

***Herald* (Melbourne), 24 July 1939, p. 18, Blacks Refuse to Go Back. Plight in Camp**

Poorly dressed, short of blankets and protected from the rain and cold only by bag shelters, 44 natives are still camped on the Victorian side of the Murray near Barmah, determined not to return to Cumeroogunga (N.S.W.) Aboriginal Station until their complaints on conditions there have been properly investigated.

Included among the 44 are 18 children. During the week-end the river was only eight inches from the top of its banks, and flood waters threatened to add to their hardships.

Across on the Mooroopna side about 20 other natives are camped, also determined not to go back to Cumeroogunga under present conditions.

Inquiry Demand

The organising secretary of the Australian Aborigines' League (Mr G. Patten) said today that the natives were now entirely dependent on food and other help sent from Melbourne. They were not eligible for sustenance in Victoria and would get nothing from New South Wales while they remained across the river.

“They are suffering a lot of hardship but they would sooner do that and take a stand to force an inquiry, than go back to Cumeroogunga”, Mr Patten said “They feel that, if they return, there will be no hope of ever improving things for themselves or their children.

“Within a fortnight the league intends to launch a public campaign to draw attention to the condition of these and other natives in various settlements. People will be asked to sign a petition requesting the Federal Government to grant a Royal Commission to inquire into complaints.

“During the campaign we intend to tell the public something of what the Cumeroogunga natives have had to put up with.”