. Wilson; Age 15 Sep.1906; J. Forsyth to Kidston, 25 Jul.1906, PRE/84, QSA; Nilsson, History of Mackay, p.134; Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.134.

86. Petition from Pacific Island Labourers to King Edward VII, encl. in PRE/87, QSA: Petition from Pacific Islanders Association, Al 06/6324, AA; Tongoa to Kidston, 17 Nov.1906, 6181, PRE/84, QSA: NM 23 Jul.1904, 4 Jun. 1906, 28 May 1906, Pacific Islanders Association meeting.


A serious problem to which the royal commission had drawn attention was the increasing unemployment amongst Islanders. As more cane farmers registered for white labour and the bounty, the number unemployed rose steeply. Another disincentive to their engagement was the uncertainty as to whether the final employer might be required to pay any extra passage money necessary to repatriate them. Moreover, until the amending Act was passed, Pacific Islanders, unless they were 'ticket-holders', were unable to be legally employed after 31 December 1906. The Government's concession, in granting special certificates of exemption so that Islanders awaiting deportation could enter into engagements between 31 December 1906 and 30 June 1907, did not remove the real obstacle to their employment, which was the bounty. As already noted, many of the Islanders interviewed by the royal commission were out of work and had expended their savings in supporting themselves or their friends: Assool, for example, told the commissioners that "I cannot get em [job] because they register for white cane". In Mackay, leasing land was seen as an alternative to the prospect of unemployment: "White men get job now, and they [the Islanders] take up a farm to make a living". There was anxiety amongst the European population concerning the social problems which such unemployment had produced.

89. MM 4 Feb.1902, 11 Jul.1903, 3 Jan.1907; PDT 12 Jan.1907; Fanny Nicol to Deakin, 9 Sep.1902, Enclosure E in Governor-General, 29 Sep.1902, A1 03/1694, AA. Brenan believed such unemployment would encourage the Islanders to go home. Brenan to Under Chief Sec., 8 Feb.1906, 00614, PRE/84, QSA.

90. CPD XXXV, p.5998, Deakin. Although Brenan contended that the press had exaggerated the problems in obtaining employment, he considered that the system of special certificates was unworkable and preferred his inspectors to give approval to short, informal agreements. Brenan to Hunt, 18 Dec. 1906, PRE/84, QSA; Brenan to Hunt, 11 Jan.1907, ibid.


WHILE BRENAN and the inspectors of Pacific Islanders carried out the administrative work, the final decisions on individual cases for exemption and the method of deportation were made by Hunt. The enactment of the amending Act in October 1906 had given little time for those with strong cases for exemption to apply. However, in August, well before the amending Act was introduced, Brenan had directed the inspectors of Pacific Islanders to make complete lists of all the Islanders in their districts, with special reference to any who appeared likely to oppose deportation and whether there were any reasonable grounds for their objections. In August too, Brenan also advised the inspectors of the additional grounds for exemption which were incorporated subsequently into the amending Act, and asked them to forward the names and full histories of any Islanders who would be eligible to apply. Inspectors were further instructed, in September, to open a register of applications for exemption and to report on any exceptional cases separately. 93

As with any bureaucratic administration of legislation, the operation of the Pacific Island Labourers Amendment Act of 1906 was marked by inconsistency. Officially, the Commonwealth Government adopted an uncompromising stance: in one case, for instance, Hunt advised Brenan that an Islander of good character and sixteen years' residence would not be exempted unless there were special circumstances. 94 Yet on other occasions the criteria for exemption were applied in a more liberal spirit - Hunt's decision to exempt those Islanders whose common law Aboriginal partners were prepared to marry them, has already been mentioned. In other cases Islanders who were not eligible for exemption were given special consideration. Some lepers, for example, were not sent back. 95 Others


94. Brenan to Insps. of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, 10 May 1907, ibid.; also cited in Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.130. See also BC 8 Jan.1907; Hunt to Kerr, 30 Jun.1906, Al 06/3763, AA.

95. Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.130; Toolah, No.1018 of 1907, COL/283, QSA.
who had been in the country for less than twenty years were granted exemption on the grounds that repatriation would endanger their lives: Royce, for instance, had been in Queensland only since 1897 but secured exemption because he had seduced a young girl on Malaita and would be killed if he returned. 96

Those who pleaded their own case or who were supported by sympathetic Europeans often gained exemption. For example, Ohnonee who had come to Port Douglas from Malaita in 1900 was a coastal man whose father and brother had been killed by bushmen; his application for exemption was granted only after his employer J.G. Robbins took the step of putting his case to the acting prime minister, Sir John Forrest, who visited the district in June 1907. 97 Yet others with equally strong reasons for remaining in Australia failed to apply. Despite Hunt's optimism, the awareness amongst the Islanders of the Act's conditions was generally hazy. Not all or even most inspectors of Pacific Islanders would have been as conscientious as Caulfeild, who carefully explained to assembled Islanders at Bundaberg the qualifications for exemption and the opportunity for any with special circumstances to come forward so that he could put their claims to Brenan. Another sympathetic inspector was Arthur Staines in the Port Douglas district, who was diligent in collecting all the relevant details of particular applications and pressing for exemption in deserving cases. 98

Few Islanders fully understood the reasons for deportation or the criteria for exemption. 99 Their confusion is well illustrated in later recollections. Tom Lammon told Tom Dutton, a linguist who interviewed him

96. Application for Exemption from Pacific Island Labourers Act in Favour of Royce, memo., n.d., AI 08/2939, AA. For other such cases, see Brenan to Hunt, 10 Jan.1907, PRE/84, QSA; Janky to Brenan, Jun.1907, AI 08/1459, AA; Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, pp.130-31; Moore, The Forgotten People, p.26.

97. Brenan to Hunt, 10 Jan.1907, PRE/84, QSA; Staines to Brenan, 6 Jun.1907, p.450, CPS 12E/62, QSA. For other examples, see T16Bsa:1; T56Bsa:1; T74Bsa:3; Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.129.


in Ayr in 1964, that in the Herbert River district the 'Government' told the Islanders that they could stay if they wanted to or else go home. Present day descendants of the migrants who were young children when deportation took place, believe that their parents stayed on either because of their children or because their 'bosses' would not let them go, neither of which were official reasons for exemption. They also believe that some of the returning Islanders were put ashore in the Torres Strait and New Guinea; most probably the basis to these stories is the Pacific Islanders reserve on Moa Island, of the existence of which they were unaware. Even some of the native-born, who were exempt by reason of their birthplace, were uncertain as to their legal position. There were allegations that the authorities had not always informed them of their right to remain: in the Herbert River district, Mary Nundy would have been deported if her father had not protested to the police magistrate. Further evidence of their confusion over deportation is found in the various instances in which Europeans exploited the Islanders by selling them spurious exemption tickets, such as the man who was travelling around the sugar districts in 1902 and charging £1 for such 'tickets'.

The majority of those exempted as a result of the amending Act had been resident for over twenty years. A smaller number qualified on the grounds of age or infirmity, marriage to a woman who was from a different island of origin or who was not a Pacific Islander, or in a very few cases

100. Dutton, Queensland Canefields English, p.55; TIBsa:3; T7Bsa:1; T56Bsa:1; Moore, The Forgotten People, p.45.

101. See ibid., pp.45-46; T1Bsa:2-3; T15Bsa:1; T19Bsb:2; T41Bsa:2; T63Bsb:3.

102. T72Bsa:1; Q 22 Dec.1906, p.33; Brenan to Insp. of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, 14 Sep.1904, Circular No.221, TPI 3/35, QSA.

103. CMP 21 Jan.1902. For other such attempts, see Fraser to Brenan, 26 Jun.1907, A1 08/2939, AA; Caulfeild to Brenan, 7 Oct.1907, 14924, telegram, M817, POL/J35, QSA; Police Commissioner to Insp. Meldrum, 17 Oct.1901, telegram, ibid.
through ownership of freehold land. As described above, a few obtained exemption by pleading special circumstances. But some of those who were exempted, or who would have been eligible for exemption, subsequently decided to leave. Mostly these were children whose parents were not allowed to stay or older people who chose to return with their friends and relatives. As late as January 1909, a number who were entitled to remain in Queensland left for their islands.

