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c/- Welfare Branch,
Wave Hill,
P/B Katherine. N.T.

To: His Excellency
The Right Hon. Lord Casey P.C., G.C.M.G.,
C.H., D.S.O., M.C., M.A.
Governor-General of Australia.

OFFICIAL SECRETARY

19 APR 1967

TO GOVERNOR-GENERAL

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

We, the leaders of the Gurindji people, write to you about our earnest desire to regain tenure of our tribal lands in the Wave Hill-Limbunya area of the Northern Territory, of which we were dispossessed in time past, and for which we received no recompense.

✓ Our people have lived here from time immemorial and our culture, myths, dreaming and sacred places have evolved in this land. Many of our forefathers were killed in the early days while trying to retain it. Therefore we feel that morally the land is ours and should be returned to us. Our very name Aboriginal acknowledges our prior claim. We have never ceased to say amongst ourselves that Vestjeys should go away and leave us to our land.

1 On the attached map, we have marked out the boundaries of the sacred places of our dreaming, bordering the Victoria River from Wave Hill Police Station to Hooker Creek, Inverway, Limbunya, Seal Gorge, etc.,. We have begun to build our own new homestead on the banks of beautiful Wattie Creek in the Seal Yard area, where there is permanent water. This is the main place of our dreaming only a few miles from the Seal Gorge where we have kept the bones of our martyrs all these years since white men killed many of our people. On the walls of the sacred caves where these bones are kept, are the paintings of the totems of our tribe.

4 We have already occupied a small area at Seal Yard under Miners Rights held by three of our tribesmen. We will continue to build our new home there (marked on the map with a cross), then buy some working horses with which we will trap and capture wild unbranded horses and cattle. These we will use to build up a cattle station within the borders of this ancient Gurindji land. And we are searching the area for valuable rocks which we hope to sell to help feed our people. We will ask the N.T Welfare Department for help with motor for pump, seeds for garden, tables, chairs, and other things we need. Later on we will build a road and an airstrip and maybe a school. Meanwhile, most of our

people will continue to live in the camp we have built at the Wave Hill Welfare Centre twelve miles away and the children continue to go to school there.

5 We beg of you to hear our voices asking that the land marked on the map be returned to the Gurindji people. It is about ⁵⁰⁰~~250~~ square miles in area but ~~this~~ is only a very small fraction of the land leased by Vestey's in these parts. We are prepared to pay for our land the same annual rental that Vestey's now pay. If the question of compensation arises, we feel that we have already paid enough during fifty years or more, during which time, we and our fathers worked for no wages at all much of the time and for a mere pittance in recent years.

6 If you can grant this wish for which we humbly ask, we would show the rest of Australia and the whole world that we are capable of working and planning our own destiny as free citizens. Much has been said about our refusal to accept responsibility in the past, but who would show initiative working for starvation wages, under impossible conditions, without education for strangers in the land? But we are ready to show initiative now. We have already begun. We know how to work cattle better than any white man and we know and love this land of ours.

7 If our tribal lands are returned to us, we want them, not as another "Aboriginal Reserve", but as a leasehold to be run cooperatively as a mining lease and cattle station by the Gurindji Tribe. All practical work will be done by us, except such work as book-keeping, for which we would employ white men of good faith, until such time as our own people are sufficiently educated to take over. We will also accept the condition that if we do not succeed within a reasonable time, our land should go back to the Government.


8 (In August last year, we walked away from the Wave Hill Cattle Station. It was said that we did this because wages were very poor (only six dollars per week), living conditions fit only for dogs, and rations consisting mainly of salt beef and bread. True enough. But we walked away for other reasons as well. To protect our women and our tribe, to try to stand on our own feet. We will never go back there.).

9 Some of our young men are working now at Camfield and Montejinnie Cattle Stations for proper wages. However,

we will ask them to come back to our won Gurindji Homestead when everything is ready.

6. These are our wishes, which have been written down for us by our undersigned white friends, as we have had no opportunity to learn to write English.

Yours




Vincent Lingiari.



Pincher Manguari.

Gerry Ngalgardji.



Long-Johnny Kitgnaari.

Transcribed, witnessed and transmitted by the undersigned:-

 Frank J Hardy.

 J W Jeffrey.