ARCHIVES AND PUBLICATIONS

This section will feature articles relating to Aborigines commissioned from national, state and overseas archives. The section editor, Niel Gunson, will also consider descriptive listings of other Aboriginal source material, including photographic and film holdings, in public and private collections; previously unpublished material such as letters, diary extracts, brief regional and family histories, and reminiscences; and specialised bibliographies.

RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (I), 1901-1916, RELATING TO ABORIGINES

Australian Archives, Canberra

Until control of the Northern Territory passed from South Australia to the Commonwealth on 1 January 1911, Commonwealth involvement in Aboriginal administration was minimal. Section 51, sub-section XXVI of the Constitution proscribed the Commonwealth from legislating for Aborigines in any State, which in effect meant Aborigines within Australia. The Federal Capital Territory became an administrative fact only in 1911; the one settlement within its borders, at Wreck Bay, was not included in the F.C.T. until 1915 and in any case continued to be administered by the New South Wales Aborigines' Welfare Board. Transactions concerning Aborigines before 1911 were almost entirely confined to the Commonwealth's passing on of correspondence to the appropriate States. This negative involvement is reflected in the records of the period 1901 to 1911: material is scant and insubstantial. In 1911 the volume of records naturally increased with the acquisition of the Northern Territory, and the genesis of Commonwealth Aboriginal policies begins to emerge from the growing correspondence between the Northern Territory Administration, the Minister for External Affairs, and others within and outside the bureaucracy.

The Department of External Affairs was administratively responsible for the Northern Territory until 14 November 1916, when the new Department of Home and Territories was accorded the function. From 1911 to 1916 the Administrator of the Territory was accountable to the Minister for External Affairs, who in this period was often also Prime Minister. A separate Prime Minister's Department was formalised on 1 July 1911 but had been fore-shadowed since about June 1904, when a distinct record series (CRS A2) was created to deal with the correspondence of Prime Minister Watson, who relinquished the External Affairs portfolio but was also Treasurer. When the External Affairs and Prime Ministerial portfolios were again held by one person later in 1904, papers relating to the Minister's role as Prime Minister continued to be filed in CRS A2, while External Affairs papers continued to be maintained in CRS A1. The intimacy of the relationship between the two notional areas of the Department is apparent from the arrangement and content of the records, with, for example, much cross-referencing at the time of registration, and sometimes with papers initially registered in the External Affairs' series being ultimately filed with the Prime Minister's, or vice versa.

The series listed and briefly described here are the main file series of the Department relating to its External Affairs function, namely CRS A1, CRS A3, CRS A6 and CRS A8; and a lesser but important series, CRS A1640. However, additional series of both this and other departments will be valuable to researchers, and some further External Affairs series are listed without comment after the description of CRS A1640.

It must be emphasised that this is a select listing of record series and individual items of only one department for a limited period, and is intended only to suggest
the variety of material held by Australian Archives in Canberra. Files scanned for this article were mainly those with titles which indicated a direct connection with Aboriginal administration, and not all files examined are listed. Other branches of Australian Archives in capital cities and in Townsville may also hold relevant records created by branches of Commonwealth agencies in those states, or by State government agencies which ceded their functions to the Commonwealth at some time. The Northern Territory Branch in Darwin holds records of the Administration which are extremely valuable in the close study of local conditions in the Northern Territory. For a broadly selective description of holdings relating to Aborigines, researchers should write to, or call at, the branches of Australian Archives in the States and the Northern Territory, clearly explaining their particular interests. Any interested person is welcome to a search ticket after completion of application forms which will be supplied on request.

Most files cited were registered between 1901 and 1916, but some which were registered later have been included where they contain papers from the period under review. (The incorporation of earlier papers into later files has been a feature of Australian record-keeping practice, often leading to the obscuring of important papers. For example, the principal documents arising from the negotiations for the transfer of the Northern Territory, contained in a file 6.00cm thick with a date range of 1901 to 1911, are now located in a 1954 Department of Territories file, CRS A452, item No. 54/62.) Files contain inward and outward correspondence and internal working papers, which may include published material and photographs, maps and plans.

