

# **The Pacific Islanders' Fund and the Misappropriation of the Wages of Deceased Pacific Islanders by the Queensland Government**

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The Queensland Pacific Islanders' Fund operated between 1885 and the 1900s but is largely unknown today. It was established in the Treasury to facilitate the operation of the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1880 Amendment Act 1885* to safeguard return fares and to ensure that the money due to deceased Islanders was returned to their families. However, over time, because of the high death rates, the wages of deceased Islanders became so substantial that they were able to be used to supplement the administration of the whole labour trade. Money was drawn off to subsidize Islander hospitals and Christian missions, to an extent that in the final 1900s deportation years there was no longer enough money available to pay full fares. The Queensland government seldom returned the full wages to the families of the deceased Islanders and profited largely from their deaths. In today's money, millions of dollars were misappropriated, in similar fashion to wages misappropriated by the same government from Aborigines.

This paper explores the legislation, the payment of wages and the misappropriations that occurred from Pacific Islanders' wages. The aim is to estimate how much money that should have been legitimately paid to South Sea Islanders or their families was held back by the Queensland government, diverted for other purposes. The legal ramifications are explored and the conclusion suggests a fair way for the Queensland and Australian governments to compensate present-day Pacific Islanders.

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## **August 1863**

At 9.00 pm on Friday 14 August 1863 the 130-ton schooner *Don Juan* arrived off Moreton Island opposite Brisbane with sixteen crew under Captain George Gruebner and sixty-seven Pacific Islander passengers from Erromango, Tanna, and Efate in the southern New Hebrides, and Maré and Lifu, two of the Loyalty Islands off New Caledonia. After a medical inspection, the ship proceeded up the Brisbane River to Redbank, between Brisbane and Ipswich. The labour recruits disembarked and walked fifty-seven kilometres to Robert Towns' cotton plantation, Townsvale on the Logan River. Although other Pacific Islanders had been working in the Torres Strait since

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1860, the Islander labourers on the *Don Juan* are generally regarded as the initial participants in the Queensland labour trade, receiving the first of 62,475 indenture contracts issued for Pacific Islanders to work as labourers in Queensland between 1863 and 1904.<sup>1</sup> Given the known pattern of re-enlistments from the islands it seems likely that there were about 50,000 individuals.

### **The Queensland Government and Indigenous People**

Regional colonial boundaries were not yet stable when Queensland began its Pacific Islands labour trade in 1863. Most of the Torres Strait was outside of the colony's territorial limits and the neighbouring Pacific Islands were also largely beyond any European territorial claims. During the nineteenth century, the colonial government regarded the islands around the Coral Sea and their indigenous inhabitants as its domain to exploit, just as it did Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and their land.<sup>2</sup>

Any consideration of Pacific Islander immigrants to Queensland needs to be placed into a much wider context. Nineteenth-century Queenslanders had an appalling reputation for the manner in which they treated indigenous peoples. Estimates suggest that at least 50,000 Indigenous Queenslanders were deliberately exterminated through paramilitary operations organised by the Native Police and settlers.<sup>3</sup> All of Australia's indigenous peoples were considered to be racially inferior to European settlers and there are many similarities with the ways in which the government regarded indentured Pacific Islander immigrant workers. While one group was indigenous and the other immigrant, a conspiracy of silence existed over mistreatment of both groups. Government legislation, presented as benevolent in intent, was used to control their lives with little sense of accountability.

One similarity between Indigenous Queenslanders and Pacific Islanders was in relation to the payment of wages. Initially Indigenous Queenslanders were paid only in rations. Then tens of thousands of Aborigines worked in the pastoral industry and Torres Strait Islanders worked in maritime industries. Many Aborigines had their full wages withheld and over several decades were paid only in rations. The 1897 *Aboriginals Protection and Prevention of the Sale of Opium Act* established administrative districts supervised by "Protectors", usually local police. From the 1890s until the 1970s, the Queensland government had full control over the lives of Aborigines, including their bank accounts. The same does not seem to have applied to Torres Strait Islanders, although their accounts were redeemable at government controlled stores and they were encouraged to use Government Savings Bank

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<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Price with Elizabeth Baker, "Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A Research Note", *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 11, 1/2 (1976), pp.106-21.

<sup>2</sup> Clive Moore, "Queensland and its Coral Sea: Implications of Historical Links between Australia and Melanesia", in Malcolm Gillies, ed., *Northern Exposures. Occasional Paper 19. Papers from the 1996 Symposium of The Australian Academy of the Humanities* (Canberra, 1997), pp.17-44; *idem*, "Empires of the Coral Sea", in Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie, eds, *The Routledge History of Western Empires* (Milton Park, Abingdon, UK, 2013), pp.151-164.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Bottoms, *Conspiracy of Silence: Queensland's Frontier Killing Times* (Sydney, 2013); Robert Ørsted-Jensen, *Frontier History Revisited: Colonial Queensland and the "History War"* (Brisbane, 2011); Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney, 2013); Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Melbourne, 2007), pp.135-39; Raymond Evans and Robert Ørsted-Jensen, "I cannot say the numbers that were killed": Assessing Violent Mortality on the Queensland Frontier", Paper presented at the Australian Historical Association Conference, University of Queensland, July 2014.

accounts.<sup>4</sup> In the 1990s, Rosalind Kidd's research revealed the breaches of fiduciary duties (the legal obligation of a fiduciary is to act in the best interests of another person over whose affairs the fiduciary has legal control) via Queensland government misappropriation of money through placing Aboriginal wages into trust funds.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Pacific Islanders who worked in the pastoral, maritime and sugar industries between the 1860s and 1900s were often paid in goods; most only partly received their earnings in cash. Some of their earnings were banked for them and placed into a trust fund or their personal bank accounts; and the wages of deceased Islanders were placed into the Treasury's Pacific Islanders' Fund. In both cases — Indigenous Queenslanders and Pacific Islanders — the Queensland government breached its fiduciary duty and trust. As Kidd, states: "A trust creates a legally binding obligation under which those who control the trust (trustees) hold the trust property for the benefit of another (beneficiary) and not for themselves in their role as trustees".<sup>6</sup> The colonial and state Queensland government chose to ignore this responsibility and profited largely.

This paper explores the legislation, the payment of wages and the misappropriations which occurred. The aim is to estimate how much money that should have been legitimately paid to South Sea Islanders or their families was retained by employers and the Queensland government. The legal ramifications are explored and the conclusion suggests a fair way for the Queensland and Australian governments to redress what appears to be an historical injustice.

