

The Day They Burned Mapoon:
A Study of the Closure of a Queensland Presbyterian Mission

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Submitted as partial requirement
for the degree of B.A. Honours,
The University of Queensland

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Geoffrey Stephen Wharton

11 June 1996

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Contents

Disclaimer	i
Warning and Statement on Access to Thesis	ii
Contents	iii
Abstract and Word Count	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abbreviations	vii
List of Illustrations	ix
List of Maps and Plans	x
List of Appendices	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter One. Agents of Closure.	14
Chapter Two. Church and State, 1891-1954	34
Chapter Three. Church and State, 1955-1963	55
Chapter Four. Bauxite and Aluminium: New Challenges to Mission Administration	63
Chapter Five. Northern Development: The Mining Companies' Impact	69
Conclusion	90
Bibliography	95
Appendix One	111
Appendix Two	113

Abstract and Word Count

Abstract

The controversial closure of the Presbyterian church's Aboriginal mission station at Mapoon in 1963 has attracted considerable media attention over the past thirty years. Much of the criticism has focussed on possible links between the grant of bauxite mining leases by the Queensland government and the destruction of Mapoon. This thesis examines the roles of the church, the government and the mining companies in the mission's demise.

The Introduction explains the parameters of the thesis research and reviews the literature on Mapoon's closure. Chapter One presents the Mapoon community, then discusses the incident in November 1963 when Aboriginal residents were forcibly removed from Mapoon by police under a government order. The chapter also introduces the principal agents alleged to be responsible for the closure.

Chapter Two examines Mapoon mission's foundation, the relationship between the church and the government and some of the long-term causes of the initial decision to close Mapoon. Church and state negotiations and the Aboriginal residents' resistance to the closure policy during the late 1950s and early 1960s are examined in Chapter Three. The development of the Australian aluminium industry and the church's attempts to gain financial benefits from mineral royalties are the subject of Chapter Four. Chapter Five looks at the impact of the bauxite mining companies on Mapoon.

The Conclusion re-examines the issues raised in the thesis, sets out the limitations of the research conducted and discusses some implications for future study.

Estimated Total Words

I certify that this thesis, including the Introduction, Chapters One to Five (inclusive) and Conclusion but excluding footnotes, has a total of 24,976 words calculated by the word count facility on Microsoft Word Version 6.0. (Note: Following minor corrections after examiners' marking, the word count totals 24,970).

Geoffrey Stephen Wharton

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This thesis had its origins in an essay assignment on Mapoon Aboriginal community completed in an undergraduate history course taught by Henry Reynolds at James Cook University in 1975. The course and the assignment revealed a significant aspect of Queensland history which had been missing from the texts which I had studied in secondary school.

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I wish to thank most sincerely the Chairpersons, members and staff of the Marpuna Community Aboriginal Corporation and the Napranum Aboriginal Corporation, as well as Moira Bligh and Kathy Frankland of the Community and Personal Histories Section, Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and Reverend Graham Brookes, Secretary for World Mission, Uniting Church in Australia, whose approval for access to archival records made it possible to research this thesis.

Historians rely heavily on the skills of archivists, librarians, museum curators, records managers and other professionals to find relevant materials and to make maximum use of research time. The following people were very generous with advice and assistance: Margaret Reid, Kathy Frankland and Maianna Tetuira, Community and Personal Histories Section, Department of Families, Youth and Community Care; Joan Pigram and John Sinclair, Queensland Presbyterian Historical Records; Dorothy McClintock and staff of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland headquarters; Nola Fulwood and staff of the Queensland State Archives; Alix Novosad and Catherine Thomas, Comalco Minerals & Alumina Library; Trish Bassett and Kath Newman, Hibberd Library, Weipa; Aggie Ahmat, Joy Reynolds and

Jan Lang of Central Records, Weipa; Deanne Dorn, Department of Mines Library; Martin Beckett, Mitchell Library; Ros Follett, Joan Keating and Margaret Rose of Fryer Library; Bill Kitson, Peter Turner and Paul Wilson, Department of Natural Resources (formerly Lands); Irene Sullivan and Cheryl McNamara of Australian Archives; Loris Williams and staff of John Oxley Library; Barbara Erskine, History Department, James Cook University of North Queensland; Kevin Brown and Terri McGregor, Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Laura Bishop, Tenures Branch, Department of Mines and Energy; David Wilson, RAAF Historical & Archives Section, Department of Defence, Canberra.

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My family, Sharyn, Claire and Andrea, have shown unlimited tolerance for the duration of the research and writing. They have my warmest appreciation for their support.

Abbreviations

AA	Australian Archives.
AAPC	Australian Aluminium Production Commission.
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
ABM	Australian Board of Missions (Church of England).
AFMC	Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee [of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland] (From 1946 to 1963).
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.
Alcan	Aluminium Company of Canada Limited.
ALP	Australian Labor Party.
AM&S	Australian Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd.
AOMC	Aboriginal and Overseas Missions Committee [of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland].
APBM	Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions [of the Presbyterian Church of Australia] (To 1972).
APM	Authority to Prospect for Minerals.
Australuco	Australian Aluminium Company Proprietary Limited.
BACO	British Aluminium Company Limited.
BOEMAR	Board of Ecumenical Mission and Relations [of the Presbyterian Church of Australia] (From 1972).
CF	Correspondence File.
CMA	Committee on Missions to the Aboriginals, State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (From 1932 to 1945).
CMH	Committee on Missions to the Heathen, State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.
Comalco	Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Limited. (Acronym became part of the company's registered name in 1960).
CP	Country Party.
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates.
CPDS	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates: Senate.
CPP	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers.
CRS	Commonwealth Record Series.
Cwlth	Commonwealth.
CZC	Consolidated Zinc Corporation Limited.
CZP	Consolidated Zinc Proprietary Limited (subsidiary of CZC).
DDNA	Deputy Director of Native Affairs.
DFYCC	Department of Families, Youth and Community Care.
DHHA	Department of Health and Home Affairs.
DM	Department of Mines.
DME	Department of Mines and Energy.
DNA	Queensland Director of Native Affairs (Sub-Department of Native Affairs).
DNAO	Director of Native Affairs Office.

FAIRA	Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action.
FCAA	Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement.
FCAATSI	Federal Council for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.
GAPCA	General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
GAPCQ	General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland.
GSQ	Geological Survey of Queensland.
JOL	John Oxley Library.
MHR	Member of the House of Representatives, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.
ML	Mining Lease.
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly, Queensland Parliament.
NSW	New South Wales.
NT	Northern Territory.
PCA	Presbyterian Church of Australia.
PCQ	Presbyterian Church of Queensland.
QGG	Queensland Government Gazette.
QGMJ	Queensland Government Mining Journal.
Qld.	Queensland.
QLP	Queensland Labor Party.
QPD	Queensland Parliamentary Debates.
QPHR	Queensland Presbyterian Historical Records.
QPP	Queensland Parliamentary Papers.
QSA	Queensland State Archives.
QVPLA	Queensland Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.
Rev.	Reverend.
SA	South Australia.
SBML	Special Bauxite Mining Lease.
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
Vic.	Victoria.

List of Illustrations

Photograph One: Rev. John Calder Allan, Mapoon superintendent, 1948-1951, 1955. ¹	48
Photograph Two: Rev. James Bentley Hartshorn, Mapoon superintendent, 1948, 1954-55, 1955-56. ²	48
Photograph Three: Rev. V.W. Coombes, General Secretary, Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 1946-1958. ³	51
Photograph Four: Rev. J.R. Sweet, Secretary, Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee, 1953-1963. ⁴	51
Photograph Five: Alan Hulme (Minister for Supply), Jack Callope (Chief Councillor, Mapoon mission), and Matthew Flinders, Mapoon, July 1959. ⁵	59
Photograph Six: Isaac York and Dick Luff (Mission Policeman), Mapoon, July 1959. ⁶	59
Photograph Seven: Rev. J.M. Stuckey, General Secretary, Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 1960-1972. ⁷	61
Photograph Eight: C.A. Byrne and Rev. G. Filmer (foreground) walking with Mapoon residents and the Minister for Supply from the airstrip to the mission, July 1959. ⁸	86

¹ Source: Biography Files, Queensland Presbyterian Historical Records (QPHR).

² Source: Biography Files, QPHR.

³ Source: Biography Files, QPHR.

⁴ Source: Biography Files, QPHR.

⁵ Source: Album of photographs taken during the visit of the Minister for Supply (Hon. Alan Hulme) to Weipa - Mapoon and Aurukun Missions - Iron Range - Mount Isa - Mary Kathleen - from July 20 1959, to July 24 1959, Cape York Collection, Hibberd Library.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Source: Biography Files, QPHR.

⁸ Source: Album of photographs, Cape York Collection, Hibberd Library.

List of Maps and Plans

Map One.	Cape York Peninsula Region.	xii
Map Two.	Land Systems of the Mapoon Area. ¹	13
Map Three.	Northern Cape York Peninsula Showing Mapoon Aboriginal Reserve 1891-1964. ²	33
Map Four.	Northern Cape York Peninsula Showing Special Bauxite Mining Leases 1 and 8. ³	84
Plan One.	General Layout of Mapoon Mission, Outstation and Farm, 1936. ⁴	40
Plan Two.	Mapoon Mission Compound, 1936. ⁵	41

¹ Based on an extract from M. Godwin, '[Map of] Weipa Region land systems', a loose insert which supplements M. Godwin, 'Land survey of the Weipa region, Cape York Peninsula', in J.W. Lawrie, ed., *Proceedings of the north Australian mine rehabilitation workshop, No. 9*, (Weipa: Comalco Aluminium Limited, 1985), pp. 279-300.

² Based on information contained in the *Queensland Government Gazette* and Reserve File 91-14 Part 1, Lands Department, Box 167, Transfer 1726/1, Queensland State Archives (QSA).

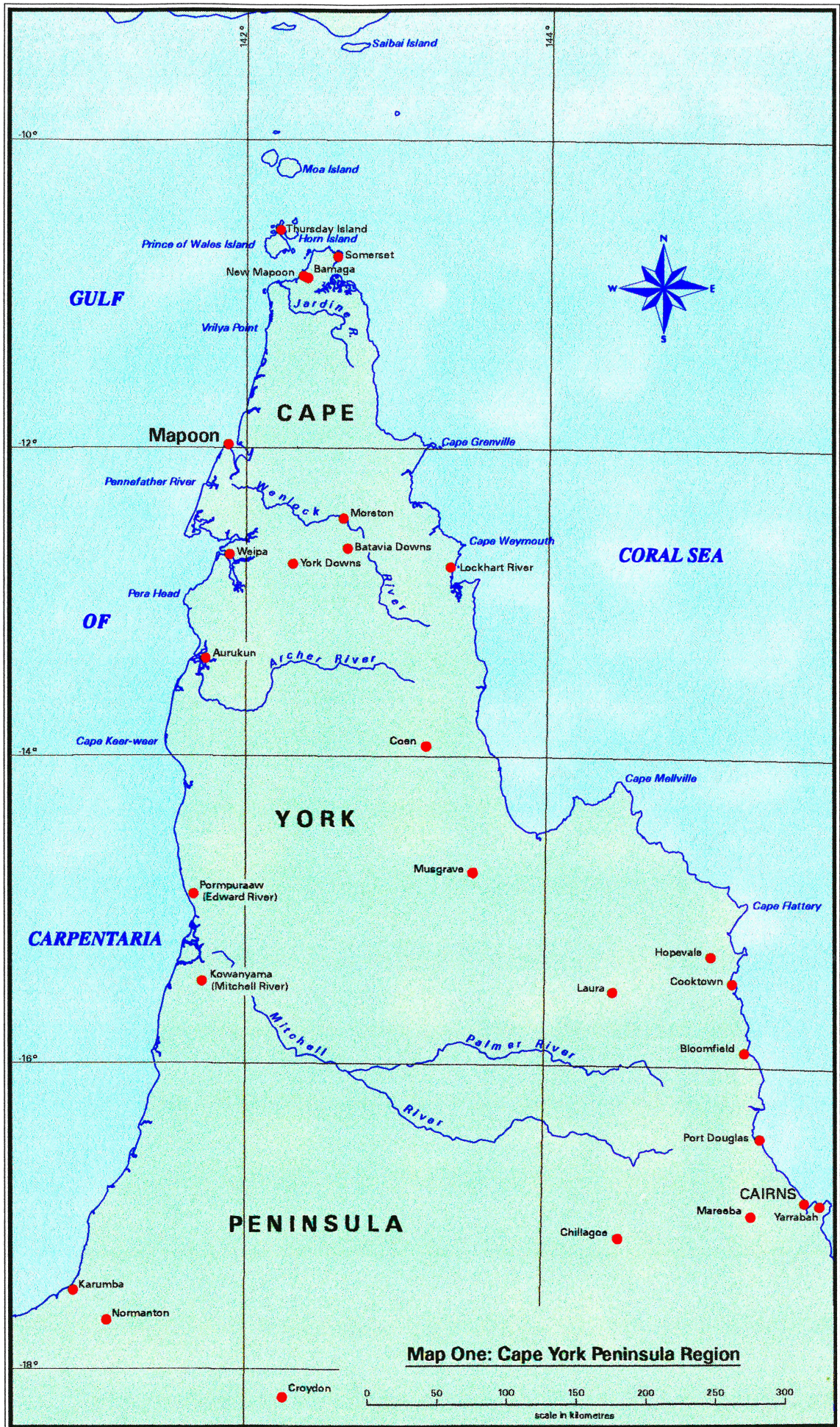
³ Based on Department of Mines and Energy Plans: Cat No. BxM 21, Compiled plan of the western bauxite field and Special Bauxite Mining Lease No. 1 constituted under 'The Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Ltd. Agreement Act of 1957', 26 July 1965; and Cat No. BxM 20, Compiled plan of bauxite field and of Special Bauxite Mining Lease No. 8 constituted under 'The Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited Agreement Act of 1965', 22 July 1965.

⁴ Photograph of blueprint contained in N.F. Nelson, Record of visit to mission stations 1936, Fry MSS 57/-, Manuscript Collection, Fryer Library.

⁵ *Ibid.*

List of Appendices

Appendix One.	Superintendents 1891-1963	110
Appendix Two.	Letter from G.L. Filmer to the Editor, Cairns Post	112



Introduction

On 13 June 1994, the *Australian* newspaper carried an article entitled ‘Displaced blacks fight for minesite homeland’ in which Anne Warner, then Queensland Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, was reported to have said to the people of Mapoon:

What happened in 1963 was appalling, it should never have happened and we unconditionally, unreservedly apologise for what happened under that previous government.¹

Mapoon, an Aboriginal community on north-western Cape York Peninsula, was a Presbyterian mission station from 1891 to 1963 and was managed subsequently as a Queensland government reserve settlement until its closure by the Director of Native Affairs (DNA) in 1964.² Following several attempts to re-settle their land during the 1960s and 1970s, Mapoon people commenced re-construction of the community in 1985 and they received a Deed of Grant of Land in Trust to an area of 1,836 square kilometres in 1989.³

The incident which Warner described and the events leading up to it are matters of personal tragedy to the older people of Mapoon and have become a legend in Queensland and Australian political history. In November 1963, a removal order initiated by the Director of Native Affairs for ‘disciplinary’ and ‘medical’ reasons under Section 22 of the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act* was served upon eleven Mapoon residents by the Queensland Police and some of their homes were destroyed.⁴ The residents named in the removal order and their children were forcibly transported by the Island Industries Board

¹ Fiona Kennedy, ‘Displaced blacks fight for minesite homeland’, *Australian*, 13 June 1994, p. 5.

² Mapoon is an Anglicised interpretation of an Aboriginal word in the Tjungundji language which means ‘place where people fight on the sand-hills’. The late David Mamoose provided this translation to the author on 1 July 1975; Nicholas Hey, one of the founding missionaries, wrote that Mapoon was the ‘native name for sandhill’. J.N. Hey, *A brief history of the Presbyterian Church’s mission enterprise among the Australian Aborigines* (Sydney, NSW: New Press, 1931), p. 9

³ *Land Act 1962-1985* (Qld), Deed of Grant of Land In Trust, Register book volume 1378, folio 149, 5 December 1988; ‘Mapoon people given land title’. *Bauxite Bulletin*, 1135, 28 April 1989, p. 1.

⁴ Director of Native Affairs to Officer-in-Charge, Police Station, Thursday Island, 14 November 1963, enclosing Removal Order No. 32/63, Director of Native Affairs Office (DNAO) File 6D/25, A/69496, Queensland State Archives (QSA); Director of Native Affairs, Thursday Island to Director of Native Affairs, Brisbane, 14 November 1963, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; Aboriginal people subject to the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939* (Qld) had no legal right of appeal against a removal order under the Act. The method and extent of destruction of buildings, which is discussed in Chapter One, has been the subject of considerable controversy. For example see: David J. Allan, ‘The day they burned Mapoon’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December 1993, p. 12; A.C. Stubs, ‘Message from Mapoon (Qld)’, *APL: Australian Presbyterian Living Today*, 426, March 1992, p. 9.

launch *M.V. Gelam* to Red Island Point *en route* to New Mapoon community, near Bamaga, Cape York Peninsula and within six months the remaining seventy-one residents had left Mapoon.⁵

While the church and the government have advanced a number of legitimate reasons for the closure of Mapoon, academics, journalists, politicians and others have painted a grim picture of the alleged abuse of human rights of Mapoon residents to make way for the advent of bauxite mining by a multinational company.⁶ One of the earliest of these was Charles Rowley, who wrote that it ‘seems clear that decisions were made by the government in consultation with the company which was negotiating the right to exploit the very extensive bauxite deposits of the area’ but failed to provide evidence to support his statement other than with hearsay which he described as ‘at least enough evidence that some former inhabitants of Mapoon believe that they were removed for the more convenient operations of the company.’⁷ One journalist has taken this a step further by writing that ‘Comalco moved the community of Mapoon from its traditional land’ which implies that the company, rather than the government, physically drove the people out of Mapoon.⁸ Not all commentators subscribe to these views and one leading authority on Aboriginal land law, Frank Brennan, wrote in 1985: ‘Mark Rayner of Comalco is right when he refutes the assertion “that the Mapoon mission was closed to enable Comalco to mine there”....But he does paint an incomplete

⁵ Director of Native Affairs, Thursday Island, to Director of Native Affairs, Brisbane, 14 November 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA; C.K. Reardon, Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Thursday Island, memo for file, 19 November 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA; C. Turner, Mapoon to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Thursday Island, 21 November 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA; The last residents left Mapoon in May 1964. G.W. Taylor to General Secretary, Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions (APBM), 25 May 1964, New Mapoon File, Aborigines and Overseas Missions Committee (AOMC)/ Correspondence Files (CF), 1964, Queensland Presbyterian Historical Records (QPHR).

⁶ The companies subject to these allegations are Comalco Limited (a subsidiary of CRA Limited and RTZ Corporation PLC) which holds mining lease ML7024 (formerly Special Bauxite Mining Lease No. 1) and Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited, (a subsidiary of Alcan) which holds mining lease ML7031 (formerly Special Bauxite Mining Lease No. 8); C.D. Rowley, *The remote Aborigines* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Ltd, 1972), pp. 137-140; Paul R. Wilson, *Black death white hands* (Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 38-40; Larissa Behrendt, *Aboriginal dispute resolution: A step towards self-determination and community autonomy* (Annandale, NSW: Federation Press, 1995), p. 89. Behrendt uses Mapoon as an example of ‘a history of deception and malice in the dealings that mining companies have had with Aboriginal communities in the past’; Peter Quiddington, ‘Cape York points to the sky for spaceport hopefuls’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August 1988, pp. 8-9; Kennedy, *Australian*, 13 June 1994, p. 5; Senator J. Keefe, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates: Senate [CPDS]*, S46 (1970) pp. 2024-2025 and *CPDS*, S62 (1974), pp. 2417, 2991; Tony Strachan, *State of Shock* (Paddington, NSW: Currency Press, 1986), [unnumbered page between pp. 27-28]. Strachan, in the background note to his play based on a tragic murder case involving an ex-resident of Mapoon, states: ‘The mission had co-operated with the Department of Native Affairs and police to clear the people off without notice so that Comalco could eventually strip the area for bauxite’.

⁷ Rowley, *The remote Aborigines*, pp. 138-139.

⁸ Phil Jarratt, ‘Spaceport Australia: A boost for the Cape York adventure’, *Bulletin*, 7 August 1990, p. 41.

picture.’⁹ Comalco has always strenuously denied any involvement in the closure, but has never tested its defence fully in court.¹⁰

The aim of this thesis is to establish the causes of the closure of Mapoon mission in 1963. The thesis will examine available documentary and oral evidence on the administration and termination of Mapoon mission station and reserve from its establishment in 1891 to 1964 and will discuss the roles of some of the parties involved – the church, the government and the mining companies. It is beyond the scope of the thesis to present a comprehensive narrative history of Mapoon.¹¹ The principal archival records used in the thesis were the files of the Office of the Director of Native Affairs, the files of the Presbyterian church committees which controlled the Mapoon mission; as well as files of the Co-ordinator-General’s Department, the Department of Mines and Energy and the Premier’s Department.¹² Audio tape recordings made by Frank McKeown and Ricky Guivarra for the Marpuna Community Aboriginal Corporation during 1992, as well as documents collected by them, were unavailable mainly due to ongoing negotiations under the *Native Title Act 1993*.¹³ Oral history taped interviews between the author and several former Mapoon residents and officials have provided a personal recollection on some of the events described, however,

⁹ Father Frank Brennan is a barrister, author and Adviser to Australian Catholic Bishops on Aboriginal Affairs. Frank Brennan, ‘Aboriginal loss’, Letter to the editor, *Age*, 25 June 1985, p. 12. In this letter he did not attribute responsibility for Mapoon’s closure to any party, but highlighted the failure of Comalco and the government to compensate the Weipa Aboriginal community for the loss of their land.

¹⁰ Comalco has threatened legal action, caused retractions by the media and written letters to editors on the issue. For example: ‘Comalco not at fault’, *Australian*, 10 November 1994, p. 2; Mark Rayner, ‘Mapoon mission’, Letter to the editor, *Age*, 22 June 1985, p. 12. In 1983 Comalco took action in the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory against the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) for alleged defamation in a programme about the Weipa South Aboriginal community. In his judgement against the ABC, Mr Justice Blackburn C.J., referred to evidence given by a former church official who claimed that a promise had been made by Maurice Mawby of Comalco at a conference on 28 February 1957 to lift the standards of living at Weipa, Aurukun and Mapoon. The judge found that at the time of the conference ‘it had already been decided in principle that the standard of the buildings and facilities at Mapoon was so low, and the site so unpromising, that Mapoon would have to be evacuated and the mission there established somewhere else.’ Order in the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory between Comalco Limited, plaintiff and Australian Broadcasting Corporation, defendant, Blackburn, C.J., 22 February 1985.

¹¹ University of Queensland History Department rules restrict an Honours thesis to a maximum of 25,000 words, to be completed within an equivalent of one year’s full time study, consequently this treatise is limited to an overview of the events and issues which led to Mapoon’s closure. It is estimated that the official, church and other records held in Australian and overseas repositories would require at least two years to review adequately.

¹² The holding repositories of these records are listed in the bibliography. Other repositories which hold Mapoon records and artefacts include the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra; the Queensland Museum, Brisbane; the Australian Museum, Sydney; the Museum of Victoria, Melbourne; the South Australian Museum, Adelaide; the National Museum of Australia, Canberra; the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, England and Moravian Church House, London, England.

¹³ Frank McKeown and Ricky Guivarra, Mapoon history project: Report to the Marpuna Community Aboriginal Corporation, November 1992, pp. 19-24. This project was to collect documentary and oral material on the history of Mapoon for the Marpuna Corporation. The material was not used for this thesis partly due to the closure of the holding repository, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, as well as access restrictions due to negotiations by the community under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

further interviews with people currently resident at Mapoon could not be obtained.¹⁴ For this reason, it has not been possible to include a chapter on the people of Mapoon and their perspectives on life at the mission.

The remainder of this introduction is a review of the published literature on the closure of Mapoon. Chapter One contains an account of the removal incident in 1963, as well as an overview of the community and the three parties. The development of the mission, the relationship between the church and the state government and some of the long-term causes of the initial decision to close Mapoon are examined in Chapter Two. Negotiations between the state and the church during the last nine years of the mission are the subject of Chapter Three, while Chapters Four and Five discuss the development of the aluminium industry, the church's response to mineral exploration and the impact of the bauxite mining companies on Mapoon.

The Literature

There is no doubt that the Aboriginal people of Mapoon felt and still feel grief over the loss of their home-land for a generation after 1963. As the Tjunguntji Women's Council recorded in 1990: 'Living away from our tribal ground has brought a great deal of physical, emotional and cultural suffering'.¹⁵ They remain bitter towards those whom they believe were responsible for the ruthless closure of Mapoon. In the tragic case of Alwyn Peter, who was tried in 1981 for the murder of his girlfriend at Weipa South (now called Napranum), the defence highlighted the closure of Mapoon as a factor which contributed to the breakdown of his self-esteem.¹⁶

The reminiscences of some ex-residents are recorded in the first of a three volume work (known as the Mapoon Books) compiled in 1975 by Jan Roberts and others, but there has been no attempt by historians to assess the long-term reasons for the closure.¹⁷ Although it

¹⁴ Some of the oral history interviews were conducted by the author during earlier research on Mapoon in 1975. Time constraints and the high cost of travel to Mapoon prevented the author from undertaking the journey while researching the thesis. It is recognised that a more complete picture of life and events at Mapoon during the 1950s and 1960s could be obtained by extensive oral history interviews.

¹⁵ Submission prepared by the Tjunguntji Women's Council (Aboriginal Corporation), May 1990, p. 2.

¹⁶ Wilson, *Black death*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁷ Roberts, *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*; J.P. Roberts, M. Parsons, and B. Russell, eds. *The Mapoon story according to the invaders: Church mission, Queensland Government and mining company* (Fitzroy, Vic.: International Development Action, 1975), (Mapoon - Book Two); J. Roberts, and D. McLean, *The Cape York aluminium companies and the native peoples: Comalco, R.T.Z., Kaiser, C.R.A., Alcan, Billiton, Pechiney,*

could be argued that forthright interpretations of history can jolt the social conscience of decision-makers and force policy changes, in the case of Mapoon it also could be sustained that their inaccurate bias or lack of detailed historical analysis can reduce the impact of legitimate concerns on their target audience, thus weakening support for the people most affected by that history, or at least damage the credibility of the history profession. Roberts' criticism of the Queensland government may have been partly responsible for the refusal by the Director of the Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement Department, Patrick Killoran, to allow access to departmental records during the latter years of his incumbency.¹⁸ For example, in 1976 when the Bishop of Carpentaria applied to the Director for copies of historical records belonging to Mitchell River mission, whose provenance was the Church of England, the Director refused. Without citing Roberts, Killoran warned departmental staff: 'For your confidential information, recently another Church authority released without consultation certain papers which had been used detrimentally both to that Church and the Government. One would not wish to contribute to reoccurrences.'¹⁹

Roberts, a British sociologist employed by the Melbourne organisation International Development Action (IDA), compiled the Mapoon Books and later wrote the book *Massacres to mining* which includes a chapter on the Mapoon closure.²⁰ Roberts' clear intention with both works was not to present an objective treatise of the closure but to alert Australians and

Tipperary (Fitzroy, Vic.: International Development Action, 1976), (Mapoon - Book Three). In a recent thesis which examined the relationship between the Presbyterian church and the state in the late 1930s and 1940s, Frank White discussed the church's failure to differentiate between its evangelical and temporal roles as one of the reasons for Mapoon's closure. His analysis was limited to broad generalisations. Francis D. White, *Church and state in Presbyterian missions Gulf of Carpentaria: 1937-1947*, MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1994

¹⁸ Patrick James Killoran was an accountant who had spent most of his career with the Sub-Department of Native Affairs in the Torres Strait area prior to his appointment as Director in 1963. He was awarded the Imperial Service Order in June 1977. Killoran stood unsuccessfully for the Queensland Parliamentary seat of Cook in 1983 and retired as Under Secretary, Department of Community Services in 1986. 'Native Affairs - Information Contained in Report of Director of Native Affairs for the Twelve Months ended 30th June, 1950'. *QPP*, 2, 1950-51, p. 1078; 'Notices of results of General Election held on Saturday, the twenty-second of October, 1983', *QGG*, vol. 274, no. 50, 17 November 1983, p. 1092; W.J. Draper, ed., *Who's who in Australia: XXVth edition*, (Melbourne: Herald and Weekly Times, 1985), p. 483; *Sunday Sun*, 11 June 1986, p. 3

¹⁹ Director of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement to Manager, Kowanyama, 6 August 1976, DNAO File 1E/57, Box 318, Transfer R254, QSA.

²⁰ Roberts, *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*; Roberts, *The Mapoon story according to the invaders*, 1975; Roberts and McLean, *The Cape York aluminium companies and the native peoples*, 1976; Janine P. Roberts, *Massacres to mining: The colonisation of Aboriginal Australia* (Blackburn, Vic.: Dove Communications, 1981); IDA described itself as a 'national organization with a "development education" programme in secondary schools and tertiary institutions'. It claimed sponsorship by the Australian Council of Churches, Australian Student Christian Movement, Australian Student Christian Movement in Schools, Australian Union of Students, Community Aid Abroad and World University Service in Australia. Printed statement on letterhead, John P. Roberts, National Director, IDA to S.G. Edenborough, Board of Ecumenical Mission and Relations (BOEMAR), 16 May 1974, File AG/95, BOEMAR Records, Box MLK 2722, ML MSS 1893, Add on 1616, Mitchell Library.

the international community to the ‘whole shameful history of oppression’ against Aboriginal people and ‘to gain justice from the multi-national mining companies’.²¹ In the Mapoon Books Roberts used oral testimony from twelve former Mapoon residents and files of the Presbyterian church to document a case against the mining companies, the government and the church.²² While the Mapoon Books have been quoted uncritically by some academics, they are at best polemics which are little more than a collection of quotes, with some passages in bold type, linked by a variety of paragraph styles.²³ Roberts gives no indication whether or not the passages in bold type were highlighted in the original source documents, so the reader is left in doubt about the significance of such statements. The value of the Mapoon Books as historical sources is further reduced by the lack of essential scholarly conventions such as footnotes or a bibliography and by the absence of a list of transcripts or tapes of interviews with Mapoon people.²⁴ In *Massacres to mining* Roberts wrote a chapter entitled ‘Assimilation and the burning of Mapoon’ in which she frequently cited the Mapoon Books in the footnotes.²⁵ She gave no evidence for her main attack on the miners that ‘the Government wanted the Mapoon Aborigines off their land so it could be profitably developed by the mining companies’.²⁶

The Mapoon Books have been chosen for some school reading lists and it appears that not all bibliographers are accurate or unbiased in the reviews of their selections.²⁷ The Education Department of South Australia’s *Recommended books for Aboriginal studies*, which suggests Mapoon Book One for ‘Junior secondary Contact history’, states that one of its criteria ‘for

²¹ Roberts, *Massacres*, p. ix.

²² The people who contributed to the history of Mapoon up to 1964 in Book One included Frank Don, Jerry Hudson, Gilbert Jimmy, Jean Jimmy, Victoria Luff, Rachel Peter, Simon Peter, Robert Reid, Harry Toeboy, Anne Wales, Jessie Wheeler and Norman Wheeler.

²³ John Harris, *One blood: 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope* (Sutherland, NSW: Albatross Books, 1990), p. 499; An apt description is made by Nicholas Peterson in his land rights bibliography: ‘Massive documentation of events in Cape York based partly on access to the Presbyterian Church’s archives. Turgid but well worth digging into’. Nicholas Peterson, ed., *Aboriginal land rights: A handbook*. (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981), p. 293.

²⁴ Roberts, The Mapoon Books. In Book One, *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*, Roberts states in the introduction on the flyleaf: ‘This is the story of Mapoon according to the Aboriginal people of Mapoon as they wrote and recorded it in the Dry Season of 1974 and the Wet Season of early 1975’ but gives no indication whether their original manuscript writings or taped interviews were kept or lodged with a repository. The Presbyterian Church of Australia’s missionary body, BOEMAR, had granted permission for IDA to read and copy some of the church files held in Sydney. Roberts, then known as John P. Roberts, sent IDA project officer, Barbara Russell to conduct the research and Roberts later wrote to the church that they appreciated ‘the trust and confidence you have shown us in opening your files to the extent that you did’. John P. Roberts, National Director, IDA to S.G. Edenborough, BOEMAR, 16 May 1974, File AG/95, BOEMAR Records, Box MLK 2722, ML MSS 1893, Add on 1616, Mitchell Library.

²⁵ Roberts, *Massacres*, pp. 114-117.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²⁷ *Recommended books for Aboriginal studies* ([Adelaide], SA: Education Department of South Australia, 1992), p. 42.

the review and evaluation of materials' is the question 'is the material biased and/or does it distort the real issues?'.²⁸ Yet the bibliographer is able to state in the entry for this book that Mapoon 'settlement was burnt to the ground by the mining company in 1963', when there is no evidence in the book that any mining company was directly involved in such an act, nor do any of the former residents' interviews about the burning of Mapoon refer to a mining company being involved.²⁹ A more balanced analysis is made by Marji Hill and Alex Barlow who, while they do comment on the 'greed of the mining companies', also focus attention on the ineptitude of the church and are critical of the lack of source documentation in Mapoon Book Two.³⁰

Some historians limit their craft to the review and selection of documentary, oral and visual evidence to provide an understanding or recreation of the past, while others seek to influence society through exposure of past wrongs. British historian, John Tosh points to the dangers of the latter approach:

...an urgent and overriding political commitment *may* produce a mythical version of history, and myths can be dangerous. They induce misguided attitudes and responses, and they stand in the way of the lessons which *can* be learnt from the past.³¹

Tosh argues that myths grow in an environment of superficiality and when alternative interpretations are unavailable. Journalists who have limited time for research use whatever published material is available, mixed with a desire to grasp their readers' attention, with the result that their shallow analysis can contribute to mythology. A recent example of this was an article on the Wik people of Aurukun by David Fagan in the *Australian* newspaper in which he claimed 'Aborigines were forced on to reserves and had their homes burnt as part of the preparation for development of Comalco's Weipa bauxite mine on Cape York', which was a quite distorted overlay of the closure of Mapoon with the development of Weipa.³² Aboriginal people at Mapoon and Weipa had lived on reserves since the 1890s and the old homes of Weipa Mission residents were demolished, not burnt, after they had moved into new homes constructed by the Presbyterian church only a few hundred metres from the old village.

