

# Department of Aborigines and Fisheries, State of Western Australia

1 January 1909 – 1 January 1920

## Details

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The Department of Aborigines and Fisheries in Western Australia was created in 1909 by the amalgamation of the Aborigines Department and the Fisheries Department. The head of the Department, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, was the legal guardian of every Aboriginal child in Western Australia, as stipulated in the Aborigines Act 1905. In 1920, the Department of Aborigines and Fisheries was replaced by the Fisheries Department, for Aboriginal matters below latitude 25 degrees, and the Department of the North West.

The Department of Aborigines and Fisheries was created on 1 January 1909 and administered the *Aborigines Act 1905*. The State Records Office website provides an overview of the Department:

*In 1909, the Aborigines and Fisheries Departments were amalgamated into one agency, the Department of Aborigines and Fisheries. This was partly due to financial constraints and partly due to the expediency of running as one the two departments whose interests lay mainly in the northern part of the State. After World War I, the Department was abolished and its functions pertaining to Aboriginal affairs south of the 25th parallel, as well as to fisheries throughout the State, were taken over by the Fisheries Department. Charles Frederick Gale was appointed the second Chief Protector of Aborigines on 1 October 1908. He undertook this position together with that of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. In 1911, Frederick Aldrich was appointed Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Gale's duties were limited to that of Chief Protector of Aborigines. Gale was dismissed from office in 1915 at an age of 54, ostensibly as an 'excess officer' and was vindicated by a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into his dismissal. Auber Octavius Neville (Secretary of the Immigration Department since 1911) was appointed as Gale's successor on 7 May 1915.*

The appointment of Rufus H. Underwood MLA as Minister for Aborigines in November 1914 had a direct impact on the funds available to north-west missions. He was elected to represent the Pilbara for the Australian Labor Party in 1906 and was critical of the effectiveness of missions in the Kimberley, removing their subsidies in December 1914. In the south of the State, missions for children continued to receive funding.

On 1 January 1920, the Department of Aborigines and Fisheries ceased and was replaced by the Fisheries Department (for Aboriginal matters below latitude 25 degrees) and the Department of the North West, for Aboriginal matters above latitude 25.

## More info

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### Chronology

- Aborigines Department, State of Western Australia (1 April 1898 - 31 December 1908)

- **Department of Aborigines and Fisheries, State of Western Australia (1 January 1909 – 1 January 1920)**
  - Fisheries Department, State of Western Australia (1920 - 1964)
  - Department of the North West, State of Western Australia (1 January 1920 - 1 January 1926)

## Related Entries

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- [Ellensbrook Farm Home \(1899 - 1917\)](#)  
Date: 1909 - 1917
- [Moola Bulla Station \(1910 - 1955\)](#)
- [La Grange Bay Relief Station \(1912 - 1918\)](#)
- [Carrolup \(1915 - 1922\)](#)  
Date: 1915 - 1920
- [Moore River Native Settlement \(1918 - 1951\)](#)  
Date: 1918 - 1920
- [La Grange Bay Feeding Depot \(1918 - 1949\)](#)

### Related Legislation

- [Aborigines Act 1905, Western Australia \(1906 - 1964\)](#)  
The Department of Aborigines and Fisheries administered the Aborigines Act 1905.  
Date: 1909 - 1920
- [Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1911, Western Australia \(1911 - 1964\)](#)

### Related Organisations

- [Chief Protector of Aborigines \(1898 - 1936\)](#)  
The Chief Protector was head of the Department of Aborigines and Fisheries.

## Records

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### Records held by other organisations

- [Files - Department of Aborigines and Fisheries \(1909 - 1920\)](#)
- [Files \(Aboriginal matters\) - Chief Secretary's Department \(1916 - 1927\)](#)
- [Personal Cards \(1920 - 1948\)](#)
- [Reports - Aboriginal Missions \(1906 - 1918\)](#)
- [Files \(Moola Bulla Station\) \(1914 - 1926\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/department-of-aborigines-and-fisheries/>