### Legislation and the Labour Trade

Until 1868, most Pacific Islanders entered Queensland under contracts of indenture subject to the *Queensland Masters and Servants Act 1861* (25 Vic. No. 11). The first Act of Parliament specifically relating to the regulation of Islander indentured labourers was the *Polynesian Labourers Act* passed in 1868 (31 Vic. No. 47). This Act introduced Inspectors of Pacific Islanders and included schedules for a £500 recruiting bond (a surety) from every ship master or owner involved in the importation of Islander labourers, and an employer's contribution, either a bond of £10 (paid in cash) to the government to defray the cost of the return passage of every indentured Islander labourer, or a fee of fifteen shillings a quarter for "three years or thirty-nine moons" to cover the return fare and all government regulatory expenses. The *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1880* (44 Vic. No. 17), a major revision, replaced the 1868 Act. The 1880 Act introduced an extra £500 emigration bond (a surety) to ensure that ship's masters delivered all passengers and their property back to their correct island home at the end of their contracts, and reduced the return passage bond to £5 while increasing the administrative charge to thirty shillings per head. The number of passengers in relation to space on board was specified, and more regulations were added to control employment within the colony. The Pacific Islanders' Fund, the central issue of this paper, was established in the Treasury under an 1885 Amendment Act (49 Vic. No. 17)

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<sup>4</sup> Steve Mullins, "Company Boats, Sailing Dinghies and Passenger Fish: Fathoming Torres Strait Islander Participation in the Maritime Economy", *Labour History*, No. 103 (2012), pp.39-58, particularly 47-50.

<sup>5</sup> Ros Kidd, "You Can Trust Me — I'm With The Government", *Queensland Review*, Vol. 1, 1 (1994), pp. 38-46. Also see an extended version of this article at <<http://www.linksdisk.com/roskidd/tpages/t1.htm>> (accessed 25 May 2013); *eadem*, *The Way We Civilise: Aboriginal Affairs — the Untold Story* (St Lucia, Qld, 1997); *eadem*, *Hard Labour, Stolen Wages: National Report on Stolen Wages* (Rozelle, NSW, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Ros Kidd, *Trustees on Trial: Recovering the Stolen Wages* (Canberra, 2006), p.36.

to administer the bonds, supervise the wages of deceased Islanders, and to increase the hospital capitation fee.

### Wages

There is a myth in the contemporary Islander community that their forebears were not paid, which is untrue, although the base pay rate was far less than that of European workers. Onwards from 1860s the standard rate of pay was £6 per year for first-indentured labourers (paid every six months after 1880). The unfairness of this rate of payment, fixed for forty years in the face of wage inflation in the general workforce, has seldom been noted by historians.<sup>7</sup> Four categories of Islander immigrants emerged: first-indenture labourers who had never left their islands before; those who re-enlisted in the islands; time-expired labourers; and ticket-holders. Re-enlistments occurred onwards from the late 1860s, and by the early 1890s more than one-quarter of the newly-arriving labourers were re-enlisting: for example, in 1897, 230 of the 934 new recruits (24.6 per cent) had previously served terms of indenture in Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia or Samoa. Time-expired labourers were those who had completed one or more three-year agreement but opted to stay in Queensland and entered new agreements. The time-expired segment of the Islander work force grew increasingly important over the four decades of immigration. By 1895, time-expired Islanders made up 65 per cent of the Islander numbers. The ticket-holder category was created in *The Pacific Islander Labourers Act 1880 Amendment Act 1884* (47 Vic No. 12): Islanders who had resided in Queensland for five years before September 1884 faced no restrictions over the type of work they undertook. Later indentured labourers were limited to coastal field labour in agriculture. In 1884 there were 835 ticket-holders, in 1892 there were 716, 704 in 1901 and 691 in 1906. Expressed as a proportion of the overall Islander population in Queensland from 1885 to 1906, in any one year ticket-holders constituted between seven and eleven per cent of the Islander population.

Labourers re-recruited in the islands received around £10 to £12 a year between the mid-1880s and the 1900s, and re-enlisting labourers in Queensland earned £16 to £23 a year. Female workers always received a lower wage, except for those on first indentures. Ticket-holders were outside the indenture system and could earn independently, some running small businesses and farms.<sup>8</sup> Total Islander earnings were well in excess of one million pounds.<sup>9</sup> The present-day Australian South Sea Islander population is largely descended from time-expired and ticket-holding Islanders.<sup>10</sup>

Not all of their wages were paid in cash. Adrian Graves has researched the use of wages and truck (payment of wages in goods or money to be spent in shops in which

<sup>7</sup> The equivalent of £6 in 1863 was more than £10 in 1904.

<<http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/relativevalue.php>> (accessed 24 August 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay* (Port Moresby, 1985), pp.170-78.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.137-69.

<sup>10</sup> The main category allowed to remain in Australia after the findings of the 1906 Royal Commission was Islanders who had more than twenty years residence. Ralph Shlomowitz, "Time-Expired Melanesian Labor in Queensland: An Investigation of Job Turnover 1884-1906", *Pacific Studies*, Vol. 8, 2 (Spring 1985), pp.25-44; Peter Corris, "'White Australia' in Action: The Repatriation of Pacific Islanders from Queensland", *Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, 58 (April 1972), pp.237-50; Clive Moore, "'Good-Bye, Queensland, Good-Bye, White Australia; Good-Bye Christians': Australia's South Sea Islander Community and Deportation, 1901-1908", *The New Federalist*, No. 4 (December 2000), pp.22-29.

the employer often had a direct or indirect interest).<sup>11</sup> Initially in the 1860s, Islanders were paid every three years or yearly and most often just in goods, which led to abuses. There was no mention of the method of wage payment in the 1868 Act although Form D, a "Memorandum of Agreement" required employers to "pay wages in the coin of the realm at the end of each year of the agreement". Graves' evidence suggests that early employers still paid in goods at the end of the three year contracts, a great advantage to the employers as the Islanders had no idea of the value or quality of the manufactured items they received. In theory, Islanders who disputed the value of wages paid could appeal to the local Magistrate's Court; but in practice they did not as they could not speak English, the legal process was intimidating, the *Oaths Act 1867* denied non-Christians the right to give sworn evidence, and the courts were often controlled by Justices of the Peace who were themselves employers of Islanders. Complaints under the *Masters and Servants Act* were only valid for six months, which meant that labourers could only hope to obtain six months of wages, even if the payment due was for three years, and when employers became bankrupt the *Wages Act* did not require the back payment of former employees. As well, a breach of contract by an employer was a civil offence, while a breach in contract by a labourer was a criminal offence, and strikes were illegal.<sup>12</sup>

