

William Cooper, Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Premier of New South Wales, Bertram Stevens, 9 May 1937, New South Wales Archives and Records, NRS 12060, Item No. [12/8749-8750]

I do thank you for your letter of 24th ult. and for the promise of improved water supply at Cumeroogunja. This will make possible the further improvements I have advocated on behalf of our League. I am writing because that matter is not mentioned nor did you promise the deputation sought.

Aboriginal interests have been subordinated to financial considerations but I note by the press that the N.S.W. budget is now balanced so that our interests may be able to receive more notice. Will you please do this?

I would, however, point out that all we seek is the right to prove our capacity for self support. We have the water and the climate. The markets are available and surely we natives are entitled to a share of these markets with Chinese and other aliens.

Some years ago the natives of Cumeroogunja had a small pump with which they irrigated a small patch of tomatoes. The break down of that plant put an end to that small industry. Could not a start be made with tomatoes this year. The manager could oversee the work and the natives do it, the proceeds being distributed among the workers in relation to the labor put in. We are merely asking for a chance to prove that aboriginal control and uplift can be made a self-supporting matter. It can, therefore, be made a means of training for self-reliance and independence.

Might I request that you call for our correspondence and refer it to your agricultural department for investigation and I would be glad to hear further from you; also please consider the request for a deputation when we can answer your objections as well as explain our wishes.

Can we not ask that the 150th anniversary of your State have as one of its objectives the Honest endeavour to lift the aboriginal to the right to full manhood and British citizenship.