

Source A

To his excellency - Sir

Torres Strait Islanders be (sic) self-controlled by the people with the aid of the Commonwealth Government.

When Japan declared war against Australia all our European leaders of Torres Strait were escaped (sic) for their lives and leave us helpless. There was no word of evacuation, we were left as precious bait for the enemy...Torres Strait had volunteered in this present war therefore its people must be on the same page as the Europeans. This is to have full citizenship rights...

Torres Strait Councillors Application from unknown Islander.

From Torres Strait Islanders: custom and Colonialism (1989) by Jeremy Beckett (p. 61-62).

Source B

There was never any discrimination in those days. We all lived, ate, slept, and worked together and never a cross word was spoken. Everybody was jovial and full of joking. We all shared the clean and dirty work, whether on the boats or at the land camps.

Quote from Ray Croke, famous Australian artist and non-Indigenous, former Army Officer serving in the Torres Strait.

From 'Correspondence with Ray Cook' on the Torres Strait Heritage Museum site.

Source C

The way they weighed into labouring jobs was an inspiration. They were big, happy, confident fellows, in no way acknowledging white supremacy and we for our part, did not claim any. We met as equals and got on famously. They were marvellous singers [and] also treated us to an occasional wild and energetic dance.

Quote from Harold West, of the 17th Australian Field Company, remembered working with the Islanders.

From: Seekee, V. One Ilun Man from Australian War Memorial Site.

Source D

We were left at the door of Australia while people of T.I (Thursday Island) were evacuated. We left our families, just like bait for enemies to come while we safeguarded other people's country (i.e. New Guinea). If enemies came and people are shot, you can't tell from the blood on the ground if it's white or black. We couldn't drink at hotels after the war but during the war all was equal.

Quote from Mr Nelima 'Slim' Panuel, Torres Strait Islander ex-Australian soldier.

From: Torres Strait at War (1987). Thursday Island State High School: National Bicentennial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program.

Source E

The Army has been good for us coloured boys. In the Army we meet good white men. They talk with us. We are friends. Some white men are good. The Education Officer on T.I helped us coloured boys a lot. We get any book we want in the Army. We treated like white men in the Army.

Quote from an Islander serving in Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.

From The Torres Strait: People and history by John Singe (p. 112).