The number of Pacific Island migrants (the native-born were not included in any totals) who were legally exempted from deportation and who remained in Australia is difficult to calculate precisely. Earlier historians, as Corris has shown, gave varying figures. He himself cited 1,654 as the number of Islanders who were granted exemption. But this figure in fact represented the number of migrants who, according to the Department of External Affairs, were still in Australia in December 1909; presumably this included the small number with special certificates of exemption (generally farmers staying on to harvest their crops) and those settled on St Paul's Mission on Moa Island. In the following years, there was a slow trickle of Islanders leaving Australia, principally those whose special certificates had expired but also including some with general exemptions.

104. For examples of the various criteria for exemption under which individual Islanders qualified, see Hunt to Brenan, 28 Sep.1907, AI 08/2939, AA; Brenan to Hunt, 2 Dec.1907, ibid.; Brenan to Hunt, 12 Jan.1907, PRE/84, QSA; Staines to Brenan, 3 May 1907, p.425, CPS 12E/C2, QSA; Staines to Brenan, 8 Jul.1907, Summary, pp.476, 478, 480, ibid.; Applications for exemption, IPI 11/1, QSA; MM 16 Apr.1920.

105. Brenan had predicted that some of the exempted would leave. See Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.131; BC cited in MM 20 Jan.1909; BC 28 Feb.1907; Q 2 Feb.1907, p.34; Argus 2 Jan.1907; Brenan to Hunt, 2 Aug.1906, AI 15/1979/AA.


108. Between 1910 and 1915, 167 Pacific Islanders left Australia; after this year, the numbers leaving the country were very small. Register of Departure of Coloured Persons from the Commonwealth, AI 10/1936, AA.
'Ticket-holders' under the 1884 Act, of whom there were said to be 691 still alive and in Australia in 1906, were automatically exempt under the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901 but some nevertheless applied for and received general certificates of exemption. According to the Department of External Affairs, 1,249 general and 131 special certificates of exemption were granted altogether. Allowing for those among the 'ticket-holders' who also applied, it can be assumed that roughly 1,200 migrants had been permitted to stay permanently as a result of the relaxation in 1906 of the criteria for exemption. But, as already demonstrated, not all of those who were exempted chose to remain. Presumably this serves to account for the greater part of the difference between the total number of 'ticket-holders' and those with general and special certificates (2,071), and the smaller number said to be still in the country in December 1909 (1,654).

From other evidence, however, it is clear that the number of migrants who received exemption and who chose to remain did not represent the total number of Islanders who stayed on in Australia. According to nominal sources there were at least 1,096 migrants in North Queensland after 1907; extrapolating from this, it can be estimated that there were over 2,500 migrants in Australia. Thus there may have been up to a

109. OPP II, 1906, p.903, Appendix XVII; Soppo, Application for exemption, IP1 11/1, QSA; Staines to Brenan, 8 Jul.1907, Summary, p.476, CPS 12E/62, QSA.

110. Hunt to Controller-General, Dept. of Trade and Customs, 20 Dec.1909, Al 09/15453, AA; CPP III, 1912, pp.907-8. Corris mistakenly assumes the figure of 1,654 represented the total number of exemptions and that therefore (subtracting the 691 'ticket-holders') the number of certificates issued under the relaxed criteria for exemption was nearly 1,000. Corris, 'White Australia' in Action', p.243.

111. There were also those 'ticket-holders' and those with certificates who may have died between 1906 and 1909, and a slight tendency to double counting due to the fact that some 'ticket-holders' also obtained certificates of exemption.

