

# First Queensland reser

QUEENSLAND'S first gazetted Aboriginal reserve was established just south of Mackay in June 1871.

The man behind it was plantation owner 'Frank' Bridgman, who had the support of others, including pioneering priest Fr P.M. Bucas.

The reserve covered 14,000 acres (5665ha) of land between Sandy Creek and Bakers Creek and included what is now known as McEwens Beach.

It was first populated in 1873 when about 200 Yuwibara were moved into the area.

From 1875 to 1877 the population swelled to a peak of 500.

Cane farmers in the area used residents as a source of cheap labour, hiring workers for the cost of some tobacco and a minimum cash outlay.

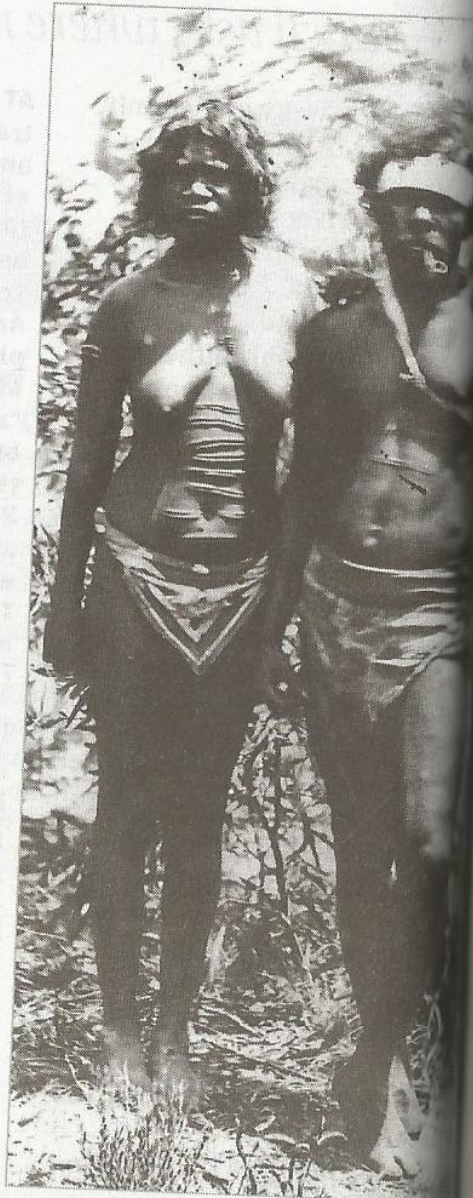
The reserve was made up of three communities who lived in slab dwellings and were surrounded by acres of fruit trees, vegetable plots and castor oil plants.

The camps were at Carrabaya, near the mouth of Sandy Creek; at Goonenberry, four miles upstream; and at Tullaboi, at the mouth of Bakers Creek.

A measles epidemic swept through the district in 1875, devastating Aboriginal and South Sea Islander peoples, but on the reserve only eight lives were lost.

A school for boys, where 32 students were taught reading, writing, geography and manual skills, was set up in 1877.

By 1880, the authorities began shutting down the reserve in sections and the last, at Bakers Creek, closed in May, 1885.



This man and woman are thought to be members of a tribe living in the Mackay region in the 1870s.