²⁸ *Recommended books*, pp. 7-8, 42.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42; Roberts, *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*, pp. 14-15.

³⁰ Marji Hill and Alex Barlow, eds., *Black Australia: An annotated bibliography and teacher's guide to resources on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1978), p. 134.

³¹ John Tosh, *The pursuit of history: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (London: Longman, 1991), p. 20.

³² David Fagan, 'Wikis try to stop State's support', *Australian*, 25 October 1994, p. 8.

Academic historians should be able to achieve a much higher standard of historical interpretation than journalists because they have both the time and the research skills to do so. Michael Stanford argues that historians' craft provides them with the techniques to assess and select evidence and to build 'an intellectual construction of the past' by the application of 'subjective imaginative judgement'.³³ With the exception of J.P.M. Long's brief 1970 analysis of the Mapoon closure and Rosalind Kidd's recent doctoral thesis on administration of Queensland Aboriginal affairs, which includes an examination of the role of the Office of the Queensland Director of Native Affairs in Mapoon's demise, most Australian academics have given only cursory attention to the long-term causes or, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, directly blamed mining companies for the events of November 1963.³⁴ Long based some of his account on the published records of the Presbyterian church and showed that although the closure process was conducted by the church and the Department of Native Affairs without real consultation with the residents, the people were not unanimous in their opposition.³⁵ His conclusion regarding the mining companies was that by 1958 'it had become clear that all the developmental work was likely to be concentrated at Weipa, though another company retained an interest in areas near Mapoon' and he accurately stated that Comalco had rejected 'responsibility for rehousing Mapoon families at Weipa'.³⁶ Kidd's thesis chronicles aggression and subterfuge by the Director of Native Affairs and his staff (who controlled government funding subsidies to the mission) in their negotiations with the church administration which culminated in the capitulation and complicity of the latter in the destruction of Mapoon.³⁷ Although Kidd is critical of the way in which Comalco negotiated with the church on compensation for disturbance to Mapoon and Weipa and describes the uncertainties created by the presence of mining companies in the area, she does not present evidence which suggests lobbying by them to close Mapoon.³⁸

Surprisingly, several Queensland academics, particularly Ross Fitzgerald and Henry Reynolds, seem to have over-relied on Roberts as a primary source which has led to dubious

³³ Michael Stanford, *The nature of historical knowledge* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), pp. 83-87.

³⁴ As discussed below, some have relied heavily on Roberts' Mapoon Books. For example: Harris, *One blood: 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity*, p. 499; J.P.M. Long, *Aboriginal settlements: A survey of institutional communities in eastern Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), pp. 171-174; Kidd is the first academic historian to have been given access to the official files of the Director of Native Affairs and 'spent fifteen months reading intensively through literally thousands of files'. Rosalind Kidd, *Regulating bodies: Administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840 - 1988*, PhD thesis, Griffith University, 1994, p. 17; see also pp. 494-519.

³⁵ Long, *Aboriginal settlements*, pp. 172-174, 214.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

³⁷ Kidd, *Regulating bodies*, pp. 494-519

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 503-508.

interpretation of the past. Their accounts, apparently based on second-hand evidence selectively distilled from Roberts' and Rowley's works, have presented a conspiracy theory: that mining companies Comalco and Alcan encouraged the Queensland government to close the community with little opposition from the Presbyterian church.³⁹ Even Roberts did not claim that the mining companies were solely accountable for the closure and concluded that 'the responsibility must be shared. All the white authorities co-operated in it.'⁴⁰

One of the most inaccurate portrayals of the role of mining companies in the Weipa area is by Fitzgerald. For example, his statement in 1984 that 'throughout two and a half thousand square kilometres of flat coast country, trees were cleared and burnt' and 'regeneration was undertaken not with native shrubs but with exotic [trees]' was a gross distortion of the facts.⁴¹ By 1992 approximately sixty square kilometres (02.4 percent of the lease) had been affected by mining, industrial infrastructure, roads and suburbs since mining began, an easy fact to verify by reference to a scaled satellite photograph of Comalco's mining lease, while major trials with exotic species lasted only a few years after the commencement of the mine rehabilitation programme in 1966.⁴² In response to this preliminary work, which demonstrated that local species were more likely to fulfil the lease agreement's regeneration requirements, the company switched its replanting and research efforts to local flora and fauna in the mid-1970s.⁴³ Other statements by Fitzgerald must also be treated with caution: without reference to primary or secondary evidence he implies that Alcan's special agreement with the Queensland government was linked to the police raid on Mapoon in November 1963 and he makes only a cursory attempt to analyse the process of negotiations between the church and the government.⁴⁴

³⁹ Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the early 1980s: A history of Queensland* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1984), pp. 304- 308, 514; Reynolds, 'White injustice throws a shadow over black lands', *Australian*, 16 August 1993, p. 9; C.D. Rowley, *The remote Aborigines*, pp. 137-140.

⁴⁰ Roberts, *The Mapoon story according to the invaders*, 1975, p. 101.

⁴¹ Fitzgerald, *From 1915*, p. 307; It seems that Fitzgerald was not interested in referring to a 1981 Comalco publication which gave details of the total areas mined and regenerated up to March 1981 as well as information on the types of species used. A copy of the publication was donated to the John Oxley Library, Brisbane in September 1982 and would have been available from the company when Fitzgerald was writing his book. Comalco Aluminium Limited, *Regenerating mined land at Weipa* (Weipa, Qld.: Comalco Aluminium Limited, 1981); N. Kirkman, Field Officer, John Oxley Library to author, 16 September 1982.

⁴² Comalco Mineral Products, The mine rehabilitation programme at the Comalco Mineral Products operations at Weipa, Supplement to the CRA Limited submission to the Resource Assessment Commission Coastal Zone Enquiry, June 1992, p. 5; An Australian Landsat Station satellite photograph showing most of Comalco's lease was printed in the company's 1981 regeneration publication. Comalco, *Regenerating mined land*, frontispiece.

⁴³ John Lawrie, 'The development of the regeneration programme at Weipa', in J.W. Lawrie, ed., *Proceedings of the north Australian mine rehabilitation workshop, No. 9* (Weipa, Qld.: Comalco Aluminium Limited, 1985), pp. 7-24.

⁴⁴ Fitzgerald, *From 1915*, p. 307.

The closure of Mapoon has taken on mythical value to one of Australia's most eminent commentators on Aboriginal affairs, historian Henry Reynolds, who has pursued social justice for Aborigines through his research and writing on nineteenth century race relations for more than twenty years.⁴⁵ In a 1993 article in the *Australian* newspaper, soon after the launch of a Federal Court land claim by the Wik people of Aurukun, a community situated 170 kilometres south of Mapoon, Reynolds made no attempt to distinguish between the Aboriginal people of Mapoon and the Wik, who have no traditional links to Mapoon.⁴⁶ The Wik people's lands extend from a few kilometres north of Aurukun to just above Edward River in the south.⁴⁷ The article used the example of the closure of Mapoon to demonstrate how the so-called Wik people had been removed by the Queensland government in order to provide land 'for the development of port facilities' thus reinforcing Reynolds' argument that 'the Queensland governments of the time failed in their fiduciary duty to the Aborigines'.⁴⁸ It is extraordinary that Reynolds discussed the Mapoon closure in the context of the Wik case, as neither the Mapoon community nor former residents were plaintiffs in the case, so it seems that he was misinterpreting historical evidence to write a journalistic argument in support of the Wik people.

⁴⁵ Reynolds wrote in 1972: 'A new deal for the Aborigines will ultimately depend, not only on socio-economic innovation, but also on a basic readjustment of our world outlook and, as a corollary, a reinterpretation of our history'. Henry Reynolds, ed., *Aborigines and settlers: The Australian experience 1788-1939* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Cassell Australia, 1972), p. xi; Heather Felton, 'Beyond the frontier', *Island (Sandy Bay, Tas.)*, 49 (Summer 1991), p. 31.

⁴⁶ *The Wik Peoples, applicants, v. the State of Queensland and others, respondents, in the Federal Court of Australia, Queensland District Registry, General Division, No. QG 104 of 1993, 1 July 1993*; Reynolds, 'White injustice', *Australian*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ On a map of the Wik region, an anthropologist who has written extensively on the Wik people describes their traditional northern boundary as extending north-east from Aurukun along the Watson River, but no farther north. Peter Sutton, 'Language in Aboriginal Australia: social dialects in a geographic idiom', in Suzanne Romaine, ed., *Language in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 54.

⁴⁸ Reynolds, 'White injustice', p. 9; It is possible that Reynolds has been confused by the reported practice of the Wik people of referring to the people to their north as the Wik Way. Hale describes this as follows: 'The Northern Paman languages are collectively termed Wik Way (/wik/language + / way/ bad) by the Wik speaking peoples south of them. The Watson River is the topographic correlate of isoglosses separating Northern Paman from its Wik neighbours. The Northern Paman languages extend from the northern side of the Watson to the tip of the Peninsula.' Kenneth L Hale, 'Appendix to XXIX', *Anthropological Linguistics*, 8, 2 (February 1966), p. 162; An account of an initiation ceremony at Aurukun in 1950 recorded another perspective: 'You will see that there is no such language as the Wik wiya or Wik wayan; Wik wiya simply means "bad talk" and is simply a term used by the Wik mounkens to describe the other Wik languages, much in the same spirit as the Englishman laughs at the Scotch burr or the Irish brogue.' J.B. McCarthy, [Report on an initiation ceremony contained in] W.F. MacKenzie, Aurukun annual reports 1933-1965, BOEMAR Records, Box MLK 2545, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1173, Mitchell Library.

The choice of words in the article shows more commitment to historical drama than objectivity:

In November 1963, Mapoon was raided by armed police who rounded the residents up and burnt the settlement to the ground. The terror-stricken residents were forced on to boats and watched the smoke rising from the ruins until they were well to sea, en route to the government settlement at Bamaje [*sic*] several hundreds of kilometres to the north.⁴⁹

Reynolds' description of the events is similar to the version noted in *Massacres to mining* but he does not cite evidence to support his statements.⁵⁰ This is quite out of character for a scholar who has emphasised the importance of primary sources to prove his accounts of massacres of Aboriginal people during the nineteenth century.⁵¹ Even one of Comalco's most vehement critics, Frank Stevens, who wrote about the return of Mapoon people to their homeland in 1974, said that 'some of the facts' about the closure incident 'seem to have been romanticised'.⁵² As will be discussed in the next chapter, there is conflicting evidence as to whether the police were armed and the suggestion that the residents were 'terror-stricken' is not supported by the recollections of Jean Jimmy or Jim O'Shea, who both indicated that there was a great deal of anger directed at Killoran by those subject to his Removal Order.⁵³ While it is clear that some buildings were burnt at the time of the removal incident, there is ample evidence that most of the destruction was by demolition in mid-1964.⁵⁴ Reynolds gives the impression that all the residents were removed on boats whereas in fact over seventy people remained at Mapoon after the removal and there was only one boat used in the removal incident, *M.V. Gelam*.⁵⁵ Stanford suggests that historians 'must be alert for what disconfirms their hypothesis and not be lulled into security by finding many things that

⁴⁹ Reynolds, 'White injustice', p. 9.

⁵⁰ Roberts, *Massacres*, pp. 115-116.

⁵¹ Henry Reynolds, 'History from the frontier', in Bain Attwood, comp., *Boundaries of the past* (Carlton, Vic.: The History Institute, 1990), p. 25.

⁵² Frank Stevens, 'Mapoon: A bid by Aborigines to reclaim their home', *National Times*, 12-17 August 1974, p. 21.

⁵³ Jean Jimmy, interview with author, Weipa South (Napranum), 1 July 1975; Senior Constable Jim O'Shea, interview with author, Weipa, 9 July 1975; Roberts, *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*, pp. 10-15.

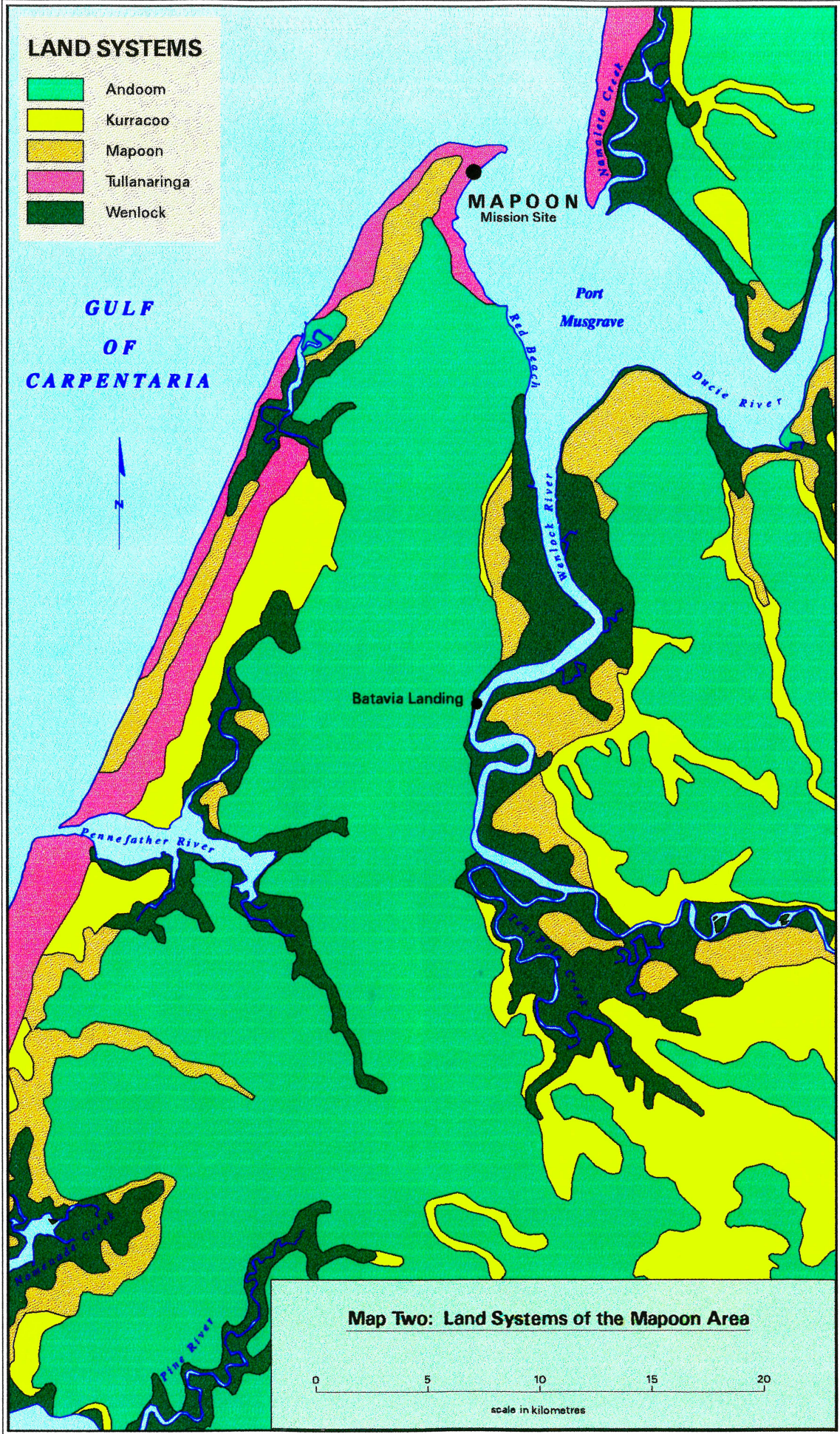
⁵⁴ Director of Native Affairs to Director-General of Education, 29 April 1964, DNAO File 9M/65, Box 888, Transfer R 254, QSA; Memo for file [describing a visit to Mapoon on 19-20 May 1964, possibly by C. Reardon], DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA; A journalist who visited Mapoon in June wrote 'I saw what is gradually becoming a ghost village'. *Courier Mail*, 16 June 1964, p. 9. In a radio message on 10 July 1964, the DNA Building Supervisor E. Niblett instructed Masi Sagigi at Mapoon 'to pull down the old school-house and the other buildings close at hand'. Niblett to Masi Sagigi, 10 July 1964, DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

⁵⁵ On 4 January 1964, six Mapoon families, comprising 48 people arrived at Weipa aboard the *Gelam*. E. Butler to Rev. J. Sweet, 6 January 1964, Judith Sambo File, AFMC/CF, 1964, QPHR. According to Presbyterian Church correspondence, the last families to leave Mapoon were the Bonds (Jimmy and Mabel Bond's family) and the Marks (Stephen and Katherine Mark's family), Annette Reid, Roy Fletcher, Betty Fletcher, Henry Brown, Flora Bond and her daughter. They arrived at New Mapoon on 23 May 1964. G.W. Taylor to General Secretary, APBM, 25 May 1964, New Mapoon File, AOMC/CF, 1964, QPHR.

confirm it' and Reynolds apparently has fallen into this trap.⁵⁶ This is unfortunate because he makes no attempt to analyse the determined efforts of some Aboriginal residents (and former residents) of Mapoon – who were by no means cowed by the police or Killoran – to enlist national and international support for their cause and there is evidence that the destruction of most of the community buildings was deliberate. Reynolds' most significant omission was to ignore the attitude and actions of the Director of Native Affairs, who, with little opposition from the Presbyterian church or politicians, had a pervasive influence on the 1963 closure.

As discussed above, most commentators have ignored the long-term causes of Mapoon's closure while focussing on the dramatic episode of November 1963. In the following chapter, the Mapoon community is introduced and a description of the events and issues immediately before the closure and during the removal incident is provided. This illustrates the intimate association between the church and the government, both of whom excluded the people whom they were supposed to represent and protect. Chapter One also includes a preface to later discussion on the long-term effects of church administration, government policy and the impact of mining companies on the closure.

⁵⁶ Stanford, *Nature of historical knowledge*, p. 100.



Chapter One. Agents of Closure.

Mapoon Community

Mapoon is an Aboriginal community on a peninsula of land which lies between the Gulf of Carpentaria and Port Musgrave, about 900 kilometres by road north-west of Cairns. [Map One] In the Mapoon area five land systems have been identified by the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.¹ [Map Two] Much of the country near the old Mapoon mission station comprises low sandy beach ridges and marine plain, with a string of fresh water lagoons on the west coast providing excellent sources of bush food. Port Musgrave is the estuary of two mangrove-lined major rivers – the Ducie and the Wenlock (called Batavia River until 1939) – which includes some of the best estuarine crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) habitat in Queensland and is endowed with rich marine life.² Much of the remainder of the land extending southward to the Mission River is a low plateau covered by open Darwin Stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*) woodland with some patches of vine forest and paperbark woodland, while the coastal lands near the Pennefather River comprise beach ridges, marine plain and paperbark woodland.³

¹ M. Godwin, 'Land survey of the Weipa region, Cape York Peninsula', in J.W. Lawrie, ed., *Proceedings of the north Australian mine rehabilitation workshop, No. 9*, (Weipa: Comalco Aluminium Limited, 1985), pp. 279-300. Land systems are used by scientists to establish an inventory of land types for land use planning and comprise patterns of recurring land units or ecosystems made up of soils, land-forms, vegetation and floristics. Map Two is an extract from M. Godwin, '[Map of] Weipa Region land systems' in J.W. Lawrie, ed. *Proceedings*, loose insert. The land systems covering the area between Cullen Point and the Pennefather River include: Andoom Land System - Low level plateau with sparse drainage and containing swampy sink holes and bordered by low gentle scarps; Kurracoo Land System - Undulating plains, moderately dissected; Mapoon Land System - Marine plain; Tullanaringa Land System - Coastal beach ridges and swales [hollows between ridges], Wenlock Land System - Saline tidal flats and stream banks.

² The Batavia River was named by the Dutch navigator ~~L. van Asschens~~ *A.M. de Leeuw* in 1623 (see Schilder pp. 314-315) and re-named the Wenlock in 1939 to avoid confusion between the gold mining community at Batavia on the middle reaches of the river and the capital of the Netherlands East Indies (now known as Jakarta). An account of the early Dutch contact with western Cape York Peninsula is contained in Günter Schilder, *Australia unveiled: The share of the Dutch navigators in the discovery of Australia*, (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1976), pp. 43-53, 80-98, 139-195. See also Robert Logan Jack, *Northmost Australia: Three centuries of exploration, discovery, and adventure in and around the Cape York Peninsula, Queensland*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1921) p. 76; 'Batavia gold: New radio outpost at romantic far northern goldfield', *Walkabout*, 5, 12 (October 1939), p. 45; *Queensland Government Gazette [QGG]*, 153, 71 (September 1939), p. 1125; L.E. Taplin, 'The management of crocodiles in Queensland, Australia', in G.J.W. Webb, S.C. Manolis and P.J. Whitehead, eds., *Wildlife management: Crocodiles and alligators* (Sydney: Surrey Beatty, 1987), pp. 129-140.

³ The fauna, vegetation, soils and drainage of the Mapoon area have been described in several scientific reports sponsored by Comalco Limited during the 1980s. They include: E.E. Cameron, and H.G. Cogger, *The herpetofauna of the Weipa region, Cape York Peninsula* (Sydney South, NSW: Australian Museum, 1992); M. Godwin, Land units of the Weipa region, Cape York Peninsula: Final report compiled by Research and Planning Branch for Comalco Limited, Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1985; J.W. Winter, and R. G. Atherton, Survey of the mammals and other vertebrates of the Weipa region, Cape York Peninsula: Final report

Mapoon is the traditional country of the Tjungundji people, however people from local language groups who came from other parts of the artificially created Mapoon reserve in early mission times, as well as families with historical associations with the area also call Mapoon home. Today Mapoon people can trace their origins to traditional Aboriginal people, people of other ethnic ancestry removed to the mission by the Queensland government from various parts of Queensland and Melanesians (usually referred to as South Sea Islanders) from the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), who worked as assistants to the missionaries.⁴ Observations, by ethnographer Walter Roth at the turn of the century, and by anthropologists Donald Thomson and Ursula McConnel in the 1930s, provide an overview of the traditional lifestyle of the Mapoon people, while brief linguistic studies were conducted by Roth and Nicholas Hey (one of the founding missionaries) in 1903 and more recently by Crowley.⁵ Roth's and Hey's work is 'flawed by phonetic misrepresentation and English orthographic conventions' while Crowley studied one dialect only.⁶

Mapoon Mission – Its Establishment and Its Early Residents

The background to the establishment of Mapoon mission is discussed in Chapter Two. In summary, the 1886 Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and

compiled by Research and Planning Branch for Comalco Limited, Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1985.

⁴ A. Ward, *The miracle of Mapoon: Or from native camp to Christian village*, (London: S.W. Partridge, [1908]), p. 242. Ward refers to South Sea Islanders Harry Louis and Harry Price at Mapoon and Aurukun, however it has not been possible to locate evidence about the early recruitment of Melanesians to Mapoon. The Committee on Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Australia had supported missionary activity in the New Hebrides (Aniwa, Efate and Malekula), during the 1880s and 1890s, so it is possible that the Mapoon missionaries arranged the employment of South Sea Islanders through the New Hebridean missions. *Minutes of proceedings of the Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania: Held in Sydney, July, 1886*, (Melbourne: Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania, 1886), pp. vi-vii.

⁵ Walter E. Roth, On the Aborigines of the Pennefather (Coen) River Districts, and other coastal tribes occupying the country between the Batavia & Embley Rivers, a report to the Under-Secretary, Home Department, 8 January 1900, Z1347 (microfilm), QSA. Extracts from this report were published later by Roth in his North Queensland Ethnography Bulletins, which were republished in facsimile as *The Queensland Aborigines*, (Carlisle, W.A.: Hesperian Press, 1984). A catalogue of the artefacts collected by Roth is being prepared by the Australian Museum and the first volume states that at least 194 artefacts from the Mapoon area are held. Kate Khan, *Catalogue of the Roth Collection of Aboriginal artefacts from North Queensland: Volume 1* (Sydney South, NSW: Australian Museum, 1993), p. 19; Donald F. Thomson, 'Notes on a hero cult from the Gulf of Carpentaria, North Queensland', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 64, 1934, pp. 217-235, plates 26-28; Ursula McConnel, *Myths of the Munkan*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957); J.N. Hey, *An elementary grammar of the Nggerikudi language*, (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1903); Terry Crowley, 'The Mpakwithi dialect of Anguthimri', in R.M.W. Dixon and Barry J. Blake, eds., *Handbook of Australian languages. Volume 2* (Canberra: The Australian National University Press, 1981), pp. 146-194.

⁶ Bruce A. Sommer and Elaine G. Sommer, Report on anthropological and linguistic research at Weipa 1993-4 for the Napranum Aboriginal Corporation and Quintigan Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, 1994, p. 130.

Tasmania had decided to establish a mission to Queensland Aborigines and following several years negotiation with the Queensland government selected a site later called Mapoon at the Batavia River on Port Musgrave.⁷ Mapoon became the church's base for the establishment of missions on the edge of the Gulf of Carpentaria including: Weipa (1898), Aurukun (1904) and Mornington Island (1914); while missions as far away as Western Australia were modelled on Hey's methods and Aboriginal people trained at Mapoon were sent to assist the new missions.⁸ A book on the mission's early development was published in 1908 and several brief perspectives on Mapoon and its missionaries have been written in recent years.⁹

By the turn of the century the Northern Protector of Aborigines, Walter Roth, reported that about 400 Aboriginal people had some contact with Mapoon mission for 'rations or medical relief' and of these 160 people had 'settled in the neighbourhood of the station', although many of them continued their traditional activities of gathering food resources and interaction with other language groups in the region.¹⁰

In 1901, the Queensland government decided to designate Mapoon as a reformatory which meant that children from ethnically diverse backgrounds were removed from their parents in other parts of north Queensland and sent to Mapoon to be raised by the missionaries.¹¹ This policy has resulted in difficulties for some Mapoon people in tracing their family history

⁷ *Minutes of proceedings of the Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania: Held in Sydney, July, 1886*, pp. 32-33.

⁸ J.N. Hey, *A brief history of the Presbyterian Church's mission enterprise among the Australian Aborigines* (Sydney, NSW: New Press, 1931), pp. 9-17; Maisie McKenzie, *The road to Mowanjum* (Sydney, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1969), p. 8; Mapoon people who assisted at various stations included: Scottie Wilson (Mornington Island), Alfred Brown and Harry Shadforth (Kunmunya, WA) and Willie Hudson and Maud Presley (Aurukun). H.C. Matthew, *The Aborigines calling! By the missionaries on the different stations* (Melbourne, Vic.: Presbyterian Board of Religious Education, [c.1940]), p. 9

⁹ Ward, *The miracle of Mapoon*; Kay Elizabeth Evans, *Missionary effort towards the Cape York Aborigines, 1886 - 1910: A study of culture contact*, BA hon's thesis, University of Queensland, 1969, pp. 70-79. Evans utilised records of the Queensland Colonial Secretary's Office and the Lands Department in her account of Mapoon's establishment, but did not refer to Presbyterian church records. John Harris, *One blood: 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope* (Sutherland, NSW: Albatross Books, 1990), pp. 485-499; W.H. Edwards and B.A. Clarke, 'From missions to Aboriginal churches: The Uniting Church in Australia and Aboriginal missions', in Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose, eds., *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: Ethnographic and historical studies* (Adelaide, SA: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988), pp. 188-190; Noel Loos, 'Concern and contempt: Church and missionary attitudes towards Aborigines in North Queensland in the nineteenth century', Swain and Rose, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions*, pp. 103-115.

¹⁰ 'Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1899', *Queensland Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly (QVPLA)*, 5, 1900, p. 590.

¹¹ 'Annual report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1901', *Queensland Parliamentary Papers (QPP)*, 1, 1902, p. 1145. The annual reports of the Northern Protector of Aborigines (Chief Protector from 1904) listed the places of origin of removed children including towns and stations in the Burketown, Cloncurry, Croydon and Normanton areas.

beyond two generations, while inter-marriage has meant that many of the people of today's community have Aboriginal, South Sea Island and other ethnic ancestry. Regardless of their traditional or historical association, Mapoon people have an emotional bond to their community, sometimes described as their birth-home. A senior elder put this sentiment strongly to a visiting politician in 1974:

I told Senator Cavanagh... I said well that's my tribal land. I'm really a Choyanjee [Tjungundji] man, and then all these others, I said well they [were] all born there, but I said they [were] all from different tribes, but we all Mapoon people.¹²

The strongest of these ties is felt by the traditional Aboriginal land owners whose spiritual and physical association with the land pre-dates European settlement. The power of that association was seriously underestimated and ignored by church and government authorities when a meeting was held at Mapoon on 8 and 9 April 1954 to discuss the mission's future. Concerns about the financial viability of the mission had been raised with the Queensland government for a number of years and the discussions – which excluded the Aboriginal residents – focussed on the physical suitability of the site, water supply, agricultural potential, mission productivity and assimilation of the people 'into the Australian way of life', all topics within the understanding and experience of the participants.¹³ At meetings in Mapoon fifteen months later senior church officials were told by community representatives that they did not want to move to Weipa, yet the church proceeded with its plans:

The Committee has given due weight to these representations but is still committed to the merger, believing that as the building projects at Weipa are concluded the attractiveness of the merger proposal will make its appeal to the Mapoon inhabitants. It is recognised that the natives will not be persuaded to vacate Mapoon for Weipa of their own free will by verbal argument. Their goodwill must be captured by practical demonstrations of the merger as being calculated to bring lasting benefit to themselves and to their children. This is the policy to which the Committee intends to adhere for the next three years.¹⁴

The Removal Incident and Closure of Mapoon

During the next nine years, uncertainty about the future of the community was brought about by pressures on the Presbyterian church administration from under-funding by the Queensland government as well as poor financial support by Presbyterian congregations, the discovery of economic bauxite deposits of international significance in the Mapoon-Weipa region and

¹² David Mamoose, interview with author, Weipa, 1 July 1975.

¹³ 'Report of the Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 107, (May 1954), pp. 67-68.

¹⁴ 'Report of the Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 109, (May 1956), pp. 65-66.

State political changes. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, in the late 1950s and early 1960s the Queensland Director of Native Affairs, Cornelius (Con) O'Leary, and his deputy, Patrick Killoran were to play increasingly coercive roles which culminated in Mapoon's closure.¹⁵

Until 1960, the body which administered the Presbyterian missions in Queensland, the Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee (AFMC) of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, was undecided whether or not to close the community. In the face of unwillingness by the Director of Native Affairs to continue funding the mission, the AFMC decided to unite with the government to convince the people of Mapoon that they should move to another locality.¹⁶ There followed three years of pressure on the residents of Mapoon either to apply for exemptions from the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act*, (*Protection Act*) or to transfer to other Presbyterian missions, or to transfer to another reserve settlement, first called Hidden Valley, established by the government near Bamaga in the far northern Peninsula area.¹⁷ Although some people did obtain exemptions and others moved to Hidden Valley, many members of the community remained opposed to leaving Mapoon and enlisted the moral support of outside Aboriginal organisations to promote their cause.¹⁸ Mission superintendent Reverend (Rev.) Garth Filmer reported that 149 people remained at Mapoon in December 1962 and nineteen adults had been granted exemptions from the *Protection Act* in the previous twelve months.¹⁹ In this letter, Filmer made it clear that 123 people were still determined to stay at Mapoon and he cynically remarked:

¹⁵ Cornelius O'Leary joined the Sub-Department of Aboriginals in 1922 and served as Director of Native Affairs from October 1942 to June 1963. Killoran was appointed Director when O'Leary retired in June 1963. 'Annual Report of the Director of Native Affairs for the Year Ending 30th June 1963', *QPP*, 1963-64, p. 1062.

¹⁶ The government's position on Mapoon was recorded in the minutes of the 1960 General Assembly as being 'resolute in its determination that no Mission should continue in the vicinity of Port Musgrave'. 'Report Aboriginal and Foreign Missions', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 113, (May 1960), p. 76.

¹⁷ The principles of the joint policy were agreed at a conference among Killoran, Rev. J.R. Sweet, Secretary of the AFMC and Rev G.L. Filmer, mission superintendent on 7 September 1960. Joint observations following a visit to Mapoon mission and discussions with the staff and inmates between 7th and 9th September, 1960, Director of Native Affairs Office (DNAO) File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA; *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939* (Qld). Under Section 5 (3) of the Act the Director of Native Affairs could 'grant exemption from the provisions of this Act to any aboriginal who in his opinion, ought no longer to be subject to this Act'.

¹⁸ These included the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA), formed in 1958, whose President Joe McGinness was based in Cairns, the Cairns Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Advancement League and the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights, London. DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R254, QSA; Joe McGinness, *Son of Alyandabu: My fight for Aboriginal rights* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1991), pp. 39, 68; Faith Bandler, *Turning the tide: A personal history of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989), pp. 47, 50-51.

¹⁹ G.L. Filmer to J.R. Sweet, 1 December 1962, Mapoon - New Mapoon File, AOMC/CF, 1963, QPHR.