After pressure from Britain in the late 1870s, Queensland established a special trust account in the Government Savings Bank into which it encouraged employers to deposit Islanders' wages. Few did until stronger provisions were included in the 1880 Act, particularly stopping unauthorised deductions from wages. From 1880, the wages were paid half-yearly in the presence of the Inspectors of Pacific Islanders and there was an option to take the wages in cash or place them on deposit with a bank. Most Islanders seem to have banked their wages, or at least the major part of them. Not all used the Government Savings Bank which ran mainly through post offices but could be accessed by the Inspectors when withdrawals were needed. On occasions employers used their own accounts to hold Islanders' wages and doled out cash on request.<sup>13</sup>

We need to differentiate between cash and bank accounts, both quite alien to Pacific Islanders, and what were called "trade goods", the desirable products of European technology — iron and steel items such as guns, axes and knives, and tobacco, cloth etc. Obtaining trade goods was their major motivation for participating in the labour trade. Cash was of little use back in the islands, except perhaps by the early 1900s. There was not necessarily anything wrong with being paid in goods; however, problems arose over equivalence and quality, particularly where employers ran their own shops or had interests in "Kanaka stores" in the surrounding towns, thus profiting in the exchange. The goal was to return home with a trade box bulging with new possessions, most of which were then distributed to relatives to compensate for their absence and to advance their social positions.<sup>14</sup>

The use of bank accounts was a peculiarity of the Queensland labour trade; Islanders had substantial amounts of their money held in the Queensland Government Savings Bank. Some of their passbooks have survived, held by the Queensland State Archives

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<sup>11</sup> Adrian Graves, "Truck and Gifts: Melanesian Immigrants and the Trade Box System in Colonial Queensland", *Past and Present*, No. 101 (1983), pp.87-124.

<sup>12</sup> Adrian Graves, *Cane and Labour: The Political Economy of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1862-1906* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp.138-42.

<sup>13</sup> Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp.156-60.

<sup>14</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*, pp.47-100 contains an extensive argument about the motivations for enlistment from Malaita Island.

and the Royal Queensland Historical Society. Graves' research shows that in 1884 23 per cent of the Islander deposits in the Government Savings Bank were in personal accounts, not in the wages trust fund. Although there were probably abuses of the system, particularly where employers used their own accounts to hold Islanders' wages, overall the banking system worked quite well. Bank accounts became a form of compulsory saving, safer than keeping money or boxes of possessions in flimsy accommodation on plantations and farms where fires occurred and items could be stolen by other Islanders. Graves calculated that in proportion to their numbers, the Islanders used the Government Savings Bank far more than the rest of the population of Queensland.<sup>15</sup>

As early as 1884, Islanders had £13,869 in the wages trust account administered by Inspectors of Pacific Islanders, and £3,917 in individual accounts held by the Government Savings Bank; there was also an unknown amount held in other banks, courtesy of employers.<sup>16</sup> The Inspectors were trustees of the Islanders' savings bank accounts and the majority of the payments of wages were made in their offices, with the minority of payments made on plantations and farms, still witnessed by the Inspectors. There is a full record of credits and debits in the Islanders' Government Savings Bank accounts at Mackay between 1888 and 1904. The number of individual accounts fluctuated; for instance 1,271 in 1892 and 437 in 1894. The total amount deposited at Mackay ranged between £5,985 in 1893 and £2,880 in 1900. During an average year, £2,900 was deposited and a similar sum withdrawn. Individual deposits were small, most no more than five or six pounds, although Maryborough statistics show that some Islanders had up to £50 in their accounts. In 1901, Queensland Islanders had £32,693 deposited in the Government Savings Bank.<sup>17</sup>

### **Wages of Deceased Islanders**

Up until 1907 the government profited by around £120,000 from the deaths of Islander indentured labourers. The return passage money held for deceased Islanders was not returned to employers, benefitting the Queensland government to the tune of £85,000. The 1885 Act (Clause 8) facilitated payment of wages owed to deceased Islanders directly into the Pacific Islanders' Fund. After paying any debts, the Minister was to "pay the surplus or any part thereof to any person proved in his satisfaction to be the next of kin or one of the next of kin of the deceased islander". As shown in Table One, only 15.6 per cent of the wages of deceased Islanders were deducted from the Pacific Islanders' Fund to purchase goods for relatives, a benefit to the government in excess of £35,000. As well, before 1885, employers seem to have kept the wages of deceased Islander employees which could have involved as much as £17,000.<sup>18</sup> The 1885 Act mandated that the wages of deceased Islanders should to be paid directly to the government. While between 1863 and 1884 employers profited from being able to keep the wages, there was no alternative mechanism in place until 1885 to ensure payment. The only way to accomplish this was to pay the wages to the government and let the Immigrant Department through its Inspectors of Pacific Islanders and Government

<sup>15</sup> Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp.156-60.

<sup>16</sup> "Savings Bank Deposits by Polynesians", *Queensland Votes and Proceedings (QVP)*, (1884), Vol.2, pp.845-47.

<sup>17</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*, pp.179-80, 182-83.

<sup>18</sup> Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp.248-49. I have calculated the amount based on 2,000 wages at £6 a year and 500 at £10 a year. It is not possible to be more precise as Islanders would have died at various stages of their three-year contracts, and pay rates varied.

Agents on labour trade vessels arrange for the proceeds, in the form of trade goods, to be paid to the families of the deceased Islanders. This might seem beyond the call of duty, as no similar scheme applied to any other group of immigrants; however, the government needed the Islander labour and knew that compensation was expected in the islands for any death. If this was not arranged there may have been an escalation of violence against recruiters and the labour trade could not have continued.

The calculations above are based on Queensland government mortality statistics which show that around 15,350 Islander labourers died in Queensland between 1863 and 1906: 6,579 before 1885 and 8,771 onwards from 1885.<sup>19</sup> This is by far the highest death rate for any group of immigrants into Australia. Pacific Islanders came from relatively isolated environments, lacking immunity to many of the common diseases found on large land masses. For those newly arrived in Queensland, the common cold, tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis and pleurisy were major killers. The Islanders had no immunity to measles and chicken pox, which caused large numbers of deaths. Dysentery also occurred, particularly on plantations where sanitary standards were often low. If an Islander survived the first three years in Queensland, he or she would probably have lived until old age, remembering of course that in the nineteenth-century people died much younger than today. The upper band of the death rate for ticket-holders was a similar rate to Europeans in Queensland. Newcomers, the first-indenture labourers, always suffered worst. The death rate is a reprehensible 24 per cent of the total number of contracts and an even higher proportion of the individuals involved (around 30 per cent).<sup>20</sup> The 1868 Act (Form D) specified that medical care was not to be deducted from wages and the 1880 Act (Part IV) introduced a medical capitation tax to be paid by employers. Government appropriation of the wages of deceased Islanders, used partly to fund Islander hospitals and Christian missions, was both morally repugnant and quite possibly illegal.