As one would expect, more is reflected in these records than the administrative structures of the time. The influence of the administrators' cultural assumptions about themselves and others is, for example, clearly apparent in their statements and actions, as by inference is the often-present gap between stated law and policy and their actual application. The complexity of relationships in isolated areas or settled communities like Darwin was not always the acknowledged subject of official communications, but it may nonetheless emerge with great clarity from so apparently mean a source as a page of accounts or a ration schedule. As well as ethnographically useful material (fairly rare in this early period of Commonwealth administration), details of land use and ecology may be significant to Aboriginal studies. It is also possible that documentation of legal issues may be had from records of, for instance, mining or pastoral transactions or the establishment of missions. Documentation of individual people is much more easily located for Europeans than for Aborigines; however, some Aborigines do emerge three-dimensionally from, or despite, what Europeans had to say of them. Often they do so through their own testimony in legal proceedings. Also, incidental information about Aborigines in a certain area, even if slight, may fit into a more substantial pattern derived from other sources.

Australian Archives documentation and finding aids, in either draft or final form, exist for the series discussed and staff will help researchers to find material in any series for which official finding aids are not yet complete. All files listed are in the open access period and have been cleared for public access; they are therefore available for reference at any time. The contents date ranges of series are shown in brackets where they differ from registration date ranges.

**CRS* A6, Correspondence files, Annual Single Number Series**

(Jan.) 1901-1902 (Feb.)

This was the Department's first general file series, the variety of its contents reflecting both the nature of the Minister's two portfolios and the newness of the

*CRS = Commonwealth Record Series*
Commonwealth. Transactions include constitutional and domestic matters, trade, immigration and external affairs. The files listed relate essentially to the Commonwealth's negative role in Aboriginal affairs, and the desire of sections of the community for the Northern Territory to be taken over by the Commonwealth. A number register and index book to this series is extant, and an Australian Archives inventory of items also exists. The series occupies approximately 1.40 shelf metres:

01/232 [Aborigines Protection Society, London – Condition of Aborigines in the Australian Colonies] (1900-1901; 0.5cm)

01/1668 [Alleged ill-treatment of Aborigines in Western Australia and the question of Commonwealth power to legislate] (1901; 4f.)

CRS A8, Correspondence files, folio system (July) 1901-1902 (1895-1905, 1966)

CRS A8 replaced CRS A6 after a short period in which both were current. It contains papers concerning matters such as the development of the Northern Territory, tariffs, entry of non-Europeans into Australia and Commonwealth/State relations. Record books and a transmission book to this series exist and an Australian Archives inventory of items is available. The series occupies some 3.70 shelf metres. The file of most direct interest is:

02/836/1 Deputation to Prime Minister, on 24th April 1902, re Northern Territory (1902; 18f.)

CRS A1, Correspondence files, annual single number series 1903-1928 (c.1856-c.1939)

In 1903 CRS A1 was raised to be the general file series of the Department, replacing CRS A8, and continued as the principal general file series of the successive departments administering Aboriginal affairs until it was replaced at the beginning of 1939 by CRS A659. (Both CRS A659 and its successor CRS A431 contain papers originally belonging to A1). CRS A1 itself contains papers first created or filed in earlier or concurrent series including CRS A3, CRS A6, CRS A8 and CRS A1640. Its varied correspondence touches on all the Department's functions, for example, naturalisation, territories, electoral matters and external affairs. In addition to the files listed, papers in this series deal with matters including the authority of the Chief Protector to permit mixed marriages, and notifications of permissions granted; appointments (e.g. the appointment and resignation of Dr Basedow); proclamation of reserves; Northern Territory Annual Reports, with background papers; legislation; surveys; and the mining and pastoral industries. Some files (e.g. 12/2991) contain photographs. Others contain tracings, plans and published maps. A number of control records to the series and its successors are still extant, for example CRS A74, Subject Index Cards, NT Cabinet, 1911-1938, CRS A75, Name Index cards, NT Cabinet, 1911-1956, and CRS A69, Number register, 1911-1938. (When as complete as these, original departmental control records can often themselves provide an interesting insight into the preoccupations and values of their creators. They may also provide significant details from papers no longer in existence). As well as being depleted by top-numberings into other series, CRS A1 has been diminished by the past destruction of files which were judged as of ephemeral interest. Some of these destructions have been unfortunate for historians.

