Source 3: An extract from Aborigines claim citizen rights!, the manifesto that outlined the injustices Aboriginal people had suffered and their expectations for the future

The 26th of January, 1938, is not a day of rejoicing for Australia's Aborigines; it is a day of mourning. This festival of 150 years' so-called 'progress'... commemorates also 150 years of misery and degradation imposed upon the original native inhabitants by the white invaders... ask yourself honestly whether your conscience is clear...

We have in our arteries the blood of... [those] who have lived in this land for many thousands of years. You came here only recently... took our land away... by force... almost exterminated our people... [We] expose the humbug of your claim... to be a civilised, progressive, kindly and humane nation. By your cruelty and callousness towards the Aborigines you stand condemned in the eyes of the civilised world...

You hypocritically claim that you are trying to 'protect' us; but your modern policy of 'protection' (so-called) is killing us off just as surely as the pioneer policy of giving us poisoned damper and shooting us down like dingoes!...

We do not wish to be regarded with sentimental sympathy, or to be 'preserved', like the koala bears as exhibits...

We do not wish to be 'studied' as scientific or anthropological curiosities... We ask you to teach our people to live in the Modern Age, as modern citizens. Our people are very good and quick learners. Why do you deliberately keep us backward? Is it merely to give yourselves the pleasure of feeling superior?...

We ask for equal education, equal opportunity, equal wages, equal rights to possess property, or to be our own masters — in two words: equal citizenship!...

Keep your charity! We only want justice... You had no race prejudice against us when you accepted [us] for enlistment in the A.I.F... We earned equality then. Why do you deny it to us now?...

The popular Press of Australia makes a joke of us by presenting silly and out-of-date drawings and jokes of 'Jacky' or 'Binghi', which have educated city-dwellers and young Australians to look upon us as sub-human. Is this not adding insult to injury?

...Aborigines are interested not only in boomerangs and gum leaves and corroborees!

...At worst, we are no more dirty, lazy, stupid, criminal, or immoral than yourselves... You who originally conquered us by guns against our spears, now rely on superiority of numbers to support your false claims of moral and intellectual superiority...

After 150 years, we ask you to review the situation and give us a fair deal — a New Deal for Aborigines. The cards have been stacked against us, and we now ask you to play the game like decent Australians. Remember, we do not ask for charity, we ask for justice.

J.T. PATTON, President, La Perouse.
W. FERGUSON, Organising Secretary, Dubbo.

Source questions

1. What do the writers of source 3 say about the difference between:
   [a] the claims and the reality of white people's treatment of Aboriginal people
   [b] the white person's image of Aboriginal people and the reality?

2. What words or phrases do the writers use to convince people of the justice of their cause?

Prime Minister Joe Lyons agreed to meet with an Aboriginal delegation on 31 January 1938. He listened to a 10-point plan outlining ways the federal government could achieve justice for Aboriginal people. The Prime Minister said that the Constitution did not allow the federal government to take control of Aboriginal affairs.

The 1938 Day of Mourning and Protest did not achieve its main goals. What it did achieve was to:

• unite Aboriginal people in their formal gathering demanding their civil rights
• make Australians think about whether 26 January was an appropriate date for a national celebration. Nowadays, Aboriginal people call it 'Invasion Day' and 'Survival Day'.

ACTIVITIES

CHECK KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

1. Create a mind map summary of the effect of British rule on Australian Aboriginal people.
2. Explain the difference between the policies of protection and assimilation.
3. What different roles did Aboriginal people want federal and state governments to be providing them in the 1930s?
4. Why did Aboriginal people make 26 January 1938 a Day of Mourning and Protest?
   a. What were their methods of protest and what were the results of their efforts?
   b. STUDENT WORKBOOK 3.2 Australia Day — celebration or mourning?