The other relevant Act is an 1886 amendment to the 1880 Act (Vic. 50, No. 6) passed after a few years of astoundingly high death rates among the Islanders.<sup>21</sup> Under the 1886 Act the cost of burial of any Islander dying while under indenture was to be paid by the employer, who was entitled to be recouped for a reasonable amount of cost out of the personal estate, if any, of the Islander. Most were buried in unmarked graves on plantations, at little cost.

The Pacific Islanders' Fund became a major source of finance for the administration of the labour trade, for health expenses of the Islanders, and in the 1890s and 1900s as much as £600 each year to support Christian missions in Queensland.<sup>22</sup> Salaries, allowances and expenses for the Inspectors of Pacific Islanders, the Government Agents on labour trade vessels, as well as office expenses, advertising, survey fees, and hospital construction and operating costs, were all financed from the Fund. After 1885, rather than being dispersed amongst employers, the wages of deceased Islanders were

<sup>19</sup> Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 248-49.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*, pp.244-62; Ralph Shlomowitz, "Mortality and the Pacific Labour Trade", *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 22, 1 (1987), pp.34-55.

<sup>21</sup> At Mackay 323 Islanders died in 1883 from the Islander population of 3,845 (8.4 per cent). In 1884 823 died in a population of 3,697 (22.26 per cent). The majority of the dead were recruits newly arrived from the islands off eastern New Guinea. Moore, *Kanaka*, p.241.

<sup>22</sup> Bishop C. Wilson to Bishop J.R. Selwyn, 5 February 1896, *Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Mission* (Guildford: Melanesian Mission, August 1896), pp.207-08, 122; *The Church Chronicle* (Brisbane), May 1895, p.3, 3 June 1895, pp.11-13; David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea, 1891-1942* (St Lucia (Qld), 1977), pp.101-02; "Notes", *Southern Cross Log*, July 1897, p.4.

centralised into the Fund. The introduction of recruiting and hospital capitation fees did not provide enough money to finance the administration of the system and in 1887 the Department of Pacific Island Immigration admitted that without the inclusion of the deceased Islanders' wages "there would have been a heavy deficiency on this head". In the final years in the 1900s, after there had been a large withdrawal of capitation fees, deposits from deceased estates were the major remaining part of the Fund.<sup>23</sup> The addition of the wages of deceased Islanders, only a small proportion of which were ever returned to their families, helped balance the administration of the indenture system and eventually helped pay for their deportation in the 1900s, although not entirely as many Islanders forced to leave Australia between 1906 and 1908 had to pay part of the fares out of their own savings.

The records of the Pacific Islanders' Fund were published in the *Votes and Proceedings of the Queensland Parliament*. These records are brief ledger entries, although a thorough search in the Queensland State Archives may uncover further records. Based on evidence presented in Table 1, the Queensland government made a considerable financial gain from the estates of deceased Pacific Islander labourers; 84.4 per cent of the money was not returned to their descendants and was absorbed for other uses. This would seem to come into a similar category to the misuse of Indigenous wages held in trust by the same government, which has been subject to compensation claims and substantial payments in recent years.

**Table 1: Deceased Islanders' Wages in the Pacific Islanders' Fund, 1885-1904 (along with incomplete figures 1880-1886)**

Year	Deceased Islanders' Wages paid into the Fund: \$	Payments ex Deceased Islanders' Estates (incl. next of kin claims): £	Ledger Balance of Deceased Islanders' Estates: £	Source
1880-81	931.8.0	n.a	n.a	QVP 1881, 1, 325
1881-82	n.a.	n.a	n.a	
1882-83	n.a	n.a	n.a	
1883-84*	3,907.0.2	n.a.	n.a	QVP 1887, 3, 609
1884-85*	4,013.7.6	n.a.	n.a.	QVP 1887, 3, 609

<sup>23</sup> Pacific Islanders' Fund Annual Statement of Account, *QVP*, 1887, Vol. 3, p.609; The Pacific Islanders' Fund, Immigration Agent's Annual Report on Pacific Island Immigration, *QVP*, Session 2 1904, Session 1 (1905), Vol. 2, p.64.



<b>Year</b>	<b>Deceased Islanders' Wages paid into the Fund: \$</b>	<b>Payments ex Deceased Islanders' Estates (incl. next of kin claims): £</b>	<b>Ledger Balance of Deceased Islanders' Estates: £</b>	<b>Source</b>
1885-86	3,740.8.10	24.3.3	n.a.	QVP 1886, 2, 938; 1887, 3, 609
1886-87	2,736.12.1	261.7.8	19,764.15.7	QVP 1887, 3, 609-10
1887-88	2,414.9.9	223.6.2	21,955.19.2	QVP 1888, 3, 181-2
1888-89	2,067.6.2	193.14.1	22,920.0.0	QVP 1889, 3, 206, 223-4
1889-90	2,257.3.5	289.6.4	25,797.8.4	QVP 1990, 2, 1561-3
1890-91	1,603.5.4	271.13.2	27,129.0.6	QVP 1891, 3, 65
1891-92	1,521.6.11	159.6.5	28,491.1.0	QVP 1892, 2, 847-8
1892-93	1,301.5.9	135.7.0	29,656.19.9	QVP 1893, 2, 541-2
1893-94	1,341.16.3	273.12.1	30,725.3.11	QVP 1894, 2, 735-6
1894-95	866.15.1	167. 18.8	31, 414.11.0	QVP 1895, 2, 1013
1895-96	1,417.16.10	323.12.11	32,508.0.10	QVP 1896, 3, 199-200
1896-97	1,164.9.0	377.7.6	33,295.2.4	QVP 1897, 2, 1085-93,1093-4
1897-98	850.8.11	239.7.4	33,904.11.5	QVP 1898, 2, 735-36

Year	Deceased Islanders' Wages paid into the Fund: \$	Payments ex Deceased Islanders' Estates (incl. next of kin claims): £	Ledger Balance of Deceased Islanders' Estates: £	Source
1898-99	1,461.1.6	428.4.9	35,054.12.8	QVP 1899, 4, 981-2
1899-1900	1,071.5.0	328.4.9	35,701.16.1	QVP 1900, 5, 687-8
1901*	1,043.1.11	420.10.7	36,778.8.6	QVP 1902, 1, 118
1902*	1,071.4.3	493.1.5	37,357.18.10	QVP 1903, 2, 443
1903*	2,035.0.0	411.1.11	38,186.2.8	QVP 1904-05, 2, 64
1904*	3,761.5.9	276.14.0	39,363.17.5	QVP 1905, 1, 742-3

\*From 1880 to 1900 the calculations are for the financial year. From 1901 they are for the calendar year.

