

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, 16 January 1937, National Archives of Australia, A459, 1942/1/8104

I take the liberty of enclosing for your information a copy of an agenda of suggestions for the forthcoming meeting of Chief Protectors of Aborigines and other administrative officers.

We looked forward to the late Premiers' conference as the means of our emancipation. Now that the consideration has been passed on to the administrative officers for consideration and recommendation we are hoping that our proposals will be kept in mind.

I will forward a copy also to the Minister for the Interior and one to each Minister of the Crown concerned and the Chief Protectors.

Our case is desperate in different parts and only by subsidy can the States hope to improve our lot. They have, in some cases, the will to do so but lack the financial capacity.

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AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES' LEAGUE
AGENDA of proposals submitted by the Australian
Aborigines' League for the consideration of the Conference
of Chief Protectors and others.

1. That all aboriginal interests be federalised with a Federal Ministry for Aborigines. Failing this
2. That there be coordination between State Departments with a view to a common policy for the whole of the Commonwealth.
3. That a National Policy be formulated for the uniform and systematic uplift of the whole of the aboriginal population throughout Australia.
4. That the cost of administering the aboriginal policy be a charge, on a per capita basis, against the whole of Australia, thus enabling the States with a large white population and a comparatively small aboriginal population sharing the cost with States with a large aboriginal population and a relatively small white population.
5. That all approved aboriginals of full or part aboriginal blood be allowed to adopt an independent status and that, in that condition, they be not subject to any disabilities in law, political, civil or economic, as aboriginals. That such aboriginals be entitled to all the rights of white persons as maternity bonus, old age and invalid pensions, sustenance (work for dole and relief work) while unemployed, etc.
6. That all aboriginals of full or part blood have the right to live in reserves set apart for aboriginals. That expulsion from reserves for breach of discipline or other cause shall not be permitted without open enquiry at which the charged aboriginal shall be

allowed assistance for his defence, legal assistance if desired. Any aboriginal discharged from an aboriginal station shall be treated in the matter of sustenance as an aboriginal electing to live privately, if unemployed.

7. That no advantage shall accrue to any class of aboriginal over another, i.e., that full bloods with those of any degree of mixed blood shall have equality of treatment and opportunity.

8. That the aboriginal population shall be grouped into classes determined by the stage of their progress and that the policy of the Administration shall be the progressive elevation from one class to a higher one till the whole race is fully civilised and cultured. These groups shall be:

(a) Myall Aboriginals.

(b) Partly civilised and detribalised aboriginals.

(c) Civilised aboriginals.

9. That education be provided for all aboriginal children designed to permit all who are capable of qualifying, to attain to the highest standard. As may be justified, secondary schools for aboriginal children shall be provided. Where this is not possible, aboriginal children and young people shall have the right to attend secondary schools set apart for white children. The education of all aboriginal children shall be academic and vocational.

10. That all aboriginals be encouraged to work in the industry of civilisation; that they have the right to work and that all able-bodied unemployed, aged, sick and infirm aboriginals shall have the assurance of full sustenance, the third group of aboriginals to be treated for sustenance as whites in parallel circumstances are treated, viz., payment of dole, old age or invalid pension, or as the case may be.

11. Suitable areas of land shall be set apart for the increasing aboriginal population. These should be large enough to permit of the development of full self-reliance, all community services being rendered, where possible, by aborigines. All reserves should be fully developed by the most up-to-date methods under expert direction. Young aboriginals should be encouraged to settle in these reservations but there should not be any compulsion on aged persons to leave areas that they have become attached to. Aboriginal reserves to be inalienable and whites not to be allowed thereon only by permission.

12. That trained and qualified aboriginals be allowed to settle on lands and to work them for their own profit, the ultimate design of all training in settlements being with this independency in view.

13. All offences by aboriginals to be subject to punishment only to the extent that white persons are punishable, due regard being paid to the implications of aboriginal law or psychology. Offences by whites against aboriginals to be punishable on the same basis as offences by whites against whites and offences by aboriginals to be punishable only to the same degree as in the case of offences by whites against

whites. In other words there shall be full equality of whites and aboriginals before the law.