

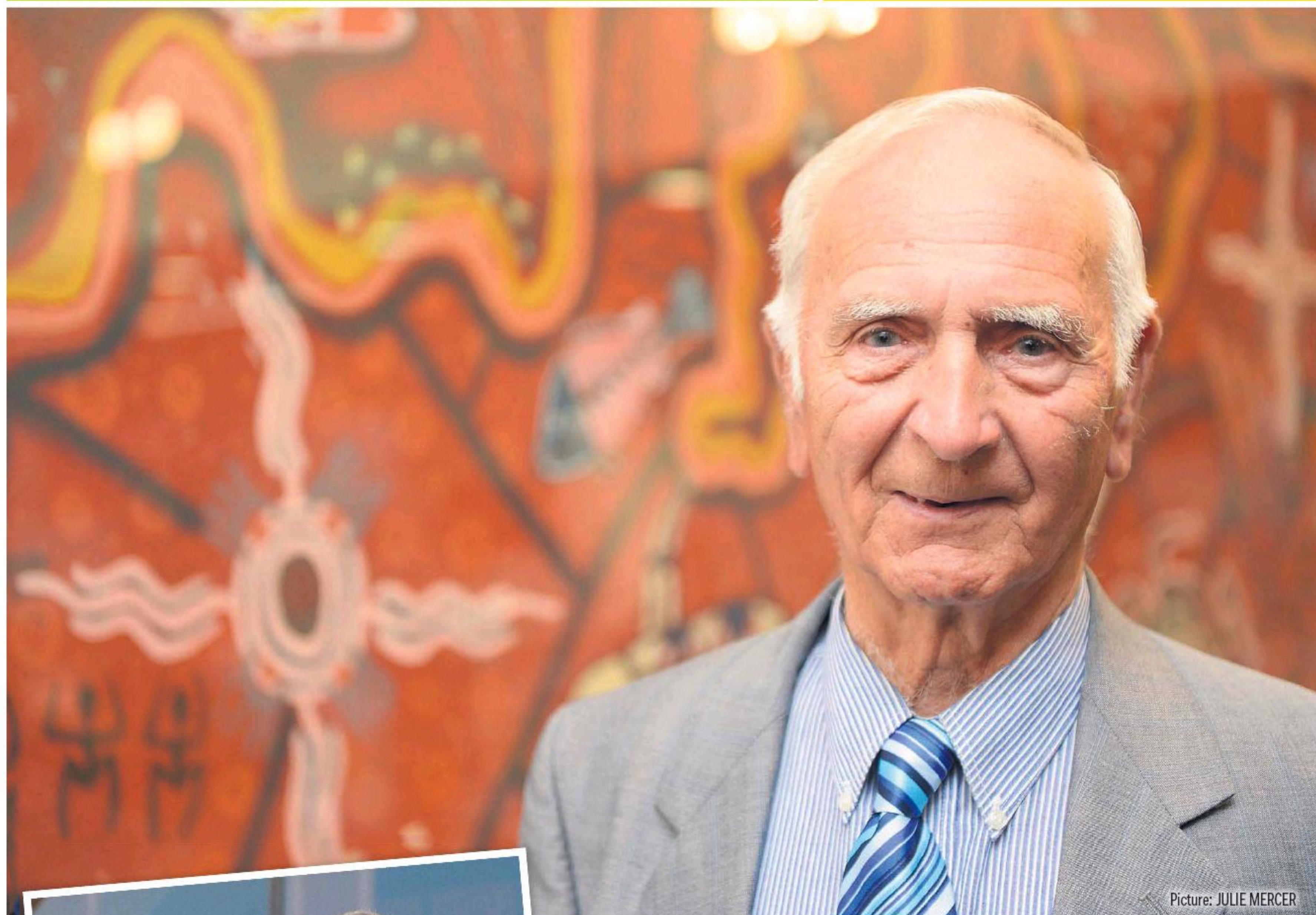
# SHEPPARTON News

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PANPA 2013 NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR


