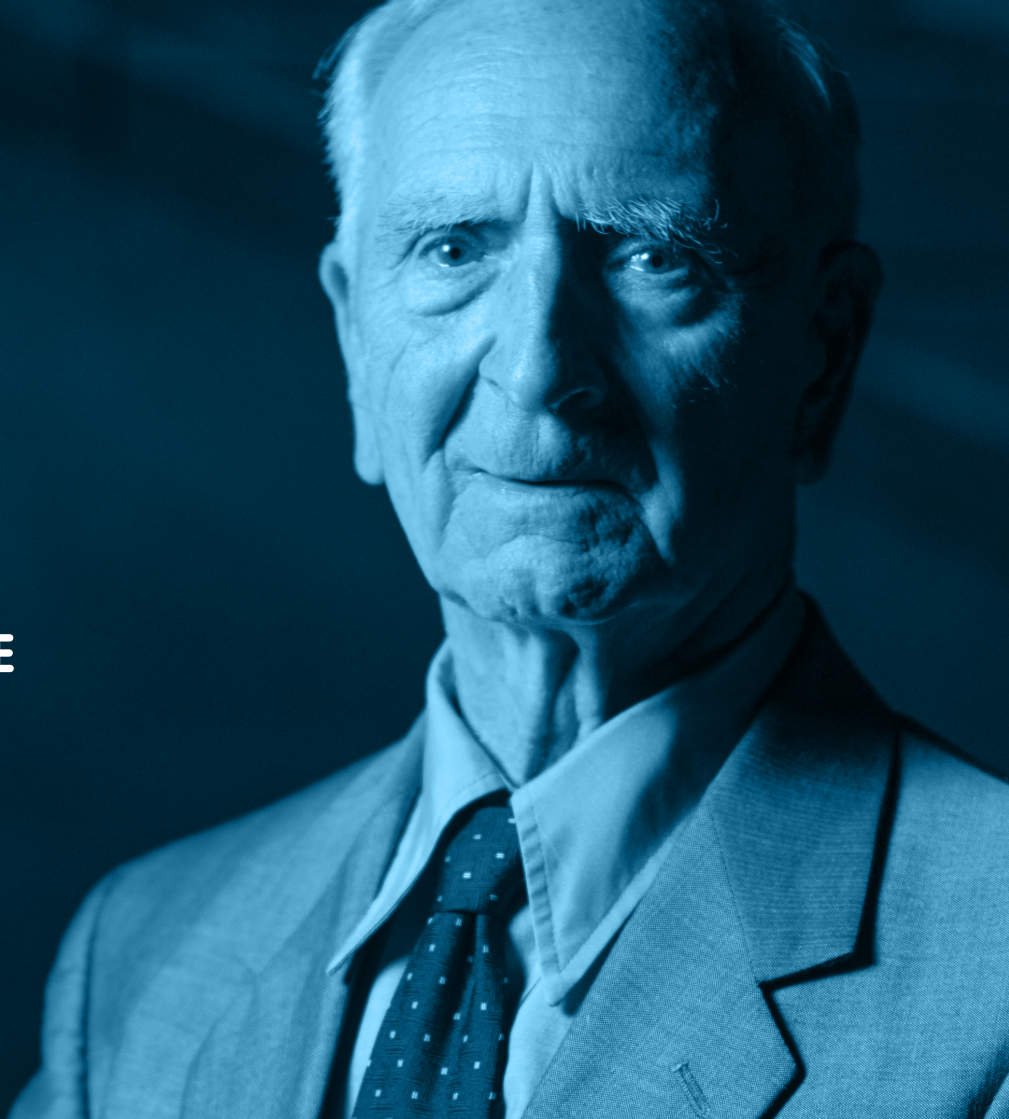


THE STORY OF UNCLE WILLIAM COOPER

Uncle William Cooper was born in the bush at the junction of the Goulburn and Murray Rivers in 1860. He was the Secretary of the Australian Aborigines League (AAL), an organisation devoted to fighting for basic human rights and civil rights for Aboriginal people.

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Cooper dedicated his life to fighting for human rights. In 1934 – 1936, he organised and attempted to forward a Petition of 1814 Indigenous signatures to the Monarch, King George V, requesting the granting of Aboriginal representation in the Australian Parliament. However, the Parliament of the day blocked the petition from ever leaving Australia.

Cooper was also known for marching in protest against Nazi persecution. He led the AAL to the German Consulate in Melbourne in 1938 after hearing about the terrible events of Krystallnacht four weeks prior. He felt great empathy for the racially victimised Jews suffering under the Third Reich, in far-away Europe.

Sadly, both the Petition to the King and the 1938 protest to the German Consul, fell upon the deaf ears of unsympathetic gatekeepers.

Cooper was a bright pupil at the local Mission school, Maloga, where he learnt the alphabet in one day. For many years, he had learnt about negotiation and persuasion from Mission Manager, Daniel Matthews, and also Victorian Premier Sir John O'Shannesy, for whom he worked. By the age of 25, he was using his writing talents and leadership insights to support

a petition for Land Rights.

On 6 December 1938, Cooper, then 77-years-old and unwell, marched from Footscray and attempted, unsuccessfully, to present a protest by the AAL against Nazi persecution of Jews. Cooper's grandson, Alfred "Boydie" Turner lived with him for nine years and witnessed his grandfather's frustrations. Uncle Boydie always felt there was some unfinished work of his grandfather's to complete.

On 6 December 2012, exactly 74 years later, his then 84-year-old grandson, Boydie, marched those same footsteps. Accompanied by hundreds of Aborigines, Jewish Holocaust survivors, Christians, Germans and other supporters, he mounted the steps of the original German Consulate building in Collins Street, Melbourne. There Boydie handed the current Honourary Consul a replica of his grandfathers' protest, thus completing the task his grandfather had begun, all those years earlier.

Boydie then turned his attention to getting the petition about Aboriginal representation, intended for King George V, to the current Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II. Cooper's original petition had 1814 signatures, so a replica was drawn up for people all over Australia to sign. A Royal audience became a possibility when Prince William, the

Duchess of Cambridge and a young Prince George announced a visit to Australia and New Zealand. Boydie was eventually able to secure a few minutes for a private audience at Admiralty House in Sydney!

Unfortunately, at the Royal Audience, protocol did not allow for the petition to be handed directly to members of the Royal Family, as any such delivery must be through the Governor-General. An audience with Governor General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, was then duly sought.

On National Sorry Day, 26 May 2014, Uncle Boydie, biographer Barbara Miller and Abe Schwarz finally delivered Cooper's replica petition to the Queen's representative in Australia.

The final chapter closed on 5 August, 2015, when Sir Peter Cosgrove was knighted by Her Majesty. As Sir Peter entered Balmoral Castle in Scotland, he handed King George V's granddaughter, Queen Elizabeth II, a very special delivery - from the hands of the grandson of Cooper. With that delivery, 86-year-old Uncle Boydie successfully completed the two tasks of unfinished business, begun eight decades earlier by his beloved and esteemed grandfather, Uncle William Cooper.

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