

Petition to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, 17 February 1846

The humble petition of the free Aborigines Inhabitants of V.D.L. now living upon Flinders Island, in Bass's Straits &c &c &c.

Most humbly showeth,

That we Your Majesty's Petitioners are your free Children that we were not taken Prisoners but freely gave up our Country to Colonel Arthur then the Gov^r after defending ourselves.

Your Petitioners humbly state to Y[our] M[ajesty] that Mr. Robinson made for us & with Col. Arthur an agreement which we have not lost from our minds since & we have made our part of it good.

Your Petitioners humbly tell Y.M. that when we left our own place we were plenty of People, we are now but a little one.

Your Petitioners state they are a long time at Flinders Island & had that plenty of Sup^{dts} & were always a quiet & free People & not put into Gaol.

Your Majesty's Petitioners pray that you will not allow Dr. Jeanneret to come again among us as our Sup^{dt} as we hear he is to be sent another time for when Dr. Jeanneret was with us many Moons he used to carry Pistols in his pockets & threaten'd very often to shoot us & make us run away in a fright. Dr. Jeanneret kept plenty of Pigs in our Village which used to run into our houses & eat up our bread from the fires & take away our flour bags in their mouths also to break into our Gardens & destroy our Potatoes & Cabbages.

Our houses were let fall down & they were never cleaned but were covered with vermin & not white-washed. We were often without Clothes except a very little one & Dr. Jeanneret did not care to mind us when we were sick until we were very bad. Eleven of us died when he was here. He put many of us into Jail for talking to him because we would not be his slaves. He kept from us our Rations when he pleased & sometimes gave us Bad Rations of Tea & Tobacco. He shot some of our dogs before our eyes & sent all the other dogs of ours to an Island & when we told him that they would starve he told us that they might eat each other. He put arms into our hands & made us to assist his prisoners to go to fight the Soldiers we did not want to fight the Soldiers but he made us go to fight. We never were taught to read or write or to sing to God by the Doctor. He taught us a little upon the Sundays & his Prisoner Servant also taught us & his Prisoner Servant also took us plenty of times to Jail by his orders.

The Lord Bishop seen us in this bad way & we told H[is] L[ordship] plenty how Dr. Jeanneret used us.

We humbly pray Your Majesty the Queen will hear our prayer and not let Dr Jeanneret any more to come to Flinders Island. And We Y.M's servants & Children will ever pray as in duty bound &c &c &c

Sgd. Walter G. Arthur, Chief of the Ben Lomond Tribes King Alexander, John Allan, Augustus, Davey Bruney, King Tippoo, Neptune, Washington.

From: Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: a documentary history*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, pp38-39.