

***The Age*, 12 October 1939, p. 12, Sustenance to Cease. Aborigines Plight**

The Minister of Labor and Sustenance, Mr Mackrell, announced yesterday that the sustenance granted aborigines who had crossed the Murray River from Cummeroogunga Station, New South Wales, to Barmah (V.), last February, would be discontinued in November.

When making this announcement to a deputation of representatives of aborigine welfare societies, Mr Mackrell said he had granted the sustenance several months ago on the understanding that he would make inquiries in Sydney as to the conditions at Cummeroogunga Station. In Sydney he had been informed by the Aborigines Board that free housing with water connected was provided, while vegetable seeds, blankets, rations and food were provided for the unemployed and infirm.

“Those receiving sustenance at the station were expected to work for the benefit of the station. There was an endowment scheme for the children while winter and summer clothing was issued. Medical benefits were available, while the Education department provided a staff for the development of the children.

In these circumstances, Mr. Mackrell said, he found it impossible to continue sustenance. The treatment seemed to be good. The suspension of sustenance had been delayed for a lengthy period, as he did not desire to impose any hardships during the cold months when floods were troublesome. Other Government departments were perturbed, as the consideration granted had created discontent in other Victorian districts.

George Patten, who left the Cumeroogunja Station, addressed the Minister with remarkable fluency, and said that the treatment, received from the Aborigines Board of New South Wales would not allow his people to be useful citizens of Australia. The majority of the men worked for four months in the Victorian fruit-growing-districts of Mooroopna and Shepparton, and paid taxes to the Victorian Government. Thus they were fully justified in asking for sustenance when no work was offering. Without sustenance the aborigines would be without an income of any description.

#### Education Dilemma

The Minister of Education, Sir John Harris, was asked by the same deputation to provide education at Barmah for the aborigine children. It was stated that the children were without education, and it was feared they would develop an inferiority complex, which would result in them submitting to a lower standard of living.

The Minister said the special Education Advisory Committee had considered the matter and had recommended that the aborigine children should not be admitted to the Barmah school, which was already full. The New South Wales department had been asked if room was available at Cummeroogunja Station, which was only two miles across the river. The reply stated that even if the aborigines remained in Victoria the school would be available to the children. If the children were not accepted, Sir John Harris promised to make further investigations.