

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Place
Entry ID: AWE1093

Cummeragunja Reserve

(1883 -)

Born 1 January, 1883, Murray River New South Wales Australia

Occupation Aboriginal Mission or Reserve

Summary

Cummeragunja Reserve was established in New South Wales in 1883 when some of the Aboriginal residents from Maloga Mission, five miles down the river, moved in order to be free of the strict religious lifestyle. It became a thriving and prosperous community and a site of Aboriginal activism in the early twentieth century. On 9 March 1984 the title deeds for the land passed to the Yorta Yorta people through the newly created Yorta Yorta Land Council. Today, many Aboriginal families reside on Cummeragunja.

Details

By the turn of the century Cummeragunja reserve was a prosperous community, and by 1908 it became a neat village with 300 residents. Its communal farming was appreciated by local farmers who persuaded the Aborigines Protection Board to commit funds to expand farm production on the reserve. However, in 1915 the local farmers committee was abolished, and the Board took over. The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 empowered reserve managers to remove residents for misconduct or because it was believed they should be earning their living elsewhere. Soon, the police started to remove 'half-caste' children to the Board's training institutions. Many families responded by fleeing across the Murray to Victoria to live in riverbank camps. On 6 February 1938 about 170 residents walked off the mission in protest of the way they were treated by the Manager, and crossed the river to settle in Victoria. Some of the women were especially vocal, including Margaret Tucker, Geraldine Briggs and others.

In 1953, Cummeragunja was closed as a station and reduced to reserve status. Despite the Board's assimilation policies, the few remaining residents agitated for the right to begin farming again. In 1965, the company Cummeragunga Pty Ltd was registered. On 9 March 1984 the title deeds for the former reserve passed to the Yorta Yorta people through the newly created Yorta Yorta Land Council. Today, many Aboriginal families reside on Cummeragunja.

Published resources

Edited Book

The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

Book

Barmah Chronicles, Hibbins, G. M. (Gillian Mary), 1991

Genealogical data on the Aborigines of Australia gathered during the Harvard and Adelaide Universities Anthropological Expedition 1938-39, Tindale, Norman B. (Norman Barnett) with South Australian Museum, 1988

From colonial to state border : a federation history of the social construction of the border between New South Wales and Victoria as a frontier, barrier and contact zone, Pennay, Bruce, 2001

Videorecording

Return to Cummeragunja: Hyllus Maris and her mother Mrs Geraldine Briggs speak 26/8/85, 1985

Basket weaving/Cummeragunja, 1990

Journal Article

Land rights in south-east Australia: the long struggle, Goodall, Heather, 1987

Aborigines in society: the man from Cummeragunja, Clark, Mavis Thorpe, 1968

An 'unfashionable concern with the past': the historical anthropology of Diane Barwick, Kijas, Johanna, 1997

Report

Genealogies of Aboriginal families from Cummeragunja and Moonculla now living in Goulburn Valley and Murray River towns including Shepparton, Echuca, Swan Hill and Deniliquin and descendants now living in Melbourne and some ex Coranderrk families, Jackamos, Alick, 1987

Author Details

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