112. This is calculated from the proportions which (according to the censuses) the Islander population in North Queensland represented of the Queensland population and which this population in turn represented of the Australian population. See Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4.
thousand Islanders (or more) without exemption who remained in the country - a much higher number than has previously been assumed.113

As will be seen, there was a considerable number of Islanders who attempted to resist deportation, particularly in the Mackay, Burdekin and Johnstone River districts. Many runaways were discovered and deported. Yet the authorities obviously believed that there were still Islanders who had stayed on illegally and escaped detection; as late as June 1908, the Immigration Department placed advertisements in Queensland newspapers stating that any Islanders not in possession of certificates of exemption were liable to be deported.114

Both in the oral and written evidence there are many stories of Islanders who remained illegally in North Queensland. One Islander lived in the hills south of Cardwell for some thirty years until he was apprehended and sent to an Aboriginal reserve, and in Innisfail a European hid "a favourite servant" for weeks in the bush and supplied him with food.115 In the Burdekin, Charlie Pentecost was one of several Islanders who were said to have evaded deportation: Charlie Cawoot from Tanna and his wife Rosie hid him from the police on many occasions and he stayed with them until he died in 1940.116 In Mackay, which had the largest Islander population, present day descendants recall that their parents and grandparents helped to hide many countrymen from the authorities; the heavy scrub around the Eungella Range was particularly suited to this. When these men finally reappeared, local farmers (although aware of their illegal presence) did not turn them into the police.117 Islanders from

113. Corris and Bolton concluded that only a few hundred remained illegally. Corris, "White Australia' in Action', p.243; Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p.251.


116. T19Bsa:1; T19Bsa:3; T56Bsa:3; T71Bsa:3.

117. T4Bsa:2; T6Bsa:1; TRBsa:2; T278sa:2; Ty5Bp:1; Moore, The Forgotten People, p.44.
Mackay and other districts are also said to have travelled as far north as the Atherton Tableland, and south to Rockhampton and even down to Nambour, to avoid discovery.

FROM LATE 1906, with large numbers of Islanders congregating in the sugar towns to await deportation, violence was feared. The Islanders were advised by prominent Europeans such as Frodsham and Caulfeild to accept deportation quietly. In the event, however, these fears were misplaced. The amending Act of 1906 had helped to defuse hostility and the general ignorance amongst the Islanders as to who was actually responsible for deportation helped to prevent any concerted reprisals. There were only isolated displays of resentment, such as drunken outbursts and brawls in the towns.

That the Islanders resented their treatment, however, was clear from their behaviour towards their employers. Late in 1906 an Islander on Alexandra plantation set fire to the cane and in Cairns the conduct of Islanders employed at the Mulgrave Mill was so bad that they were being encouraged to break their agreements and return home. Apart from vengeful or recalcitrant behaviour, other actions clearly demonstrated the Islanders' resentment of their unequal position vis-à-vis European

118. T6Bsa:1; T19Bsb:3; T27Bsa:2.


cane-cutters. In July 1906, for example, fifty Islanders advertised in the Mossman Champion that they would be available if Europeans could not fulfill their cane-cutting contracts. In the same month, 16 Islanders at Mossman Central Mill were fined for refusing to cut cane on land which had been registered for the bounty but then withdrawn because it was badly grub eaten; this provoked over 140 Islanders employed by the mill to go on strike.

Such actions expressed the resentment of their situation felt by the Islanders, but had no impact outside each district. In late 1906 the legality of the Commonwealth Government's power to deport Pacific Islanders was finally challenged. In Queensland, Europeans who questioned the Commonwealth's power in this regard had been raising money to meet the costs of a legal challenge. At Brenan's suggestion, the Commonwealth took the initiative and paid the legal costs of an appeal to the High Court against Section 8 of the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901 by an Islander, Robtelmes. In early October the case was heard and decided in the Commonwealth's favour.

With this issue settled, Brenan and Hunt pressed ahead with deportation. Deportation orders were issued from October 1906 through to mid-1908 for any Islanders whom it was believed would resist deportation, and those who showed a reluctance to leave were imprisoned pending deportation. For example, deportation orders were issued in October 1906 for sixteen Islanders at Mackay and the "more obstinate" of fifty Solomon

122. CNP 29 Jul.1906; PDR 27 Jul.1906; Kerr, Northern Outpost, p.43; Staines to Brenan, 24 Jul.1906, 3647 of 1906, mf 167(a), RSPS-PSEAH. For other such examples, see OPP II, 1906, p.735, Ackar; Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p.251; Saunders, Uncertain Bondage, p.455.