This number may be reduced a lot of course, once buildings start to topple....I think however that it is very likely that some will remain stubborn in spite of everything....The D.N.A. may have a little problem on their hands after June 30th next.²⁰

By a deliberate process of attrition the DNA and the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions (APBM) – which had assumed mission management control from the AFMC in October 1961 – reduced the facilities and services at Mapoon. This created such unrest among the residents that Killoran was able to use Section 10 of the *Protection Act* to request the magistrate from Thursday Island to inspect the community.²¹ O’Leary evidently had planned this since the beginning of the year, as he wrote to his superior the Director-General of Education to request the appointment of a visiting justice ‘by reason of contentious matters arising concerning control and administration of’ Bamaga, Lockhart River Mission, Mapoon Mission and Weipa Mission ‘and magisterial advice would be most helpful if and when such would be required’.²² The visiting justice’s report of 26 June 1963 was critical of the housing and sanitation of the village and highlighted the hostility of some residents, particularly the Head Councillor Gilbert Jimmy and Frank Don, towards the Mission staff.²³ In early July, the APBM General Secretary James Stuckey advised the Director that the church had been unable to find a replacement for Rev. Filmer who was resigning due to his wife’s ill-health.²⁴ Killoran quickly placed Charles Turner, a DNA staff member, in charge of Mapoon Aboriginal settlement.²⁵ Turner soon reported that some residents were organising independent school, store and transport facilities, which prompted Killoran to request a Removal Order under section 22 of the *Protection Act* to move those residents off the Mapoon Reserve.²⁶ Although the order number was issued immediately, it was not activated

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Rosalind Kidd, *Regulating bodies: administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840 - 1988*, PhD thesis, Griffith University, 1994, pp. 515-517; Section 10. ‘Appointment of visiting justice to reserve’, *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939* (Qld).

²² Director of Native Affairs to Director-General of Education, 19 February 1963. DNAO File 1A/343, A/59327, QSA.

²³ B.J. Scanlan, Visiting Justice, Thursday Island, to Director of Native Affairs, 26 June 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.

²⁴ Rev. James Maitland Stuckey was General Secretary, APBM from 1960 to 1972. James M. Stuckey, APBM to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 18 June 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA, Memo of factors leading to, and a summary of, the conversation between the Director of Native Affairs Queensland, Mr. P.J. Killoran, and the General Secretary of the A.P.B.M. Rev. J.M. Stuckey on 1st July 1963, at 8.30 p.m., DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.

²⁵ Director of Native Affairs to Director-General of Education, 5 July 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA; Stuckey to Director of Native Affairs, 10 July 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.

²⁶ C. Turner, Mapoon to Director of Native Affairs, 28 August 1963 [which confirmed earlier discussions with Killoran], DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.; Director of Native Affairs [Thursday Island] to Director of Native Affairs [Office], Brisbane, 23 August 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.

for over two months.²⁷ Killoran had written to the Director-General of Education on 5 July, to raise concerns about resistance to the closure and wanted to ‘discuss [the] situation with [the] Director-General prior such issue [of Removal Orders], view possible political repercussions’ and Rosalind Kidd suggests that the government was unwilling to proceed for this reason.²⁸ Another reason, also advanced by Kidd in an earlier unpublished paper, may have been that the unavailability of housing at Hidden Valley would have restricted the number of people who could be accepted from Mapoon until later in the year.²⁹

On 14 November 1963, the Officer-in-Charge of Police at Thursday Island received official instructions from Killoran, to remove twenty-three Aboriginal residents from Mapoon to Bamaga.³⁰ The following day the Island Industries Board launch *M.V. Gelam* sailed into Port Musgrave with two Queensland Police Force officers, Noel Hughes and Jim O’Shea and several Saibai Islander police, whose instructions were to ‘effect the transfer of the families’ listed in the removal order and an Islander work party who were requested to ‘commence demolition of the vacated shanties on the Reserve’.³¹

Accounts vary about events over the next two days, however it is certain that the police landed in the evening of the 15th and proceeded to force people, named in the removal order, from their homes during the night. Rev. George Taylor, the Presbyterian Chaplain who was appointed to minister to the people of New Mapoon later bore the brunt of the ex-Mapoon residents feelings over their ill-treatment by the church and the government.³² Initially his

²⁷ Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Director of Native Affairs, 29 August 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.

²⁸ Director of Native Affairs to Director-General of Education, 5 July 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.; Kidd, *Regulating bodies*, p. 517. Kidd incorrectly attributes this letter to O’Leary who had retired the previous week. The letter was dictated by Killoran from Thursday Island to his Brisbane Office. In the same paragraph, Kidd states that Killoran sent the visiting justice to Mapoon in August –it was June.

²⁹ Rosalind Kidd, *Hidden agendas*, [Unpublished paper prepared for the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), Brisbane], [1992], p. 24; Even when the people removed in November reached Bamaga, there was a severe shortage of housing. The Presbyterian Chaplain at New Mapoon reported that following the arrival of a second group of people on 22 November, there were no vacant houses and one had ‘about 16 persons in it’. G.W. Taylor to General Secretary, APBM, 25 November 1963, Mapoon/New Mapoon File, AOMC/CF, 1963, QPHR.

³⁰ The Queensland Police officers involved were Constable First Class Noel Hughes and Constable Jim O’Shea. The Islander police officers were Sergeant Waia, Constable Carolus Isua and possibly Pilli Waigana. Director of Native Affairs to Officer-in-Charge, Police Station, Thursday Island, 14 November 1963, enclosing Removal Order No. 32/63, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA; Memo [file note], Secretary [initialled, not signed], 13 November 1974, DNAO File 6G/18, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; Senior Constable Jim O’Shea, interview with author, Weipa, 9 July 1975.

³¹ Director of Native Affairs, Office of Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Thursday Island to Director of Native Affairs, Brisbane, 14 November 1963, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.

³² Rev. George William Taylor (1908-1971) and his wife Jessie were appointed to New Mapoon in 1963 and served there several years, before transferring to Thursday Island. Biography File, QPHR.

correspondence reflected the official position of his church but doubts began to emerge as he developed a closer relationship with the people. Eleven months after the removal incident he wrote to the Secretary of the AOMC:

...in my opinion, the D.N.A. did the wrong thing in sending out a white policeman [*sic*] to Mapoon on the 23rd [*sic*] of Nov; last who frightened the daylight out of the people, and who told the people that they had to be ready to leave the next morning.³³

The following year he elaborated further on the experience of Jean Jimmy, one of the people removed:

Jean is certainly very bitter. She cannot forget how the policeman went to every house at Old Mapoon and shone a torch in their faces whilst in bed and told [them] they had to be ready to leave in the morning.³⁴

One of the officers, O'Shea, later recalled that a detailed report of the police actions had been prepared by his colleague, however no copy of the report was located on the files of the Director of Native Affairs during research for this thesis.³⁵ O'Shea claimed that the police were unarmed (as was the practice for officers on general duty in the Queensland Police Force at the time) but gathered firearms from people as they found them:

But I reckon that as we went along several of them gave me their guns.... We started to walk along here [referring to a map used in the interview] and of course those guns got a bit heavy for me to carry along with a few of the other bundles.... So I handed all the guns back about half way along the beach and Noel objected a bit. I said well look we haven't got bloody ammunition, and they've got it and the rest of them have got guns amongst their property, we might as well give 'em back to them.³⁶

Jean Jimmy's recollection was that the police were armed, although her statement recorded in Mapoon Book One corroborated other aspects of O'Shea's version of events:

Armed police then walked us along the beach –their revolvers or even their shining handcuffs and clubs they didn't use, though we all seen them hanging on their belts. Police O'Shea helped by taking my suitcase, also our short [*sic*] gun, so I carried our rifle and my hand bag.³⁷

The demolition of mission buildings, including private homes belonging to the residents, was the task of the Islander work gang which had arrived on the *Gelam*. In contrast to the

³³ G. W. Taylor to Secretary, AOMC, 11 October 1964, New Mapoon File, AOMC/CF, 1964, QPHR.

³⁴ Jean Jimmy (1912-1991) and her husband Gilbert were both traditional people of the area. G.W. Taylor to Treasurer, APBM, 17 August 1965, New Mapoon File, AOMC/CF, 1965, QPHR.

³⁵ Senior Constable Jim O'Shea, interview with author, Weipa, 9 July 1975. DNAO Files searched included 6D/17 Missions - Mapoon. Administration General; 6D/25 Missions - Mapoon. Proposed removal to new site, and 6G/20 Mapoon Mission - Future of Mission.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; Hughes also refuted the assertion that he was armed. 'Guns missions raid denied', *Courier Mail*, 5 November 1974, p. 2.

³⁷ J.P. Roberts, Barbara Russell, and Mike Parsons, eds. *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*. (Fitzroy, Vic.: International Development Action, 1975) (Mapoon - Book One), p. 13.

accounts provided by later commentators such as Henry Reynolds [*supra*], evidence in DNA files indicates that demolition did not begin until Monday 18 November as Turner radioed to the DNA: ‘Aigiri Ger[,] Mapia Yoelu and Wasiku Waiai [*sic* - Waia] commenced demolition work 18 11 63’.³⁸ The Treasurer of the APBM, S.G. Edenborough had given full support to Killoran’s destruction plans when he wrote in September 1963:

We note your intention that you wish to send a gang of men from Thursday Island to demolish and scrap unoccupied native houses to preclude them from further occupation in the future, and we would agree that this would seem to be the wisest course to follow.³⁹

There is no evidence of the exact number of buildings which were actually burnt rather than demolished although O’Shea recalled that the people subject to removal had objected strongly to the threat:

Turner called the D.N.A. at Thursday Island [by radio]. A senior representative of the D.N.A. there – I better not mention his name but a very senior member – he said to him ‘How are we going to pull these houses down? These fellows have got no tools’ and the reply came back ‘Well, I picked those men out specially. They all smoke and they’ve all got a box of matches’. So the fellow, one of the fellows who’d been listening outside the window went back down and told the fellows on the beach [near the mission house] that we were going to burn their houses down. They got a bit upset about that and we assured them we weren’t.⁴⁰

One of the last residents to leave Mapoon, Norman Wheeler, later recounted the resistance shown by one of the residents:

...I saw few houses got burned in front of my eyes but I didn’t say anything you know... Harry [or Henry] Brown...went along and he see these Torres Strait Islanders Police they come and he said to himself ‘What they going to do to my house?’ He went over to them and said ‘What are you going to do?’....They said ‘Well we gotta burn every house. We have to shift the people away’....He started to make his .303 [rifle] straighten up you know, straighten the gun up and he shoved one [bullet] half way. He said ‘ shift all those leaves out the back there otherwise I’ll waste all these bullets through all of you’....They went away, went straight through and never came back.⁴¹

The J.G. Ward memorial church was left standing until the last residents left the following May when ‘Masi Sagigi, Carpenter, and Labourers from Bamaga were instructed to commence demolition of all buildings and constructions, with the exception of the Mission

³⁸ Turner to [Director of Native Affairs], 18 November 1963, DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

³⁹ S.G. Edenborough to Director of Native Affairs, 9 September 1963, DNAO File 6D/33, A/69498, QSA.

⁴⁰ Senior Constable Jim O’Shea, interview with author, Weipa, 9 July 1975. In a letter to the Director-General of Education, Killoran quoted a statement by Wasaku Waia that only five huts were destroyed by fire and that as of April 1964 the balance ‘of huts at Mapoon, either with or without contents (which time did not permit to be dismantled)’ remained. Director of Native Affairs to Director-General of Education, 29 April 1964, DNAO File 9M/65, Box 888, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁴¹ Norman Wheeler, interview with author, Mapoon, 29 June 1975. It is unclear when this event occurred.

House....⁴² By the end of May parts of the church altar had been delivered to Rev Taylor and on 5 August 1964 a radio message to the Deputy Director of Native Affairs heralded the end of Mapoon: 'Every building was being pulled down all job is complete we run out for tucker'.⁴³

Jean Jimmy recalled with anguish how the residents left Mapoon in November 1963:

The swamps were all stirred up – scared millions of birds. When we looked around we couldn't see the sun. The harbour was just covered with birds, all sorts of birds and the Gelam was sailing just under the shadow. When we came up right on the Cullen Point now the bow was just about to come out and the birds formed V, capital V.... Oh it was marvellous you know we looking up to the sky and I said gee...what these birds...mean? I said maybe in...years to come...we'll fight it, fight and win the victory because it's more like a big fight between us and the Director.⁴⁴

Jean's commitment to that fight for her traditional homeland was sustained for the rest of her life. She was active in organising the short-lived re-occupation of Mapoon in the mid-1970s and was the first Chairperson of the Marpuna Community Aboriginal Corporation when it was formed in 1984.⁴⁵

Killoran's role in the closure of Mapoon was not unexpected given the licence allowed to the Director by the Nicklin government. With APBM support he encouraged the movement of people to New Mapoon without making adequate provision for their housing, he made promises to the residents and the church which apparently he had no intention of keeping and he misled the public of Queensland about the reasons for the removal of people in November 1963.⁴⁶ Rev. Taylor's disgust with Killoran's actions is evident in a letter which he wrote in October 1964:

⁴² [Unsigned] Memo for file [describing a visit to Mapoon on 19-20 May 1964, possibly by C. Reardon], DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

⁴³ [Unsigned] Memo for file [describing a visit to Mapoon on 19-20 May 1964, possibly by C. Reardon], DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA; [Radio message from unidentified person at Mapoon possibly an Islander carpenter] to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 5 August 1964, DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

⁴⁴ Jean Jimmy, interview with author, Weipa South [Napranum], 1 July 1975.

⁴⁵ J.P Roberts, et al., *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*, pp. 16-17; Frank McKeown, An ethnography of an Aboriginal Corporation: The Marpuna Community Aboriginal Corporation and the survival of Old Mapoon, Draft working paper, April 1993, p. 35.

⁴⁶ Rev. G.W. Taylor to General Treasurer, APBM, 14 September 1964, New Mapoon File, AOMC/CF, 1964, QPHR; Killoran had agreed at the meeting with Sweet and the community on 7 and 8 September 1960 that 'cattle holdings calculated to give a family a reasonable living' would be made available from the existing Mapoon Reserve to 'people of Mapoon origin and their descendants'. Joint observations following a visit to Mapoon Mission, September, 1960, DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA. When former Mapoon traditional elder Jackson Mamoose applied for a 'lease of 10 acres of land on Reserve R.2 County of Dunblane', Killoran personally intervened to instruct the Secretary of the Land Administration Commission not to issue the lease and argued that return of former Mapoon people to their land could 'involve the Government in the expenditure of some hundreds of thousands of pounds'. Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Memo for File, 8 December 1964, DNAO File

When Mr Killoran was here [at New Mapoon] some time ago, he admitted that what Jean Gilbert [Jean Jimmy] told the conference at Canberra, about the Mapoon people being forced to leave Mapoon was true; they had been forced and he wasn't going to be fooled any longer. The people arrived in November and December last year to a situation, which in my opinion was scandalous. They had no houses to go into, and many promises that had been made to them had not been fulfilled. They are still badly overcrowded in the houses and this has been the cause of many visits by me to the Superintendent's office here.⁴⁷

It is clear that the November 1963 removal was one of the worst examples of paternalistic and ruthless actions to control Aboriginal people in the recent history of Queensland. The personal cost to the people of Mapoon cannot be measured, but the evidence cited in this and subsequent chapters suggests that the former Director of Native Affairs, encouraged by the APBM, must carry the major accountability for the methods used by the Queensland government to close Mapoon. Finally a quarter of a century after the closure, three of the people on Killoran's removal list, including Jean Jimmy, sat in a place of honour with the Queensland Minister for Community Services Bob Katter at an official ceremony to receive the Deed of Grant of Land in Trust to an area known as Old Mapoon.⁴⁸ According to press reports, Katter had been instrumental in the demise of Killoran from the public service three years before.⁴⁹

Church Administration

From 1923 until 1961 the Presbyterian Church of Queensland was responsible for the administration of Mapoon through its Brisbane-based Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee (AFMC) and its predecessors.⁵⁰ Control of Mapoon then shifted to the APBM of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Sydney under its General Secretary Rev. J.M. Stuckey until the withdrawal of the mission staff in July 1963. There was a high turnover of Mapoon

6D/17, A/69497, QSA; Director of Native Affairs to Secretary, Land Administration Commission, 4 January 1965, DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA. In contrast to the reasons for removal given by Killoran in correspondence with his superior (noted above) the press statement carried the explanation that "We just couldn't leave the last few to starve," the [DNA] spokesman said. They were people incapable of supporting themselves there'. 'Police take 14 natives to safety', *Courier Mail*, 22 November 1963, p. 5. The day before, Turner had advised the Deputy Director at Thursday Island that seventy-one people remained at Mapoon and suggested that no more should leave until accommodation was available for them at New Mapoon or Weipa. C. Turner to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 21 November 1963, DNAO File 6G/20, Transfer R254, Box 728, QSA.

⁴⁷ G.W. Taylor to Secretary, AOMC, 11 October 1964, New Mapoon File, AOMC/CF, 1964, QPHR.

⁴⁸ *Bauxite Bulletin*, 1135, 28 April 1989, p. 1. The people were Andrew Archie, Constance Cooktown and Jean Jimmy.

⁴⁹ *Courier Mail*, 14 June 1984, p. 5; *Courier Mail*, 7 March 1986, p. 8; *Sunday Sun*, 15 June 1986, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Routine management was provided by Rev. J.R. Sweet, Secretary of the AFMC from 1953 to 1963 and the Committee was led by a Convener, Mr H. Munro, from 1953 to 1963. H. Munro, 'Know the Kirk, No. 5 Aboriginal and Overseas Missions', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 46, 11 (June 1963), pp. 5-6.

superintendents with fourteen appointments between 1923 and the last, Rev. Garth Filmer, in 1958. [Appendix One] He was a young man who had been ordained a few months before taking office and, according to Aboriginal residents and his own writings, had little empathy with the people or the locality.⁵¹ His attitude towards traditional Aboriginal people may be gauged by one of his statements regarding difficulties with spiritual work at Mapoon, when he claimed that Mapoon's 'large number of castes [people with various ethnic ancestries] has meant a higher intelligence and greater reasoning power'.⁵² In contrast, James Winn, the superintendent of the Presbyterian Mission at Weipa where Comalco's bauxite developments were focussed, had been stationed there since 1938 and had greater understanding and sensitivity towards the local people.⁵³

Although there had been earlier questions about its future, the initial impetus to close Mapoon mission came from a 1953 meeting between the AFMC and the Queensland government when the committee 'was advised that no further aid would be forthcoming for Mapoon unless the Church' rehabilitated the mission buildings and made the mission 'more self-supporting by her industries'.⁵⁴ At a conference of church and government officials held at Mapoon in April 1954 a policy decision was made to close Mapoon and evacuate the people to Weipa or other stations, or to 'assimilate those ready for exemption [from the *Protection Act*] into the Australian way of life elsewhere'.⁵⁵ Between 1954 and 1963, a number of reasons were advanced by the Presbyterian church for the proposed closure of the mission, including unavailability of local alternative land sites, lack of water supplies, poor soils for agriculture, low potential for alternative industry and the need to assimilate Aboriginal people into Australian society.⁵⁶ By June 1963, the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions had

⁵¹ Rev. Garth Laureston Filmer, who was ordained in Brisbane in December 1957 received only a few months training at Aurukun before he was placed in charge of Mapoon; *Presbyterian Outlook*, 41, 7 (January 1958), p. 4; Rachel Peter, 'The last of the Mapoon Missionaries 1958 to 1963', J.P. Roberts et. al., *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*, p. 8; G.L. Filmer, 'Correspondence - Mapoon Mission', *Cairns Post*, 4 December 1963, p. 7. Filmer even sought permission to open and peruse the residents' personal mail to gather information about their communications with the Aborigines Advancement League in Cairns. G.L. Filmer to Director, Department of Native Affairs, 3 January 1962, DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

⁵² 'Aboriginal and foreign missions', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 43, 11 (May 1960), p. 16.

⁵³ Writing about Winn's role, Frank White noted the views of several elders of the Weipa community who 'spoke with profound gratitude and respect for James and Mrs Winn'. White, *Church and state in Presbyterian missions*, p. 154.

⁵⁴ Disquiet about Mapoon mission's location had been expressed as early as 1894 when it was reported that 'it was found that the place was quite unsuited for cultivation'. 'Report of Committee on Foreign Missions', *Proceedings of the Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania: Held in Melbourne, September, 1894* (Sydney: Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania, 1894), p. ii; *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 107 (11-19 May 1954), p. 64.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

reduced these reasons to three, namely ‘poor accessibility in loading and unloading boats; poor communication on land because of heavy sand and indifferent soil for gardening.’⁵⁷

The most detailed catalogue came from Filmer, who responded to criticism of the closure in a long letter to the *Cairns Post* in December 1963 with a litany of complaints about the locality and the people. [Appendix Two]⁵⁸ None of these accounts carried any analysis of the church administration’s performance or their inability to hear the voice of the Mapoon people. These aspects are discussed in Chapters Two and Three of the thesis. The Presbyterian church belatedly recognised the negative role of the church in the closure of Mapoon by the words of Rev. Jim Sweet, the former Secretary of the AFMC, when he said in 1990:

At Mapoon and Weipa the Church never gave sufficient support to the Aborigines claim of their spiritual link with the land. In the Mapoon crisis we negotiated for their future *against* them *with* the government. In retrospect, I believe the closure of Mapoon was wrong.⁵⁹

Government Policy

To understand the Queensland government’s role it is necessary to look at the context of public policy and public opinion in Queensland in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Japanese Armed Forces had come very close to invading the far north of the state only thirteen years before the discovery of bauxite and all governments of the 1950s were strongly in favour of economic development and increasing the population of the region.⁶⁰ Any development which was likely to attract permanent white residents, provide potential employment prospects for Aboriginal people and royalties for consolidated revenue, was welcomed.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Australian Aborigines*, (Sydney, NSW: Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 1963), p. 7.

⁵⁸ Filmer, *Cairns Post*, 4 December 1963, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Marjorie Lewis-Jones and John Harrison, ‘UC Assembly apologises to Mapoon people’, *Journey: Uniting Church Magazine*, September 1990, p. 16. Rev. James Richard Sweet was appointed Secretary for Aboriginal and Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland in November 1953 and held this post throughout the negotiations which led to the closure. Biography File, QPHR.

⁶⁰ Between March 1942 and June 1943 there were at least eight Japanese air raids on Horn Island and several battalions of Australian troops were stationed in the northern Cape York area. ‘Japanese launched 8 raids off Cape: Report’, *Courier Mail*, 10 February 1988, p. 7; *Queensland Parliamentary Debates (QPD)*, 219, 1957-58, p. 1424; Report on conference with the Minister for Health and Home Affairs (Dr. Noble), held at Parliament House on Thursday, 5th September, 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁶¹ At a ceremony to sign the agreement for the development of Weipa’s bauxite mine, the Premier of Queensland was reported to describe it as ‘the key to unlock the Gulf country and settle it with white people.’ ‘Bauxite will “open” Gulf, says Nicklin’, *Courier Mail*, 17 December 1957, p. 3.

Until the mid-1950s, the Queensland Labor government's legislation and policy was aimed at what was termed 'protection and preservation' of Aboriginal people, which meant in effect that the Department of Native Affairs and the superintendents of mission stations had total control over their lives.⁶² In his overview of the Labor Party's approach to Aboriginal affairs up to 1957, Raymond Evans highlighted the absence of opposition to this regime:

Lacking both the challenge and the contrast of any clearly formulated state opposition approach towards Aborigines, the Queensland government, which happened to be an almost continuously Labor one from 1915 to 1957, operated almost unhindered, an increasingly anachronistic "protectionist" policy towards aborigines, based squarely upon racist premises.⁶³

By mid-1957, the Director of Native Affairs was promoting a policy change to a gradual progression from protection to assimilation of Aboriginal people into the white community.⁶⁴ Noel Loos, an historian from James Cook University, asserted that 'it was no co-incidence that the enunciation of this new policy coincided with the discovery of the vast mineral wealth of the Mapoon-Weipa reserves'.⁶⁵ This seems to suggest an intent by the government to make their policies fit their actions. Although the State may not have publicised an assimilation policy until 1957, the Presbyterian church declared that it was a key issue at its conference about the future of Mapoon (attended by the Director of Native Affairs) in 1954, more than a year before bauxite was discovered at Weipa.⁶⁶ The AFMC considered that 'the natives of Mapoon are more ready for assimilation than any of our other Mission Stations' and laid the foundation for the future demise of Mapoon by taking the view that 'it would be wise for the Church to refrain from a building programme on a Station that had not a long

⁶² This was embodied in the Queensland legislation covering Aboriginal affairs, the *Protection Act*. Dawn May, 'Race relations in Queensland 1897-1971', in L.F. Wyvill, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody: Regional report of inquiry in Queensland* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), p. 125.

⁶³ Raymond Evans, 'Aborigines', in D.J. Murphy, R.B. Joyce and Colin A. Hughes, eds., *Labor in power: The Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 349.

⁶⁴ 'Native Affairs – Annual Report of the Director of Native Affairs for the Year Ended 30th June, 1957', *QPP*, 2 (1957-58), p. 1117.

⁶⁵ Noel Loos, 'A chapter of contact: Aboriginal-European relations in North Queensland 1606-1992', in Henry Reynolds, ed., *Race relations in North Queensland* (Townsville, Qld.: Department of History and Politics, James Cook University, 1993), p. 29. Similar views were expressed by: Heather Wearne, *A clash of cultures: Queensland Aboriginal policy (1824-1980)* (Brisbane: Division of World Mission, Uniting Church in Australia, 1980), p.16; and Christopher Anderson, 'Queensland', in Nicholas Peterson, ed., *Aboriginal land rights: a handbook*. (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981), pp. 64-66.

⁶⁶ *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 107 (11-19 May 1954), p. 68; The Labor Minister for Health and Home Affairs had also declared assimilation as government policy during a meeting with church officials in 1954 when he said: 'our objective is...training them [Aboriginal people] to be assimilated into the community'. Notes taken at a deputation from the Presbyterian Mission Committee, which waited on the Hon. W.M. Moore, M.L.A., Minister for Health & Home Affairs, at 11.30 A.M. on the 24th March, 1954. DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

expectation of life in its ministry to the Aborigines there'.⁶⁷ As early as 1941 the church had mooted the possibility of transferring 'full-blood' Aboriginal people to Weipa or Aurukun and maintaining Mapoon as an educational centre for 'half castes, with a view to their ultimate absorption into the industrial life of the State.'⁶⁸ Loos also ignores any other factors which may have led to the change in policy and makes no attempt to examine the influence which the church had over the closure of Mapoon, particularly as a result of its financial dependence on the government, mission policy and the calibre of the church administrators and mission staff.

Kidd's doctoral analysis of the Queensland government's Aboriginal affairs administration clearly shows the lengths to which the public servants would go to achieve control over the church:

In the face of church intransigence, Queensland's coalition government, abetted by Native Affairs bureaucrats, implemented a strategy of public condemnation of underfunded missions as a means of justifying pro-development interventions.⁶⁹

Aspects of this bureaucratic subterfuge, along with the input of other agencies such as the Department of Health and Home Affairs and the Co-Ordinator-General's Department are examined in Chapters Two to Five.

Bauxite Mining Companies

The announcement by Lionel Robinson – Chairman of Consolidated Zinc Pty. Limited – on 20 August 1956, that his company had discovered 'hundreds of millions of tons of bauxite' (the ore of aluminium) on Cape York Peninsula, heralded the dispossession of the traditional lands of the Mapoon and Weipa Aboriginal people by governments eager to encourage development of Queensland's north.⁷⁰ Aluminium metal, which is now used in a wide variety of domestic and industrial applications, was first produced commercially in 1854 by French metallurgist H. Saint-Claire Deville.⁷¹ Bauxite, the ore of aluminium, had been discovered by

⁶⁷ *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 107 (11-19 May 1954), p. 68.

⁶⁸ Secretary for Missions to Rev. H.C. Matthew, Secretary, Board of Missions, 17 June 1941, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1941, QPHR.

⁶⁹ Kidd, *Regulating bodies*, p. 508.

⁷⁰ 'Vast N.Q. find of bauxite', *Courier Mail*, 21 August 1956, p. 1; The traditional lands were within Crown land reserved for Aboriginal people with the Director of Native Affairs as trustee. Neither the Aboriginal people nor the administrators of the church missions had any form of legal title to the land under state laws.

⁷¹ Patrick D. Stobart, *Centenary of the Hall & Héroult processes 1886 - 1986* (London: International Primary Aluminium Institute, 1986), p. 17; Today, aluminium metal is produced in a two-stage process. Bauxite ore is

P. Bertier at Les Baux, France in 1821 and was ‘composed primarily of one or more aluminium hydroxide minerals and impurities of silica, iron oxide and titanium’.⁷² Deville’s chemical reduction process was costly and the new metal did not achieve world-wide acceptance until the development of the electrolytic smelting process by Charles Hall in Ohio, United States of America and Paul Héroult of Normandy, France in 1886.⁷³ Worldwide consumption of aluminium steadily increased until the Second World War.⁷⁴ During the war, aircraft and other metal products stimulated demand for aluminium and the Australian government established the Australian Aluminium Production Commission (AAPC) to assist its defence efforts.⁷⁵ The AAPC required reserves of high grade bauxite to establish the industry and sought assistance from the states to find them.⁷⁶

The Geological Survey of Queensland (GSQ) was aware of a report by Queensland Government geologist C.F.V. Jackson which noted deposits of ‘pisolitic iron ore’ when he visited Mapoon and Weipa briefly in 1902.⁷⁷ He described the predominant geological formation near the Mapoon mission station as ‘ferruginous sandy clays on the southern side of Port Musgrave, 3 miles [4.8 km] from Mapoon; and on the south shore of the Batavia River 7 miles [9.6 km] from the station, where the cliffs are from 25 to 30 feet [7.6m to 9.1m] high, a deposit of clayey pisolitic ironstone similar to that at Vrilya Point is seen overlying these clays’ and predicted that it was ‘probable that if these deposits were systematically examined and sampled, they would be found to include masses of higher-grade ores; and...might ultimately prove of some value, especially on account of their ready accessibility from the sea’.⁷⁸ His report did not attract any interest in the potential bauxite ore and was forgotten until the AAPC’s request to the GSQ. The GSQ, which sought samples of bauxite from

dissolved in caustic soda to recover aluminium oxide (alumina) in a refining method known as the Bayer process. Alumina is then smelted electrolytically to produce aluminium. W.H. Andrews, ‘Uses and specifications of bauxite’, in Leonard Jacob, ed., *Bauxite: Proceedings of the 1984 bauxite symposium Los Angeles, California February 27 - March 1, 1984* (New York: Society of Mining Engineers, 1984), pp. 50-51.

⁷² Stobart, *Centenary*, p. 73; ‘Essentially bauxite is the product of weathering and leaching of a variety of sediments or rocks, generally in a high-rainfall tropical or sub-tropical climate, resulting in the enrichment of the aluminium oxide content’. Andrews, *Bauxite*, p. 49.

⁷³ Stobart, *Centenary*, pp. 19-20.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 180, 1944, pp. 1702-1706.

⁷⁶ ‘First annual report of the Australian Aluminium Production Commission for period 1st May, 1945, to 30th June, 1946’, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 2, 1946-47-48, p. 994.

⁷⁷ C.F.V. Jackson, *Report on a visit to the west coast of the Cape York Peninsula and some islands of the Gulf of Carpentaria* (Brisbane, Qld.: Department of Mines, 1902), pp. 8-9; Pisolites are small round pebbles made up of pisoliths which are defined as ‘a small spheroidal particle with concentrically laminated internal structure, ranging from 1 to 10 mm. in diameter.’ American Geological Institute, *Dictionary of geological terms* (New York: Dolphin Books, 1962), p. 382.

⁷⁸ Jackson, *Report on a visit*, pp. 7-9.

various localities throughout the State including the west coast of Cape York Peninsula, wrote to the Presbyterian church to ask their assistance in obtaining them from their mission stations.⁷⁹ The letter described the site of interest at Mapoon in the same words as Jackson's report and the samples were collected by Rev J.B. Hartshorn in April and June 1948 at 'the mouth of the Batavia River' an area now known as Red Beach and at 'the old Batavia landing, seven miles [eleven kilometres] up from the mouth of Batavia River'.⁸⁰

When Government Chemical Laboratory analysis of Hartshorn's samples and those requested from Aurukun and Weipa missions gave non-commercial grade results for alumina the GSQ decided, in consultation with the AAPC, not to seek further samples from the missions and did not send a qualified geologist to examine the area.⁸¹ Seven years later, geologists from Frome-Broken Hill Co. Pty. Ltd., which held an Authority to Prospect for Petroleum, visited the Weipa area.⁸² On 16 July 1955 an experienced geologist, Henry James (Harry) Evans, who was on secondment to Frome from Consolidated Zinc Corporation Ltd. found an outcrop of bauxite at a tableland known as the Jump Up, then called at the Weipa Mission next day and collected further samples.⁸³ Accompanied by local Aboriginal elder Matthew (Wakmatha [stormbird] of the Linngithig people), Evans explored the coastline between Duyfken Point and Pera Head the following October and estimated the bauxite reserves at 250 million tonnes.⁸⁴ Evans' discovery prompted Consolidated Zinc Corporation (CZC), through its subsidiary Australian Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd. (AM&S) to apply for an Authority to Prospect for Minerals which was granted as AP No. 28M over 1,415 square miles in February 1956 and increased to 2,585 square miles in July 1956.⁸⁵ APM 28 extended from Vrilya Point

⁷⁹ C.C. Morton to Rev. D.A. Brown, 22 January 1948, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

⁸⁰ C.C. Morton to Rev. D.A. Brown, 22 January 1948, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA; J.B. Hartshorn to Chief Government Geologist, 3 June 1948, Commodity File 4-12-1 "B" Bauxite General, Geological Survey of Queensland (GSQ), Department of Mines and Energy (DME); The traditional name for Red Beach is Rugapayn which means red cliffs. Isobel Savo and Harriet Flinders, personal comment to author, 4 June 1996.

⁸¹ Chief Government Geologist to Acting Superintendent, Mapoon Mission, 24 August 1948, Commodity File 4-12-1 "B" Bauxite General, GSQ, DME; The grade of bauxite is 'determined by the percentages of alumina, silica, titania, and iron' it contains. Stobart, *Centenary*, p. 75.

⁸² A.K.D. [A.K. Denmead], 'Discovery of bauxite on Cape York Peninsula: Historical note', *Queensland Government Mining Journal (QGMJ)*, 58, 670 (August 1957), p. 552.