### Deportation and the 1900s

In 1901 all of this began to come to an end when, despite opposition from Queensland, the new Commonwealth government passed an Act to deport all the Islanders, Australia's only attempt at removing an entire immigrant group.<sup>24</sup> There were 9,844 Islanders living in Queensland and New South Wales in 1901. 7,068 were due for deportation between 1904 and 1908. No new Islander labourers entered Australia after early 1904 and natural attrition reduced the numbers as contracts ended and they returned home between 1903 and 1906. The number liable for deportation had been reduced to 4,000 at the end of the 1906. In that year, a Royal Commission recommended that some Islanders be allowed to stay in Australia: ticket-holders under the 1884 Act (691 in 1906), and another 1,380 on humanitarian grounds. An unknown number — up to 1,000 — managed to disappear into the bush for several years, reappearing once attention had shifted away. Patricia Mercer calculated the residual Islander migrant population to be 2,500.<sup>25</sup> The Pacific Islanders' Fund continued to

<sup>24</sup> This was the *Act to Provide for the Regulation, Restriction and Prohibition of the Introduction of Labourers from the Pacific Islands and for Other Purposes* (No. 16 of 1901). <[http://foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/cth4i\\_doc\\_1901.pdf](http://foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/cth4i_doc_1901.pdf)>.

<sup>25</sup> Corris, "'White Australia' in Action"; Moore, "'Good-Bye, Queensland, Good-Bye, White Australia; Good-Bye Christians'"; Lyndon Megarrity, "'White Queensland': The Queensland

operate after 1901 when Queensland became a state of the Commonwealth. Between 1885 and 1900 the Pacific Islanders' Fund was controlled by an Act of a British colony. After 1901, this was an Act of an Australian state. The federal government was complicit with Queensland in using the Pacific Islanders' Fund, including the wages of deceased Islanders, to finance the mass deportation of 1907-1908. The Pacific Islanders' Fund contained the deposited return fares for all Islanders, but only £5 per individual (unchanged since 1880), and current employers had no obligation to pay the difference. Each Islander was supposedly informed of this by the Inspector when he or she signed their first indenture contract, but that could have been 20 years earlier and they may not have understood the English used.<sup>26</sup> The collection points for deportation were Brisbane, Bundaberg and Cairns. Islanders had to pay to transport themselves to these ports and their living expenses while waiting, sometimes as much as £10, which was usually their entire savings. They were often left with no money to buy trade goods to take home. The two governments chose to ignore that it had used the funds of deceased Islanders for others purposes, including administration, hospitals and Christian conversion, and made those forced to leave pay the extra bills.

No matter how unjust Acts of Parliament may have been, they were still legal. As long as the Queensland government followed the law, there is no remedy available. The question is, was the administration of the Pacific Islanders' Fund within the law? Clause 10 of 1885 Act could be argued to allow the government to use the Pacific Islanders' Fund for any purpose it chose:

The money standing to the credit of 'The Pacific Islanders' Fund' shall be available, and may be applied by order of the Governor in Council, for the payment of any expenses lawfully incurred in and about the execution of any of the provisions of '*The Pacific Island Labourers Acts, 1880-1885*', or in and about any act or thing done by the Minister for the protection or benefit of any islanders.

The diversion of funds under Clause 10 of the 1885 Act was facilitated by weak financial management standards. Clause 4 of the *Audit Act* 1874 (38 Vic. No. 12) prescribed that private moneys coming into the possession of the government should be placed in a trust fund, but did not require that it be segregated from other money or that it be used only for the benefit of the legal owner. In a legal challenge the Queensland government would have to prove that use of the Pacific Islanders' Fund under Clause 10 of the Act, including the wages of deceased Islanders, was done with permission of the Executive Council.

### **Calculating the Extent of Misappropriation by the Queensland Government**

Only an actuary or accountant working with interest rates between 1885 and today, and with knowledge of the rate of inflation, could satisfactorily calculate the amount of compound interest involved. Only a lawyer competent in financial and fiduciary duty litigation could assess the possibility of legal action by the present-day Australian South Sea Islander community or the governments of present-day Vanuatu, Solomon

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Government's Ideological Position on the Use of Pacific Island Labourers in the Sugar Sector, 1880-1901", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 52, 1 (2006), pp.1-12; *idem*, "Teething Pains of the Early Commonwealth: Barton and the End of the Pacific Island Labour Trade", *The New Federalist*, No. 8 (2001), pp.54-65. Patricia Mercer, *White Australia Defied: Pacific Islander Settlement in North Queensland*. Studies in North Queensland History No. 21 (Townsville, 1995), p.99. The figures do not balance because some ticket-holders also applied for exemption.

<sup>26</sup> *Queensland Royal Commission into Sugar Industry Labour* (Brisbane, 1906), pp.60-61, 314, 205, Queensland State Archives, PRE/84, IA to UC, CSD, 12 February 1906.

Islands, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia (France), Fiji, Kiribati or Tuvalu succeeding. The deceased Islanders came from all of these nations, although primarily from Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. It is quite clear that the amount of money involved is substantial and in today's money runs into millions of dollars.

