



Information Sheet 7: Australian South Sea Islander Oral History Collection, 1974-1980

Between 1974 and 1980, while tutors and later PhD students at James Cook University and the Australian National University, Clive Moore and Patricia Mercer recorded 87 cassette tapes with 75 Australian South Sea Islanders at Mackay, Bowen, Ayr and Home Hill, Palm Island, Ingham and Hervey Bay. Some were interviewed several times. There are supplemented by a further 9 tapes recorded at Mackay, Rockhampton, Tweed Heads, Hervey Bay, Maryborough and Ayr and Home Hill by Matt Peacock from the ABC for a three-part radio programme *The Forgotten People* in 1978. The tapes are supplemented by a few others with Europeans associated with the Islanders. They are held as part of the Black Oral History Collection at James Cook University and in the 1990s were converted to CDs for preservation.

This collection is unique and extremely valuable for preserving cultural traditions and identity in the community. The interviews were recorded in the 1970s mainly with the children and grandchildren of the first generation. The interviewees represent all major Australian South Sea Islander families. Participants were aged between their 30s and 99; most were 50 to 70 year old. There is a huge literature on the Islanders, but most of it written from European documents. The extensive collection of oral testimony is an essential part of Australian South Sea Islander history in that it enables access to the memories of a generation now largely gone. It provides an historical window back to the 1860s and 1870s and is a source of pride for the community.

The original arrangement with the Moore/Mercer tapes was that access by enables for research and for use by the families. The Peacock tapes were given to Clive Moore (rather than be destroyed) and he gave them to James Cook University. Recently, several Islander families have obtained their own copies of these recordings with their forebears. Now, with the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first South Sea Islanders in Queensland, it is time to ensure that these recordings are preserved in public collections and if possible transcribed for use by the families.

The present-day community wishes to have the collection made more widely available and views the interviews as an essential part of reclamation of Islander identity.

Those Interviewed: Tom Ambertal; George Andrews; Gladys Andrews; Belle Backo; Blue Backo; Ishmael Backo; Melba Backo; Faith Bandler; Dennis Bobongie; Flo Bobongie; Henry Bobongie; Sam Bobongie; Vivian Bunn; Louisa Cassidy; Renie Cassidy; Malcolm Cole; Trixie Cole; Adelaide Corowa; Alf Corowa; Arthur Corowa; Eva Corowa; Olive Darr; Percy Darr; Annie Davis; Emily May Enares; Christian Fatnowna; Joan Fatnowna; Minnie Fatnowna; Noel Fatnowna; Norman Fatnowna ; Valroy Fatnowna; Ada Geesau; Esther Henaway; Jessie Heron; Ishmael Itea (visitor from Solomons); Mrs Kinch; Rhoda Lamon; Lisa Labanca Lampton; Simon Leo; Phyllis Macken; Shireen Malamoo; Gloria Malayta; Phlip Malayta; Ada Marlla; Winnie Miller ; Des Moonie; Gracie Motto; Sid Oba, Eddie Parter; Heather Pelayo; Bill Quakawoot; Mira Quakawoot; Henry Stevens Quaytucker; George Reid; Tom Rode; Andrew Satani; Noah Sabbo-Toga; Mary Swali; Charlie Tallis; Richard Talonga; Cecilia Tarryango; Winnie Tass; Bill Thomas; Ivy Thomas; Blanch Toas; Philip Tonga; Joe Viti; Sandy Viti; Leslie Willie; Jessie Willie; Les Womald; Caroline Yasso; Eddie Yasso; Ester May Yasso; Jessie Yatta

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Sincerely,



Emelda Davis – President

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