

**William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, 3 December 1939, National Archives of Australia, A461, A300/1, Part 3**

The following matters addressed to you are again brought to your notice and I would request that they be finalised as soon as possible and you advise the position at present:—

1. Letter of 8th Sept. 1939 re the rights of aborigines who have reached a civilised status to full community rights as Old Age and Invalid pensions, maternity bonus and franchise.
2. Asking that no delay be permitted in respect of the new deal: That the finance for its implementation be made available in the full volume intended and as soon as possible.
3. Re our petition to his Majesty, asking inter alia, for representation in Parliament.
4. Asking that you receive a deputation from the league seeking a reply to four representations.

The whole of this correspondence and our other representations would be fully met if you were to pass amending legislation granting *full rights to aborigines who have attained civilised status*. We submit that a short bill could cover this and its passage would be quick. Failing this, we submit that it may be possible to do this by regulation under the War Precautions Act or its equivalent.

May we emphasise that this war is by reason of the tyranny over minorities and their cruel discriminating treatment. Australia cannot fight that cause in honesty while still oppressing her minority though we know that no white person sees this. Taking the matter of the last reported case of cruelty, that of refusing Miss [Ada] Austin, a charming, cultured, civilised aboriginal woman of Victoria a pension. Can a failure to rectify such a matter and allowing other such cases to occur be reconciled with British Justice.

Our treasurer, Doug Nicholls, broadcast over Wesley's pleasant Sunday Afternoon last week. His manuscript was submitted to the Censor, who disallowed certain portions, because it was not in the interests of Australia that the statements made, wholly concerning the utterance of white men and leaders in the White realm, should be given over the air to be picked up by enemy propagandists. Our community is so loyal that Doug gladly acquiesced.

This means that we may not broadcast our treatment but must just suffer it.

May I request that you close this whole matter by according to approved natives the full rights of white citizens *AND THOSE RIGHTS WHICH ARE THE PRIVILEGE OF ALIENS BORN IN THE LAND*.

The last war gave British Women their rights. May this one give the same to aborigines. Mr Lyons' government produced our MAGNA CARTA in the New

policy. We do trust that your government will take the logical final steps for the outcome of the Federal policy must be the civilisation of the race who thus must ultimately come to a full Australian status.

The matter is urgent to us, some hungry mouths are still hungrier. Get rid of the disabilities and so link the aboriginal people in the more affectionate loyalty to the Empire.

We request your personal dealing with this matter.