While the Commonwealth wanted all Islanders to leave Australia, they were unwilling to fund the attempt at compulsory expulsion and tried first to divert the costs onto employers and then the Islanders themselves. In the end, the Queensland government raided the Pacific Islanders' Fund and took the money from the wages of deceased Islanders to pay the deportation bill.<sup>27</sup> The final report on Pacific Islander immigration was submitted to Queensland Parliament in 1905.<sup>28</sup> This included the last known balance of the deceased Islanders' account — £39,363. However, had the Commonwealth and Queensland governments wanted to pay out the deceased estates, the overall balance of the Fund, £12,392 at the end of 1904-1905, was insufficient as the Fund's balances had been used to meet administrative and passage costs. By 1907, all of the money had been used up — the Auditor-General reported a large payment of £17,746 under "Incidentals, Return Passages etc."<sup>29</sup> This expense was Queensland's contribution to the deportation of Islanders organized by the Commonwealth, financed out of what remained of the £5 per head return passage money and the wages of deceased Islanders. It took the Fund into deficit to the extent of £8,639 which was paid for from the government's overdraft at the Queensland National Bank. Further payments were made up to 1909 when the Fund was closed and the deficit £13,740 transferred to the Consolidated Revenue Fund in the 1909 budget.<sup>30</sup>

In calculating the compound interest due on the deceased estates, the most appropriate starting points would be 1863, or 1880, or 1885, and the calculation would be a rolling amount of money. Because of this difficulty, let us assume that the base for the calculations is £39,364 in 1904. Because use of the wages of deceased Islanders relieved the Queensland government of a borrowing requirement, let us also assume that the government long-term bond yield is an appropriate interest rate. In Table 2 these rates from 1904 to 2012 have been compounded forward each year. On this basis, the account accrues to \$38,221,511 in 2012.<sup>31</sup> As a rough guide, using this method, every one thousand pounds in the 1900s is now worth one million dollars. If we use £35,000 (the money accruing from the wages of the deceased Islanders between 1885 and 1904) as our basic amount with which to begin the calculation, the value today is also in excess of thirty million dollars. If we use the £120,000 calculated earlier, the amount triples. There is no easy way to calculate the amount involved, although the inescapable conclusion is that it is substantial.

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<sup>27</sup> By 1907 the Pacific Islanders' Fund had been used up. The Auditor-General reported a large payment of £17,746 under "Incidentals, Return Passages etc." in 1907. This expense was Queensland's contribution to the Commonwealth-ordered deportation. It took the Fund into deficit to the extent of £8,639 which was funded from the government's overdraft at the Queensland National Bank. Further payments were made up to 1909 when the Fund was closed and the deficit totalling £13,740 was transferred to the Consolidated Revenue Fund in the 1909 budget. Mercer, *White Australia Defied*, p.94; *QVP* (1907), Vol. 1, p.142; *Brisbane Courier*, 19 November 1909, p.5.

<sup>28</sup> *QVP* (1905), Vol. 1, pp.741-46.

<sup>29</sup> *QVP* (1907), Vol. 1, p.142.

<sup>30</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 19 November 1909, p.5; *The Economist* (London), 10 April 1909, p.782.

<sup>31</sup> David Pope, *Australian Money and Banking, Source Papers in Economic History No. 11* (Canberra, 1986); Table 7; Reserve Bank of Australia <[www.rba.gov.au/statistics/tables/indexhtml#interestrates-Table F2](http://www.rba.gov.au/statistics/tables/indexhtml#interestrates-Table F2)>.

### Limitations on Compensation

I argue that the Queensland government perpetrated a “fraudulent breach of trust” under the terms of the *Limitations of Actions Act 1974* in its administration of the Pacific Islanders' Fund. Today's descendants of the original labourers are entitled to recover trust property “converted to the trustee's use”.<sup>32</sup> They were unaware of this breach of trust, which removes the limitation on action for compensation. The case is similar to that perpetrated against Aborigines as exposed by Rosalind Kidd. Her evidence to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry in 1996 resulted in what seems a substantial compensation offer by the Queensland government. In the early 1990s the Indigenous savings accounts were closed and in 2002 the Queensland government made a reparation offer to Aboriginal Queenslanders which included \$55.4 million, an apology, a parliamentary acknowledgement and a protocol to acknowledge traditional owners. By 2007 nearly \$20 million had been paid to over 5,500 people, another \$14.64 million was to be paid and the remaining \$21.23 million was paid into a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation. In 2008 the Queensland government re-opened the final reparations offer to those who had not applied earlier. Six million dollars was put aside for this purpose and the offer closed on 30 April 2009, an attempt to end this disreputable and fraudulent affair.<sup>33</sup> However, the Queensland government limited individual payments to \$4,000, when in some cases vastly more was owed, and many payments were not made because the government could not locate its own records. While the amount sounds large it was nothing like the actual amount owed which was closer to \$500 million.<sup>34</sup>

The Queensland government failed in its duty of care to honestly administer money held in trust. Whether this is also a failure of fiduciary duty is less clear. Although trust law is well defined, fiduciary law is a disputed area. In her book *Trustees on Trial*, Kidd notes that fiduciary relationships and fiduciary obligations depend on the demands of the particular circumstances and that courts often characterise government discretionary power as a political obligation, not a true trust in a commercial sense.<sup>35</sup> However, in Canada and the USA, courts have concluded that where governments acted as legal trustees and trust managers for indigenous people they are responsible for the good management of that money or property; the amount at stake there is as high as \$US40 billion.<sup>36</sup> Kidd notes that recent Australian Federal Court decisions recognise “a fiduciary duty enforceable by the courts if an economic interest is at

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<sup>32</sup> The Queensland *Limitations of Actions Act 1974* governs limitation on compensatory action. Section 27 is applicable: 27 Actions in respect of trust property. (1) A period of limitation prescribed by this Act shall not apply to an action by a beneficiary under a trust, being an action — (a) in respect of a fraud or fraudulent breach of trust to which the trustee was a party or privy; or (b) to recover from the trustee trust property or the proceeds thereof in the possession of the trustee, or previously received by the trustee and converted to the trustee's use. 2) Subject to subsection (1), an action by a beneficiary to recover trust property or in respect of a breach of trust, not being an action for which a period of limitation is prescribed by any other provision of this Act, shall not be brought after the expiration of 6 years from the date on which the right of action accrued. <<http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/L/LimActionsA74.pdf>>.

<sup>33</sup> “Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, History of Stolen Wages and Savings in Queensland” <<http://www.datsima.qld.gov.au/atsis/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-peoples/claims-and-entitlements/history-of-stolen-wages-and-savings-in-queensland>> (accessed 25 May 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Kidd, *Trustees on Trial*, p.10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21, 22-35,

stake”.<sup>37</sup> The misuse of the Pacific Islanders’ Fund goes back further (1885), ended sooner (1906) and was for a smaller amount of money, but in all other ways it is similar to stolen Aboriginal wages.

