

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Premier of New South Wales, Bertram Stevens, 23 May 1938, New South Wales Archives and Records, NRS 12060, Item No. [12/8749-8750]

You will doubtless be aware of the effect of the present drought at Cumeroogunga aboriginal station. The conditions, never satisfactory, are now particularly bad for, though this station is beautifully situated on the Murray River, and readily irrigable, the cattle are dying and the children cannot get milk. Certainly, belatedly, irrigation has begun, but if the stock may be saved that will be all possible. There is no prospect for milk for the children let alone for the adult population. It is stated that meat is now being purchased in Echuca for the station when it should be reasonably possible for Cumeroogunga to supply meat to that town.

All this distress was avoidable and I only mention the matters above to point this fact. We presented a plan which we felt would lift aboriginal administration from being a liability to being a revenue producing department. We did feel and do feel that the care of aborigines can be made self-liquidating and the aboriginal population can be made an asset.

You did advise us that you were carrying out part of our proposals and we were looking to that to prove out contentions. You were to provide a pumping plant adequate to the needs of the station, and, without wishing to seem critical, I feel that if this had been done all the present misery would have been avoided.

I am now writing to ask that the pumping plant be established without further delay and the further plans which you have approved be given effect to.

We feel you will be satisfied with the result, and given time, you will yet realise that the policy we advocate has been wise.