⁸³ Alan Trengove, 'Red treasure on a lonely coast', Supplement to *CRA Gazette*, 27, 2 (August 1992), pp. 1-2; Geologists in the party included J.S. Bain, Louis H. Dixon and Harry Evans. Entry for 17 July 1955 in Weipa Mission visitors' book, J.S. Winn Papers, Cape York Collection, Hibberd Library; J.S. Legge, ed., *Who's who in Australia: XXIst edition, 1974* (Melbourne, Vic.: Herald and Weekly Times, 1974), p. 349. Harry Evans (1912-1990), had worked for seventeen years as a gas and oil geologist in New Zealand and Australia, prior to the Weipa discovery.

⁸⁴ Trengove, Supplement to *CRA Gazette*, pp. 2-3; The late Matthew's language name was provided to the author by members of his family.

⁸⁵ I.W. Morley, Bauxite on Cape York (Status as at January 1957), pp. 11-12, Commodity File 4-12-1 "B" Bauxite General, GSQ, DME.

in the north to Tokalee Creek, near Aurukun in the south, including all of the coastal lands near Mapoon.⁸⁶ CZC appointed another of its subsidiary companies, Enterprise Exploration Pty. Ltd., to manage the exploration programme and a camp was established at Weipa in June 1956.⁸⁷ At the end of the year CZC created a new subsidiary company to operate its bauxite interests, Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited – later known by the name derived from its initial letters as Comalco.⁸⁸

As will be discussed in Chapter Five, CZP and Comalco negotiated with the Queensland government to enact special legislation which included an agreement that gave the company secure title to much of the former Aboriginal reserves of Mapoon and Weipa and covered the development of the bauxite mine and alumina refinery.⁸⁹ The *Comalco Agreement*, which was signed on 16 December 1957, did not provide for compensation to the church or the Aboriginal people of Mapoon and Weipa or even recognition of their prior occupation of the Crown reserve land.⁹⁰ By the time the church left Mapoon in 1963, exploratory drilling had been conducted but no discoveries of economic bauxite were made near the community.⁹¹ Yet the accusation that Mapoon was closed to allow Comalco to mine in the area has remained a key issue in the recent history of the community. The nearest bauxite mine to Mapoon is located at Andoom near the Mission River about sixty kilometres south of the community. From 1904 to 1958, the Mapoon reserve extended from the Mission River to areas north of Mapoon, however Comalco's Special Bauxite Mining Lease No. 1 (SBML1) granted in 1958 absorbed much of this land. People with traditional links to the Andoom

⁸⁶ [Plan showing titles based on Queensland Stock Route Map, Sheet 8, scale 16 miles to an inch.], Commodity File 4-12-1 "B" Bauxite General, GSQ, DME.

⁸⁷ "'Top Camp' closes at Weipa', *Insight* [Comalco Industries Pty. Ltd. newsletter], 2, 9 (October 1967), p. 1; T.F. Roberts, 'Early investigations at Weipa: Bauxite on Cape York Peninsula', *North Australian Monthly*, 10, 6 (January 1964), pp. 6-7.

⁸⁸ '£5m in Cape bauxite project', *Courier Mail*, 21 December 1956, p. 1; An account of the development of Comalco is contained in Kosmas Tsokhas, *Beyond dependence: Companies, labour processes and Australian mining* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 49-56.

⁸⁹ The Queensland Cabinet approved the agreement on 18 November 1957 and the legislation was passed in early December. Cabinet Secretariat, Minutes (Decisions and submissions), Decision No. 91, The Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Bill, 18 November 1957, Microfilm Z 2350, QSA; The *Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Act of 1957* (Qld) – (*Comalco Act*). The *Comalco Agreement* is contained as a schedule to the Act and was proclaimed on 22 March 1958. *QGG*, vol. 197, no. 75, 22 March 1958, p. 1328; Comalco has used the legislation to defend its title against other government legislation. For example, its leases were excluded from the affect of the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* by excluding 'land subject to a special mining Act' (Section 2.13) from lands claimable under the Act. See also Frank Brennan, 'The Queensland Aboriginal Land Act 1991', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 2, 50 (June 1991), p. 11.

⁹⁰ 'Signing of Weipa bauxite agreement: Further step in development of the State', *QGMJ*, 59, 675, p. 6.

⁹¹ During the period 1 May 1957 to 31 October 1957, Enterprise Exploration put down 128 ore evaluation drill holes and four test pits near Mapoon. M. Mawby, Director, AM&S to Under Secretary for Mines, 6 January 1958, Batch File 28M "B", Tenures Branch, DME; Comalco's principal bauxite ore reserves north of the Mission River were found at Andoom.

mining area, principally the Thaynakwith, had settled at both Weipa and Mapoon during the missionary period.⁹² (See Maps Three and Four)

While there is no evidence of direct lobbying of the state government by Comalco to close Mapoon, equally there is no doubt that its initial blunt rejection of the Presbyterian church's request for financial assistance with the reconstruction or relocation of Mapoon contributed to the financially-weak church's capitulation to government insistence that the mission be shut down. This and the company's later silence during the events of 1963 created a nemesis for Comalco and its parent companies, CRA Limited and RTZ Corporation PLC, which made them a target for those commentators who believed that the company provided the impetus for the closure.⁹³ Their criticism has tended to overshadow the positive aspects of the relationship which has developed between Comalco and the communities of Mapoon and Napranum, particularly since the early 1980s.⁹⁴

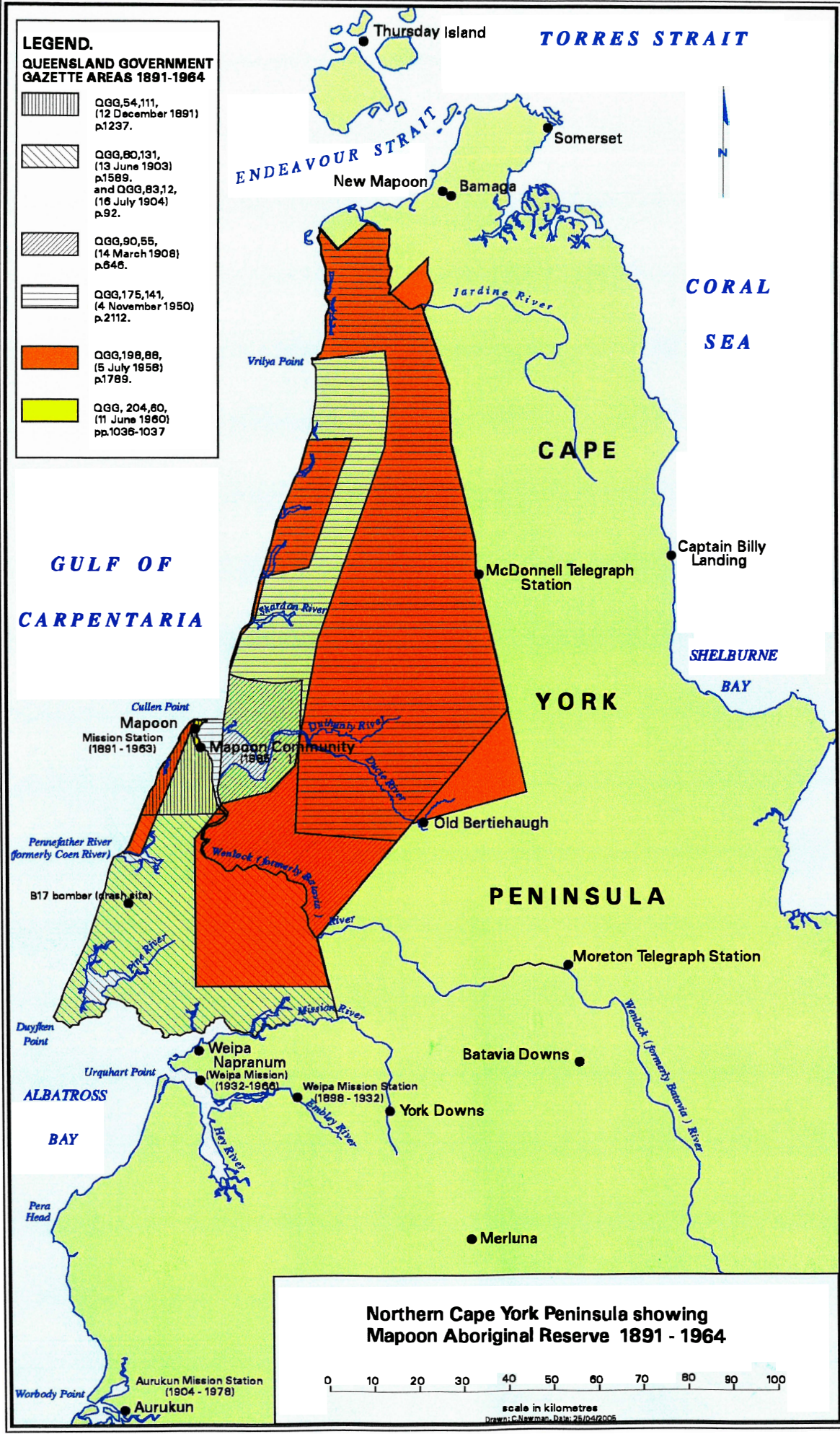
Although Comalco's impact is an important part of the story, an examination also will be made of the role of Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited, a Canadian company. Alcan conducted bauxite exploration east of Mapoon during the 1950s and was granted a Special Bauxite Mining Lease No. 8 (SBML8) of 536 square miles (1388 square kilometres) over some of the traditional Mapoon lands eighteen months after Mapoon Mission shut.⁹⁵

⁹² Roth referred to the Aboriginal people of the Pine River area coming under the influence of Mapoon Mission. 'Annual report for 1901', *QPP*, 1, 1902, p. 1143; Sommer, Report, 1994, p. 158. Sommer, who describes this language as Thanakuith, suggests that it extended from the Pine River to the tidal limits of the Mission River. For example, the late David Mamoose's wife Mary was a Thaynakwith speaker from Mangrove Island on the Mission River. *Napranum Cha*, 14, 1988, p. 5; Another Thaynakwith elder, Kaynayth (Joyce Hall), of Napranum was a spokesperson on land rights for her people during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Roberts, *Massacres to mining*, pp. 156-158.

⁹³ M. Mawby, Comalco, to James R. Sweet, 21 August 1957, D_{NAO} File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA; Philip Robinson, 'Protests attack RTZ land policies', *Times*, 28 May 1981, p. 15; Barbara Miller, 'Clayton's land rights: the Queensland Aboriginal Land Act - an Aboriginal Coordinating Council perspective', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 2, 52 (October 1991), p. 10.

⁹⁴ Patrick Dodson, Chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, remarked in a speech to the mining industry that the 'growth that's taken place in the general concept of the "good neighbour" policy, particularly in the Weipa area, suggests it's well worth looking at...'. Patrick Dodson, 'Facing up to the realities of Aboriginal economic advancement', *Mining Review*, 18, 2 (June 1994), p. 25; Recent articles which examine the relationship which has developed between the communities and the company include: Richard Howitt, 'Weipa: Industrialisation and indigenous rights in a remote Australian mining operation', *Geography*, 77 Part 3, 336 (July 1992), pp. 223-235; Robyn Dixon, 'Comalco hears voices in the wilderness', *Age*, 31 July 1993, p. 2; Fiona Kennedy, 'Mixing commerce with mutual respect', *Australian*, 13-14 August, 1994, p. 16.

⁹⁵ *The Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited Agreement Act of 1965* (Qld). The act under which SBML8 was issued was proclaimed on 4 June 1965, however the lease was deemed to commence on 1 January 1964. The area is described in the first schedule to the Agreement.; No file on Alcan, its AP53M or its SBML8 could be located in the Director of Native Affairs Office records held by the QSA or the DFYCC. There was no record of any negotiations regarding Mapoon between Alcan and the Director of Native Affairs or the church on the AP53M batch files held by the DME. Clause 56 of the *Alcan Agreement* provided for the company to 'obtain a suitable site on Port Musgrave with all necessary facilities including access for the processing and shipping of bauxite'.



Note:

The original Map 3 on page 33 was incorrect. The Mapoon Aboriginal Reserve boundaries did not include the Reserve for Police Purposes gazetted over the old *Bertiehaugh* pastoral lease in 1903. A revised map with corrected boundaries is shown above.

Chapter Two. Church and State, 1891-1954

Mapoon mission was established in 1891 under the auspices of the Presbyterian church, with Queensland government financial assistance, on land reserved by the government under the *Crown Lands Act of 1884*.¹ Following the proclamation of the *Aboriginals Protection and Prevention of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897*, church missions were increasingly influenced by government legislation and policy.²

Commencing with an overview of the mission's establishment in 1891, this chapter discusses the development of mission management practices which shaped the lives of Mapoon people during Mapoon's first fifty years, then examines the changes wrought by the Second World War and its aftermath.³ The relationship between missionaries and the Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee (AFMC) is included in the discussion, as well as the temporal roles of superintendents as community leaders and as intermediaries between the residents, church and government.⁴ The chapter concludes with an analysis of the development of the AFMC's Mapoon policy during the early 1950s and the roles of church and government agencies in the initial decision to close Mapoon.

¹ *Queensland Government Gazette (QGG)*, 54, 111 (12 December 1891), p. 1237.

² The most comprehensive analysis of the development of Queensland government Aboriginal policies and practices is contained in Ros Kidd's thesis. Rosalind Kidd, *Regulating bodies: Administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840 - 1988*, PhD thesis, Griffith University, 1994; A useful overview also was prepared by Dawn May for the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Dawn May, 'Race relations in Queensland', in L.F. Wyvill, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody: Regional report of inquiry in Queensland* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), pp. 123-170.

³ Although decisions made by church and government representatives at the April 1954 conference (held at Mapoon) are recognised as the beginning of the policy to close the mission, the staffing and financial difficulties in the decades prior to that date had a debilitating effect on the mission and on the perceptions of the Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee (AFMC).

⁴ General Secretary of the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions (APBM), James Stuckey, commented soon before the closure: 'We have lost out in Mapoon partly because of our inability to keep the post staffed'. J.M. Stuckey to Rev. G. Coutts, 28 May 1962, General Secretary File, AFMC/CF, 1962, QPHR. Appendix One shows the turnover of mission superintendents from 1891 to 1963.

Establishment of the Mission

It is not the purpose of this thesis to provide a detailed account of the early development of the mission and several works are available for background reading.⁵ As was the pattern during earlier European annexation of Aboriginal land in other parts of Queensland, the 1880s and 1890s were a period of destruction of Aboriginal traditional life on Cape York Peninsula.⁶ Aboriginal people who occupied the coastal lands of the Mapoon area were affected more by the demand for labour by the bêche-de-mer fisheries than by pastoralists.⁷ The Queensland Commissioner of Fisheries, William Saville-Kent, made several suggestions in 1890 to control the excesses of the fishing industry and to reduce conflict, one of which led to the establishment of Mapoon mission:

The proposition that has been now and again made to establish a mission station on the Batavia River, and which for years past has represented the main recruiting ground for the Torres Straits bêche-de-mer fishery, is also one well worthy of consideration.⁸

Several years before Saville-Kent's report, a decision had been made by the Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and Tasmania to begin a mission to Aboriginal people in Queensland.⁹ At a meeting with Queensland church officials 'with reference to a grant of

⁵ A. Ward, *The miracle of Mapoon: Or from native camp to Christian village* (London: S.W. Partridge, [1908]); Richard Bardon, *The centenary history of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland* (Brisbane: Presbyterian Church of Queensland, 1949), pp. 82-90; Kay Elizabeth Evans, *Missionary effort towards the Cape York Aborigines, 1886 - 1910: A study of culture contact*, BA hon's thesis, University of Queensland, 1969, pp. 70-79; John Harrison, *Missions, fisheries and government in far north Queensland 1891-1919*. BA hon's thesis, University of Queensland, 1974; John Harris, *One blood: 200 years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope*, (Sutherland, NSW: Albatross Books, 1990), pp. 485-499; W.H. Edwards and B.A. Clarke, 'From missions to Aboriginal churches: The Uniting Church in Australia and Aboriginal missions', in Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose, eds., *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: Ethnographic and historical studies* (Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988), pp. 188-190.

⁶ Loos provides a broad overview of the history of conflict between Aborigines and Europeans on Cape York Peninsula during the nineteenth century. Noel Loos, *Invasion and resistance: Aboriginal-European relations on the North Queensland frontier 1861-1897* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982), pp. 54-55, 60-61; A Queensland-wide perspective of frontier violence is given by Evans et al. Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1993), 3rd edition, pp. 33-66.

⁷ 'Thursday Island: Report of the Government Resident for 1885', *QVPLA*, 1, (1886), p.491; Loos, *Invasion and resistance*, pp. 118-159. Loos details the brutality of the bêche-de-mer fishermen. Bêche-de-mer is a delicacy in Chinese cooking and is reputed to have aphrodisiac qualities. The first bêche-de-mer station had been established at Albany Island in 1862 and the first pearl-shell station in Torres Strait in 1868. Regina Ganter, *The pearl-shellshellers of Torres Strait: Resource use, development and decline, 1860s-1960s*, Melbourne, Vic.: (Melbourne University Press, 1994), pp. 19-20. Recent research on these industries does not indicate when Aboriginal people first were recruited from the north-western Peninsula, however Mullins refers to 'Aborigines from northern Cape York Peninsula' as labour in the fishing fleets of the 1870s. Steve Mullins, *Torres Strait: A history of colonial occupation and culture contact 1864-1897* (Rockhampton, Qld.: Central Queensland University Press, 1995), p. 111.

⁸ 'Bêche-de-mer and pearl-shell fisheries of northern Queensland', *QVPLA*, 3, (1890), p. 732; Saville-Kent was Commissioner of Fisheries from 1889 to 1892. A.J. Harrison, 'William Saville-Kent, F.L.S., F.Z.S., F.R.M.S. (1845-1908)', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 122, 2 (1988), pp. 165-178.

⁹ *Minutes of proceedings of the Federal Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania, July 1886* (Melbourne: Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania, 1886), pp. 32-33.

land for a mission station in the northern portion of the colony' on 12 May 1891, Sir Samuel Griffith remarked that John Douglas and Rev. Maitland Woods of Thursday Island had taken an interest in the Aboriginal people of the Batavia River and following a visit to the area by Woods, Griffith 'thought that the mission would have much greater scope on the Batavia River than anywhere else' and the church agreed.¹⁰

An inspection of potential mission sites was conducted by Douglas, who described the selected locality in glowing terms: '...Cullen Point, on the shores of Port Musgrave – a grand harbour which is formed at the embouchure of the Ducie and Batavia rivers'.¹¹ The founders of Mapoon were Moravian missionaries, James Gibson Ward, a minister and his wife Matilda Hall Ward (née Barnes) from Ballinderry, Ireland and John Nicholas Hey from Germany and his wife Minnie Mary Anne Hey (Matilda Ward's sister).¹² After establishing the mission on 28 November 1891, Ward was less impressed with the site than Douglas, as he later wrote: 'It is by no means the best part of the 100 square miles set apart by the Government as an Aboriginal Reserve...but it is thought to be the safest point for future operations'.¹³ Ward died from fever and was buried at Mapoon in 1895, while Hey remained as Superintendent of the mission until his retirement in 1919. Hey's management methods were regarded as a model for Presbyterian missions for many years.

¹⁰ 'Aboriginal missions', *Evening Observer*, 13 May 1891, p. 3, Clipping in Reserve File 91-14 Part 1, Box 167, Transfer 1726/1, QSA, [currently held by the Department of Natural Resources]; *Minutes of the proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, held in Brisbane, March, May, and July, 1891*, (Brisbane: Presbyterian Church of Queensland, 1891), p.55; John Douglas, in his report to the Chief Secretary of 8 May 1890, had broadly endorsed the recent report by Saville-Kent. 'Annual report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island', *QVPLA*, 3, (1890), p. 169; Griffith had a long association with Douglas as he had been Attorney-General during the period when Douglas was Premier of Queensland, 8 March 1877 to 21 January 1879. *Queensland Parliamentary handbook*. (Brisbane: Queensland Parliamentary Library, 1983), pp. 243, 257.

¹¹ The traditional name for Cullen Point is Trathalarrakwana (unconfirmed spelling of a Tjungundji word) meaning 'Barramundi story place'. Isobel Savo and Margaret Nota, personal comment to author, 7 June 1996. Cullen Point was named presumably in honour of E.A. Cullen, Marine Surveyor, who accompanied Hugh Milman during an inspection of the Batavia (later Wenlock) River in 1887 and drew the first hydrographic chart of the area. Port Musgrave apparently was named in honour of the Governor of Queensland at that time, Sir Anthony Musgrave (Governor 6 November 1883 - 9 November 1888), although his nephew Anthony Musgrave was prominent in New Guinea during the same period.; Hugh Milman, 'Port Musgrave and the Batavia and Ducie Rivers (report by Acting Government Resident at Thursday Island upon)', *QVPLA*, 4, (1887), pp. 3-4; Thomas Edward Dutton, *Police Motu: Iena sivarai = Police Motu: Its story* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985), p. 180; 'Annual report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island', *QVPLA*, 2, 1892, p. 1029.

¹² Ward, *Miracle of Mapoon*, pp. 27-42; Death certificate for James Gibson Ward, 3 January 1895; Birth certificate for Phillipina Elizabeth Hey, 17 July 1896; Brief biographies of the Heys and Wards may be found in: Brian Dickey, ed., *The Australian dictionary of evangelical biography* (Sydney, NSW: Evangelical History Association, 1994), pp. 165-166, 396-397.

¹³ Ward, *Miracle of Mapoon*, p. 58; The Reserve for Aboriginal Mission Station comprising 100 square miles [259 square kilometres] was gazetted under the *Crown Lands Act of 1884* (Qld) on 12 December 1891. *QGG*, vol. 54, no. 111 (12 December 1891), p. 1237; The original reserve and subsequent extensions are shown on Map Three.

Mission Management: The Committee and the Station

The Presbyterian Church of Queensland (PCQ) assumed responsibility from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) for financing and managing the work of ‘Missions to the Aboriginals’ in the state in 1923.¹⁴ The committee which administered the Queensland mission stations, the Committee on Missions to the Heathen (CMH) – renamed the Committee on Missions to the Aboriginals (CMA) in 1932 – was based in Brisbane and reported as a standing committee to the annual State Assembly, where general policy was approved. Until 1951, the rules of the State Assembly contained only a broad description of all standing committees’ functions and did not set down the specific duties of the CMA.¹⁵ The committee also liaised with the PCA through its Board of Missions. In 1946 the Board created new procedures which established a secretariat in Sydney to control all mission work of the PCA to Australian Aborigines and overseas missions.¹⁶ Following objections from the CMA that it had carried on its work ‘successfully and with the confidence of the State Government’, the Board continued to delegate management to the Queensland committee, subsequently renamed the Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee (AFMC).¹⁷

Noel Loos pointed out that ‘all missionaries tried to convert adult Aborigines to Christianity, but without exception, diverted most of their resources to converting the young’.¹⁸ Hey had little regard for the traditional lifestyle and cultural values of Aboriginal people, although his later writing indicates that he mellowed over the years:

¹⁴ At the General Assembly of the PCA in September 1922, the Board of Missions accepted the proposal of the PCQ to assume responsibility for the ‘North Queensland Stations’ as from 1 July 1923. *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia*, Session 14 (September 1922), p. 34; G.L. Shirreffs, ‘The missionary spirit’, *Presbyterian Outlook*, 4, 62 (October 1923), p. 12.

¹⁵ Rules 86-87, 89-92, State Assembly, Presbyterian Church of Australia, *Constitution and rules and forms of procedure Queensland* (Melbourne: Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1925), pp. 154-159; The 1951 rules prescribed: ‘The Committee has the control and oversight of the Missions of the Church to the Aboriginals, and all matters relating thereto; the appointment and direction of Ministers, and Missionaries, and all other Agents employed therein...the direction of matters relating to communal life on the Mission Stations, and the material advancement of the people; the administration of funds raised for the Missions and of grants from the Governments for education, relief, and other social services.’ Rule 105, State Assembly, Presbyterian Church of Australia, *Standing orders and rules and forms of procedure Queensland*, [1951], p. 60.

¹⁶ *Minutes of Proceedings of the State General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 99 (14-22 May, 1946), pp. 58-60.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁸ Noel Loos, ‘Concern and contempt: Church and missionary attitudes towards Aborigines in North Queensland in the nineteenth century’, Swain and Rose, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions*, p. 111.

Many [missionaries]...realise that only the Christian natives know fully the reason lying behind many of their customs and traditions, and can say whether a particular custom is or is not consistent with the principles of our Christian religion.¹⁹

The principal methods employed by the missionaries were the separation of children from their parents by housing them in dormitories, attendance at church services, regular school lessons and industrial training including 'gardening, carpentry and milking' for boys and 'domestic science and all kinds of housework' for girls.²⁰ Despite opposition from the missionaries, the people developed strategies to teach their children traditional ways, as Jean Jimmy recalled: 'We were not allowed to talk lingo...But my Mother taught me some of our culture....She knew all the history of the different tribes.'²¹

In addition to cottages built immediately to the south of the mission compound, in 1905 Hey had established a village [sometimes known as Musgrave outstation] for married couples about four miles (6.4 kilometres) south of the mission 'where more suitable agricultural land was available' and this was expanded to a second outstation in the vicinity of Red Beach in 1907.²² A training farm was developed at the Batavia outstation (now known as Batavia Landing) fifteen miles (24 kilometres) south of Mapoon in 1911, where 'boys after leaving school...received...preparation for settling down later on their own farms', however within ten years it failed as an agricultural venture.²³ The overall layout of Mapoon changed little between Hey's departure and 1963. The only surviving plans of the mission were made by N.F. Nelson in 1936, who listed thirteen cottages in a village near the mission compound, twenty-one cottages and a church at the [Musgrave] outstation, as well as a cottages at a farm near Red Beach. (Plans One and Two)²⁴

¹⁹ Loos, 'Concern and contempt', pp. 109-110; J.N. Hey, *A brief history of the Presbyterian Church's mission enterprise among the Australian Aborigines* (Sydney: New Press, 1931), p. 21.

²⁰ Hey, *A brief history* p. 13.

²¹ Jean Jimmy, 'The mission at Mapoon started' in Roberts, *The Mapoon story by the Mapoon people*, p. 7; Jean was a respected custodian of traditional knowledge and was consulted by the Australian Army during the 1980s when they were cataloguing Aboriginal bush foods in the Mapoon area. Les Hiddins, 'Training to survive: The survival resources of continental Australia', *Army Training News*, 12 (April 1984), pp. 27-30.

²² Hey, *A brief history*, p. 13; The village was also known as Musgrave agricultural settlement and the land was divided into 'five or more acre blocks bounded in front by a fringe of mangrove'. J. N. Hey, *A visit to Mapoon* (Sydney: Presbyterian W.M.A., 1923), p. 28; 'Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1905', *QPP*, 2 (1906), p. 936; In his report for 1907, Hey referred to the outstation being developed at Nowmanya [now referred to as Rugapayn or Red Beach], '7 miles [11 kilometres] south of Mapoon'. 'Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year 1907', *QPP*, 3 (1908), p. 944.

²³ 'Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines of the year 1911', *QPP*, 3 (1912), p. 1019; Hey, *A brief history*, p. 13; In a 1953 report it was stated that the 'fact that old Louis, a Samoan therefore a natural gardener could not make a success of it speaks for itself'. W.F. MacKenzie, Aurukun Mission, Report on investigations at Mapoon, and discussion with Director of Native Affairs at Thursday Island regarding engine for "Reliance", 14 July 1953, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁴ N.F. Nelson, Record of visit to mission stations 1936, Fry MSS 57/-, Manuscript Collection, Fryer Library.

With considerable vision for his time, Hey attempted to secure title to individual plots of land for each Aboriginal family. He wrote in 1915:

We regret that, so far, no progress has been made towards allotment of lands to the natives in severalty [individual or unshared tenure]. If this were done, we believe the owners would make still better progress.²⁵

Hey's proposal, described in a Lands Department memo in 1919, was to lease twenty-four lots of ten acres [four hectares] each under section 185 (2) of the *Land Act 1910* and a department official noted that the 'purpose of the proposition' was 'to give fillip to the industry of the proposed lessees (inmates of the Mission)'.²⁶ The department's advice indicated that such leases could be issued but approval was refused, by either the Home Department or the Minister for Lands, for reasons unstated.²⁷ If the church had pursued the matter further, possession of the leases may have assisted the Mapoon people in 1957 when Comalco was seeking a mining lease over reserve lands. The Aboriginal residents and the church had no legal title with which to bargain against a litigiously-minded mining corporation.²⁸

There are conflicting accounts about the state of Mapoon during the 1930s which reflect selection of unsuitable staff by the committee and poor leadership provided by the missionaries.²⁹ G.K. Kirke, Convener of the CMA, lamented in a report on his visit there in 1934 that the people were 'dispirited and depressed', that mission gardens were overgrown and 'many of the people were finding it difficult to get enough to eat, with a further result that many of the men had to leave the station in search of work'.³⁰ Kirke considered that a 'uniform policy of management, based on Mr. Hey's methods should not be departed from', and that 'Superintendents should not be allowed to follow out personal whims'.³¹

²⁵ 'Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the year 1915', *QPP*, 3 (1916-1917), p. 1740.

²⁶ Proposed Leases under Section 185 (2) Parts of Mapoon Mission Station, 28 November 1919, Reserve File 91-14 Part 1, Box 167, Transfer 1726/1, QSA; Section 185 (2) of the *Land Act 1910* provided that: '...the trustees of a reserve...may lease the whole or part of any land under their control subject to' certain conditions including approval of the Minister for Lands. *Land Act 1910* (Qld).

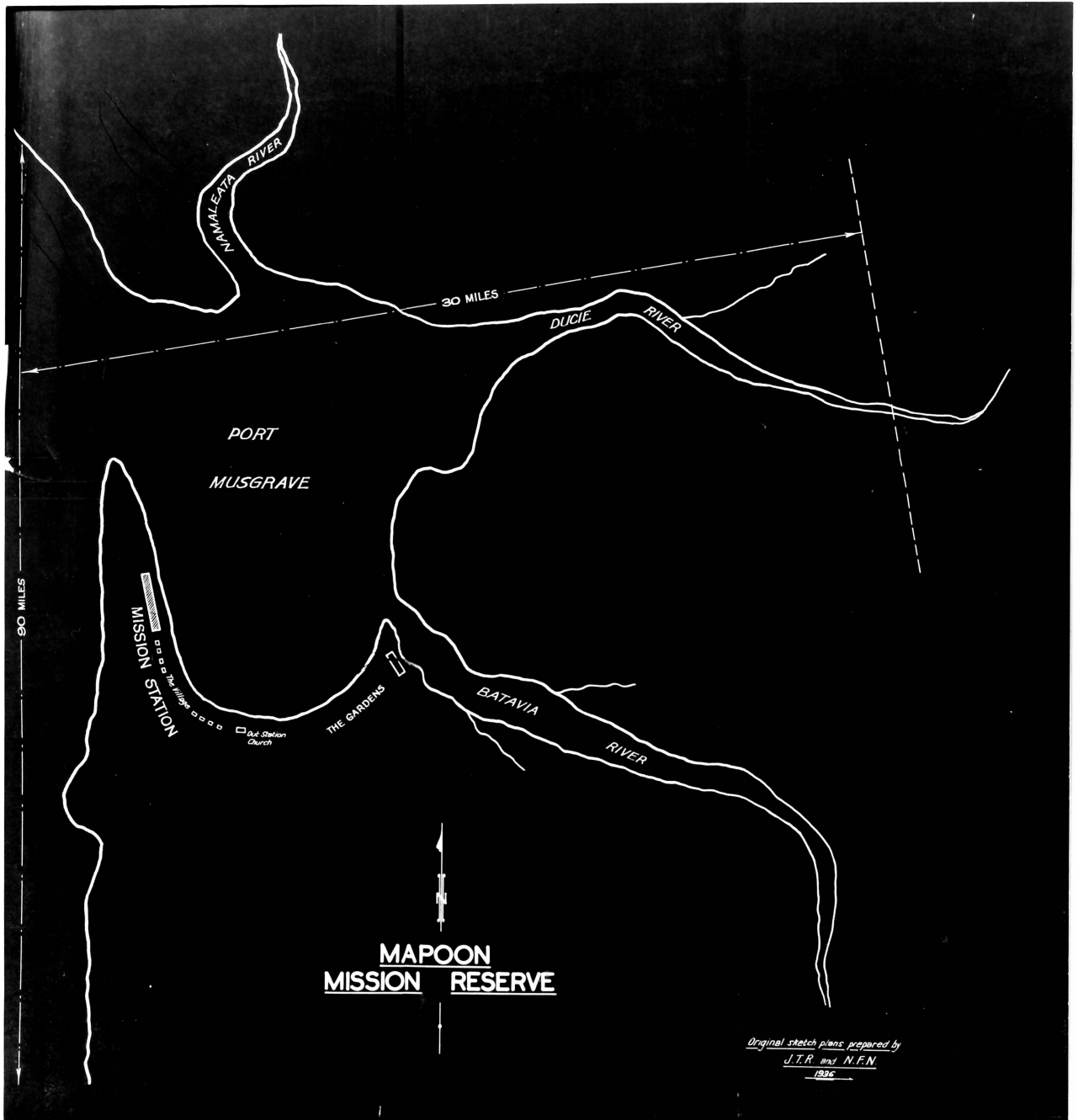
²⁷ Proposed Leases under Section 185 (2) Parts of Mapoon Mission Station, 28 November 1919, Reserve File 91-14 Part 1, Box 167, Transfer 1726/1, QSA.

²⁸ Comalco's insistence on obtaining legal title to Aboriginal reserve land was stated by Maurice Mawby at the first meeting with church officials. Notes of a conference with representatives of the Presbyterian Church and Mawby Consolidated Zinc Corporation, held at the office of the Minister for Health and Home Affairs (Hon. W.M. Moore, M.L.A.) on Thursday, 28th February, 1957, at 10 a.m., DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁹ Until 1940 the committee did not even require a staff candidate to undergo a medical examination prior to appointment. 'Report of Committee on Missions to the Aboriginals', *Minutes of Proceedings of the State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church State of Queensland* Session 93 (14-22 May 1940), p. 74.