123. BC 17 Sep., letter to Ed. by Rev. Gillespie, 19 Sep, letter to Ed. by L. Stable, 22 Sep., letter to Ed. by H. Heinemann and Central Summons Court, 3 Oct.1906; Wright, 'The Expulsion of the Kanakas', p.13; Brenan to Hunt, 24 Sep.1906, Al 07/293, AA.
Islanders from Ayr were imprisoned in the Mackay gaol until their departure time. While there was some resistance to deportation in Mackay, the Burdekin and other coastal North Queensland districts, the centre of intransigence was in the Johnstone River district. Sergeant Alexander Fraser was sent to this district to hasten deportation and to prevent the area from becoming a refuge for runaways from adjacent districts. There were thick patches of scrub in which the Islanders could easily evade detection and Fraser only managed with great difficulty to send off fifty-two Islanders in July 1907. Even by May of the following year there were estimated to be still some thirty-two Islanders hiding in the scrub around Innisfail.

By July 1908, however, deportation was regarded as officially complete and the Pacific Island Labour Branch of the Immigration Department ceased to exist. The actual process of deportation had gone relatively smoothly and Brenan and his fellow officers were commended by Deakin for their efforts. Altogether it was calculated that 4,269 Islanders were deported by the Commonwealth Government under the Pacific Island Labourers Act between late 1906 and the end of 1909.

124. PDT 20 Oct., 30 Oct. 1906. For other such cases, see BC 11 Jan. 1907, interview with A. Hunt; PDMR 21 Dec. 1906, 1 May 1908, Mossman Police Court; Hunt to Brenan, 16 Mar. 1908, AI 08/2939, AA; Forrest to Brenan, 20 Apr. 1907, AI 07/4198, AA; Hunt to Insp. of Pacific Islanders, Bundaberg, 23 Sep. 1907, AI 07/8941, AA; Brenan to Hunt, 23 May 1908, Appended statement on repatriation, Al 08/5120, AA.

125. Ibid.; Fraser to Brenan, 22 Jun. 1907, Al 08/2939, AA; Brenan to Hunt, 6 Jul. 1907, ibid.; Brenan to Hunt, 9 Jul., 15 Oct. 1907, ibid.; PDMR 5 Jul. 1907. Several of the Islanders sought legal advice before they agreed to leave. Fraser believed that such stubbornness had been provoked by the actions of a local farmer, Ryan, who had given leases to some Islanders.

126. Deakin to Act.; Premier, 16 Jun. 1908, AI 15/19391, AA; Corris, Passage, Port and Plantation, p.131.

127. Hunt to Controller-General, Dept of Trade and Customs, 20 Dec. 1909, Al 09/15453, AA.
In 1907, large crowds of Europeans and Islanders assembled to watch the departing men and women, laden with possessions such as bicycles, sewing machines and wheelbarrows. Personal belongings were searched carefully by officials for firearms and ammunition, often concealed ingeniously, and any discovered were confiscated. Christian Islanders usually behaved soberly, often singing hymns together. But others, often drunk, were more boisterous and were only got aboard with difficulty. Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans were generally shipped from different ports, to avoid conflict. In Mackay after a row between New Hebrideans and Malaitans on the wharf, the New Hebrideans were sent off while the Malaitans were detained to be sent later. There were defiant gestures from some of the deportees, such as haranguing the crowd or cheering loudly as the ship left the wharf. As the Malaita left Cairns one group of Islanders delivered its verdict on the Pacific Island Labourers Act, calling out derisively:

"Goodbye Queensland; Goodbye White Australia; Goodbye Christians."  

128. For these wharf scenes see BC 11 Mar.1907; CMP 27 Nov.1906, 1 Mar.1907; MM 7 Jan.1907; Q 15 Dec.1906, p.34; PDMR 19 Oct.1906; Shepherd, The Herbert River Story, pp.277, 284; T4Bsa:3; T57Bsa:1; Moore, The Forgotten People. p.45. 


130. CMP 17 Nov.1906, also cited in Wetherell, Reluctant Missions, p.115. For other such gestures, see BC 24 Jan.1907; CMP 2 Mar.1907; MM 7 Feb.1907; Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p.251; 'Tramp', 'Sugar Land Reminiscences', Mar.1936, p.20.