

***Herald* (Melbourne), 26 July 1939, p. 12, State Relief for Blacks. Inquiry on Camp**

A promise that five families of aborigines, including 13 children, now living near Barmah, would be placed on sustenance pending investigation of their position, was made today by the Minister for Sustenance (Mr Mackrell).

The Minister told a deputation, which included representatives of the Australian Aborigines' League, Aborigines' Assistance Committee and Aborigines' Uplift Society, that his department had no intention of discriminating between people because of their color.

Mr G. Patten (organising secretary of the Aborigines' League) said that in February, because of intolerable conditions imposed on them at Cumeroogunga aboriginal station (New South Wales), a number of natives crossed into Victoria.

#### BETTER EDUCATION

If their children could attend the school at Barmah they could obtain a better education than the third-grade education provided at Cumeroogunga. They had applied for sustenance, and had been refused on the ground that they were aborigines.

Mr Mackrell: Was it on the ground that they were aborigines or aborigines from another State?

Mr H. H. Lees: Apparently they had been refused sustenance, because they had the right to go back to the station.

Mr Patten said starvation would drive the natives back to New South Wales unless they were given assistance. Some had already been forced to return. There were 44 in the camp at Barmah, of whom five families were not on sustenance. Twenty more were living at Mooroopna.

Mr A. P. Burdeu, president of the Australian Aborigines' League, said the families intended to stay in Victoria unless they were forced to return by refusal of sustenance.

The deputation wished to have the aborigines placed on the same footing as white people coming from New South Wales, who, after three months' residence, were eligible for sustenance. They particularly asked that the Victorian Department should not insist that the aborigines must return to the station.

#### PAUPER CIVILISATION

Miss Helen Baillie (Aborigines Uplift Society) said one of the great disabilities the aborigines suffered was the insufficiency of education. The result was that a pauper civilisation was being produced, because the aborigines, with their third-grade education, were not fitted to take their place in society.

Mr Mackrell also promised investigation of a complaint by Mr Burdeu that aborigines who had left the Lake Tyers settlement were not receiving assistance from the

settlement and were not entitled to sustenance.