

NATIONAL PETITION

TOWARDS EQUAL CITIZENSHIP FOR ABORIGINES

What Do Aborigines Want Most?

- Freedom from restrictive laws that apply only to Aborigines.
- The right to legal ownership of their own reserves.
- The right to the same wages and industrial protection as other Australians.
- Government-financed programmes of housing, education, technical and vocational training to raise their standard of living to that of the rest of the Australian community as quickly as possible.

What Excludes Aborigines from Equal Citizenship?

The present restrictive State laws and Northern Territory Ordinances.

How Can this Discrimination be Removed?

Either each State Government must act to remove its present restrictive legislation, or the Federal Parliament must get the authority to pass uniform laws that would override the existing State laws.

Why Doesn't the Federal Government Pass Laws that Would Override Existing State Laws Discriminating Against Aborigines?

Although in general practice, laws passed by the Federal Government override any State laws on the same subject, the Federal Government always claims that it does not have the authority to do this for Aborigines because of Section 51 of the Federal constitution. Section 51 gives the Federal Parliament "power to make laws for the peace, order, and good Government of the Commonwealth with respect to: Clause XXVI: The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws."

How Can the Government Get the Authority to Pass Laws for the Aborigines?

There are two ways: (1) The States could voluntarily give up their authority over Aborigines to the Federal Government. This could be done through a Premier's Conference. (2) The Federal Constitution could be amended. As most State authorities are always very reluctant to surrender any of their powers to the Federal Government, the most practical procedure appears to be to amend the Federal constitution.

How Can the Federal Constitution be Amended?

This can only be done by means of a Referendum at which all citizens have to vote on the suggested alterations. A majority of States as well as a majority of voters is necessary for alterations to be made to the constitution.

Do Any Other Clauses in the Constitution Discriminate Against Aborigines?

Yes. Section 127 which excludes Aborigines from those people counted in the Census. The Government considers cattle, sheep and pigs important enough to be counted officially but not the Aboriginal people. Their omission from the census results in an unfair distribution of the revenue from Income Tax to the States as this is distributed on the basis of the population figures obtained in the census.

What Is This Petition For?

It asks the Federal Government to hold a Referendum to amend the Constitution so that these clauses which discriminate against Aborigines can be removed.

If the Constitution is Altered as a Result of a Referendum, Will Aborigines be Free from Legal Restrictions Immediately?

No. The Federal Government would have to make use of its new authority to pass the necessary laws. This petition is only part of an Australia-wide campaign to obtain equal citizenship and social justice for Aborigines. It is complementary to the many campaigns in progress for repeal of individual State Acts. The Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement urges the removal of all legislation discriminating against Aborigines.

Please Sign this Petition — Take Copies of the Petition — Get Your Friends and Workmates to Sign. Financial Assistance is Urgently Needed. Donations should be sent to the Victorian Campaign Committee, P.O. Box 59, Coburg.