

1: Indigenous rights – 1950s and 1960s



Student Materials

Source 1.1: Five Basic Principles

The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League was founded in 1957 and built on the work of previous organisations. In 1958, the League united with other State-based groups to form the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA). Five basic principles united the member organisations:

FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES

Principle 1 - Equal citizenship rights with other Australians for Aborigines.

Principle 2 - All Aborigines to have a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing and medical care not less than for other Australians.

Principle 3 - All Aborigines to receive equal pay for equal work and the same industrial protection as other Australians.

Principle 4 - Education for detribalised Aborigines to be free and compulsory.

Principle 5 - The absolute retention of all remaining reserves, with native communal or individual ownership.

This was published in *Smoke Signals*, the magazine of the Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League (VAAL).

Source 1.2: Aboriginal rights in the 1950s and 1960s

Before the 1967 Referendum, definitions of Aboriginality, and laws and regulations relating to Aborigines, varied from State to State.

The following table summarises the rights enjoyed by Aborigines on settlements and reserves in five States and the Northern Territory.

	NSW	Vic	SA	WA	NT	Qld
Vote (State)	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Marry freely	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Control own children	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Move freely	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Own property freely	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Receive award wages	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Drink alcohol	N	N	N	N	N	N

(From FCAA 1967 Referendum petition leaflet, 1962).

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Source 1.3: Living conditions

'END DISCRIMINATION – VOTE 'YES' ON MAY 27'

This was the front cover of the special Referendum issue of *Smoke Signals*, the journal of the Aboriginal Advancement League.



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Source 1.4: Rules at Lake Tyers

Every [A]borigine on a reserve shall obey the instructions of the manager of such reserve...No person shall on a reserve: use profane, indecent or abusive language...harbour any person whose admission to the reserve is not permitted or approved...gamble or bet...be under the influence of any intoxicant not bona fide administered to him as a medicine by a fully qualified medical practitioner (or his authorized agent)...

(1957 Aborigines Act, cited in *Victims or Victors?* page 29)

Source 1.5: Grazing and Pastoral Industry Wages 1964

Comparison of wages paid under the Station Hands Award and the Aborigines' Preservation and Protection Acts (Queensland).

Employment	Award Wage	Aboriginal wage
General Station Hand	£ 15/17/6	£8/5/0 (from 18 – 45 years) £7/10/0 (over 45 'if active') £ 5/10/0 (over 45 'not active')
Drover	£18/3/4	£10/0/0 (from 18 – 45 years) £5/7/6 (over 45 'not active')
Worker under 18 years	£8/14/3	£5/0/0
Worker 20 – 21 years	£13/9/11	£6/0/0
Male Cook	£15/7/6	£8/10/0 (if cooking for Europeans) £7/7/6 (if cooking for Aborigines)
Female Cook	£12/2/6	£7/7/6 (if cooking for Europeans) £5/12/6 (if cooking for Aborigines)
Domestic servant under 19 years	£6/12/7	-
Domestic servant over 19 years	£11/15/9	£4/15/0 (over 18 years)
Annual Leave	3 weeks	One week

(Adapted from A. McDonald, Discrimination against Aborigines in the Grazing and Pastoral Industries, *Smoke Signals*, Volume 3, Number 4, December 1964)

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Source 1.6: Timeline

1901	The Commonwealth Constitution excludes the Commonwealth Government from Aboriginal affairs (Section 51) and from counting Aborigines in the census (Section 127).
1902	The Commonwealth Franchise Act passed by the new Commonwealth Government takes away the right to vote for most Aboriginal people.
1911	The Commonwealth Government takes control of the Northern Territory, so becoming involved in Aboriginal affairs.
1912	Maternity allowances are introduced.
1914	War pensions are introduced.
1937	First national native welfare conference agrees on assimilation policy. Aborigines' Progressive Association formed in NSW and, led by Bill Ferguson and Jack Patten, fights for citizenship rights for Aboriginal people.
1938	Day of Mourning (marking 150 years of European settlement). Aboriginal deputation to Prime Minister Lyons presents a 'Long Range Policy for Aborigines' which includes a Department of Aboriginal Affairs aimed at granting all Aborigines full citizenship status.
1941	Child endowment is introduced.
1944	'Powers' Referendum (concerned with granting the Commonwealth Government additional powers for implementing its post-war reconstruction program, including the power to legislate for Aborigines) is overwhelmingly rejected.
1945	Unemployment and sickness benefits are introduced.
1948	<i>United Nations Declaration of Human Rights</i> is proclaimed. Australia is one of the first signatories.
1949	Nationality and Citizenship Act formally defines the term 'Australian citizenship'. Commonwealth Electoral Act extends voting rights to those Indigenous people who had been, or continued to be members, of the Defence Forces.
1951	Second Aboriginal Conference confirms assimilation policy.
1958	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals (FCAA) is established (later changed to FCAATSI to include Torres Strait Islanders).
1959	Aborigines become eligible for pensions and maternity allowances if not 'nomadic or primitive', but group payments are often made to reserves and missions instead.
1961	Senate Select Committee on Aboriginal Voting Rights established. It investigates and recommends a full extension of voting rights to Aborigines.
1962	Commonwealth franchise extended to all Aborigines but voting not compulsory.
1963	A protest is conducted over mining leases on Yirrkala Aboriginal reserve land. Bark petition is presented to the Prime Minister.



1965	Freedom Rides through NSW country towns. Bill to change Constitution by Referendum is introduced in the House of Representatives.
1966	Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission grants equal wages to Aboriginal pastoral workers but with a three-year delay. Gurindji strike and walk off Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory, starting start a seven-year fight to obtain title to their land