

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Premier of New South Wales, Bertram Stevens, 31 March 1937, New South Wales Archives and Records, NRS 12060, Item No. [12/8749-8750]

I am taking the opportunity of writing to you personally for I feel sure that you have not personally handled the correspondence from me previously else I would not have received the scant courtesy I have only received, quite different from that accorded to every other Administration in Australia, for I have considerable correspondence with each. I know that the matters have had a departmental course which will explain everything for the departments have not yet taken seriously the effort of the aboriginals on their own behalf.

I have written from time to time asking for the favor of your receiving a deputation from us when you are in Melbourne and I would be grateful if you would personally agree to see us at some convenient time: meantime I am asking your personal consideration of one outstanding matter as follows: –

As you may know, Cumeroogunja is located on the Murray, where an abundant supply of beautiful water exists. There is a pumping plant and water is laid on to some of the homes. The land is fertile and it must be patent that if the natives were encouraged to grow vegetables their health would be better. We are criticised for not doing so but the fault is not ours.

During the heat of the summer, a member of our executive noticed the dark folk passing to and from the stream with kero tins, drawing water from the river. He questioned the matter with the Assistant Manager who did then pump twice a day when he was there. When he went away one filling was reverted to per day and again, in the heat of the summer, the natives had to cart water by bucket. Now, only a matter of oil fuel stands between an adequate supply of water laid on and the conditions which did exist. I am at a loss to understand why two or even three pumpings per day cannot be made. It may be urged that the natives would waste the water. Would you accept that excuse from white people in similar circumstances? See that the taps are capable of being turned off, ration the use of water for gardens so that different people can use it at different times, forbid wasting and follow up disregard and there could not be any trouble on that score. There are other matters that I have put to you concerning the station which cost may have been a factor in not according to, but the cost of adequate water would be very low.

Can we have the assurance that next summer will see adequate water. If so, we can use our voice to bring to the notice of the people that we have secured this advantage and they must help us to retain it.

The present manager [J.G. Danvers], who we hold in high regard, will be able to warn any defaulter of the consequences of disregard of instructions and, if to this be added the weight of native opinion, I do not anticipate any difficulty whatever.

Thank you.