

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Minister for the Interior, John McEwen, 19 February 1938, National Archives of Australia, A1, 1936/12778

Mr E. E. Kramer has explained to me his proposals re the ration depot at Alice Springs and the natives who are not in employment there being removed to a suitable location where there is sufficiency of native food. I am thoroughly in accord with the proposal and would like to explain the policy of our league in that connection.

We feel that the natives should be educated and civilised on their own reservations so that they will ultimately be able to take their places in civilised society as valuable units. We appreciate that little can be expected from the present generation who should be allowed to live their own lives as largely as possible, but we do feel that a definite policy of uplift should take the young people and fit them for the civilisation of the white people. We therefore suggest:

1. That the people not in employment be removed from Alice Springs to the suitable location mentioned. That the location be an aboriginal station as is the practice in more advanced parts, as Palm Island. That a Manager be placed in Control to organise the young natives, and the old ones to the extent they are willing, in the development of a portion of the land according to its capacity by up to date methods. Certain of the area should be used to stock with cattle, etc. so that our idea of making the native settlements self-supporting can be tried out. It should be possible to do this without immediately displacing the native animals which are the normal food of natives. In short that a policy be framed to take the native as he is and bring him to the full culture of the white. There should be educational facilities for the children. CANNOT THE GOVERNMENT REGARD THIS AS A GOOD PLACE FOR AN EXPERIMENT WHICH SHOULD BE SYMPATHETICALLY CARRIED OUT AND WHICH MAY, ACCORDING TO THE EXPERIENCE GAINED, BE A PATTERN FOR FUTURE WORK. WE SAY, QUITE DEFINITELY, THAT ABORIGINAL UPLIFT SHOULD BE SELF-LIQUIDATING AND THE GOVERNMENT POLICY SHOULD BE BASED ON THIS COMMENDABLE PRINCIPLE.

I do trust that you will be able to meet the wishes of Mr Kramer, of many years experience in those parts and a man who regards us as human beings capable of thorough culture.

Might I suggest that while you are in the Territories you call at Bonny Well, the Station of Mr Curtis, south of Tennants Creek. You will there see aboriginal capabilities given full expression. We want you to see that we are practical and that when we make claims we are not merely theorists. We want also to impress that it is white interests that will be served as well as aboriginal when the problem which is not insoluble is properly tackled. May I summarise Aboriginal claims in a few sentences:

1. Aborigines are entitled to a quid pro quo for the loss of their lands and liberty. This is implied in the term BRITISH JUSTICE. If the aborigines are merely a conquered and enslaved people it is not consonant with British principle.

2. Aborigines do not ask Charity but Uplift. They ask for full equality in law but also the opportunity to qualify for it. Aboriginal uplift can be made self-liquidating and it ought be.
3. Aborigines must not be an exploitable cheap labor but they must be fully equipped to serve Australia and should ultimately be living under Australian conditions. When the aboriginal people are fully cultured and are Australian in the fullest sense of the term you will be proud of us.
4. There is that transitional period. A policy, longsighted and sympathetic, must be framed and carried out to bring the aboriginal over in the shortest time and the most thorough fashion.
5. NO OUTWORKING OF THE WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY SHALL WORK DETRIMENTALLY TO THE NATIVES. FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS POLICY, THE ABORIGINAL IS WHITE. (IS NOT THAT REASONABLE?) WE BELIEVE AND CONTEND THAT ABORIGINES, NOT SOUTHERN EUROPEANS, ARE THOSE WHO SHOULD DEVELOP THE OUTBACK. WE CAN DO IT, UNDER WHITE GUIDANCE, BETTER THAN ANY OTHERS FOR THE CLIMATE HAS NO TERRORS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER KNOWN A MORE FAVORABLE ONE. WE CLAIM THAT THE PEOPLING OF AUSTRALIA'S UNSETTLED AREAS WITH CIVILISED ABORIGINES IS THE BEST WAY TO CLOSE AUSTRALIA'S BACK DOOR FOR THE ABORIGINAL IS LOYAL AND EFFICIENT.

TRY US OUT! WE LOOK TO YOU. WE HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN.
Yours sincerely ...