³⁰ G.K. Kirke, Report to the Aboriginal Mission Committee of the Visit of the Convener to the mission stations situated in the Gulf of Carpentaria, August-October 1934, BOEMAR Records, Box MLK 2530, ML MSS 1893, Add on 1173, Mitchell Library.

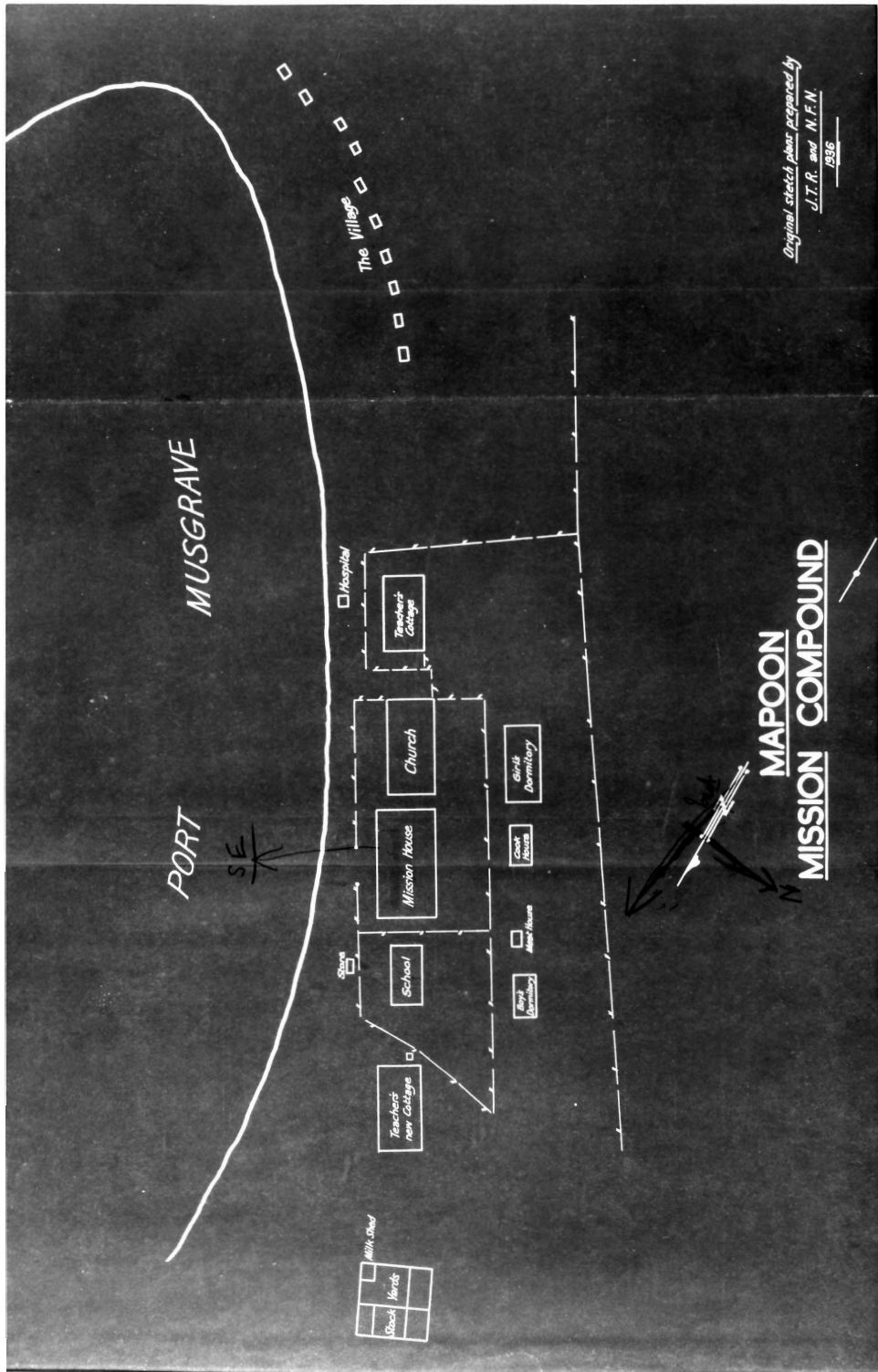
³¹ *Ibid.*



Plan One. General Layout of Mapoon Mission, Outstation and Farm, 1936.

[From a blueprint contained in N.F. Nelson's report].³²

³² N.F. Nelson, Record of visit to mission stations 1936, Fry MSS 57/-, Manuscript Collection, Fryer Library.



Plan Two. Mapoon Mission Compound, 1936.
 [From a blueprint contained in N.F. Nelson's report].³³

³³ N.F. Nelson, Record of visit to mission stations 1936, Fry MSS 57/-, Manuscript Collection, Fryer Library.

He suggested this should be reinforced by triennial visits from CMA representatives.³⁴ Two years later N.F. Nelson reported more optimistically on Mapoon to the CMA:

All the cottages at the outstation have been built and purchased by the natives....Many men go...to Thursday Island...for work and some earn good money; portion of which is allotted each month to their families on the station....The whole station is well organised and being older than the others can be run more on the lines of a settled charge in the South.³⁵

Pre-war Tension Between Church and State

In his study of the Gulf missions from 1937 to 1947, Frank White declared that the church lacked policies and strategies for the work of its Gulf missions, 'especially with respect to the relationship between Church and State'.³⁶ White also suggested that the mission staff 'took on the role of buffer in the complex network of tensions that existed between Church, State and Community' while attempting to discharge their evangelical responsibilities to the church.³⁷

The relationship with the government was twofold: the CMA received 'almost half of the total budgeted expenses for the maintenance of the four missions' from the state, and the missionaries in charge of stations were appointed as superintendents for each reserve under section nine of the *Protection Act*, which made them accountable to the Director of Native Affairs for matters such as discipline, travel outside the reserve and entry to the reserve.³⁸ White declared that the church was incapable of differentiating between its spiritual and temporal roles during the 1930s and 1940s and he claimed that the church 'failed to exercise a radically independent, Gospel-centred ministry to the people it sought to serve'.³⁹ It could be argued that one of the reasons for this was that the church was unable to afford the luxury of employing two people for the separate roles of the ordained minister and the reserve superintendent at each of its missions. There was also strong resistance by some church elders to direct state involvement on the missions, which prevented the appointment of a

³⁴ G.K. Kirke, Report to the Aboriginal Mission Committee of the Visit of the Convener to the mission stations situated in the Gulf of Carpentaria, August-October 1934, BOEMAR Records, Box MLK 2530, ML MSS 1893, Add on 1173, Mitchell Library.

³⁵ N.F. Nelson, Record of visit to mission stations 1936, Fry MSS 57/-, Manuscript Collection, Fryer Library.

³⁶ Francis D. White, Church and state in Presbyterian missions Gulf of Carpentaria: 1937-1947, MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1994, p. 23. White's was the only academic study of the PCQ's missions in the 1930s and 1940s which was located during research for this thesis.

³⁷ White, Church and state in Presbyterian missions, p. 56.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44; *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939* (Qld.).

³⁹ White, Church and state, p. 74.

government superintendent even if the government had been prepared to find the funds to do so. The latter position was firmly expressed by Hey in 1931:

It is...certain that the Government Settlements...do not solve the native problem. It is not a system or a certain method that is required in dealing with a superstitious people, but a Christian atmosphere in which a deepening and ever-widening knowledge and practice of Christian ethics is possible.⁴⁰

By maintaining this stance the church placed a heavy burden on its missionaries, whose positions as government superintendents required 'voluminous correspondence and reports...done at night after long hours of strenuous toil' which prevented them from spending more time on their 'spiritual and moral' work.⁴¹

White's focus on the church's financial dependence on the state ignored the inadequacies of mission staff in areas such as budgetary management and business principles. In 1940 the CMA recorded serious problems with the indebtedness of Mapoon and Aurukun mission stations to a Thursday Island firm.⁴² The committee considered that this was due to unemployment caused by the disruption of industries which relied on markets in China and Europe, both affected by war, and also the 'lack of revenue-producing work' except some gardening and timber cutting on the missions.⁴³ The missionaries had been unwise in employing men on unproductive work when the mission lacked the revenue to pay them.⁴⁴ Although these were immediate factors, the greater problems appear to have been the extended lack of financial support by Presbyterian congregations, unavailability of skilled staff and the poor management processes used by the CMA.⁴⁵ Because of difficulties with staff relationships and finances at Mapoon in late 1939, Rev. Roy McLelland was replaced by a layman, Captain Frank Cane, who previously had worked as industrial missionary at Mapoon in 1935 followed by a term at Aurukun.⁴⁶ Cane was to serve as superintendent throughout the war years and until 1948.

⁴⁰ Hey, *Brief history*, p. 28.

⁴¹ Secretary for Missions to Rev. H.C. Matthews, Secretary, Board of Missions, 17 June 1941, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1941, QPHR.

⁴² *Minutes of Proceedings of the State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church State of Queensland*, Session 93 (14-22 May 1940), p. 75.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ In 1938 the committee recorded 'a very serious falling off in the giving of our people'. 'Report of the Committee on Missions to the Aboriginals', *Minutes of Proceedings of the State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia State of Queensland* Session 91 (10-18 May 1938), p. 79. Bardon considered that staff shortages made 'difficult continuity of policy on the stations' and frequent changes in committee convenership were similarly disruptive. Bardon, *Centenary history*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ Rev. Roy McLelland had worked as an 'accountant' (possibly an unqualified bookkeeper) at *Merluna* Station near Weipa during the 1920s, then studied theology in Melbourne before taking up his first missionary posting at Mapoon on 24 December 1934. In view of Mapoon's later financial difficulties, it is hard to believe that he was a

The Second World War And Its Aftermath

Until the commencement of hostilities with Japan in December 1941, the Second World War (1939-1945) had little effect on the way the Presbyterian missions operated. In order to improve the 'efficient working' of its mission stations, the CMA introduced new regulations in May 1940 which, apart from describing conditions of service and restrictions on personal business dealings, gave a sketchy outline of the duties of missionary staff and provided no guidelines on the temporal role of the superintendents such as their accountabilities under the *Protection Act*. The duties description was:

All members of the staff on each station are expected to confer regularly concerning the general working of the station....Where there are two married Missionaries on one station, the wife of the Missionary in Charge shall act as matron, and the wife of the assistant shall take charge of the school (i.e. where there is no teacher appointed) or as may otherwise be mutually arranged....Missionaries are to furnish reports to the Committee as may be required.⁴⁷

A patrol report by the Protector of Aboriginals in 1941 was critical of several key aspects of Mapoon mission's operations which demonstrated discrepancies between the government's required standards and their implementation by the church.⁴⁸ At the same time the CMA, driven by the pressures of financial debt, was considering whether Mapoon should be handed over to the government.⁴⁹ Although this was an option which the committee aired publicly to awaken Presbyterian congregations 'to a sense of danger' for the mission's future, its secretary claimed that the proposal was 'purely academic'.⁵⁰ Its approach brought short-term success when the government provided increased grants for food, the Queensland churches gave extra donations and the PCA's Board of Missions offered financial assistance.⁵¹

qualified accountant. *Presbyterian Outlook*, 17, 7 (January 1935), p. 12 and 17, 9 (March 1935), p. 11; Secretary for Missions to Rev. R. McLelland, 21 March 1939, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1939, QPHR; Frank Alan Cane had 'skipped vessels in many parts of the world' and had experience as a farmer in the Tweed district of NSW. *Presbyterian Outlook*, 17, 10 (April 1935), p. 11; C.D. Sydney, Report on Mapoon Mission Station, 5 March 1940, CMA/CF, 1940, QPHR.

⁴⁷ 'Report of Committee on Missions to the Aboriginals', *Minutes of Proceedings of the State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church State of Queensland*, Session 93 (14-22 May 1940), pp. 77-78.

⁴⁸ Protector of Aboriginals, Thursday Island to Director of Native Affairs, Brisbane, Report on patrol to Mapoon mission, 4 August 1941, DNAO File 6G/3, Box 727, Transfer R 254, QSA; The Protector stated that the 'aged and indigent who could not care for themselves...were being issued approximately half flour rations, no meat (they get bones once a week) and no dripping', because the superintendent was unaware of the 'prescribed scale of rations' under the *Protection Act's* regulations, while in the school 'the slates were in a deplorable condition' and the desks were 'so rickety that no child could be expected to write correctly on them.'

⁴⁹ Secretary for Missions to Rev. H.C. Matthew, Secretary, Board of Missions, 17 June 1941, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1941, QPHR.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*; H.C. Matthew, Board of Missions, Melbourne to Rev. D.A. Brown, 10 June 1941, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1941, QPHR.

By 1942 the church and its missions were feeling the full effects of a threatened enemy invasion. Japanese air raids on Horn Island in March 1942 were followed by evacuation of non-Aboriginal females, children and aged staff from the missions.⁵² Despite expressions of doubt about the loyalty of Cape York Aboriginal people by one Army intelligence officer, the church strongly defended their mission people.⁵³ Several incidents involving allied aircraft near Mapoon reinforced the church's stand. In September 1942, a United States Army Air Force (USAAF) B-17 Flying Fortress bomber of the 93rd Bomber Squadron, returning from operations in the Solomon Islands, crashed near the Pennefather River.⁵⁴ People from Weipa and Mapoon were involved in the crew's rescue and were instrumental in saving their lives.⁵⁵ Four Mapoon men served in the Royal Australian Engineers Water Transport Squadron and Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, at least two served in or were attached to the Navy, while others were members of the Civil Construction Corps.⁵⁶

Military historian, Bob Hall, who made a detailed analysis of the contribution of Aborigines and Islanders during the Second World War, highlighted the importance of the war as a catalyst for changing their lives:

War service had given them a taste for equality and a sense of having fulfilled the duty of the citizen....their service training had developed their command and organisational skills. Many had met black American servicemen and had learned of racism as it was practiced in the United States and of the civil rights movement...These factors tended to result in Aborigines and Islanders challenging white control of their lives. They had become more assertive – more politicised – in their demand for 'citizen's rights'.⁵⁷

The church on the other hand reacted negatively to this new independent spirit and instead of harnessing the ex-servicemen's new skills, expressed concern about the problems it could

⁵² Geraldine MacKenzie, *Aurukun diary: Forty years with the Aborigines* (Melbourne, Vic.: Aldersgate Press, 1981), pp. 101-104.

⁵³ H.B. Beaman, Native missions Thursday Island and Peninsula, Extract from Queensland L of C file no. F55/16, undated, Security Service Files, CRS A 373, Australian Archives (AA); D. Galloway, Moderator, PCQ to Minister for National Security, Canberra, 20 January 1943, Security Service Files, CRS A 373, AA.

⁵⁴ Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, *QPD*, 179, 1942-43, pp. 785-787; USAAF, History of the 93rd Squadron, 19th Group from December 8, 1941 to January 31, 1943, Microfilm A0572, Air Force Historical Research Agency, USA.

⁵⁵ Frank Cane to [D.A.] Brown, 11 November 1942, CMA/CF, 1942, QPHR; 'Aborigines save lives of airmen', *Courier Mail*, 30 October 1942, p. 3. The following February, in a powerful expression of community spirit the whole mission population was involved in towing a RAAF Beaufort bomber (A9-157) many kilometres along the beach to preserve the aircraft for eventual recovery. A.H. Cobley [*sic* - Cobby], Air Commodore, RAAF North Eastern Area to Secretary, Queensland Presbyterian Church, 7 April 1943, DNAO File 1E/24, Box 314, Transfer R 254, QSA; Ralph Vincent Woodley, interview with author, Weipa, 6 July 1988; 7 Squadron Aircraft Accident Data form, Records, Information and Support Services – Air Force, Air Force Headquarters, Canberra.

⁵⁶ Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Director of Native Affairs, 14 December 1960, DNAO File 1A/543, Box 110, Transfer R 254, QSA; Woodley, interview with author, 1988.

⁵⁷ Robert A. Hall, *Fighters from the fringe: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders recall the Second World War* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1995), p. 196.

bring. In his committee's report to the 1946 General assembly, CMA convener David Galloway said: 'It was feared that their sojourn in the wider world and the high wages they received might cause them to become dissatisfied, and there is some evidence of this among a small number of half-castes'.⁵⁸ The following year he complained that the men had 'been influenced by agitators, while drinking and gambling have claimed victims'.⁵⁹ White declared that the Presbyterian church had 'failed to appreciate the gravity of the social and political consequences' of the war in contrast to the Church of England's Australian Board of Missions (ABM), whose chairman had criticised the lifestyle offered to Aboriginal people in missions and had issued a challenge to his missionaries to allow Aboriginal people to make their own decisions on how they would use the Christian Gospel.⁶⁰

Mapoon 1947-1954: Hopes Raised and Dashed

All of the missions suffered from the effects of war through unavailability of finance and materials to effect repairs on buildings and equipment. In response to a letter from C.D. Sydney in 1947 about the poor condition of the manse (superintendent's house) at Mapoon, the AFMC secretary wrote that if it could be 'made habitable for another 20 years it may see our interest in the place out. We have thought here for a long time that Mapoon should become a self-contained community within the next few years'.⁶¹ White interpreted the secretary's words to mean that the church 'was preparing to simply walk away from Mapoon', however earlier correspondence from the CMA secretary of the period does not support such a view.⁶² A more likely scenario was that the secretary was still considering the possibility of converting Mapoon from a mission and reserve to a normal community which was self-supporting.

⁵⁸ *Minutes of Proceedings of the State General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 99 (14-22 May 1946), p. 56.

⁵⁹ *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 100 (13-22 May 1947), p. 54.

⁶⁰ White, *Church and state*, p. 114; Noel Loos, 'From church to state: The Queensland Government take-over of Anglican missions in North Queensland', *Aboriginal History*, 15, 1 (1991), p. 74. Although White's thesis wandered beyond the chronological cut-off of 1947, his research did not include PCQ files held in the Mitchell Library. A 1950 report to the AFMC showed some in the church were starting to think strategically when it stated: 'we must be prepared to...raise the standard of living and in effect teach and allow them to live more or less as we do here. We should be prepared with a long range policy with this end in view'. J.T. Robinson, Report on visit to stations 1950, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

⁶¹ Secretary for Missions to C.D. Sydney, Aurukun, 9 June 1947, Aurukun File, AFMC/CF, 1947, QPHR.

⁶² White, *Church and state*, p. 122; Surviving church records indicate that committee first considered transferring control of Mapoon to the government in 1941. Secretary for Missions to Rev. H.C. Matthew, Secretary, Board of Missions, 17 June 1941, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1941, QPHR.

Letters from Calder Allan, who had been appointed superintendent in 1948, indicate that he was serious about diversifying the commercial opportunities for the mission community in the late 1940s.⁶³ He mentioned the potential for timber sales to the Torres Strait, noted efforts to sell beef cattle from the mission's herd and reported favourably on other activities:

The hospital board [at Thursday Island] have agreed to take all the fish I can supply @ I/- [sic] a lb unboned....Now that the truck is running we are getting wood away again. Our plans are "to employ all the men who want to work over the wet on cutting cordwood". There is unlimited market for the wood and it will relieve our employment problem here.⁶⁴

By 1950, Allan had decided that the mission should be moved to a new site because it was 'absolutely useless trying to build any permanent buildings...on the shifting sand which comprises the whole of the present site'.⁶⁵ A report by the AFMC's business administrator, J.T. Robinson, enthusiastically supported Allan:

The site proposed is at a place they call Red Beach...about five miles [eight kilometres] from the present Station....There is plenty of good, fairly high, level ground and apparently abundance of fresh water....There is good anchorage in south east weather (better than the present site) and even better in north west weather....Mr. Allan estimates that with very little extra help he can shift the Mission in about eighteen months. I was much impressed with the idea - in fact I think we should ask the Government to build the various amenities they propose, on the new site.⁶⁶

According to DNA records, it appears that Robinson and James Winn from Weipa discussed the Mapoon site with the DNA in February 1951.⁶⁷ Winn questioned the suitability of the Red Beach site due to uncertain water supplies and said that the AFMC should 'give consideration to the half-castes' of Mapoon 'many of whom were capable of looking after themselves and should not be catered for to the extent of a new Mission as against the requirements of Aborigines on other Missions.' It probably appeared to the DNA that the missionaries and the AFMC were divided, which would have torpedoed any short-term redevelopment of the mission. By lobbying for the status quo at Mapoon, Winn hoped to attract more funds to his own community but in so doing laid the foundation for the DNA's later determination to close Mapoon completely.

⁶³ John Calder Allan had served in an army artillery unit in New Guinea during the war and was ordained in 1948. He was superintendent at Mapoon from November 1948 to August 1951 and returned to that role from March to December 1955. Allan was Moderator of the PCQ in 1971-72 and retired in 1975. Biography Files, QPHR.

⁶⁴ J.C. Allan, Mapoon to Secretary, Aboriginal Mission Committee, 25 August 1949, Unsorted files, AFMC/CF 1949, QPHR; Allan to Secretary, 26 September 1949, Unsorted files, AFMC/CF 1949, QPHR; Allan to Secretary, 17 November 1949, Unsorted files, AFMC/CF 1949, QPHR.

⁶⁵ Robinson, Report on visit to stations 1950, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Unsigned letter, re: Presbyterian Mission Matters to Under Secretary, DHHA, undated, [Filed between letters dated 8 January 1951 and 30 October 1951], DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.



Photograph One: Rev. John Calder Allan, Mapoon superintendent 1948-1951, 1955.



Photograph Two: Rev. James Bentley Hartshorn, Mapoon superintendent, 1948, 1954-55,
1955-56.

The plan for a new mission site lost its champions when Mrs Allan contracted poliomyelitis in mid-1951, which forced the Allans to leave Mapoon, and at the same time Robinson was stricken with serious illness.⁶⁸ AFMC Allan's replacement, George Holmes, was an experienced missionary who had served at Kunmunya mission in Western Australia.⁶⁹ He had been trying to transfer to Queensland since 1946 but had been rejected by the AFMC following a very unfavourable report from the APBM which regarded him as a 'neurotic and temperamental man'.⁷⁰ In 1950 the AFMC received advice from the General Secretary of the APBM that Holmes had ability and that he should have another chance, 'having in mind his temperament and training'.⁷¹ The decision by the AFMC to appoint Holmes to Mapoon was in hindsight most unwise, as he obviously had personality problems which eventually contributed to the destruction of the community spirit and sense of direction which the mission had enjoyed under Calder Allan's leadership.⁷² Matters came to a head on 10 June 1953 when twelve Mapoon men met with the Director of Native Affairs to complain about the superintendent's administration, particularly new rules restricting the number of horses which could be owned by individuals.⁷³ O'Leary asked Rev. Bill MacKenzie, Aurukun's experienced superintendent, to visit Mapoon and advise.⁷⁴ MacKenzie's report included an assessment of potential new mission sites – including Red Beach, Old Outstation, Batavia River Outstation and Coen River (Pennefather River).⁷⁵ Due to poor soil and difficult boat access, MacKenzie rejected all of these sites in favour of the existing location and concluded that unless the mission was properly staffed and resourced within a definite policy, it should be closed.⁷⁶ His separate advice to the AFMC made it clear that the situation was the 'culmination of...a succession of superintendents who had no policy and were incapable or lazy in forming one, with the notable exception of Calder Allan', but optimistically stated that

⁶⁸ *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 105 (13-21 May 1952), pp. 68-69.

⁶⁹ MacKenzie, *Road to Mowanjum*, p. 163.

⁷⁰ R.S. Byrnes to D.A. Brown, 12 September 1946, AFMC/CF, 1950, QPHR.

⁷¹ V.W. Coombes to Rev. J. McPhail, Secretary for Missions, AFMC/CF, 1950, QPHR.

⁷² The first sign of this was contained in a letter from assistant missionary, Len Hopkinson, who said that he and his wife would not stay at Mapoon 'much longer if we are to be subjected to any more autocracy, incompetency, selfishness as we have witnessed since joining the Gulf Mission Service'. Len Hopkinson, Mapoon to Mr McPhail, 12 October 1951, Stations File, AFMC/CF, 1951, QPHR.

⁷³ Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 15 June 1953, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁷⁴ Rev. William Frederick MacKenzie (1897-1972) was appointed superintendent of Aurukun in 1924 and retired in 1965. He and his wife, Geraldine, were regarded highly by the church and the Queensland government for their work at Aurukun. He was elected Moderator of the PCQ in 1949 and made a Commander of the British Empire in 1963. Geraldine MacKenzie's book on their time at Aurukun gives many insights to life on a Presbyterian mission station during that period. MacKenzie, *Aurukun diary*, Biography Files, QPHR.

⁷⁵ W.F. MacKenzie, Aurukun Mission, Report on investigations at Mapoon, and discussion with Director of Native Affairs at Thursday Island regarding engine for "Reliance", 14 July 1953, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

the government may be prepared to fund the transfer to another Mapoon site, provided it was considered 'a good proposition' by an expert on water, soil and timber.⁷⁷

During the 1950s Aboriginal people subject to the *Protection Act*, regardless of ethnic ancestry, were forced to accept the government's control over their lives and there was no recognition of Aboriginal people's traditional ties to the land. In a report to his superior, which was not conveyed to the church, O'Leary took the view that Mapoon should be closed and recommended a remarkable piece of paternalistic social engineering as his preferred solution to 'the problem of Mapoon Mission':

...transfer the half-caste inmates there to Weipa Mission and transfer the Aboriginals from Weipa and Mapoon, numbering probably 100, to Aurukun Mission, thus establishing two Missions with some prospect of industrial expansion as against the present policy of three Missions, one of which had no possibility...⁷⁸

In Brisbane, the AFMC also encountered controversy when its secretary, James McPhail, resigned publicly at the 1953 State Assembly in protest against the church's poor budgetary allocation towards its Aboriginal missions.⁷⁹ This reflected the Aboriginal committees' long-standing struggle to extract financial support from the mainstream Presbyterians, but it also demonstrated a fundamental weakness in the church's mission administration which assisted the government to maintain the upper hand in debates over Mapoon's future.⁸⁰

The following February, the new AFMC secretary, James Sweet, invited O'Leary to a conference with the committee to be held at Mapoon and sent him a 'Draft Policy for Mapoon' prepared by Calder Allan.⁸¹ The policy made no mention of closure and was modelled on the methods which Allan had begun earlier, emphasising the commercial opportunities which could be created by Mapoon's proximity to the Thursday Island market.⁸²

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Bill MacKenzie to McPhail, 1 July 1953, Dept. Native Affairs File, AFMC/CF, 1953, QPHR.

⁷⁸ DNA to Under Secretary, DHHA, 7 July 1953, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁷⁹ 'Church evading responsibility', *Cairns Post*, 20 May 1953, p. 5; The assembly minutes recorded: 'The Queensland Church is failing bitterly in this common duty to its Missionaries'. *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 106 (12-20 May 1953), p. 67.

⁸⁰ Poor support continued to plague the AFMC in later years. An article on the 1957 congregational appeal to Queensland Presbyterians stated that, although most churches had filled their quotas of donations to be raised, sixteen congregations had failed to reach even 'half the amount required of them'. 'The story the figures tell', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 41, 9 (March 1958), p. 3.

⁸¹ J.R. Sweet to DNA, 24 February 1954 [and attachment] Mapoon Mission: Suggestions for a progressive policy, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁸² *Ibid.*



Photograph Three: Rev. V.W. Coombes, General Secretary, Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 1946-1958.



Photograph Four: Rev. J.R. Sweet, Secretary, Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee, 1953-1963.

O'Leary did not record his response on file nor the government's brief to its agricultural advisor S.E. Stephens, a horticulturist from the Department of Agriculture and Stock in Cairns, whose advice was used to demolish Allan's proposal at the Mapoon conference.⁸³ However, it is interesting to speculate that O'Leary may have viewed the proposal as a potential competitor to agricultural industry being developed on the government's Bamaga reserve at the time.⁸⁴

Preparatory to the AFMC's northern conference, representatives of the committee met with the Minister for Health and Home Affairs, W.M. Moore in March to discuss Mapoon and other missions.⁸⁵ The Minister indicated that some of the missions could be amalgamated to reduce costs, thus adding political weight to the views of his public servants regarding Mapoon. On 8 and 9 April, church representatives including Coombes, Sweet, and the superintendents of Mapoon, Aurukun and Mornington Island met with government representatives at Mapoon to discuss the mission's future. O'Leary's minutes recorded that the reports by Allan and MacKenzie were discussed and the conference formed the opinion that 'there was no prospect of financial remuneration to the Mission or remunerative employment of the men' and that the mission's future was determined by the lack of agricultural potential of the area.⁸⁶ Calder Allan was not present to defend his commercial plans and the minutes indicate that they were all rejected without significant defence from any attendee. O'Leary had arranged an examination of the Red Beach and mission areas by S.E. Stephens, whose one and a half page report indicates that he consulted with church

⁸³ Stephen Ernest Stephens (1901-1988) had served with the Department of Agriculture and Stock in north Queensland since 1927. He was well known in the Cairns district for his work with horticultural societies. *Historical Society, Cairns, North Queensland Inc. Bulletin*, 341 (November 1988), p. 2.

⁸⁴ In 1948, the government had purchased 44,500 acres [16,390 hectares] of land on far northern Cape York Peninsula to establish the Bamaga community and this project was championed by O'Leary. Director of Native Affairs to Hon. A Jones, Minister for Health and Home Affairs, 4 October 1948, DNAO File 9M/10, Box 870, Transfer R 254, QSA; 'Irish King of the native isles', *People*, 4 June 1952, pp. 17-19. The DNA's 1951 annual report states that 'future policy of this area aims at greater development of general farming' with the aim of supplying Thursday Island. This and subsequent reports record that S.E. Stephens was the agricultural advisor to the Bamaga superintendent for several years. 'Native Affairs - Annual report of the Director of Native Affairs for the year ended 30th June, 1951', *QPP*, 2 (1951-52), p. 1100; 'Native Affairs - Annual report of Director of Native Affairs for the year ended 30th June, 1954', *QPP*, 2, (1954-55), p. 1055; Although Stephens was described by the DNA as a tropical agricultural expert, the Under Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Stock stated in 1958 that Stephens' knowledge of the Bamaga area was 'limited to fruit and vegetable crops'. Under Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Stock, to Under Secretary, DHHA, 18 July 1958, DNAO File 9M/7, Box 868, Transfer R254, QSA.

⁸⁵ Notes taken at a deputation from the Presbyterian Mission Committee, which waited on the Hon. W.M. Moore, M.L.A., Minister for Health & Home Affairs, at 11.30 A.M. on the 24th March, 1954. DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁸⁶ Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 28 April 1954, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

representatives but did not seek the opinions of any Aboriginal residents.⁸⁷ Stephens made a cursory visual inspection of the main mission locality and Red Beach only and did not conduct any soil tests, which would have been expected in a scientific report.⁸⁸ His comments on the prospective water supply amounted to nothing more than a layman's opinion, as drilling and assessment by a hydrological engineer would have been required to determine the groundwater capacity of the area:

At Red Beach a small well was seen....it appeared to be draining from a swamp area some distance behind the Red Beach land and would undoubtedly be at a very low level of flow when the dry season became advanced⁸⁹

The church's minutes gave a different perspective: that while water, accessibility and productivity were key issues 'above all these considerations, there was the question of the constitution of Mapoon's population'.⁹⁰ Asked to describe the Queensland government's policy, O'Leary was reported to have replied that present: 'policy in Native Affairs was Education of [t]he Native Pop'n [population] with a view to Assimilation over a period of 15 to 20 years'.⁹¹ As discussed in Chapter One, the conference decided that of those residents who did not transfer to Weipa or other missions, the remainder would be expected to assimilate into Australian society elsewhere.⁹² There was no discussion on how such assimilation could occur, nor any doubts raised about the residents' likely reactions to the proposal. At a superintendents' conference at Aurukun a week later, there was unanimity that

⁸⁷ Under Secretary, DHHA to Secretary, Foreign Missions Department, 18 May 1954, with attachment – Memorandum: Mapoon Mission from S.E. Stephens, Department of Agriculture and Stock, 28 April 1954, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR.

⁸⁸ O'Leary apparently was well aware of the technology available for analysing soils, as in February 1954 thirteen soil samples from Bamaga were sent by the DNA for analysis to the Department of Agriculture and Stock. Director of Native Affairs to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 18 February 1954, DNAO File 9M/10, Box 870, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁸⁹ Under Secretary, DHHA to Secretary, Foreign Missions Department, 18 May 1954, with attachment – Memorandum: Mapoon Mission from S.E. Stephens, Department of Agriculture and Stock, 28 April 1954, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR; A study of the groundwater hydrology at Weipa in 1959-60 indicated that 'on the laterite plateau areas of the west side of Cape York Peninsula...rainfall infiltrates through...the bauxite deposits, to join a flow of unconfined groundwater to the sea'. T.G. Chapman, 'Groundwater hydrology of the Weipa Peninsula, North Queensland', *Journal of the Institution of Engineers*, 35 (July-August, 1963), p. 181. It is this groundwater which has provided the Weipa mine and a population of 3,500 with reliable water since the 1960s. Map Two clearly shows that the Andoom Land System, which Godwin described as 'low level plateau', extends to the vicinity of Red Beach, which may indicate similar groundwater hydrology to Weipa. M.D. Godwin, Land units of the Weipa region of Australia's Cape York Peninsula, p. 72.