There are two main difficulties with this comparison. Firstly, in the cases of Queensland’s Aborigines and indigenous North Americans, the people are indigenous to the territories. As noted at the beginning of this paper, despite the vagaries of nineteenth-century Pacific territorial claims, Pacific Islanders were immigrants. This may affect legal issues, despite the nature of trust funds and fiduciary duty. The second major difficulty in taking any legal action would be establishing the names of the individuals involved and tracing their descendants in Australia and the islands. Without these names, any case would be likely to fail, and we can presume that the current Queensland government would seek to place similar limits on payouts as was done by the Beattie government in the early 2000s. Some of the names can be retrieved from church, funeral home and cemetery registers, which were gathered in the research completed by Patricia Mercer and me in the 1970s. Other names may be available in the Queensland State Archives and in private records. This second issue would not be insurmountable but requires extra research. There is also the possibility of bringing a public interest action, provided that the grounds of standing (*locus standi*) can be expanded, which depends on the position in Australia regarding public interest suits.

### Conclusion

The history of Queensland government abuse of Aboriginal wages held in bank accounts is beyond doubt, as is the avarice of some employers. There is reason to suspect that some fraudulent procedures were perpetrated on the Islanders as well. The vast majority of the Islanders found Immigration Department and banking procedures a mysterious process: there are many stories of them judging the value of coins by their size and avoiding paper money. To have their earnings reduced to a balance in a bank book must have perplexed them, remembering that the vast majority were illiterate and innumerate. The Immigration Department operated a complex ledger system; there were elaborate procedures in place to administer the Islanders’ presence in Queensland. It would be wrong to be damningly suspicious of all nineteenth century public servants any more than of those in the twentieth or this century, and although any system can be corrupted, no evidence has been uncovered that suggests large-scale fraud, other than the massive misappropriation by the government itself. Individual bank accounts would have been dealt with in the same way as any other accounts; it is likely that some of the Islanders’ money ended up in the internal revenue of the Queensland government when accounts became inactive. However, the Pacific Islanders’ Fund was similar to the Indigenous trust funds and the Queensland government is responsible for the non-return of the money. After 1885, the government made sure that employers could not profit from the wages of deceased Islanders by establishing the Pacific Islanders’ Fund, but in the outcome the government itself profited.

Australia’s South Sea Islanders, descendants of Queensland’s indentured Pacific Islanders (1863-1907) have been a patient people for 150 years. They are not Indigenous Australians, although half of them through inter-marriage have Indigenous ancestry. Their current numbers are difficult to estimate: there are between 20,000 and 40,000, depending on whether we include Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders with South Sea Islander ancestry. They have faced and survived many serious obstacles.

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<sup>37</sup> Ros Kidd, “Stolen Wages — US and Australia”  
<<http://www.linksdisk.com/roskidd/tpages/t31.htm>> (accessed 25 May 2013).

Today, Australia's South Sea Islanders are part way to becoming a united community after a slow unification of the eighty islands and hundreds of language groups involved in the labour trade. Initially a substantial proportion of their forebears were kidnapped to come to Australia. Estimates vary as to the number physically forced into the labour trade: most historians estimate 10 to 15 per cent; the Islanders suggest a larger percentage. All of them were "culturally kidnapped", meaning that Europeans took cultural advantage of their small-scale societies and enticed them to come to Australia under circumstances they could not fully comprehend. Once indentured in Queensland, they were servile bonded labour, paid poorly (by comparison with White labourers), often held in circumstances that can only be described as slave-like, and subjected to racial discrimination to an extent only matched by the way Indigenous Australians were treated. They suffered the highest death rate of any immigrants to Australia: an astounding 30 per cent. Then, as the trade unions became powerful and Islanders were no longer as cheap a source of labour, general sentiments to establish a "White Australia" led to legislation in 1901 which ordered their deportation.

During the first half of the twentieth century, further government legislation and trade union pressure, particularly from the Australian Workers Union (AWU), ensured that those who remained were forced out of the sugar industry and their Australian-born offspring were treated likewise, even though they were Australian citizens. The community was left broken and divided, divorced from their island homes and unwanted in Australia.<sup>38</sup> It took until the 1970s for them to begin to come together as a nationally cohesive group and another twenty years, after several investigative reports, for the Australian, Queensland and New South Wales governments formally to recognise them as a distinct and socially and economically disadvantaged ethnic group.<sup>39</sup>

This is not the first time the Australian South Sea Islander community have raised the matter of the Pacific Islanders' Fund with the Australian government. The deceased wages were raised in Islander petitions in 1902 and 1904,<sup>40</sup> and when Henry Tongoa and Alick Mallicoola (Malakula) travelled to Melbourne in 1906 on behalf of the Pacific Islanders' Association to meet with Prime Minister Alfred Deakin on 17 September and 1 October. One of the issues they discussed with Deakin was the "disposition of the Pacific Islander Fund", to no avail.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Mercer, *White Australia Defied*; Clive Moore and Patricia Mercer, "The Forgotten People: Australia's Immigrant Melanesians", *Meanjin*, Vol. 37, 1 (1978), pp.98-108; Patricia Mercer and Clive Moore, "Australia's Pacific Islanders, 1906-1977", *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 13, 1-2 (1978), pp.89-101; Clive Moore, ed. *The Forgotten People: A History of the Australian South Sea Island Community*, Sydney, 1979; Clive Moore and Mercer Patricia, "The Forgotten Immigrants: Australia's South Sea Islanders, 1906-1991", in Henry Reynolds, ed., *Race Relations in North Queensland* (Townsville, 1993), pp.208-42.

<sup>39</sup> Max Quanchi, "Australia's South Sea Islanders: A Call for Recognition", *Journal of the Pacific Society*, Vol. 21, 3 (October 1998), pp.3-19; *idem*, "Lobbying, Ethnicity and Marginal Voices: The Australian South Sea Islanders Call for Recognition", *The History Teacher* (May 1998), pp.31-41; Evatt Foundation, *A Report on the Current Status of South Sea Islanders in Australia* (Sydney, 1991); Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *The Call for Recognition: A Report on the Situation of Australian South Sea Islanders* (Sydney, 1992); Michael Lavarch, "Government Response to the Report on the Situation of Australian South Sea Islanders", Federal Attorney-General's Department, August 1994; Senator Ian MacDonal, "Ministerial Statements: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report", *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Senate*, 1 September 1994, pp.814-19.

<sup>40</sup> Mercer, *White Australia Defied*, p.94.

<sup>41</sup> Moore, "'Good-Bye, Queensland'", p.28; *Brisbane Courier*, 2 October 1906, p.5.

