

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Minister for the Interior, Thomas Paterson, 30 July 1937, National Archives of Australia, A659, 1940/1/858

In the press of Saturday, 24th instant, reference is made to the "Payne enquiry and the favorable impression they had formed of the suitability of the Territory for development by white people. In relation to the White Australia policy generally there does seem to be a disposition not to take the aboriginal into consideration at all, unless it be to regard him as a menace to be eliminated. I am writing to appeal that you give consideration to the claim of this league "that no application of the White Australia policy leaves out the aboriginal: that it be a fundamental phase of that policy that it include a plan for the uplift, civilisation, industrialisation and culture of the native inhabitants of the soil; that it be not inconsistent with that policy that aboriginals should ultimately be permitted to enjoy full equality of rights with white settlers".

We need hardly impress on you that the natural tendency of the aboriginal is to lose his native culture and assume the culture of those associated with his uplift. We claim that the civilised aboriginal is a black Britisher, having adopted the psychology and outlook of the people who displaced him. The aborigines are intensely loyal to the Throne and Person of Their Sovereign Lord. In many cases it might be affirmed that they are "more British than the British". It should be equally obvious that the civilisation of the race, to whom the out back presents no climate problem, will produce a virile, capable people, who will prove an efficient bulwark for the defence of your country and theirs.

Our League, as by this time you will believe, is not a discordant element but sincerely desirous of winning respect for our race by what we believe to be the sheer merits of our case. We claim that our whole policy can be included in the expression "The Aboriginal can be, should be, and, with a fair deal, will be, as asset and not a liability to Australia". We know, from personal knowledge, how great the problem is and what patience will be needed to apply the plan of uplift but we know that the longer the applying the remedy is, the more difficult will be the task. We further insist that the whole problem is of White creation and its solution is a White obligation.