⁹⁰ Report of Mapoon Conference held at Mapoon on Thursday and Friday, 8th and 9th April, 1954, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 107 (11-19 May 1954), p. 68.

the 'key to the active co-operation of the Mapoon folk was in the provision of better education for the children'.⁹³

When the Moderator of the Queensland church visited Mapoon he attended a meeting of residents where he was handed a statement which read:

All Mapoon people don't agree to go to Weipa For [*sic*] Weipa is not the best. Why can't our children be educated here at Mapoon? What about our property we own? From all the people of Mapoon. Signed by Councillors. Nicholas Wheeler. Andrew Archie.⁹⁴

On behalf of the church, Sweet replied to the councillors that he was not willing to answer them until he could discuss 'these problems' with them personally.⁹⁵

The people of Mapoon had made their views known, but the church's failure to assess their likely reaction to closure prior to the April 1954 conference and Sweet's patronising response to their questions was characteristic of the AFMC's general misjudgement of the strong ties which the people had for their homeland. Church ineptitude, decisions based upon the government's earlier inadequate analysis of alternative local sites such as Red Beach and the depression caused by church and government neglect of community infrastructure would lead to a bitter struggle with the residents and failure of the church's evangelical mission over the next nine years.

⁹³ Resolutions of the Superintendents Conference held at Aurukun on Wednesday and Thursday, 14th and 15th April, 1954, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

⁹⁴ Andrew Archie and Nicholas Wheeler to Rowellyn Ramsay, Moderator, 25 August 1954, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1954, QPHR.

⁹⁵ Secretary, AFMC to Nicholas Wheeler and Andrew Archie, 5 November 1954, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1954, QPHR.

Chapter Three. Church and State, 1955-1963

Once the church and government had agreed on a policy to close Mapoon, it soon became evident that the Aboriginal residents were not in favour of the plan. From 1955 to mid-1959, the AFMC approached the merger with increasing caution while the government grew frustrated with the committee's intransigence. Although, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, the church's decision-making was affected strongly by the advent of the mining companies after 1955, several other factors contributed to its capitulation to the government in 1960. Voluminous government and church files contain very detailed accounts of the negotiations between the two parties between 1955 and 1963, however the size of the records made it impossible to discuss every aspect of the relationship in the thesis.¹ This chapter examines some of the key issues and actions over the nine years prior to 1963. These include the contrast in superintendents' management styles which, coupled with high staff turnover, led to the disaffection of the residents against the church, the insensitivity of Sweet and Filmer towards the residents and Killoran's manoeuvres to forge an alliance with the church. The chapter concludes with the transfer of missions administration from Brisbane to Sydney in 1961 and the development of organised opposition by the residents.

Superintendents 1954-1958: Sympathy to Antagonism

When Rev. Jim Hartshorn arrived at Mapoon in late November 1954 to temporarily manage the mission he found a demoralised community badly affected by his predecessor's poor management.² He wrote that his first steps would be 'to make the place clean and tidy, to effect some temporary repairs, and to endeavour to quiet the people's unrest & gain their confidence'.³ At a meeting soon afterwards to discuss the proposed merger with Weipa, Hartshorn received a strong statement from Jackson Mamoose that the people would not

¹ Rosalind Kidd's thesis discussed the government's involvement in the closure in some detail, consequently it was considered inappropriate to provide extensive analysis of issues already covered in her dissertation. Rosalind Kidd, *Regulating bodies: Administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840 - 1988*, PhD thesis, Griffith University, 1994, pp. 494-519; Similar discussion was contained in her unpublished paper. Rosalind Kidd, *Hidden agendas*. [Unpublished paper prepared for the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), Brisbane], [1992].

² Jim Hartshorn to Sweet, 22 November 1954, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1954, QPHR.

³ *Ibid.*

leave Mapoon and the church could do what it liked.⁴ Although Hartshorn reacted to this by silencing and later disciplining Mamoose, the missionary soon changed his opinion, as he wrote to Sweet:

...with the exception of a few families, the people here are strongly opposed to moving. They have suggested that they would be willing to work hard to shift the Mission to a site behind the outstation, which I inspected this week. To say the least, this site is surprising in its possibilities....I must admit that the people here have my sympathy.⁵

Calder Allan resumed the superintendency in February and his letters soon reflected a happier community. He reported positively about Jackson Mamoose's repairs to the church building and said that he had 'never seen so much activity about their homes. Lots of them have their own garden and we have been receiving greens from the village'.⁶ Sweet unrealistically replied that the garden activity indicated that the people's morale had 'been spurred on by the possibility of a change to Weipa'.⁷ In his report to the State Assembly in May 1956, he declared that he and Rev. V. Coombes, the APBM General Secretary, had held discussions with representatives of the population who repeated their opposition, but the AFMC were still 'committed to the merger'.⁸ This was in spite of being told bluntly by Calder Allan that the people did not support the church's invitation to move to Weipa and to think otherwise was 'wishful thinking and not facing the facts'.⁹

Mapoon was soon to face a bewildering turnover of superintendents which, combined with the uncertainty created by the advent of mineral exploration nearby, left the residents disillusioned with their church. The newly ordained Rev. Jim Hartshorn resumed duty in December 1955, then transferred to Wotjulum mission, Western Australia in April 1956. He was replaced by the former Thursday Island mission agent, Peter Fletcher, until Frank Green's appointment in June 1957. Rev. Coombes shared Sweet's concern about staffing and remarked:

⁴ Jim Hartshorn to Sweet, 22 January 1955, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ J.C. Allan to Sweet, 30 March 1955, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR.

⁷ Secretary, AFMC to Allan, 20 April 1955, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR.

⁸ *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 109 (15-24 May 1956), p. 65.

⁹ J.C. Allan to Secretary for Missions, 29 September 1955, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR; Allan and Hartshorn were not the only Mapoon missionaries to express such views. Rev. Roy McLelland had responded to an earlier committee's suggestion of moving people away from Mapoon by stating that the transfer of 'Mapoon fullblood natives' to Weipa would be 'tragic for them' because their 'country means more' to them than to non-Aborigines. He argued that 'Mapoon was their country long before the halfcastes were brought' to Mapoon and considered that whoever originated the idea either did not know the people or had 'little love for the Abo [*sic*] or care for his welfare'. R. McLelland, The Manse, Charlton to Mr Brown, 28 July 1941, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1941, QPHR.

One of the greatest disabilities of Presbyterian Mission work has been the hiatus and sometimes the shock inflicted on the Native people at the time of a change in Superintendentship....The sense of insecurity and consequent indifference to progress among the people which follows from constant changing of Missionary personnel and therefore of approach and local policy, is understandable but very regrettable....If we could select the right persons...and give them some anthropological study to be followed by a period of at least six months (preferably longer) as Assistant to the experienced Superintendents, we would have successors with reasonable prospect of doing the job as it ought to be done.¹⁰

Neither Fletcher nor Green were ordained missionaries and the former had health problems which required hospitalisation several times during his tenure. At times the strain of running the mission inspired strongly-worded letters to the AFMC:

I want to advise you all, that since my wife's departure..I have worked every day and all day in work ranging from continual radio work [Mapoon's only communications were by radio to Thursday Island], attending sick people....we have had more court cases than number of people almost, over matters which would send any one of you grey....I would like some of you to just follow around for one week, and see how long it can be reasonably expected for one to carry on at this pace and pressure.¹¹

Such a letter does not reflect a leader in control of the mission or a committee able to plan its stations' staffing adequately.

The Church's Disillusionment: The Beginning of the Unholy Coalition

In May 1958, Mapoon's last superintendent, Rev. Garth Filmer took control of the mission. He had been ordained in December 1957 and was supposed to attend an anthropology course prior to field training at Aurukun, but the church was unable to spare him the time.¹² Within twelve months of Filmer's appointment, the Mapoon people were openly hostile to him and his wife. Notes taken by Sweet following a visit to Mapoon in June 1959 recorded complaints against the discipline being imposed by the Filmers.¹³ Sweet perceived these views as rebellious and answered all questions 'in favour of' the missionaries, reserving his strongest condemnation for 'the argumentative attitude of the Councillors' whom he described as lacking 'loyalty'.¹⁴ His comments on the situation indicate that he was unwilling to learn from the positive community spirit which Calder Allan had encouraged, even in the

¹⁰ General Secretary, APBM to Rev. J.R. Sweet, 15 January 1957, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

¹¹ Peter Fletcher to Rev. J.R. Sweet, 16 January 1957, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

¹² V.W. Coombes to Rev. J.R. Sweet, 26 November 1957, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF, 1958, QPHR.

¹³ Report of Secretary on visit to Mapoon, June, 1959, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

difficult aftermath of Holmes' incumbency, compared with the negative atmosphere created by the Filmers. Sweet saw the problem as 'moral and religious' and considered that 'no effective progress' could be made while 'suspicions, distrust and prejudice of Committee, Government and Missionaries' remained.¹⁵

In early September, a party of government officials including the Director-General of Health, Dr A. Fryberg and the Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Patrick Killoran visited Mapoon and held a meeting with the residents. At the meeting, Jack Callope reiterated the people's opposition to moving, but Killoran apparently persuaded them to send representatives to inspect the Bamaga area.¹⁶ Fryberg commented in his report that if the government intended to assimilate the people, then the mission would have to be moved because it was in such a dilapidated and unhealthy state.¹⁷ Although he visited the Red Beach site, his rejection of this as an alternative was based on Stephens' 1954 report and not on health grounds.¹⁸ Two months later Killoran took Richard Luff, Milton Brown and Horace Bond on a tour of the northern Peninsula area, including Bamaga and Cowal Creek (Injinoo) and asked them to sign statements on their impressions.¹⁹ Their original handwritten statements indicate that although they were positive about the agricultural and housing potential of the area, they did not favour it as a source of traditional foods.²⁰

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Soon after his return to Brisbane, Sweet wrote to the Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs (DHHA) and urged the government to declare its policy on the future of Mapoon. James R. Sweet to Under Secretary, DHHA, 10 July 1959, DNAO File 1A/427, Box 92, Transfer R 254, QSA.

¹⁶ Director of Native Affairs to Secretary, AFMC, 15 October 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

¹⁷ Fryberg was particularly critical of the lack of sanitary facilities in the village, but did not acknowledge that neither the government nor the church had done anything to implement recommendations arising from earlier health inspections, including one by himself in 1949. [Copy of report to the Under Secretary, DHHA on] Mapoon Mission by A. Fryberg, 9 September 1959, DNAO 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; J.C. Allan, Mapoon to Mr Robinson, 5 September 1949, Unsorted files, AFMC/CF, 1949, QPHR; Abraham Fryberg was appointed Director-General of the Department of Health in 1947. He had spent most of his career in urban hospitals and army service. Ross Patrick, *A history of health & medicine in Queensland 1824-1960* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1987), p. 112.

¹⁸ [Copy of report to the Under Secretary, DHHA on] Mapoon Mission by A. Fryberg, 9 September 1959, DNAO 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

¹⁹ Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Rev. G. Filmer, 13 November 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁰ [Statements by] Horace Bond, Milton Brown and Constable Richard Luff, 11 November 1959, DNAO File 6D/25, A/69496, QSA.



Photograph Five: Left to right – Alan Hulme (Minister for Supply), Jack Callope (Chief Councillor, Mapoon mission) and Matthew Flinders, Mapoon, July 1959.



Photograph Six: Left to right – Isaac York and Dick Luff (Mission Policeman), Mapoon, July 1959.

Killoran arranged for an edited version of the men's reports, which did not include their reservations, as well as a copy of the original statements to be taken back to Mapoon for discussion.²¹ Killoran had earlier refused to accede to a private request from Callope and two others to remove Filmer from the mission. In a letter to Filmer enclosing the reports, Killoran stated that it had been made 'very clear' to Jackson Mamoose, Bond, Brown and Luff that there was no 'alteration in the status of Mapoon' and, as superintendent, Filmer was 'representing both the Church and the State as Protector of Aborigines'.²² In January 1960, Killoran met with Sweet in Brisbane and they agreed that 'no progress would be made' in their 'negotiations with the Mapoon people until representatives of the Department and the Committee presented a united front to the Mapoon people'.²³ The government made full use of the coalition which their staff had cemented with Filmer and Sweet to conduct a programme of attrition to remove Mapoon residents from their homeland.²⁴

During 1960 the church and government continued to debate Mapoon's future. At the State Assembly in May it was recorded that the AFMC wished to hold a conference at Mapoon to offer the people 'the opportunity' to move to 'Bamaga, Yarrabah, or even Weipa'. Members of the AFMC met with O'Leary a few weeks later and he reiterated the government's opposition to any new site near Mapoon, based upon Fryberg's comments the previous year.²⁵ As late as August 1960 Sweet still considered that the church should 'make strong representations' on behalf of the Mapoon people for a new community to be built at 'the Batavia River gardens just at the entrance of the Wenlock River to Port Musgrave'.²⁶ On 7 September, Sweet, Filmer and Killoran met at Mapoon to plan for a conference with the people the next day. Killoran outlined the government's proposal based upon re-establishment of Mapoon community near Bamaga, the offer of exemptions to those qualified and a new proposal to make small land holdings of about ten square miles [twenty-six square kilometres] available for selection from the mission reserve by Mapoon families interested in

²¹ The statements seemed to have had little impact, as the church recorded later that they 'were open to different interpretation'. 'Aboriginal and Foreign Missions', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 113 (10-18 May 1960), p. 76.

²² Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Rev. G. Filmer, 13 November 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²³ J.R. Sweet, Report of interview with Mr Killoran, Deputy Director of Native Affairs, at the Department of Native Affairs Office on Friday, 29th January, 1960 at 2.30 p.m.', Agendas File, AFMC/CF, 1960, QPHR.

²⁴ Kidd, *Regulating bodies*, pp. 512-519.

²⁵ Secretary, AFMC to General Secretary, APBM, 14 June 1960, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

²⁶ Secretary, AFMC to General Secretary, APBM, 8 August 1960, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

raising cattle.²⁷ The last item convinced Sweet that the church's desire to guarantee title for the people had been met by the government and 'any reservations' that he had in his 'mind were banished'.²⁸ Although the people rejected the government's proposals at the conference, subsequent talks with community leaders led the church to believe that 'the rejection was premeditated opposition deliberately planned as a common front' and that the 'heads of families...welcomed the proposed closure'.²⁹ Events over the next three years were to demonstrate that the people were by no means unanimous and Killoran allowed the promised cattle holdings, the church's central concern, to disappear from the agenda.³⁰



Photograph Seven: Rev. J.M. Stuckey, General Secretary, Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 1960-1972.

²⁷ Report on visit to Mapoon by Secretary, Rev. J.R. Sweet, September 1960, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS Add on 1872, Mitchell Library; Killoran's version of the discussions was contained in: Joint observations following a visit to Mapoon Mission and discussions with the staff and inmates between 7th and 9th September, 1960, by Rev. J. Sweet, Secretary, Aboriginals and Foreign Missions Committee, Presbyterian Church of Queensland and P.J. Killoran, Deputy Director of Native Affairs. Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Thursday Island to Director of Native Affairs, 12 September 1960, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁸ Report on visit to Mapoon by Secretary, Rev. J.R. Sweet, September 1960, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

²⁹ 'Aboriginal and Foreign Missions', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 114 (16-25 May 1961), p. 83.

³⁰ Killoran wrote the following March that 'consideration of this subdivision [of the cattle holdings] could be deferred pending establishment of the inhabitants in more suitable accommodation'. Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 20 March 1961, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; It appears that the government had no commitment to the concept, because, as discussed in Chapter One, Killoran refused to allow the Land Administration Commission even to grant a small block of land to Jackson Mamoose in 1964.

Despite this, Sweet remained committed to the closure and fully supported Rev. James Stuckey, General Secretary of the APBM, who assumed responsibility for Queensland missions in October 1961.³¹ Stuckey developed a close association with Killoran and encouraged a common front with the government against opposition to the closure.

In view of the inability of the thesis to present the residents' perspective, the liaison between the residents and Aboriginal support organisations has not been examined. Although the restrictions placed on access to the mission reserve and the prevailing lack of interest in Aboriginal issues in the early 1960s limited the effectiveness of the residents' opposition, their cause was an important rallying point for Aboriginal self-determination. The closure served to strengthen the resolve of the Mapoon people and as Faith Bandler pointed out, support from organisations such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) 'and public enlightenment may well have helped contribute to their return to Mapoon'.³² Bandler and other contemporaries took the view that the responsibility for Mapoon's closure was principally due to Comalco, whose 'search for bauxite was obsessive' and they ignored the long-term debilitation of the mission caused by church and government policies. In the following chapters, the thesis returns to the 1950s to review the impact of the aluminium industry on the decision to close Mapoon.

³¹ 'Aboriginal and Foreign Missions' *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 115 (14-23 May 1962), p. 76.

³² Faith Bandler, *Turning the tide: A personal history of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989), p. 51; Further comment on the links between Mapoon people and external supporters is contained in: Kidd, *Regulating bodies*, pp. 515-516, 518.

Chapter Four. Bauxite and Aluminium: New Challenges to Mission Administration

As discussed in Chapter One, the theory that Mapoon was closed to allow mining on the former mission reserve lands has been presented by a number of academics and other commentators over the past thirty years. This chapter commences with a brief history of the Australian aluminium industry and examines the unsuccessful attempts by the Presbyterian church to negotiate with the Queensland government on mining issues during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Development of the Australian Aluminium Industry

In 1900, total world production of aluminium was 7,810 tonnes and this grew rapidly with the stimulus of the First World War.¹ Aircraft engines, munitions and soldiers' equipment all found uses for the new metal and world production rose to over 100,000 tonnes per annum by the early 1920s.² Aluminium fabrication commenced on a small scale in Australia during that decade, followed by the establishment of the first aluminium company in 1936 and this corporation was absorbed into the Australian Aluminium Company Proprietary Limited (Australuco) formed in 1939 by a partnership among Aluminium Limited – a Canadian company, later Alcan – British Aluminium Company Limited (BACO), Electrolytic Zinc Company and Metal Manufactures Limited.³ Australuco developed a rolling and extrusion plant at Granville in Sydney which became a significant manufacturer of aircraft parts for Australia's defence industry during the Second World War.⁴ Aluminium's growing importance as a strategic metal was recognised by the Australian government – which had to import stocks of aluminium ingot from the United States along shipping routes subject to enemy attack – consequently in 1944 it drafted the *Aluminium Industry Bill*. This legislation

¹ Patrick D. Stobart, *Centenary of the Hall & Héroult processes 1886 - 1986* (London: International Primary Aluminium Institute, 1986), p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45, 53.

³ A.A. Smith, ed., *40 years on: A history of Alcan in Australia 1941-1981* (Granville, NSW: Alcan Australia Limited, 1981), p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-14.

created the Australian Aluminium Production Commission (AAPC) to establish an aluminium ingot industry in Tasmania.⁵

Although some bauxite deposits had been identified in Australia during the early 1940s, the AAPC's first annual report highlighted the importance of finding greater resources to support the industry:

The first problem facing the Commission was, therefore, the location of bauxite deposits sufficient in size and high enough in grade to justify the establishment of expensive plants, which no company operating on a commercial basis would be prepared to set up without reserves adequate for the period over which the plants would be depreciated and amortized.⁶

The AAPC approached the Queensland government, as well as other states, to commence a bauxite geological survey programme.⁷

Opportunity Lost: Church Negotiations Before the Mining Boom

The GSQ's request for bauxite samples from the Presbyterian church's Gulf missions in 1948 did not result in the discovery of economic deposits of the mineral. It did, however, raise uncertainty in the minds of the AFM committee about the security of their missions' tenure if a mineral discovery was made. They sought the Queensland government's views on the issue in 1949.⁸ The Minister for Mines replied in terms which were to prove accurate seven years later:

If an application for a lease is lodged..., it would be referred to the Director of Native Affairs; consequently that Sub-Department has virtual control of mining on reserves in its initial stages. In the event of an important lode being discovered on a reserve for aboriginals, naturally this Department would consider mining paramount and...would...have the reserve amended to exclude the appropriate area....As a reserve for the benefit of aboriginals is Crown land under both the Mining Acts and the Petroleum Acts, it appears competent to grant an Authority to Prospect over such reserves under such Acts, though Department policy would probably be to refer the matter to the Director of Native Affairs, and it would be decided by Government policy at the time. It is noted that the reserves in question are vested in the sub-Department of Native Affairs and Mission authorities hold no titles over them.⁹

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, 180, 1944, pp. 1702-1706.

⁶ 'First annual report of the Australian Aluminium Production Commission for period 1st May, 1945, to 30th June, 1946', *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (CPP)*, 2, 1946-47-48, p. 992.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 994.

⁸ Secretary for Missions to Minister for Health and Home Affairs, 1 June 1949. AFMC/CF, 1949, QPHR.

⁹ W.M. Moore, Minister for Mines to A. Jones, Minister for Health and Home Affairs, 1 July 1949, AFMC/CF, 1949, QPHR.

The AFMC took this reply no further until a new Secretary, Rev. James Sweet, was appointed to the committee in November 1953.¹⁰ Sweet was attracted by the ideas put forward by Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories in the Commonwealth government in his booklet *Native welfare in Australia* and he wrote to Hasluck in October 1954:

It was grand to hear and read of Federal Policy re royalties for a Welfare Fund as mentioned on Pages 28 and 29 of your booklet....It is possible that valuable mining development may take place on Aboriginal reserves on which are situated some of our Church Mission stations.¹¹

Sweet wrote to W.M. Moore, Minister for Health and Home Affairs, who had previously held the Mines portfolio in 1949-50 and raised 'the problem of mining rights on Aboriginal Reserves of the Church Mission stations' in an effort to ascertain the Queensland government's policy.¹² The letter acknowledged the importance of the discovery of mineral resources for national development, but posed the likelihood of Aboriginal people being left 'on the fringe again' which Sweet considered to be a moral and religious issue which should be addressed by the churches and governments of Australia.¹³ Sweet quoted a statement by Hasluck to the Second Native Welfare Conference in September 1952 that if 'mining takes place on the severed portion, [of an Aboriginal reserve] royalties will be paid into a special fund to be applied to the welfare of the natives' and suggested that the Queensland government should follow suit.¹⁴ The advice which Con O'Leary, Director of Native Affairs, tendered to Moore's departmental head repeated the assurances which had been given to the

¹⁰ No reference to the issue was made in the AFMC's annual report. 'Aboriginal and Foreign Missions' *Minutes of Proceedings of the General assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 103 (16-25 May 1950), p. 57.

¹¹ Secretary, AFMC to Hon. Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, 29 October 1954, Government Departments File, AFMC/CF, 1954, QPHR; Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck was Commonwealth Minister for Territories from 11 May 1951 to 18 December 1963. *Parliamentary handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986), 23rd edition, p. 343; Paul Hasluck, *Native welfare in Australia* (Perth, WA: Paterson Brokensha, 1953), pp. 28-29. A legal definition of a royalty is 'a payment to the lessor proportionate to the amount of the demised mineral worked within a specified period'. John B. Saunders, *Words and phrases legally defined: Volume 4: R-Z* (London: Butterworths, 1990), p. 112.

¹² William Matthew Moore was ALP member for Merthyr from 9 November 1940 to 2 August 1957 and held several portfolios during that period, including Minister for Health and Home Affairs from 10 May 1950 to 12 August 1957. D.B. Waterson and John Arnold, *Biographical register of the Queensland Parliament 1930-1980* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982), p. 67; Secretary, A. & F.M. Committee to Hon. W.M. Moore, 29 October 1954, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

¹³ Secretary, A. & F.M. Committee to Hon. W.M. Moore, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; This policy had been approved by the Commonwealth Cabinet following debate over the development of bauxite deposits on the Wessel Islands in the Northern Territory. Paul Hasluck, *Shades of darkness: Aboriginal affairs 1925-1965* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 112-113.

AFMC in 1949, played down the church's concerns about the status of Aboriginal reserves and ignored Sweet's submission on royalties.¹⁵ O'Leary concluded his advice:

In effect it would seem that Sweet is endeavouring to obtain from the Department a [de]cision on a matter which is non-existent, and any visualisation of action under the circumstances is at the moment impracticable. I think Mr. Sweet could be further assured that, if and when, Departmental or Government action is required in the interests of Aboriginals, in common with the Government's determination for exploitation of the State's potentialities and the development of Queensland, the interests of Aboriginals will not be overlooked.¹⁶

Sweet was a voice in the wilderness at a time when there was remarkably little difference between the major Queensland political parties on either Aboriginal or mining policies.¹⁷ The Labor Premier from 1952 to 1957, Vince Gair, was a former Minister for Mines and was described by one biographer as 'not an initiator of major reform policies; and he was intolerant, arrogant and dictatorial'.¹⁸ There was no likelihood that Sweet's proposal would receive favourable consideration when the Labor government held the view that encouragement of overseas investment in the mining industry was 'fundamental to decentralization objectives', which reflected the government's electoral dependence on northern areas of the state.¹⁹ The Department of Mines' (DM) position was that most 'minerals in Queensland' were 'the property of the Crown', thus preventing any legal claim by the church for royalties on mineral production.²⁰

Soon after Harry Evans had made his first visit to Weipa the Deputy Director of Native Affairs (DDNA), P.J. Richards, wrote to Sweet to advise that AM&S had applied 'for an Authority to Prospect for minerals over an area of about 450 square miles surrounding Weipa

¹⁵ Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs (DHHA), [day obscured] December 1954, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Raymond Evans suggests that there was no 'clearly formulated state opposition approach towards Aborigines', which resulted in the Labor government operating 'an increasingly anachronistic "protectionist" policy towards Aborigines, based squarely upon racist premises'. Raymond Evans, 'Aborigines', in D.J. Murphy, R.B. Joyce and Colin A. Hughes, eds., *Labor in power: The Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 349. Kett Kennedy expresses similar confluence between the parties on mining policy: 'In retrospect, apart from the dozen years of Labor commitment to state enterprise, mining policies have not divided the parties fundamentally.' K.H. Kennedy, 'Mining', in D.J. Murphy, R.B. Joyce and Colin A. Hughes, eds., *Labor in power: The Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 307.

¹⁸ Brian Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's loser', in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce and Margaret Cribb, eds., *The Premiers of Queensland* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1990), p. 459.

¹⁹ Kennedy, 'Mining', p. 306.

²⁰ G. Clark, Under Secretary, Department of Mines to Under Secretary, DHHA, 24 May 1956, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

Mission Station' and asked for the church's comments.²¹ Sweet's reply acknowledged the inevitability of mining if 'commercial quantities' of minerals were found, but reiterated the AFMC's request that:

...State Governments might enact legislation that would provide revenue for an Aborigine Benevolent Fund from royalties paid by Companies on all minerals prospected in Aboriginal Mission Reserves, administered either by Government or Church Mission Stations.²²

Richards ignored this request in his subsequent advice to the DM that no objection had been raised by the church, however Sweet was not prepared to let the issue die.²³ He wrote to Richards who eventually obtained a response from George Clark, the Under Secretary of the DM, who dismissed the church's request and set the tone for the eventual exclusion of the Aboriginal people and their missions from the legislation which granted mining leases to Comalco and Alcan.²⁴ Clark wrote:

As the result of legislation operative from 1st January, 1956, a royalty on all mineral produced in this area will be payable to the Crown, and there is no provision whereby any part of such royalty, when payable, could be apportioned to the Missions....Whilst I am not aware that the Company would or could agree to make some regular contributions to the Mission Authorities, I feel confident that successful mining operations by the Company would result in great benefits in other directions to the Mission.²⁵

Prior to 1956, royalties were payable only on gold, coal and petroleum in Queensland.²⁶ In October 1955, the Secretary for Mines, Colin McCathie, introduced an amendment to the *Mining Acts* to widen royalty provisions for all minerals.²⁷ In his second reading speech, McCathie pointed out that royalties would be paid into consolidated revenue but that the DM would 'be given a large amount of money to spend on the expansion and development of the mining industry in Queensland'.²⁸ As royalty provisions were supported generally by the opposition during the debate, it would have required considerable lobbying on the church's

²¹ Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Secretary, AFMC, 15 September 1955 DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

²² James R. Sweet to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 5 October 1955, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

²³ Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, Department of Mines, 2 November 1955, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

²⁴ James R. Sweet to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, 26 March 1956, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

²⁵ G. Clark, Under Secretary, Department of Mines to Director of Native Affairs, 24 May 1956, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

²⁶ 'Mining Acts Amendment Bill', *QPD*, 213, 1955, pp. 1015, 1392.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1014-1015.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1391.

part to persuade the government and the DM to redefine the beneficiaries of such royalties.²⁹ During the parliamentary debate on the Comalco Bill in November 1957, the Minister for Health and Home Affairs repeated Clark's argument that: as Aboriginal people were occupants of Crown land, they were not entitled to royalties on minerals which were the property of the Crown.³⁰ He also suggested that if Aboriginal people received royalties, the amounts paid from consolidated revenue for Aboriginal welfare would have to be reduced accordingly and this could place the people at risk, as there was 'no guarantee that such royalties would be as great as the amount paid out of consolidated revenue'.³¹ Despite obvious signs of bureaucratic and bipartisan political resistance to the concept, Sweet vainly continued to seek royalties for Aboriginal welfare until 1958.³² This demonstrated considerable naivety with political processes, which was reflected in the church's later negotiations with Comalco and the government and in its handling of Mapoon's closure.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1392-1393.

³⁰ 'Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Bill: Initiation in Committee', *QPD*, 219, 1957-58, p. 1431.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 1432; This remained government policy until the Goss ALP government introduced the *Aboriginal Land Act* in 1991. Section 7.02, *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* (Qld.).

³² At the Queensland general assembly in May 1958, Sweet reported on the AFMC's failure to secure royalties and the subject was not mentioned by him in subsequent years. 'Aboriginal and Foreign Missions', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 111 (13-21 May 1958), pp. 73-74.

Chapter Five. Northern Development: The Mining Companies' Impact

The effects of the 1955 discovery of economic bauxite deposits on the church's mission administration and reserve lands are examined at the beginning of this chapter, followed by a review of the church's failure to achieve its aim of protecting Aboriginal rights during the 1957 mining agreement negotiations with the Labor and coalition governments. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the impact of the mining companies' actions and policies on the eventual closure of Mapoon.

The Mining Corporations Arrive

The advent of full-scale mineral exploration with the arrival of CZP's Enterprise Exploration team at Weipa in June 1956 and the issue of AP 53M (covering 1,690 square miles inland from Mapoon and Aurukun) to Aluminium Laboratories, a subsidiary of Canadian aluminium producer Alcan, in September 1956 made the AFMC cautious with its Mapoon-Weipa merger programme.¹ In a letter to advise Killoran of forthcoming timber requirements for construction on the missions, O'Leary noted that the church had indicated to his Minister:

...in view of the changed circumstances surrounding the Gulf Missions and particularly Weipa by reason of the Mining operations there it was impossible to determine a time when the natives would be shifted from Mapoon to Weipa. The Committee furthermore mentioned that at present people would not voluntarily transfer and it was better to leave them as they are. No developmental work will be undertaken at Mapoon.²

¹ "Top Camp" closes at Weipa', *Insight*, p. 1; AP53M was expanded to 5,675 square miles in December 1956. I.W. Morley, Bauxite on Cape York (Status as at January 1957), p. 12, Commodity File 4-12-1 "B" Bauxite General, GSQ, DME; Cabinet Secretariat, Minutes (Decisions and submissions), Decision No. 5089, Development of bauxite deposits, 26 March 1963, Microfilm Z3738, QSA; Aluminium Laboratories Limited had been formed by Alcan during the 1940s to conduct 'research, engineering and geological exploration'. Duncan Campbell, *Global mission: The story of Alcan volume 1 to 1950* (Ontario Publishing Company Limited, 1985), pp. 394-395.

² Director of Native Affairs to Deputy Protector of Islanders, 25 September 1956, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; Ros Kidd came to a different conclusion in her thesis: that O'Leary was ordering Killoran to 'ensure that no developmental work was to be undertaken', yet it is obvious in the context of the letter that O'Leary was simply repeating what the church had advised the Minister. Kidd later alleged that this letter proved her contention that O'Leary had misleadingly blamed the church for inaction over the closure when he was in fact to blame. Unless Kidd was referring to a different letter, it is difficult to see how her argument can be sustained. Rosalind Kidd, *Regulating bodies: Administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840-1988*, PhD Thesis, Griffith University, 1994, pp. 503, 506.

An Aluminium Laboratories team led by geologist B. Summers and mining engineer L.D. Patience established operations for their company near the Ducie River in late 1956 and employed several Aboriginal men from Mapoon to guide them about the country and as labourers.³ The contribution of Aboriginal people to early exploration of the Weipa and Mapoon bauxite deposits was important but largely unrecognised beyond payment of wages by either company.⁴ One exception was the naming of one of Weipa's main shipping channels in honour of Mapoon elder and seafarer, Jackson Mamoose.⁵ By January 1957, CZC's exploration programme had proved bauxite mineral existed 'over an area of more than 2,000 square miles', consequently the company's vice-chairman, Maurice Mawby, wrote to Premier Vince Gair, to request mining tenure and suggested that it would be 'appropriate for the various rights and obligations of the company...to be embodied in an agreement and Act of Parliament as was done in...the development of the iron ore deposits of Koolan Island area.'⁶

Mawby also sought to allay any concerns about the effects of mining on the mission communities by a broad statement of the company's policy. Its ambiguity would later lead to considerable conflict between the AFMC and Comalco:

We are deeply conscious of the role of the Missions in the development of the Cape York area, and of the rights and needs of the Aboriginal inhabitants, most of whom we believe we could usefully employ....It is possible that the interests of the Aborigines would best be served by their concentration at one or two Missions, or by the establishment of a new Mission at some different site, or by raising the existing Missions to standards which would be more in consonance with the new conditions in the area ; and we are prepared to play our part in effecting any adjustment which may be considered necessary in the present arrangements.⁷

³ I. W. Morley, *Bauxite on Cape York*, pp. 14-15, 17; In his first report to the DM, Patience wrote: 'During part of the period [October - December 1956], Messrs. Summers and Perkins were assisted by two aborigines in their general reconnaissance. A crew of aborigines was also employed to blaze a trail from York Downs to Mapoon Mission'. L.P. Patience to Under Secretary, DM, 11 March 1957, Batch File 53M "A", Tenures Branch, DME.

⁴ Patience did not record the names of his Aboriginal assistants; The vital role of Aboriginal people in nineteenth century Australian exploration was a theme discussed by Henry Reynolds in *With the white people*, however little has been written about Aborigines' contribution to the mineral exploration of the 1950s and 1960s. Henry Reynolds, *With the white people* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1990), pp. 5-40.