In 2015, 152 years after the first Pacific Islanders arrived in Queensland, and 168 years after the first Islander labourers were imported into New South Wales,<sup>42</sup> surely it is time for the Queensland, New South Wales and Australian governments to acknowledge the wrongs of the past and to provide adequate support for the Australian South Sea Islander community? At the very least, the Queensland and Australian governments should admit the misappropriation of the wages of deceased Islanders and attempt to restore dignity to this ethnic community. In February 2013, when the *Act of Recognition* was passed by the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Gillard said: “We must never feel guilt for the things already done in this nation’s history, but we can — and must — feel responsibility for the things that remain undone”.<sup>43</sup> These sentiments can be extended to Australia’s South Sea Islanders. No one living today has responsibility for the treatment the Islanders have received in the past, but the cumulative effect is that these Australians have never in 151 years been able to enjoy the socio-economic security of average Australians. All surveys show them to be a disadvantaged immigrant ethnic group living in conditions not markedly different from Indigenous urban Australians.

Direct compensation to the families of descendants of the Islanders whose wages were misappropriated may now be difficult, but acknowledgement that this occurred is a necessary part of healing for the Australian South Sea Islander community. Accordingly, a most appropriate outcome would be for the Queensland and Australian governments to establish and adequately fund a new Foundation to assist in broader education for Australian South Sea Islanders (ASSI), with a component for use in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, and to assist the Australian descendants to re-link with their families back in the islands.<sup>44</sup> The Vanuatu Government made a significant move on 28 July 2013 by introducing a Blackbirding commemoration day into their independence celebrations, encouraging ASSI to return and reunite with their families. Vanuatu has now enabled dual citizenship rights which will include ASSI. The Commonwealth could make the floundering Seasonal Workers scheme operate effectively, once more returning money to the islands through labour in Australia.

Following on the recognition of and apology to Australian South Sea Islanders by the Queensland and New South Wales governments in 2000 and 2013, and Prime Minister Rudd’s 2008 apology to the Stolen Generation, it is time for further healing with a formal apology from the current Prime Minister to Australia’s South Sea Islanders.

**Table 2: Pacific Islanders Fund: The Accrued Balance of Deceased Estates, 1905-2012 (£ until 1966, \$ thereafter)**

Date	Interest rate	Compounding	Date	Interest Rate	Compounding
1905	4.01	39,364.00	1959	4.97	387,857.45
1906	3.45	40,694.50	1960	4.83	406,590.96

<sup>42</sup> Marion Diamond, *The Sea Horse and the Wanderer: Ben Boyd in Australia* (Melbourne, 1988), pp.126-40.

<sup>43</sup> *Australian*, 13 February 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Queensland has established an Australian South Sea Islander Community Foundation, which has a more limited purpose

<<http://www.datsima.qld.gov.au/resources/multicultural/media/assi-foundation.pdf>>.



<b>Date</b>	<b>Interest rate</b>	<b>Compounding</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Interest Rate</b>	<b>Compounding</b>
1907	3.38	42,147.30	1961	5.34	428,302.92
1908	3.57	43,689.89	1962	4.88	449,204.10
1909	3.66	45,358.84	1963	4.72	470,406.54
1910	3.82	47,009.90	1964	4.29	490,586.98
1911	3.64	48,810.38	1965	4.76	513,938.92
1912	3.83	51,177.69	1966	5.15	1,080,813.54
1913	4.85	53,352.74	1967	5.02	1,135,070.38
1914	4.25	55,737.61	1968	5.10	1,192,958.97
1915	4.47	58,557.93	1969	4.91	1,251,533.25
1916	5.06	61,679.07	1970	5.64	1,322,119.73
1917	5.33	64,726.01	1971	6.41	1,406,867.60
1918	4.94	68,150.02	1972	5.71	1,487,199.74
1919	5.29	72,150.42	1973	5.30	1,566,021.33
1920	5.87	77,359.68	1974	8.05	1,692,086.05
1921	7.22	82,604.67	1975	8.04	1,828,129.77
1922	6.78	87,800.50	1976	8.45	1,982,606.73
1923	6.29	93,077.32	1977	8.80	2,157,076.12
1924	6.01	98,624.72	1978	8.28	2,335,682.03
1925	5.96	103,753.21	1979	8.46	2,533,280.73
1926	5.20	109,293.63	1980	9.95	2,785,342.16
1927	5.34	115,228.27	1981	11.08	3,093,958.07
1928	5.43	121,289.28	1982	13.87	3,523,090.05
1929	5.26	128,045.09	1983	12.43	3,961,010.15
1930	5.57	128,045.09	1984	13.75	4,505,649.04
1931	6.51	136,380.83	1985	13.50	5,113,911.66
1932	4.68	142,763.45	1986	12.95	5,776,163.23
1933	3.92	148,359.78	1987	12.80	6,515,512.12

Date	Interest rate	Compounding	Date	Interest Rate	Compounding
1934	3.61	153,715.57	1988	11.95	7,294,115.82
1935	3.31	158,803.55	1989	13.50	8,278,821.45
1936	3.74	164,742.81	1990	13.40	9,388,183.53
1937	4.02	171,365.47	1991	11.17	10,436,843.63
1938	3.68	177,671.72	1992	8.90	11,365,722.71
1939	3.90	184,600.91	1993	7.37	12,203,376.47
1940	3.80	191,615.75	1994	9.63	13,378,561.63
1941	3.09	197,536.68	1995	8.86	14,563,902.19
1942	3.25	203,956.62	1996	8.93	15,864,458.65
1943	3.23	210,544.42	1997	7.05	16,982,902.99
1944	3.24	217,366.05	1998	5.58	17,930,548.97
1945	3.24	224,408.72	1999	6.27	19,054,794.39
1946	3.25	231,702.00	2000	6.16	20,228,569.73
1947	3.21	239,139.63	2001	6.04	21,450,375.34
1948	3.17	246,720.36	2002	5.99	22,735,252.82
1949	3.13	254,442.71	2003	5.01	23,874,288.99
1950	3.12	262,381.32	2004	5.87	25,275,709.75
1951	3.17	270,698.81	2005	5.11	26,567,298.52
1952	3.75	280,850.01	2006	5.79	28,105,545.11
1953	4.53	293,572.52	2007	6.26	29,864,952.23
1954	4.40	306,489.71	2008	6.45	31,791,241.65
1955	4.52	320,343.04	2009	5.52	33,546,118.19
1956	4.53	334,854.58	2010	5.1	35,256,970.21
1957	5.09	351,898.68	2011	5.21	37,093,858.36
1958	5.00	369,493.61	2012	3.04	<b>38,221,511.66</b>

Sources: David Pope, *Australian Money and Banking, Source Papers in Economic History No. 11*, ANU 1986, Table 7; Reserve Bank of Australia  
[www.rba.gov.au/statistics/tables/indexhtml#interestrates-Table F2](http://www.rba.gov.au/statistics/tables/indexhtml#interestrates-Table F2).