The series occupies 184.92 shelf metres. Some files of interest are:

11/11307 Payments made on behalf of Native Police. NT Statements
[Proposed visit of Chief Protector to Alice Springs to arrange for extension of departmental control to the southern area] (1911; 0.5cm)

[Inadequate supply of suitable medicines for Aboriginal depots in the south] (1911; 0.25cm)

Correspondence from Mr W.A. Burton re Aborigines NT. (1910-1911; 3.00cm)

Northern Territory. Aborigines. Establishment of Institution for adequate housing etc. of Halfcastes in. (1910-1911; 0.5cm)

(1) Regulations under N.T. Aboriginals Act 1910, re licensing of persons to employ Aboriginals. Also (2) ‘Aboriginals Ordinance 1911’ (1910-1912; 2.5cm)

Northern Territory: Preliminary Scientific Expedition 1911

Professor Spencer’s Report re Aborigines. (1911-1912; 1.00cm)

Northern Territory. Appointment of Professor Spencer as Chief Commissioner of Aborigines. (1911-1912; 0.75cm)

Alligator River (Oenpelli) Abo. Reserve File No. 1 (1912-1927; 8.00cm)

Kahlin Compound School Darwin (1913-1936; 0.25cm)

Black prison labour employed on Gov’t work at Alice Springs (1912-1936; 0.5cm)

Bathurst Island Reserve for Aborigines (1909-1939; 2.00cm)

CRS A3, Correspondence files, NT series, 1912-1925 (c.1907-1925)

CRS A3 was raised in 1912 to deal with specifically Northern Territory matters. It contains papers from other series including CRS A1640, and some files have been top-numbered into A1. Records relate to such matters as the pastoral industry, mining, Chinese and Island labour, legislation, town leases, individuals, and administrative machinery. Subject index cards CRS A74 and name index cards CRS A75 control this series as well as CRS A1, and there is a separate register, CRS A81. Some files contain photographs (e.g. NT 13/5922), and tracings, sketch plans and maps, as well as manuscript and published reports, also appear. Relevant files in addition to those cited relate to a wide range of subjects including administrative machinery and appointments; the export of anthropological specimens; surveys; health; trials for murder; arrangements for counsel for Aboriginal defendants; custody of half-caste children and their removal to mission stations; and the discovery of Aboriginal remains. Some representative files are:

NT 12/1567 Paddy Bull convicted of Murder. Remission of Sentence (1911-1912; 0.5cm)

NT 12/10964 Northern Territory. Inspectors reports on the Aborigines (1911-1912; 1.00cm)

NT 13/5922 Finke River Mission (1894-1911; 2.5cm)

NT 13/8240 Koppio – N.T. Aboriginal Execution of. (1913; 1.5cm)

NT 14/5471 Protection of Aboriginals. N.T. Administrator’s proposals re. (1914; 1.00cm)

NT 14/7104 Aboriginal Reserve. Musgrave, Mann & Tomkinson Ranges. (1914-1919; 1.00cm)

NT 15/402 Finke River Lutheran Mission (1904-1912; 3.5cm)

NT 19/2897 Professor W. Baldwin Spencer’s Report on N.T. Natives (1913-1919; 3.00cm)

NT 23/4594 Missions to Aborigines in the N.T. (1914-1923; 2.5cm)

CRS A1640, Correspondence dockets, NT series, 1868-1910
These dockets were originally created by South Australian Colonial and State Government agencies. In 1911 a number of South Australian records relating to the Northern Territory were transferred to the Department of External Affairs in Melbourne. In 1927 most were returned to South Australia and are now located in the South Australian State Archives. However, the Commonwealth retained as a discrete series some four hundred dockets which it was felt were still required for current administration. Others had already been incorporated into CRS A1 and CRS A3 files. The history of the dockets from 1927 to 1953 is somewhat obscure, but in 1953 they were discovered in the Northern Territory and transferred to Canberra. Documentation of this series is proceeding. Meanwhile a draft checklist is available on request in the A.C.T. Branch. Generally the series contains material concerning land transactions, mining, survey and exploration, individuals, agriculture and the pastoral industry. Manuscript reports, tracings, maps and plans appear on file. Some dockets containing references to Aborigines are:

1885/995 Report [of the Government Resident] on the Aborigines of the N.T. (1885; 0.5cm)
1885/1151 Report on coast from Roper River to Castlereagh Bay by Capt. Carrington (1885; 0.25cm)
1885/1251 Report on Land at South and East Alligators Rivers by Gover­ner Gardener. (1885; 0.5cm)
1886/225 Mr Cuthbertson’s report on Borroloola and MacArthur River (1886; 0.25cm)
1906/223 Aborigines Reserve — Ord River District. N.T. Re proposed. (1906-1910; 1.00cm)
1910/570 [Reverend Father Gysell] asking I [that] Bathurst Island be reserved for Aboriginal purposes II Permission to establish Roman Catholic Mission on the Island. (1894-1910; 0.5cm)

Some other possibly relevant Department of External Affairs (I) records
CRS A66 Album of Northern Territory Views, c.1910 (c.1887-1900s)
CRS A89 Grazing licences, Northern Territory, 1914-1955.