

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, 22 July 1936, National Archives of Australia, A659, 1942/1/8104

The aborigines are looking forward with deep concern to the forthcoming conference of Premiers in Adelaide next month as they feel that their destinies are somewhat involved.

You have undertaken to bring the matter of aboriginal control and policy to the conference and we do plead that no circumstance be permitted to shelve or delay the matter.

We do plead for one controlling authority, the Commonwealth and request that all aboriginal interests be absolutely federalised. This will enable a continuous common policy of uplift, which we trust will contain provision for the exploitation of all natives' reserves by the natives. By the natives, under able leadership, and for the natives. We submit an aim, which is practicable, and that should be the ultimate self liquidation of the whole problem of uplift. So far from the aboriginal continuing to be a charge on the community, he can be made under sound and capable direction to be an asset to the community. This is a long vision no doubt.

We plead for this, but if the Premiers are not willing to lose a responsibility they do not wish to retain we plead for a common policy under Commonwealth control or influence with a subsidising of the States on the aboriginal per capita basis. We have no hope where the States with large aboriginal populations cannot adequately finance their obligations and the States with small aboriginal populations, or none, as in the case of Tasmania, should not be freed from responsibility.

We would request that the request of this League for parliamentary representation be considered. If the whole control is federalised this should be readily concedable, but if the States retain control, we submit that such representation should be accorded to our people in the States' legislature, at any rate where the aboriginal populations are numerous.

Trusting that you will bring these requests to the notice of the Premiers.