⁵ T.F. Roberts, Hendra to author, 11 February 1988. Captain Roberts was employed by Enterprise Exploration to conduct hydrographic and land surveys at Weipa in 1956.

⁶ M. Mawby, Vice-Chairman, Consolidated Zinc Pty. Limited to Hon. V.C. Gair, Premier of Queensland, 10 January 1957, *Ibid.*; Maurice Mawby (1904-1977) had joined the Zinc Corporation at Broken Hill in 1928 and by the 1950s was well experienced in metallurgy and mining engineering. John Ralph, *Sir Maurice Mawby* (Melbourne: CRA Limited, 1991), pp. 6-9.

⁷ M. Mawby, Vice-Chairman, Consolidated Zinc Pty. Limited to Hon. V.C. Gair, Premier of Queensland, 10 January 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA.

In his advice to Gair on the implications of Mawby's letter, the Co-ordinator-General, J.A. Holt, recommended that 'consideration be given to ensure the commencement as early as practicable of what could be a major industry in this remote and sparsely populated region'.⁸ Holt endorsed the DM's view that a special agreement 'ratified by an Act of Parliament' would be required and concurred that 'any arrangements agreed to with the Department of Native Affairs and Mission Authorities' could be included in such an agreement.⁹ It is apparent that the AFMC naively entered the negotiations with the view that a mere claim to Comalco or the government would be sufficient to fulfil the missions' needs. A former Queensland Moderator of the church, Rowellyn Ramsay, commented in September 1956:

Fortunately our Aboriginal Committee has been alive to the possibilities and had already two years ago taken steps to protect the Church's claim on behalf of the natives....the Presbyterian Church is prepared to protect the people of the Gulf from purely commercial exploitation.¹⁰

This was a serious misapprehension because the government had not recognised the church's claims to royalties, had stated that the church did not have title to the reserve lands and had warned that mining would take precedence over existing use of the land. The church mistakenly believed that it had legal standing, but could rely only on a moral position or public opinion to influence the development protagonists. Coupled with its financial dependence on the government, this was to have a significant impact on the church's ability to retain its mission at Mapoon. On 1 February 1957, the AFMC sent O'Leary its comments on the issues raised by Mawby's letter to Gair and suggested that the company should pay a compensation grant of about £260,000 for the disruption of the 'economy and social structure of the Native community' and this would include provision for a new mission station. O'Leary's response to the church's claim should have been a warning to the AFMC to reconsider its position when he said: 'It is difficult to visualise the Company accepting a liability of £260,000 without some very elaborate data to support it', and he later counselled Sweet to 'not necessarily join issue on the question of compensation' at the forthcoming meeting with the company.¹¹ The AFMC apparently accepted the latter advice but failed to

⁸ J.A. Holt, Co-ordinator-General to the Premier of Queensland, 7 February 1957, Batch File 614 Part 1 Bauxite and Alumina, Chief Secretary's Department Correspondence Files, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Rowellyn Ramsay, 'Editorial: Exploration limited', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 40, 3 (September 1956), p. 14.

¹¹ Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 5 February 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA; Secretary, AFMC to V.W. Coombes, 25 February 1957, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

heed O'Leary's concerns about the scope of their claim, thus losing the opportunity to test the company's resolve as well as building false hopes in the minds of the church's constituents.¹²

At the first conference among the church, the government and the company on 28 February, the church's interests were represented by two members of the AFMC, Revs. R.E. Pashen and Sweet as well as the General Secretary of the APBM from Sydney, Rev. V.W. Coombes, while CZC's team included Mawby, Clarence Byrne (the company's Brisbane representative) and Don Hibberd, who had just joined CZC from the Commonwealth Treasury Department.¹³ The Minister for Health and Home Affairs, W.M. Moore, led much of the discussion, which focussed on the likely effects of mining on the mission at Weipa and he indicated that the proposed legislation to allow Comalco to develop the bauxite deposits would 'embody agreed upon safeguards to both the company and the natives', a statement which the CZC representatives did not refute.¹⁴ Mawby and Hibberd emphasised the urgency for the company to gain title to the land before it could proceed to raise capital and establish markets.¹⁵ Surprisingly, the church representatives did not use this as their cue to query the government's stated policy that the missions had no claim to title, but concentrated instead on the issue of moving the Weipa mission away from the proposed mine.¹⁶ Mawby asked if there was 'any objection against the possibility of combining Weipa with Mapoon and Aurukun' to which O'Leary ominously replied:

I would say that any suggestion of merging Weipa with Mapoon would be opposed by Native Affairs, because they are totally different races. We had better leave Mapoon to their own devices and deal with them as a separate entity altogether....I would say that

¹² Secretary, AFMC to V.W. Coombes, 4 March 1957, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

¹³ Rev. Ronald Edward Pashen (1914-1987), printer and theologian, was Minister of St Pauls Presbyterian Church, Brisbane from 1948 to 1979 and served on the AFMC 1944-1962 and on the AOMC 1963-1971. Biography Files, QPHR; Rev. Victor W. Coombes was appointed Secretary-Treasurer of the APBM in 1946 and served in this capacity until May 1958. He continued as Treasurer until 1961; Clarence Askew Byrne (1903-1987) was decorated during wartime service in the Royal Australian Navy, had been involved in the mining industry since the 1920s, was appointed a director of CZC in 1957, president of the Queensland Chamber of Mines 1961-69 and later served as Chairman of Queensland Alumina Limited from 1977 to 1981. Keith A. Cadman, ed., *Who's who in Australia: XXVIIth edition* (Melbourne: Herald and Weekly Times Limited, 1988), p. 164; *Comalco News Notes*, 287, 3 July 1981, p. 2; *Sunshine Coast Daily*, 2 May 1987, p. 5; Donald Hibberd (1916-1982) had been Treasury's representative on the AAPC prior to joining CZC. He was managing director of Comalco from 1960 to 1969 and executive chairman from 1969 to 1978. *Comalco News Notes*, 348, 12 January 1983, p. 1.

¹⁴ Notes of a conference with representatives of the Presbyterian Church and Mawby Consolidated Zinc Corporation, held at the office of the Minister for Health and Home Affairs (Hon. W.M. Moore, M.L.A.) on Thursday, 28th February, 1957, at 10 a.m., DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Mapoon, if they have anywhere to go, will have to go North, and you might have to talk to Mr Killoran.¹⁷

Coombes responded that Mapoon people as well as Aurukun would be affected by the development particularly in relation to living standards and employment opportunities and Sweet tried to highlight the need for assistance from the company to 'keep pace' with accelerated developments in the area, to which Mawby replied: 'We will do everything possible to assist the Missions in every way'. Sweet and his colleagues did not ask Mawby to enumerate the monetary limits to such assistance, an omission which later led to the church's claim for compensation being rejected strongly by the company and ridiculed privately by the government.¹⁸ In hindsight, the church could be criticised for not recognising the need to ascertain the company's specific position immediately, but it must be remembered that this was an initial exploratory meeting and the church team members were all clergy with no training in secular negotiations of this nature. The critical factor which hindered the AFMC throughout the negotiations was the absence of church representatives with political lobbying, business, legal or mining experience. There is no evidence for example, that the church made any attempt to lobby or develop relationships with the opposition Country-Liberal coalition parties during 1957, despite clear signs in April that the Labor government could lose office.¹⁹ Coombes' advice to the AFMC that the church 'must adopt a very bold line in this matter and not be at all modest in our requests' was premised on his unrealistic view that the church could convince the government to withhold legislation if the company did not meet the compensation claim.²⁰ His opinion on Mapoon was that its future would 'sort itself out as the people became absorbed in one or other of the industrial centres' and he recommended that some renovation at Mapoon would be required for the short-term.²¹ During a court case in

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ D.J. Hibberd to K.J. McCormack, Under Secretary, DHHA, 8 May 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA; O'Leary commented to McCormack that: 'the Missionaries may have mis-construed or mis-interpreted remarks by Mr. Mawby concerning aboriginal labour and assistance to the Mission generally...this Company will insist on a hard bargain'. Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 15 April 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

¹⁹ On 18 April, Gair received a vote of no confidence by the Queensland Central Executive of the Labor Party for his government's failure to 'legislate for three weeks' leave for all State award workers'. The *Courier Mail's* leader article on 20 April raised the likelihood of an early election if Gair was expelled from the Party. 'Gair calls caucus together: to discuss motion for expulsion by the Q.C.E.', *Courier Mail*, 20 April 1957, p. 1; Following Gair's expulsion on 24 April and his defeat in the Legislative Assembly on 12 June, a state election was called. The Country-Liberal coalition was elected on 3 August and Premier Frank Nicklin's ministry was sworn in nine days later. Brian Stevenson, 'George Francis Reuben Nicklin: "Honest Frank" – the Gentleman Premier', in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce and Margaret Cribb, eds., *The Premiers of Queensland* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1990), pp. 479-480.

²⁰ General Secretary, APBM to J.R. Sweet, 6 March 1957, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

²¹ *Ibid.*

1983, Sweet was cross-examined on his recollections of 1957 and he considered that the church was ‘never in a good negotiating position’ and he appeared to indicate that the church had mistakenly relied on the support of the government and the DNA in the negotiations for compensation.²² In an optimistic article published by the church’s magazine in April 1957, Sweet wrote:

At the present time, your Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee, with a sympathetic Government, is negotiating with mining officials in an attempt to integrate these two important factors of future aboriginal welfare and the development of a mining industry of great magnitude on an aboriginal reserve....The Church must not fail the aborigines in our role as their entrusted guardians.²³

The church’s compensation claim sent to the DNA at the beginning of April was emphatic that ‘no legislation be enacted to give mining concessions sought until concessions sought by the Mission have been granted’.²⁴ At a meeting with Hibberd, Byrne and Tom Blamey of CZP, the Under Secretary of the Department of Health and Home Affairs, K.J. McCormack presented the claim, which Hibberd immediately rejected on the grounds that it ‘did not represent a fair and reasonable assessment of the Company’s intentions’ which had been offered at the 28 February conference.²⁵ The detailed compensation claim, which totalled £367,800, included a request for funding of £95,800 for facilities, equipment and fifty houses (at £1,500 each) at Mapoon, as well as other matters affecting the mission:

Guarantee of Port and Airfield facilities at Weipa and Mapoon. [and] Preservation of Aurukun, Mapoon and Weipa compound and cattle outstations situated on mining tenure as Native Reserve subject to present provisions of the Act for the protection of the aborigine.²⁶

Unknown to the church, Comalco had issued a memorandum of proposals which formed the draft of its mining agreement with the government and a copy was sent by the Department of

²² Transcript of proceedings: Comalco Limited, plaintiff, v. Australian Broadcasting Commission, defendant, in the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory before Mr Justice Blackburn, C.J., 12 September 1983, p. 3643.

²³ J.R. Sweet, ‘Bauxite and our Aboriginal Missions’, *Presbyterian Outlook*, 40, 10 (April 1957), pp. 11, 14; Sweet had given a similar message to the Queensland public a few days after the formal announcement of the bauxite discovery, when he said: ‘We have known of these deposits for many years, and we hope to reap the benefit of them for the natives’. ‘Bauxite to help natives’, *Courier Mail*, 24 August 1956, p. 3.

²⁴ J.R. Sweet to Director of Native Affairs, 1 April 1957, and attachment: Guiding principles on which our claim for compensation is based, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁵ Director of Native Affairs, Bauxite mining, Consolidated Zinc Pty. Ltd., and Presbyterian Mission Committee: Summary of conferences and discussions, 16 May 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁶ J.R. Sweet to Director of Native Affairs, 1 April 1957, and attachment: Guiding principles on which our claim for compensation is based, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA. The church clearly chose to ignore O’Leary’s February warnings about the size of their claim and his views on the future of Mapoon.

the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works to O’Leary for comment on 7 May.²⁷ In contrast to the commitment reported to have been made by Mawby in February, that the agreement would include ‘provisions which affect the scope of the different discussion for aboriginal rights, lands, etc.’, no mention was made of these matters in the company’s draft.²⁸ Despite this obvious omission, O’Leary apparently did not respond to the company or query the omission, nor did he alert the AFMC.²⁹ It could be argued therefore, that as from May 1957 neither the government departments nor the company had any intention of formal recognition of the missions’ concerns in the legislation.

The AFMC reported on the negotiations to the annual General Assembly of the Queensland church in May 1957 and made it clear that the arrival of the mining companies had halted progress with the absorption of the Mapoon community by Weipa, a policy which had been agreed with the government in 1954:

The prospecting of one British company for bauxite on the Mapoon and Weipa reserve close to the coast and that of Aluminium Laboratories, a subsidiary of Alcon [*sic*] a giant Canadian aluminium company behind them again, has made your Committee pause and review policy on Mapoon’s future.³⁰

The committee now considered Mapoon’s prospects lay ‘with the mining development on the shores of Musgrave Harbour’ or with Weipa.³¹ In a brief account of the previous day’s Assembly meeting, the *Courier Mail* of 22 May reported a summary of the compensation claim, which highlighted the church’s desire for ‘protecting the natives’ interests’.³² The publicity may have prompted Comalco to arrange alternative media coverage, as a few weeks later the *Telegraph* newspaper carried a large article under the heading ‘Weipa natives strike it rich’ which extolled the employment opportunities provided by the company to Weipa

²⁷ G.J. Robertson, Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works to Director of Native Affairs, 7 May 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁸ Notes of a conference with representatives of the Presbyterian Church and Mawby Consolidated Zinc Corporation, held at the office of the Minister for Health and Home Affairs (Hon. W.M. Moore, M.L.A.) on Thursday, 28th February, 1957, at 10 a.m., DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

²⁹ G.J. Robertson, Secretary, Department of the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works to Director of Native Affairs, 7 May 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA. There was no follow-up correspondence to Robertson’s request in File 1A/338.

³⁰ [Report]: Aboriginal and Foreign Missions’, *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 110 (14-22 May 1957), p. 69.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² ‘To “protect” missions’, *Courier Mail*, 22 May 1957, p. 9.

Aboriginal people and carried a quote from Hibberd that: 'We realise our responsibility to the natives and will play our part'.³³

The Minister for Health and Home Affairs advised O'Leary on 21 May that his government would take no further action on the mining agreement legislation and instructed him to 'mark time' on future discussions with the church and the company.³⁴ Within a few weeks, Queensland was embroiled in a state election and the negotiations were postponed until the new government was installed. When the opposition leader, Frank Nicklin, gave the Country-Liberal coalition policy speech on 1 July, he made no mention of Aboriginal issues but gave significant emphasis to northern development:

...we have directed our whole policy toward the vigorous and planned development of all parts of the State. This State is crying out for ...planned development of a State-wide character, which takes into account the great potential of Queensland, and the need for filling up our empty spaces with people and industry, especially in the vital North and North-West regions.... This work will require capital much greater than the usual State resources.... if responsible and progressive government is given to Queensland, we will immediately attract the interest of overseas investors. We as a government would be prepared to do all in our power within our limits to assist investors....³⁵

Change of Government: Develop the North

The church should have understood the forthcoming government's likely attitude to any organisation which stood in the way of major mining investments. Doctor Henry Winston Noble, Liberal Member for Yeronga was appointed Minister for Health and Home Affairs with responsibility for the DNA on 12 August 1957.³⁶ Noble had made no parliamentary statements on Aboriginal issues since his election in 1950 and he was a strong proponent of northern development to counter the perceived threat of invasion of Australia.³⁷ Comalco

³³ Earle Buchanan, 'Weipa natives strike it rich', *Telegraph*, 12 June 1957, p. 7.

³⁴ Bauxite mining, Consolidated Zinc Pty. Ltd., and Presbyterian Mission committee: summary of conferences and discussions, 24 May 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

³⁵ Policy Speech Queensland Country and Liberal Parties. (...delivered at the Star Theatre, Maroochydore on Monday, 1st July, 1957, at 8 p.m. by Mr. G.F.R. Nicklin, Leader of State Opposition). Box 12 of 12 (679) Sir Frank Nicklin Papers, OM77-13, John Oxley Library (JOL).

³⁶ Noble was a medical practitioner who had spent most of his life in Brisbane. He was president of the Queensland Liberal Party in 1949-50 and was Member for Yeronga from 29 April 1950 until his death on 28 March 1964. D. B. Waterson and John Arnold, *Biographical register of the Queensland Parliament 1930-1980* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982), p. 73.

³⁷ All Noble's statements were checked in the *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* between volume 198, 1950-51 and volume 216, 1956-57. He referred to the threat of invasion by Indonesia and communists of mainland Asia in his maiden speech and was a proponent of Prime Minister Menzies' attempt to outlaw the Communist Party in 1951. *QPD*, 198, 1950-51, p. 100 and *QPD*, 201, 1951-52, p. 265.

quickly pressed its case for resolution of the claim issue by writing to Nicklin – who directed Noble to investigate and advise him – and set out its arguments against the church.³⁸ It proposed that the church’s claim had ‘no legal or moral basis’ and that responsibility lay with the government which should ‘decide upon the measures necessary to achieve what is clearly a common objective and also upon an equitable sharing of the costs of those measures’.³⁹ The company indicated that the Aboriginal people of Weipa and Mapoon would be affected by its operations and noted that ten miles [sixteen kilometres] from Mapoon it was testing a bauxite deposit which promised ‘to be another source of ore for our initial production programme’.⁴⁰ Comalco’s commitments to the government included an offer to transfer and rehouse the Weipa mission at Aurukun and it made two specifically on Mapoon:

[Comalco] will ensure that our operations near Port Musgrave are for as long as practicable kept well removed from the Mapoon Mission station. When our operations come within the vicinity of that Station we will be prepared to assist in any relocation of the Mission that may then be necessary; and...we will agree to the permissive use by the Mapoon Mission for grazing purposes of a reasonable area of the mineral lease in the vicinity of the Station until such land is required for mining.⁴¹

At the same time, Mawby sent a formal response to Sweet which relied heavily on the company’s professed alignment with government policy to reject responsibility for a ‘negotiated settlement’:

In truth we can say that the experience of the past twelve months or so confirms our belief that there is no conflict between our plans for large-scale development of the area and the well-established objectives of policy on native affairs in Queensland. We aim to provide a gradual and satisfactory means of assimilating suitable natives; the State and Missions also aim to achieve assimilation in progressive steps.⁴²

The AFMC, represented by Sweet and Pashen, held their first meeting with Noble on 5 September where they were told that the church should trust Comalco ‘to do the right thing over the years’ and that the government was keen to encourage any company because ‘the best way to defend the North was by development and the settling of as large a population of

³⁸ Under Secretary, [Chief Secretary’s Department] to Dr. H.W. Noble, Minister for Health and Home Affairs, 21 August 1957, [with attachment] Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation, Protection and welfare of natives, 15 August 1957, Batch File 614 Part 1, Bauxite and Alumina, Chief Secretary’s Department Correspondence Files, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² M. Mawby to J.R. Sweet, 21 August 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

white people as possible'.⁴³ Sweet's written response commenced with a warning to the government that all 'denominations of the Christian Church' were following their negotiations 'with deep interest' and argued for just compensation because 'an enlightened Australian conscience will expect the Company to do more for the aborigines it is displacing than that of simply legal obligations'.⁴⁴ The following day the *Courier Mail* published a brief article quoting the letter's argument that the church 'could not agree to transferring its mission sites' until the government gave 'a clear policy statement on the church missions' future'.⁴⁵ While Sweet may have considered that the church would gain public support from this tactic, it was not forthcoming and he probably damaged a tenuous relationship with the new minister. Noble also may have considered that Sweet's reasoning was too close to the views of Queensland's Trades Union Congress which shortly afterwards had carried a resolution 'requesting the State Government to prevent' bauxite companies on Cape York Peninsula 'from interfering with the operation of missions and the rights, practices and customs of the aboriginals of the area'.⁴⁶

Events moved quickly over the next two months, with the government firmly controlling the public debate. It released a series of media announcements on progress towards the mining agreement and an article on the potential benefits of mining for Aboriginal people in which the *Courier Mail* outlined CZC's plans to spend £50,000 on a 'model village at Weipa Aboriginal Mission' and quoted Noble's description of the project as 'the best deal they've ever had'.⁴⁷ The Minister for Development, Mines and Main Roads, Ernest Evans, had visited Weipa and Alcan's exploration camp in mid-September to familiarise himself with the area.⁴⁸ The government's Public Relations Bureau reporter who had accompanied Evans wrote an article lauding the 'creation of a multi-million pound industry' and without explanation stated:

⁴³ Report on conference with the Minister for Health and Home Affairs (Dr. Noble) held at Parliament House on Thursday, 5th September, 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁴⁴ J.R. Sweet to Dr. H.W. Noble, 4 October 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁴⁵ 'Call for policy on bauxite missions', *Courier Mail*, 5 October 1957, p. 5.

⁴⁶ "'Want your help" Islander pleads', *Courier Mail*, 18 October 1957, p. 7.

⁴⁷ 'Canadians may mine our bauxite', *Courier Mail*, 19 October 1957, p. 1; 'Cabinet approves £50m. project for Cape York mining', *Courier Mail*, 29 October 1957, p. 3; 'See model village at Weipa', *Courier Mail*, 14 November 1957, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *QGMJ*, 58, 672 (20 October 1957), pp. 729-733.

The conversion of the vast deposits of bauxite in two stages to the finished product aluminium will mean a new deal for the aboriginal population numbered approximately 1,000 at the three missions in the vicinity.⁴⁹

Sweet and Coombes travelled to Aurukun, Weipa and Mapoon to confer with their superintendents on future policy regarding this so-called new deal. In company with Bill MacKenzie, on 15 October they met with Alcan geologist Summers at the company's Tentpole Creek camp where discussion focussed on employment issues.⁵⁰ Sweet reported that Alcan was 'anxious to assist Mission and Government in policy for natives' but that Summers had criticised his Aboriginal employees for their 'inability to settle down to long periods of continuous work, e.g. demand for five day week'.⁵¹ Summers' opinion reflected recent industrial unrest caused by poor personnel management practices, which the DDNA had strongly condemned:

The statement that men at Mapoon would not work more than one or two days per week is incorrect... I am of the opinion that the unrest which occurred was occasioned mainly by the failure of the Company to maintain regular wages payments and by the failure of the Mission Superintendent to credit wages Pass Books when advised⁵²

Alcan had alerted the Mines Minister to their requirements for 'access to a port site on the Gulf of Carpentaria' and sufficient land for 'docks, railroad yards, ore stockage and alumina plant'.⁵³ It is noteworthy that this issue apparently was not discussed at the Tentpole meeting although Summers indicated that it 'would take three more years to assess the field'.⁵⁴ The employment problems and Alcan's uncertain future do not appear to have created any doubts in the church leaders' minds as Coombes later advised Sweet that he was convinced that the Mapoon people would 'have been deprived of a rightful opportunity for industrial progress

⁴⁹ 'Bauxite production poses power problems', *News Bulletin: A Digest of Government Activities*, 2, 30 September 1957, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Report of Reverend J.R. Sweet on visit to Weipa, Aurukun & Mapoon, together with General Secretary, Rev. V.W. Coombes, from 11th to 17th October, 1957, Agendas File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 2 October 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA; It is interesting to note that Summers' official report to the DM carries another perspective: 'The aboriginal labourers from Mapoon Mission developed into much more reliable and keen workers as a result of a decision by the Minister for Health and Home Affairs to permit us to pay them cash for overtime work'. B. Summers, Aluminium Laboratories Limited to Minister for Mines, 27 February 1958, Batch File 53M "A", Tenures Branch, DME.

⁵³ E.W. Greig, Senior Geologist, Aluminium Laboratories Limited to Minister for Development, Mines and Main Roads, 16 August 1957, Batch File 53M "A", Tenures Branch, DME.

⁵⁴ Report of Reverend J.R. Sweet on visit to Weipa, Aurukun & Mapoon, together with General Secretary, Rev. V.W. Coombes, from 11th to 17th October, 1957, Agendas File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

toward assimilation if they' were 'removed far from the site of the mining enterprise'.⁵⁵

While Coombes and Sweet were at Mapoon, a trip was made up the Wenlock River to inspect 'the old outstation site' which the Mapoon people favoured 'for the new Mission if built in that area'.⁵⁶ Sweet commented: 'Certainly accessibility, water and soil would be a tremendous improvement on the present site', but did not record any church commitment to the people's choice.⁵⁷

During October, Comalco and the government continued negotiations over the mining agreement and Cabinet approved the proposed Bill on 18 November.⁵⁸ In his introduction to the Bill ten days later, Ernest Evans, stated that the purpose of the legislation was:

- (i.) to authorise the Premier to make an agreement which is embodied...[in the Act];
- (ii.) to provide that upon the making of the agreement the provisions therein shall have the force of law; and
- (iii.) to declare that the agreement can only be varied by further agreement between the Minister and the company with the approval of the Governor in Council.⁵⁹

Evans stated that there were 'no provisions in the agreement relative to Weipa mission' and went on to broadly outline the company's position on the Weipa mission and reserve but did not mention Mapoon.⁶⁰ In response to a question on the church's role from John Mann, ALP Member for Cairns, Evans misled Parliament when he claimed 'the church authorities have had a say in it. They have agreed on it with the Minister for Health and Home Affairs', but although the church refuted this statement, they decided to respond privately, rather than giving the opposition or the media an opportunity to harry the government.⁶¹ During the first and second reading debates Noble strongly rejected the need for Aboriginal people to retain

⁵⁵ V.W. Coombes to J.R. Sweet, 21 November 1957, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF 1957, QPHR; Secretary, AFMC to V.W. Coombes, 15 November 1957, *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Report of Reverend J.R. Sweet on visit to Weipa, Aurukun & Mapoon, together with General Secretary, Rev. V.W. Coombes, from 11th to 17th October, 1957, Agendas File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Cabinet Secretariat, Minutes (Decisions and submissions), Decision No. 91, The Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Bill, 18 November 1957, Microfilm Z2350, QSA.

⁵⁹ Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Bill: Initiation in Committee', *QPD*, 219, 1957-58, pp. 1408-1410.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1413.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1414; This brought an angry response from the AFMC members who wrote to the Premier the following day that their previous submissions on pastoral rights and royalties were 'reaffirmed' and noted that neither submission had been included in the Bill. Secretary, AFMC to Premier of Queensland, 29 November 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA; Nicklin's reply disregarded the Weipa people's traditional ties to the land where bauxite mining was to proceed and argued that a population of '159 men, women and children' would retain 1,500 out of 2,500 square miles of their reserve. Under Secretary, Premier and Chief Secretary's Department to Secretary, AFMC, 6 December 1957, Government Departments File, AFMC/CF 1957, QPHR.

large areas of reserve land. His rationale reflected the attitude of many politicians of the period:

The time will surely come when all the people of aboriginal blood in our State will have been assimilated into the community, and it would be the height of absurdity if very large areas of the State no longer needed or used were tied up and made inaccessible to normal occupancy and development by the community.⁶²

The ALP's Member for Kedron, Eric Lloyd, raised numerous concerns about protection of the rights of Aboriginal people and he unsuccessfully attempted to introduce formal recognition of Comalco commitments into the legislation.⁶³ Comalco's plans for Mapoon's reserve land were queried by Sweet in a letter to Noble on 2 December and the minister's reply was based upon a Comalco letter, which he quoted:

I refer to the discussions which have taken place in relation to the Mapoon Mission and desire to confirm that the Company is prepared to surrender from the lands proposed to be leased to it under a special bauxite mining lease the area upon which that Mission is located....if in the future the land is vacated by the Mission, it will, if the Company so desires, be again included in the lease from which it was surrendered. In addition, as we have already assured the...Church, the Company agrees to the permissive use by the Mapoon Mission of a reasonable area of the special bauxite mining lease for grazing purposes.⁶⁴

Comalco's letter could be interpreted as evidence that the company was asking the government to ensure that the mission was closed in the future, however such a conclusion could be confirmed only if: Comalco had taken advantage of the closure in 1964 to have the mission area de-gazetted and fully re-incorporated into its lease; and had exerted pressure on the DNA not to graze cattle in the area. This did not occur and the former mission remained as Aboriginal Reserve overlapping SBML 1 until re-linked to other former reserve areas, after they were relinquished by Comalco back to the state under clause thirteen of the *Comalco Agreement* in December 1977.⁶⁵

Following a visit to Mapoon in October 1957, Noble had already indicated to the church that he considered 'the standard of living at Mapoon....was a disgrace' and had urged the

⁶² 'Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Bill: Initiation in Committee', *QPD*, 219, 1957-58, p. 1433.

⁶³ 'Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty. Limited Agreement Bill: Second reading', *QPD*, 219, 1957-58, p. 1628; Eric Gayford Lloyd was MLA for Kedron 1951-1972 and was Deputy Opposition Leader, 1957-1966. Waterson and Arnold, *Biographical register of the Queensland Parliament 1930-1980*, p. 58.

⁶⁴ Minister for Health and Home Affairs to J.R. Sweet, 4 December 1957, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁶⁵ *Comalco Agreement* (Qld); R.H. Thomson, Senior Staff Surveyor, Department of Mines to Under Secretary for Mines, 1 September 1980, File SBML No. 8/A, Tenures Branch Correspondence Files, DME.

construction of a new mission near Bamaga.⁶⁶ The AFMC was not willing to be hurried into a decision and distrust in the government's motives grew following the dramatic loss of reserve land which had been absorbed into Comalco's mining lease.⁶⁷ In a statement which was later conveniently forgotten by his successor, Coombes set out his concerns about removing 'the Mapoon people away from their own beloved area' in a letter to Sweet on 20 January 1958:

We may not forget that the presence of Aborigines with established rights in the area has been and continues to be something of an embarrassment to the Government in its negotiations with the Mining Companies...Now if they can get the Mapoon people right out of the area on one pretext or another, that will give them a most comfortable and clean sheet. It will also be an acknowledgement to the world that as far as the Church is concerned, the Aborigines had no vital relationship with the Reserve territory which they had occupied for so long. If we concede that, we have virtually conceded all.⁶⁸

The government in turn distrusted Sweet and his relationship with the Director of Native Affairs had deteriorated to the point where O'Leary questioned whether Sweet's views represented those of the AFMC and gave as an example Sweet's statement in a meeting with Noble that 'irrespective of the arguments adduced in favour of the removal [of Mapoon to Bamaga] he would oppose it', whereas other members of the AFMC, Pashen and Allan, had shown concern 'only with the retention of reserves at Aurukun and Mapoon'.⁶⁹

The Aftermath of the Comalco Agreement

Soon after the *Comalco Agreement* was signed, Hibberd wrote to O'Leary suggesting that an area of 480 acres (194 hectares) should be proclaimed as an Aboriginal reserve at Mapoon mission station, but asked that Cullen Point should be excluded because:

...the only deep water inside the Port and close to the shoreline is that just off the Point. It may prove necessary for the Company to have access to the Point for shipping purposes....⁷⁰

Negotiations between Comalco and the church continued intermittently until the end of 1958 but no decision was reached due to the absence of definite government policy on the

⁶⁶ Report on conference with the Minister on Wednesday, the 13th November, 1957 in the Minister's Office at 9 a.m., Government Departments File, AFMC/CF, 1957, QPHR.

⁶⁷ Secretary, AFMC to V.W. Coombes, 15 January 1958, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF, 1958, QPHR.

⁶⁸ V.W. Coombes to J.R. Sweet, 20 January 1958, Board of Missions File, AFMC/CF 1958, QPHR.

