



Department of  
**Local Government,  
Sport and Cultural  
Industries**



# Aboriginal Family History Research Service

## Thinking about researching your Aboriginal family history?

The Aboriginal History Research Service (AHRS) at the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (the department) assists people to locate Western Australian State Government records about themselves and their Aboriginal ancestors. Due to the personal and sensitive nature of information contained in the records, many are restricted and not publicly available.

The records were created by the Native Welfare Department (and its predecessors) which operated under government policies that greatly restricted the lives of Aboriginal people between the late 1880s and the 1970s.

## When I apply for my family history, what will I receive?

Applicants can select to receive copies of all existing records within the AHRS collection that relate to themselves and/or their direct ancestors, including their mother's side of the family, their father's side, or both. You can also request records for a specific ancestor. A researched family tree will be provided to assist with navigating the records where possible.

## What information do the family history records contain?

Most of the records held by the AHRS are state records created by previous 'Native Welfare' departments between 1886 and 1972. The records are administrative in nature, often containing information about birth dates, child endowments, employment and wages, parentage, marriage and partnerships, places of residence, travel permits, mission and station details, and much more. The type of information varies from record to record, and you will find that records exist for some Aboriginal people yet not for others. There are many reasons for this, for example, if someone was 'exempt' from the Aborigines Act then their information may not have been documented. Records have also been lost or destroyed overtime by successive state government agencies.

The AHRS also holds copies of genealogies and photographs recorded by anthropologists Norman Tindale and Adolphus Peter Elkin in Western Australia between the 1920s and 1960s. More information about the Tindale collection including the locations that he visited can be found here: <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/aboriginal-history>.

## How do I apply?

Fill in a Family History Request form available from the department's website and forward the completed application to [ahrs@dlgsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:ahrs@dlgsc.wa.gov.au). For privacy reasons, you will need to attach a copy of identification to the completed form (e.g. drivers license or Healthcare card).

## Do I need permission from family members to apply?

If you have a living grandparent(s) on the family side that you are researching, or alternatively a parent(s), then they will need to sign the consent form provided in the application package. The policy does not discriminate between siblings, therefore brothers and sisters have equal right and access to the records. If you are seeking information on extended family members, such as an aunt or great uncle, permission will need to be obtained from that person or alternatively from their direct descendants if they are no longer living.

## Redactions and restricted information

Please be advised that the AHRS is unable to provide adoption-related records and applicants will need to contact the Department of Communities directly for this information. For privacy reasons and under the direction of the State Records Act 2000, highly confidential health information as well as any third-party details will need to be redacted from any records provided.

## How long will my application take to process?

In most instances, applications are processed within 20 working days and the completed application will be forwarded by email where possible or by registered mail unless alternative arrangements are made.

## What happens if the AHRS does not hold records relating to my family?

State records were not created for every single Aboriginal person in Western Australia. The AHRS collection is not exhaustive and often external collections will need to be referred to as well. A list of organisations for further research assistance is provided at <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/aboriginal-history/aboriginal-history-research-services/further-research-assistance>.

### Contact Us

Aboriginal History Research Services

Freecall: 1800 161 301

Email: [ahrs@dlgsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:ahrs@dlgsc.wa.gov.au)

Website: <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/aboriginal-history>

Address: Level 2, State Library of WA, 25 Francis Street, Perth

Post: PO Box 8349, Perth Business Centre WA 6849