



Department of
Creative Industries,
Tourism and Sport

July 2025

Aboriginal Family History Research Service

Thinking about researching your Aboriginal family history?

The Aboriginal History Research Services (AHRS) at the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport (CITS) assists Aboriginal people to locate Western Australian state government records about themselves and their ancestors. Due to the personal and sensitive nature of information contained in the records, many are restricted and not publicly available.

The records were created by the various Aboriginal 'Welfare Departments' that administered Aboriginal people, which operated under government policies that greatly restricted the lives of Aboriginal people between the late 1880s and the 1970s.

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

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

What information do the family history records contain?

Most of the records held by the AHRS are state records created by previous 'Native Welfare' departments between 1886 and 1972. The records are administrative in nature, often containing information about birth dates, child endowments, employment and wages, parentage, marriage and partnerships, places of residence, travel permits, mission and station details, and much more. The type of information varies from record to record, and you will find that records exist for some Aboriginal people yet not for others. There are many reasons for this; for example, if someone was 'exempt' from the *Aborigines Act 1905* then their information may not have been documented. Records have also been lost or destroyed over time by successive state government agencies.

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

How do I apply?

Family History Request forms are available from our website or can be collected from 10.00am to 2.00pm Monday to Friday at the Cultural Space on Level 3 in the State Library WA. Provide the completed application via email to ahrs@cits.wa.gov.au or via post to: Aboriginal History Research Services, PO Box 8349, Perth Business Centre WA 6849. For privacy reasons, you will need to attach a copy of identification to the completed form.

Do I need permission from family members to apply?

If you have a living ancestor [e.g., parent(s) or grandparent(s)] on the family side that you are researching, then the oldest living ancestor will need to be the applicant for the records.

Redactions and restricted information

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

How long will my application take to process?

It may take longer than expected to receive information, as we are working hard to process a high number of requests. We apologise for the delay.

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

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

Contact Us

Aboriginal History Research Services

Call us:

Freecall: 1800 161 301

9:00am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

Visit us:

Cultural Space, Level 3 State Library of WA,

25 Francis Street, Perth

10:00am – 2:00pm

Monday to Friday

Email us: ahrs@cits.wa.gov.au

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

Post: PO Box 8349, Perth Business Centre WA 6849