⁶⁹ Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 20 January 1958, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁷⁰ D.J. Hibberd to C. O'Leary, 20 December 1957, DNAO File 1A/338, Box 78, Transfer R 254, QSA.

mission's future. Sweet sought the Premier's views and emphasised the church's reluctance to move the Mapoon people from their 'home land, against their will.'⁷¹ The following February, Sweet wrote to Byrne setting out the areas of land required for the mission's community and grazing.⁷² His letter also requested finance for fifteen cottages for 'such families of the Mapoon community as may choose to move to Weipa' and based this on the contention that before Enterprise Exploration had:

commenced to prospect for bauxite in the Reserves of Mapoon and Weipa, the Government and the Church were committed to the implementation of merging Mapoon Mission station with Weipa. This plan was dropped following extensive operations by this company.⁷³

Byrne replied that the company was prepared to offer an area of 2900 acres for the Mapoon reserve providing access to Cullen Point was retained and he indicated that Comalco would be prepared to make another site 'in the vicinity of Port Musgrave' available if the church wished to move the mission.⁷⁴ He refused the claim for fifteen cottages and rejected responsibility for interruption to the Mapoon-Weipa merger on the basis that the company had 'been reliably informed' that the mission superintendent and residents were opposed to the proposal 'some considerable time before we started our investigations on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula.'⁷⁵ It is likely that the government was again siding with Comalco, because: on or before 2 March 1959 O'Leary discussed Sweet's letter with Byrne; an undated draft of the company's letter was found in the DNA's Mapoon file; and subsequent advice from O'Leary to his Minister could find no fault with the company's argument.⁷⁶ While it did not accept Comalco's views on the stalled merger, the church advised that it was happy to proceed on the reserve area.⁷⁷ Internally, Byrne's letter sparked church discussion on the future employment potential of bauxite shiploading facilities at Cullen Point and recognition that 'any rebuilding of Mapoon' would be 'a Government cum Mission enterprise with the former contributing on a big scale'.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Secretary, AFMC to G.F.R. Nicklin, 6 November 1958, Batch File 614 Part 1 Bauxite and Alumina Plants, Chief Secretary's Department Correspondence Files, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

⁷² Secretary, AFMC to C.A. Byrne, 10 February 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

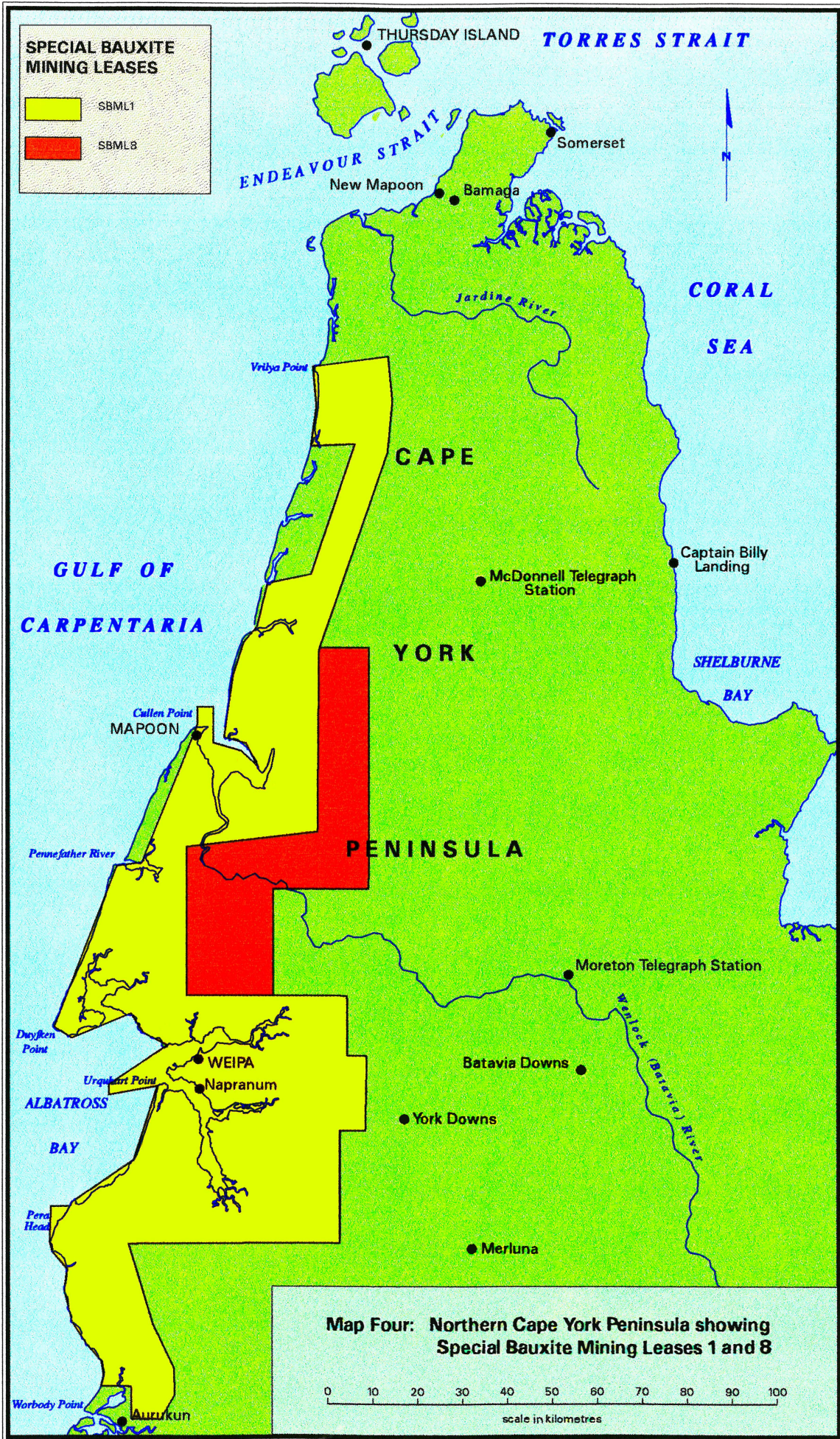
⁷⁴ C.A. Byrne to J.R. Sweet, 15 April 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ C. O'Leary, memo for file, 2 March 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; C.A. Byrne, draft letter to J.R. Sweet, undated, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; Director of Native Affairs to Under Secretary, DHHA, 23 April 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁷⁷ Secretary, AFMC to C.A. Byrne, 26 May 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁷⁸ Further negotiations with Comalco: Comments by Rev. V.W. Coombes on information contained in Rev. J. R. Sweet's letter (21.4.59), undated, File AQ/7, APBM, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.



Sweet's report to the annual General Assembly in May indicated that the church was still in favour of redevelopment of Mapoon when he talked of the need for funds to repair the Church and mission house and claimed that: 'Many of the responsible Mapoon people are restless because they are most anxious to rebuild a new village before they grow too old'.⁷⁹ The following month Sweet visited Mapoon to discuss the mining developments and mission administration with the people.⁸⁰ It was this meeting which appears to have been the turning point in Sweet's attitude to Mapoon's future, because – as was discussed in Chapter Three – from this time on he became increasingly supportive of the government's demands to close Mapoon. The AFMC Secretary's notes of the meeting did not record the people's views on the mining companies, however there was a unanimous vote for relocation of the mission to the 'outstation' site which was probably near the area known as Red Beach.⁸¹ Sweet told the meeting that 'this site might not be acceptable to the Government' and the people replied that 'they would not go to Bamaga. It was hungry country; dirty soil and it was inland.'⁸²

The government's resolve to close Mapoon was given a further boost when Clarence Byrne visited the mission on an official tour of bauxite areas with the Commonwealth Minister for Supply, Alan Hulme, in July 1959. O'Leary received a call on 20 August from Byrne, who relayed Hulme's concerns about the state of Mapoon and Weipa missions and reported on a recent conversation in which Sweet allegedly had 'intimated to him his personal wish that the Government would take over Mapoon' which the church felt was becoming 'virtually uncontrollable'.⁸³ Byrne then wrote to Noble regarding the future of Weipa mission and suggested that further consideration should be given to relocating Weipa, and possibly Mapoon, to Aurukun:

In recent weeks I...had the pleasure of visiting the Aurukun Mission and also of viewing the deplorable location known as Mapoon...Frankly I felt ashamed as a Queenslander to

⁷⁹ 'Aboriginal and Foreign Missions', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 112 (12-20 May 1959), pp. 82-83.

⁸⁰ Report of Secretary on visit to Mapoon, June 1959, File AQ/7, APBM, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ C. O'Leary, memo for file, 21 August 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA; On 13 August Sweet wrote to members of the AFMC to advise them of his telephone conversation with Byrne. Sweet did not record any comment regarding a church desire for the government to take over Mapoon. It appears that he either did not say it, or forgot to mention it, or felt that it was too controversial to discuss with his colleagues. On the other hand, Byrne may have been trying to push the Director of Native Affairs in a certain direction by misquoting Sweet. J.R. Sweet, Memorandum to members of the Aboriginal and Foreign Missions Committee, 13 August 1959, File AQ/7, BOEMAR Records, Box 19, ML MSS 1893 Add on 1872, Mitchell Library.

have to escort visitors through the Weipa and Mapoon Villages after seeing what had been done at Aurukun.⁸⁴

Although the government was already in favour of transferring Mapoon to Bamaga, there is little doubt that Byrne's conversation with O'Leary and his biased letter to Noble – which made no concession to the severe underfunding of church missions over many years – would have critically weakened any case put forward by the residents or the church to retain the mission community at Mapoon.



Photograph Eight: C.A. Byrne and Rev. G. Filmer (foreground) walking with Mapoon residents and the Minister for Supply from the airstrip to the mission, July 1959.

In March 1962 the government, in a newspaper article written with the co-operation of the church, emphatically denied that mining had ever been a motivation for the government's insistence to close Mapoon, yet there is evidence that the presence of the mining lease was used by the government in 1959 to encourage people to move to the Bamaga area.⁸⁵ The

⁸⁴ C.A. Byrne to H.W. Noble, 21 August 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁸⁵ 'State's oldest mission closes', *Telegraph*, 13 March 1962, p. 24; O'Leary wrote to Sweet: 'I furnish my suggested Press Statement for your perusal and alteration if and where you think fit'. O'Leary to J.R. Sweet, 5 February 1962, Mapoon Closure File, AFMC/CF, 1962, QPHR; The evidence is contained in an undated

Deputy Director of Native Affairs had obtained signatures by three representatives of the Mapoon people on a document which stated that Mapoon people should ‘look at some other areas away from the Mining Leases that now cover the Mapoon Mission’.⁸⁶ This was not forgotten by residents such as Jean Jimmy who recalled in 1975:

I knew it was Mr Killoran because he said we will come as thieves by night and they really did it... When we had the meeting, councillors and the Presbyterian church, they all threaten us and said that before our removal... the bulldozer will come, the miners will come lift up your homes and turn your people upside down. Fancy just our councillors were speaking all that.⁸⁷

Even in 1962, the new General Secretary of the APBM, James Stuckey was still undecided about the future of Mapoon in relation to Alcan’s plans for their bauxite operations and he sought the government’s views:

You may have information... as to whether they intend to apply for a mining lease... If considerable employment potential becomes available within a year or two a good deal of what we have said about Mapoon would need to be reviewed.⁸⁸

No record of a reply by O’Leary could be located, however the letter raises the interesting concept that if Alcan’s mining operation had commenced, the church may have had much stronger grounds to rebuild the community near its original site. Some commentators correctly have referred to Comalco’s needs for a harbour at Port Musgrave, although the decision to site the export harbour at Weipa was made five years before Mapoon was closed and the first export wharf at Weipa was officially opened on 18 April 1963.⁸⁹ It could be argued also that Comalco wished to retain control of the old mission area on Port Musgrave as part of its commercial competitor strategy against Alcan which, until an agreement was reached over disputed lease boundaries in 1964, would have needed to cross Comalco land to

document entitled ‘The following is the combined reports of the three men who visited the northern Peninsula area’ and was signed by Horace Bond, Milton Brown and Dick Luff. It was attached to a letter from the Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Rev. G. Filmer, 13 November 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁸⁶ ‘The following is the combined reports of the three men who visited the northern Peninsula area’, Deputy Director of Native Affairs to Rev. G. Filmer, 13 November 1959, DNAO File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

⁸⁷ Jean Jimmy, interview with author, 1 July 1975.

⁸⁸ J.M. Stuckey to Director of Native Affairs, 26 July 1962, Weipa File, AFMC/CF, 1962, QPHR.

⁸⁹ Henry Reynolds, ‘White injustice throws a shadow over black lands’, *Australian*, 16 August 1993, p. 9; ‘Comalco reports on “Weipa Development”’, *Queensland Government Mining Journal*, 64, 740 (June 1963), pp. 333-334; Elgin Reid, ‘Weipa is a “going concern” now’, *Courier Mail*, 19 April 1963, p. 5. A 1974 Comalco letter stated that although it had ‘felt it important to retain this narrow strip only in order to give access to a possible shiploading point in the Port Musgrave region’ it was prepared to relinquish the site provided it was accessible for shipping in the future. S. Christie, Managing Director, Basic Resources & International, Comalco Limited to N.T.E. Hewitt, Minister for Aboriginal & Island Affairs, 4 November 1974, DNAO File 6G/18, Box 728, Transfer R 254, QSA.

access suitable harbour areas on Port Musgrave.⁹⁰ If this was the case, it is unlikely that Comalco would have relinquished the old mission site in 1977. Conversely, the government may have put pressure on the DNA when the Minister for Mines was negotiating with Alcan to participate in the construction of the alumina refinery at Gladstone, as his letter to the company confirming their proposed agreement made specific reference to the state assisting Alcan ‘to obtain a suitable site on Port Musgrave’ for bauxite processing and shipping.⁹¹ If this was the case, it is likely that correspondence similar to that relating to Comalco’s negotiations over the potential relocation of Weipa Mission would have been found on the DNA files – it was not.⁹² Alcan did not formally seek a port site until 1970, when it applied for an area of 18.2 square miles on the northern side of Port Musgrave between Namaleta Creek and the Ducie River.⁹³

This chapter has presented clear evidence that, despite consistent denials by Comalco since 1959, the advent of mining did have a negative impact on Mapoon. The key issues which support this view are Mawby’s failure to keep his reported promise that the Comalco agreement would include provisions affecting Aboriginal rights and lands, the uncertainty about the company’s intended use of the reserve lands which made the church reconsider the proposed Mapoon-Weipa merger, the refusal by the company in 1957 and 1959 to accept any responsibility for rebuilding Mapoon mission and Byrne’s unqualified expressions of disgust at the state of Mapoon which supported the Minister’s views on the mission’s future.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Cabinet Secretariat, Minutes (Decisions and submissions), Decision No. 7101, Proposed Agreement between the State of Queensland and Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited, 23 November 1964, Microfilm Z3998, QSA.

⁹¹ Minister for Development, Mines, Main Roads and Electricity to Aluminium Laboratories Ltd., Montreal, 5 August 1963, Batch File 53M “B”, Tenures Branch, DME; The agreement required Alcan to contribute ‘at least 15% of the capital’ for the refinery and take ‘at least 100,000 short tons of alumina per annum for a period of at least twenty years’ in return for the grant of a Special Bauxite Mining Lease. E.K Healy, Under Secretary, DM to Parliamentary Draftsman, 13 November 1964, File 1964 Alcan Queensland Pty. Limited Agreement Bill, Co-ordinator-General’s Department Correspondence Files, Box 7, Transfer TR 2027, QSA.

⁹² The principal files which contain correspondence between Comalco and the DNA are DNAO File 1A/338, Administration General. Mining Rights and Reserves, Box 78, Transfer R254, QSA and File 1-059-002 [Formerly DNAO File 1A/438] Commonwealth Aluminium Pty Ltd Agreement Act 1957, Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care (DFYCC).

⁹³ S.H.W. Shand, Chairman, Alcan Queensland Pty Limited to Under Secretary for Mines, 22 July 1970, File SBML No. 8/A, Tenures Branch, DME.

⁹⁴ In 1976, Comalco responded to public criticism of its relationship with local Aboriginal communities by releasing a publication on its history and policies. The company maintained that it was ‘not in any way involved in the decision to close’ Mapoon and quoted from an non-referenced church statement to that effect from June 1962. An unsuccessful search was made for the source of the statement in: the *Courier Mail*, 1 June 1962 to 30 June 1962; Brisbane’s *Telegraph* newspaper for the same period; church publications and archival records during research for this thesis. Comalco Limited, *Aborigines and Islanders at Weipa: Notes on background and current position* (Melbourne, Vic.: Comalco Limited, 1976), pp. 6, 11; See also Comalco Limited, *The Aboriginal and Islander community of Weipa South* (Melbourne: Comalco Limited, 1981), p. 16. The company made no

Comalco's argument that the 'former Mapoon Mission area has no mineral significance' is correct but it conveniently overlooks the fact that 'about 70% of all bauxite mined at Weipa comes from Andoom' area which was formerly part of the Mapoon reserve.⁹⁵

Despite the inferences which may be drawn from the chapter, no direct evidence was located in any of the church and government files consulted that either Alcan or Comalco directly lobbied to have Mapoon closed for any reason.⁹⁶ However, it does appear that the government used the existence of the mining lease as one of its arguments to encourage people to move. In the conclusion to this thesis which follows, the long-term and immediate causes of Mapoon's closure will be re-examined in the light of the evidence provided in the present and previous chapters.

reference to the church's Mapoon policy review published in May 1957, which shows that the company's arrival interrupted the merger. *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 110 (14-22 May 1957), p. 69.

⁹⁵ Comalco Minerals & Alumina, *Weipa: The mine and its people* (Weipa, Qld.: Comalco Aluminium Limited, 1994), 6th edition, p. 17.

⁹⁶ It should be noted that the correspondence records of neither company were used during research for the thesis. DME files on SBML 1, held by the Crown Law Office for litigation purposes, were not consulted.

Conclusion

The actions of the Queensland government and the Presbyterian church during the closure of Mapoon in 1963-64 were the culmination of more than nine years of uncertainty and infrastructure decay following the initial decision to merge Mapoon with Weipa. Many commentators have chosen to attribute most of the blame for the closure to two companies whose mining leases absorbed much of the former Mapoon Aboriginal Reserve. One of the companies, Alcan, has never responded publicly, while Comalco has vigorously and repeatedly denied the allegation. The decision to research this thesis was prompted by a desire to test the reasons for Mapoon's closure, which have been advanced by the church, the government, the miners and their critics, against the available documentary sources.

The Church's Position

The church declared in 1963 that its decision to withdraw was based on the assimilation policy agreed with the Queensland government in 1954. It claimed that Mapoon was not a suitable mission site due to 'poor accessibility in loading and unloading boats; poor communication on land because of heavy sand and indifferent soil for gardening.'¹ This was an abbreviation of points discussed at the April 1954 conference.² The church's claims are supported by contemporary mission staff correspondence, however it has been demonstrated that the reports made inaccurate assumptions (particularly regarding water) based on guesswork about alternative sites. No attempt was made by church representatives at the conference to challenge O'Leary's or Stephens' view that none of Calder Allan's commercial plans would work, nor did they query the potential conflict of interest by government representatives whose commitment lay with the future of agriculture at Bamaga. No review of the policy's premises was made in later years when improved communications and technology were available.³ The church's statement in 1963 that 'in consultation with the

¹ 'Mapoon and New Mapoon', *Encounter*, 8, 1 (June 1963), p. 7.

² These centred upon the brief reports by MacKenzie and Stephens on the suitability of several alternative local sites for water supplies, agriculture and anchorages.

³ For example Comalco conducted tests for water in 1959-1960 at Weipa and the introduction of mineral exploration had provided the potential for alternative transport of supplies via the port at Weipa over roads constructed by Alcan and Comalco.

people themselves, the old Mission at Mapoon is coming to the end of its time and usefulness' was misleading. From 1954 onwards, the residents and a succession of their councillors and elders had made it abundantly clear that, although they would be prepared to rebuild the mission in the vicinity to overcome difficulties with the original sandy site, they were unwilling to relocate away from their traditional lands. The church's actions in ignoring and denigrating the residents could not be defined as consultation, as it was not an act of seeking their advice and taking into consideration their feelings and interests. The church's duplicity with government actions to destroy the spirit and property of the Mapoon residents in 1963-64 was equalled only by the hypocrisy expressed in a missionary publication edited by Stuckey in June 1963:

The assimilation of Aborigines into the life of the community must be subject to their consent....Opportunity for assimilation may be offered; but acceptance must not be forced.⁴

It is not surprising that James Sweet and other church officials publicly apologised to the Mapoon people in the early 1990s, although it could be argued that long-term financial neglect by Queensland Presbyterian congregations was the church's principal agent of destruction.⁵

The Government's View

Geographer Richard Howitt, in a recent paper on social impact assessment and Aboriginal people of the Weipa region, argued that 'histories of resource localities....in company, government and academic literature' have contributed to the dominance of a project-centred narrative of regional development'.⁶ Conversely, he submitted:

⁴ 'Mapoon and New Mapoon', *Encounter*, 8, 1 (June 1963), p. 6.

⁵ Marjorie Lewis-Jones and John Harrison, 'UC Assembly apologises to Mapoon people', *Journey: Uniting Church Magazine*, September 1990, p. 16; '[Report of] Australian Presbyterian World Mission Committee', *Minutes of Proceedings of the Forty-first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia*, September 1991, pp. 162-163; A.C. Stubs, 'Message from Mapoon (Qld)', *APL: Australian Presbyterian Living Today*, 426, March 1992, p. 9. Very Rev. A.C. Stubs, who was Acting Moderator-General, apparently did not read his church's files on Mapoon mission, because he stated that the J.G. Ward church had been 'burnt to the ground' and that the church simply did not 'protest' at the closure. This thesis has demonstrated that the church agreed to the destruction of mission buildings and that church staff, such as Filmer and Stuckey, publicly supported the closure.

⁶ Richard Howitt, *Developmentalism, impact assessment and Aborigines: rethinking regional narratives at Weipa* (Casuarina, NT: North Australia Research Unit, Australian National University, 1995), p. 5.

Dissident voices, expressing alternative approaches are easily dismissed as troublemakers, parochial, or somehow outside the wider interest of the ‘community’, which unproblematically benefits from development projects.⁷

The Nicklin government used the latter approach to counter its critics’ claims about Mapoon and heavily advocated northern development. It excused its actions by promoting assimilation and by deflecting accountability for the decay of Mapoon to the church. Politicians, bureaucrats and most church officials did not understand that the souls of many of the Mapoon people were in their homeland and by forcibly removing those who wished to remain in 1963, the government’s assimilation policy was unlikely to succeed for all of the Mapoon people.

In this thesis, it has been demonstrated that the long-term failure of the church and government to provide necessary secular support and training for missionary staff, combined with poor financial support from Presbyterian congregations and government budgetary restrictions, gave rise to structural weaknesses in the administration and community life of Mapoon mission. This, coupled with the absence of legal title for the residents or the church and the church’s managerial, commercial and political ineptitude, left the mission ill-prepared for the pressures created by the advent of mining corporations in 1956.

Alcan and Comalco

The assertions of Rowley, Reynolds, Fitzgerald and others that the mining companies were involved in, or directly responsible for, Mapoon’s closure have not been proved. It has not been possible to conclude that Comalco or Alcan exerted pressure on the Queensland government to close Mapoon.⁸ On the other hand, Comalco’s selective memory of the events of 1956-1963 clearly played down its intentional exclusion of Aboriginal rights or compensation from its agreement with the state government. Its “historical” public relations efforts totally ignored the case put by the ALP and the AFMC for recognition of those rights during the Comalco Bill debate and relied heavily on an unsourced church statement to counter criticisms of company involvement in the closure. It is hard to believe that the

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁸ As discussed in Chapter Five, not all potential sources of information on this matter were able to be consulted during research for the thesis.

government was not influenced by both companies' desire to establish harbour or other facilities near Mapoon, at least until Comalco announced its preferred port site in 1958. Furthermore, Comalco apparently made no attempt to understand the views of the residents or to consider the historical reasons for Mapoon's decayed state when it rejected the church's requests for funding. Its Brisbane representative, Byrne, whose knowledge of Mapoon was limited to one brief visit, gave active moral support to the Minister for Health and Home Affairs in his desire to close Mapoon.

Some Unanswered Questions

Whether Mapoon would have closed if bauxite had not been discovered is an important but hypothetical question. Conversely, there is some evidence that the church was willing to reconsider the closure if Alcan or Comalco had proceeded with development plans near Mapoon, thus providing employment opportunities for the residents. From a political point of view, it also could be argued that Noble's embarrassment at the dilapidated state of the mission, which would have continued to reflect badly upon the government unless major capital had been spent, provided a strong imperative for action by career-minded public servants. On the other hand, if Calder Allan had remained at Mapoon beyond 1955, the potential results of his leadership and commercial ability may have caused both church and government to reconsider their decision.

If Comalco had advanced the capital funds requested for Mapoon in 1957, would that have saved the mission? It is possible, however it must be remembered that the government's view, expressed by the Labor Minister for Health and Home Affairs in 1953 and 1954 and repeated by the coalition, was that it could not continue to support the operating costs of the mission.

Implications For Future Research

As discussed in the introduction, the thesis did not include an examination of the residents' perspectives. This was largely due to the unavailability of the extensive oral history recordings deposited with AIATSIS, as well as the space and time restrictions of an Honours

thesis and the large volume of records which had to be consulted to establish the study's parameters. It is believed that the thesis may provide a suitable framework for a detailed account of the residents' experiences which could utilise existing oral history and a project involving Mapoon school children in recording and interpreting their community's history.

More informed analysis of the positive and negative involvement of the mining companies could be made if their records were made available for examination. A broader perspective of the church's role could be obtained by interviewing surviving former missionaries and AFMC members. There is no doubt that the pressures exerted on the people of Mapoon created a legacy of bitterness and distrust towards church, state and mining companies which will remain a blot on Queensland's history. The Mapoon people have had the final say by successfully re-establishing ties to their homeland and by showing that self-determination and self-esteem were capable of overcoming the artificial barriers of church ineptitude, government policy and commercial power.

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Appendix One

List of Superintendents, Mapoon 1891-1963

Name	Date Officially Appointed Or Arrived At Mapoon	Date Terminated Or Departed Mapoon
Rev. James Gibson Ward	November 1891 ¹	January 1895 ²
Rev. John Nicholas Hey	June 1895 ³	October 1919
Rev. James Robert Beattie Love	October 1919 ⁴	1927 ⁵
Robert Millar MacCormack	1927	April 1928 ⁶
J.D.K. Smith (Acting)	April 1928 ⁷	September 1928 ⁸
Rev. P. Currell	October 1928 ⁹	December 1933
W. Millar (Acting)	December 1933 ¹⁰	December 1934
Rev. Roy McLelland	December 1934 ¹¹	October 1939 ¹²
C.D. Sydney (Acting)	November 1939 ¹³	December 1940
Frank Alan Cane	December 1940 ¹⁴	March 1948
James Bentley Hartshorn	March 1948 ¹⁵	November 1948

¹ Arthur Ward, *The miracle of Mapoon* (London: S.W. Partridge & Co., [1908]), pp. 56-59.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187; Brian Dickey, ed., *The Australian dictionary of evangelical biography* (Sydney, NSW: Evangelical History Association, 1994), pp. 396-397.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

⁴ 'Report of the Committee on Missions to the Heathen', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church State of Queensland*, Session 70 (May 1920), p. 67.

⁵ 'Report of the Committee on Missions to the Heathen', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church State of Queensland*, Session 78 (10-18 May 1927), p. 65.

⁶ 'Death of Mr MacCormack of Mapoon', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 10, 11 (May 1928), p. 5.

⁷ 'Mission notes: Unexpected changes', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 11, 1 (July 1928), p. 8.

⁸ 'Report of Committee on Missions to the Heathen', *Minutes of Proceedings of the State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church State of Queensland*, Session 80 (7-15 May, 1929), p. 77.

⁹ 'Aboriginal mission notes', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 11, 5 (November 1928), p. 15.

¹⁰ 'Aboriginal mission notes', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 16, 6 (December 1933), p. 6.

¹¹ 'A new missionary', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 17, 9 (March 1935), p. 11.

¹² Convener, Aboriginal Mission Committee to Rev. R. McLelland, 5 October 1939, Unsorted files, CMA/CF 1940, QPHR.

¹³ C.D. Sydney, Report on Mapoon Mission Station for year ending December 31st, 1939 to Director of Native Affairs, 5 March 1940, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1940, QPHR.

¹⁴ Frank A. Cane to Mr Brown, 9 December 1940, Unsorted files, CMA/CF, 1940, QPHR.

¹⁵ Dates based on Cane's absence on furlough and Allan's appointment. D.A. Brown to J. Hartshorn, 16 March 1948, Unsorted files, AFMC/CF, 1948, QPHR; 'Aboriginal and Foreign Missions', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 101 (11-20 May 1948), p. 51.

Rev. John Calder Allan	November 1948 ¹⁶	August 1951
Len Hopkinson (Acting)	August 1951 ¹⁷	September 1951
Rev. George William Holmes	September 1951 ¹⁸	November 1954
James Bentley Hartshorn	November 1954 ¹⁹	February 1955
Rev. John Calder Allan	February 1955 ²⁰	December 1955 ²¹
Rev. James Bentley Hartshorn	December 1955 ²²	April 1956 ²³
Peter Cecil Fletcher	April 1956 ²⁴	June 1957
Frank Richard Green	June 1957 ²⁵	May 1958
Rev. Garth Laureston Filmer	May 1958 ²⁶	July 1963

¹⁶ John Calder Allan, Biography Files, QPHR.

¹⁷ Len Hopkinson to Mr McPhail, 11 August 1951, Stations File, AFMC/CF, 1951, QPHR.

¹⁸ J. McPhail, Secretary for Missions to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, DNAO File 6A/6, Box 686, Transfer R 254, QSA; Len Hopkinson to Mr McPhail, 2 October 1951, Stations File, AFMC/CF, 1951, QPHR.

¹⁹ Jim Hartshorn, Mapoon to Mr Sweet, 22 November, 1954, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1954, QPHR..

²⁰ Secretary, AFMC to Director of Native Affairs, 21 February 1955, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR.

²¹ Jim Hartshorn, Mapoon to Mr Sweet, 5 December 1955, Mapoon File, AFMC/CF, 1955, QPHR.

²² DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA; Note: He had been ordained since his previous appointment.

²³ 'Aboriginal and foreign missions', *Presbyterian Outlook*, 39, 1 (April 1956), p. 6.

²⁴ DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

²⁵ DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

²⁶ DNAO File 6D/17, A/69497, QSA.

Appendix Two

Letter from G.L. Filmer to the Editor, Cairns Post
[Cairns Post, 4 December 1963, p. 7]

CORRESPONDENCE

MAPOON MISSION

(To the Editor "The Cairns Post")

Sir.—With reference to the question of moving Mapoon Mission to Bamaga, raised by your correspondent "Hear Both Sides" ("The Cairns Post" Nov. 27), I feel that there are other facts that the public should know about the matter. The letter from your correspondent is quite reasonable, but like many others who have taken an interest in the Mapoon question in recent years, he seems to regard everything said by native folk as being correct, and everything said by white administrators as being suspect.

Concerning the police visit to Mapoon, I have heard nothing of it apart from the reference on Nov. 22. There is nothing unusual in a police visit to a reserve, however, and I can only add that Mapoon would have avoided many of its troubles in the past if the Police Department had had the staff and time to make more frequent calls. The only thing wrong with moving Mapoon is that it was not done 10 or 15 years ago. Most of the natives who were there six years ago were reasonably educated—they could read, write, handle currency, owned motor boats, horses, radios, rifles and all spoke English. They could live in a town as well as any white man (which has been amply proven) and the impression gained would be that such folk ought not to be on a reserve at all.

It is a reasonable thing however for an uninformed person to ask, "Why not let the people stay on their original place?"

The Presbyterian Church and the Queensland Government would have been only too happy to do this, only for the fact that the old site of Mapoon is less than worthless—in fact it was a constant liability. The site is on an exposed peninsula; the whole terrain consists of deep drifts of sterile sand which is very hard to cultivate without the addition of huge quantities of humus and water. The sand causes buildings to topple, blows into every nook and cranny under the pressure of high winds, penetrates stationary engines, ruins the mechanism of vehicles and causes eye troubles among the children.

The area is impregnated with hookworm, resulting in anaemia and low resistance to illness. Plagues of mosquitoes are frequent. I have been all over Queensland and have not seen the flies worse anywhere. Anyone who has been told that Mapoon is a good place has been gravely misinformed, and it is small wonder that during the 10 years from 1950 to 1960 there were no fewer than seven superintendents.

Problems of terrain have been overcome by other peoples elsewhere, and it is true that there was a time about 40 years ago when the place did flourish, i.e. in relation to the standards of that time. In those days, however, the natives co-operated with their Superintendent and with each other, but this has not been so for many years past. It is regrettable that the majority of those who "dug their toes in" and Mapoon wanted their missionaries to be there to do things for them, but would not obey them and frankly distrusted them. It is interesting to see that it is these very folk who made the biggest fuss when the missionaries were withdrawn in

July of this year. Had they been truly independent, they could not have made any complaint.

The position was that they would let my assistant and myself unload cargoes of groceries from the boats at all hours of the night and in all weathers, often in very rough seas, and never move from their beds to help. They were all there the next day however when it was time for the haul or sale of the goods.

Some of the men did embark on their own schemes such as crocodile hunting, but in my time only one man stuck at it for long periods. The crocodile hunters were heavily dependent on the visits of outside men, and the women who made handicrafts were dependent on the store being open in order to barter their goods. Others did not bother to work at all, being content to live entirely on grandfather's pension (and with no rates, taxes or medical expenses you can live quite well) or on their children's endowment.

As in all races, ability and application do not always go together. No one worried so long as the missionary was there to do everything, and the Church very rightly considered this situation unhealthy.

The moment the missionaries attempted to apply pressure on the people to improve themselves, the leaders would write complaining to some political group who could be relied on to make a public outcry. In such a position the Church felt it could do little else but withdraw.

Jobs with the mining companies were admittedly short when I left, but this was not always so. Many Mapoon men used to earn from £20 to £25 per week in this way, so in spite of the "land grab" we have heard so much about, credit ought to go to the companies where it is due.

The facts are that these valuable jobs were often lost through the failure of the men to apply themselves to their work, and lack of "stickability". There were always plenty of jobs on neighbouring cattle stations, but the men would not go.

I was told recently by an ex-Mapoon man now at Bamaga that there was ample work at the new site, some contract jobs being worth up to £18 p.w. Nothing wrong with that money, but evidently the work was too hard for those used to getting things easily at the old place. The lower prices in the old Mapoon store were possible only through the willingness of missionaries to work long hours of overtime for no extra pay, but even so I did not consider the Island Industries Board prices unreasonable. Indeed in my experience the I.I.B. was the cheapest of any of the retail stores on Thursday Island.

Bamaga has a few disadvantages in comparison with the old site, but these disadvantages seem to have received far more publicity than the many points of improvement. In contrast to the old place, the soil at Bamaga is red and fertile, and free from hookworm. During my several visits I did not notice any flies or mosquitoes.

Every family at Mapoon had to dig their own wells which were subject to tidal inundation at certain times of the year, whereas at Bamaga water of good quality is laid on by pipe to every home.

The houses at the old site were shocking—in such a place they could hardly be otherwise—whereas at Bamaga our native people are granted brand-new homes rent-free for

as long as they care to occupy them. Where else could anyone of any colour get such a generous deal?

The hunting and the fishing are not as near at hand as on the old site, but surely the time has come in this age of development for our native folk to try to improve themselves by education, training and employment rather than the old way of living by destruction of the country and putting nothing back in return.

So far from abandoning the people, the Church last March pointed an ordained minister and his wife to the new settlement. If the inhabitants of the old site did not choose to move, appointed an ordained minister, the decision was entirely their own.

In case I appear to be rather more critical than I should, I hasten to add that Mapoon over the years has produced some very fine people, most of whom left the mission many years ago, and some in more recent times. These were the "staying" ones who have got out to "make a life of it" outside, under their own efforts, and I maintain that these are the ones who deserve to be applauded and

Like your correspondent, I have no connection with any political party, and have no direct link with the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions. I do not agree with everything the Department of Native Affairs says and does, nor is the record of the Church in Mapoon perfect, but I feel that these authorities have been unjustly censured by many people in this country and abroad, who do not know the inside facts.

I think I can stand to know most of the story, as I was the last Superintendent of Mapoon up to the closure in July last, and I lived there for five years.

Yours etc.,
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