**TRADERS'  
BUSINESS  
BOOMING**

+ NEWS PAGE 7



Picture: JULIE MERCER

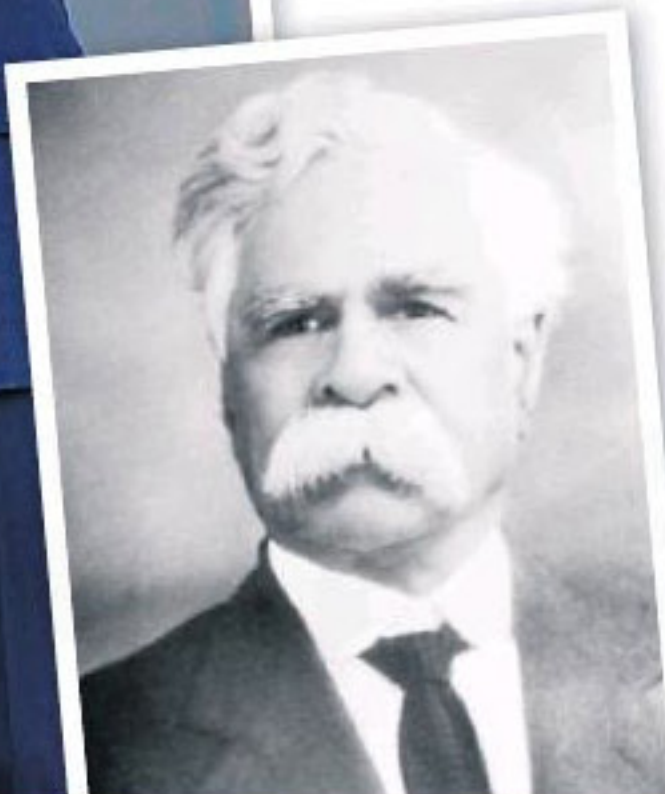
## ALF'S ROYAL AUDIENCE

TURNER MEETING PRINCE WILLIAM TODAY

Mooroopna Aboriginal elder Alf Turner (above) has a private audience in Sydney today with Prince William (far left, with wife Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge).

He is meeting the prince to fulfil a dream - presenting a letter about Indigenous Australians' rights his grandfather William Cooper (left) wrote and tried to send to King George VI in 1937.

+ NEWS PAGE 6


**21°** TODAY  
Showers

**18°** TOMORROW  
Cloudy

**19°** SUNDAY  
Mostly sunny

**WEATHER**  
Page 2

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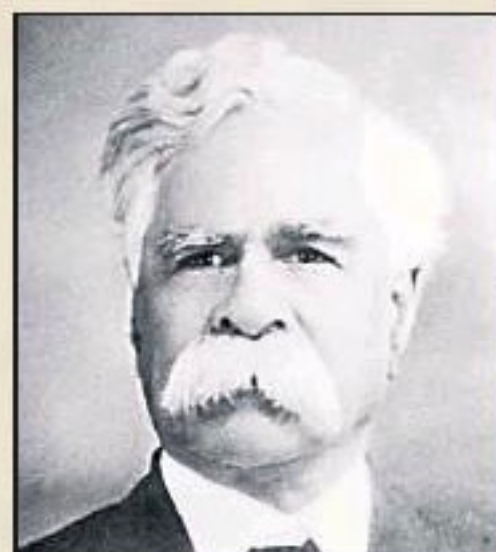
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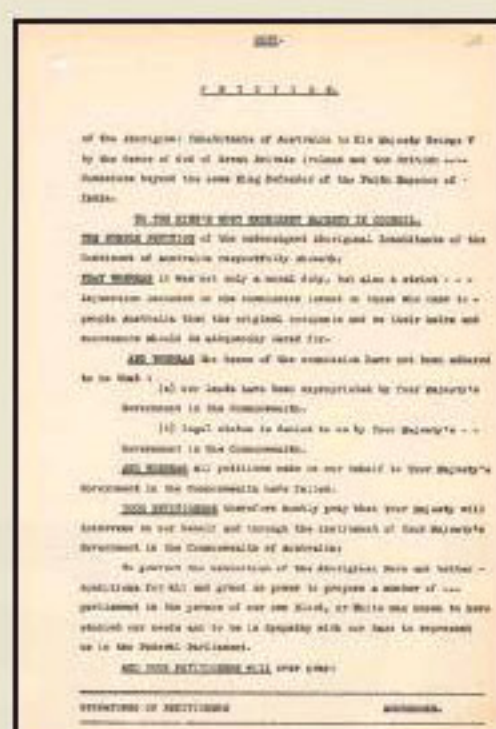
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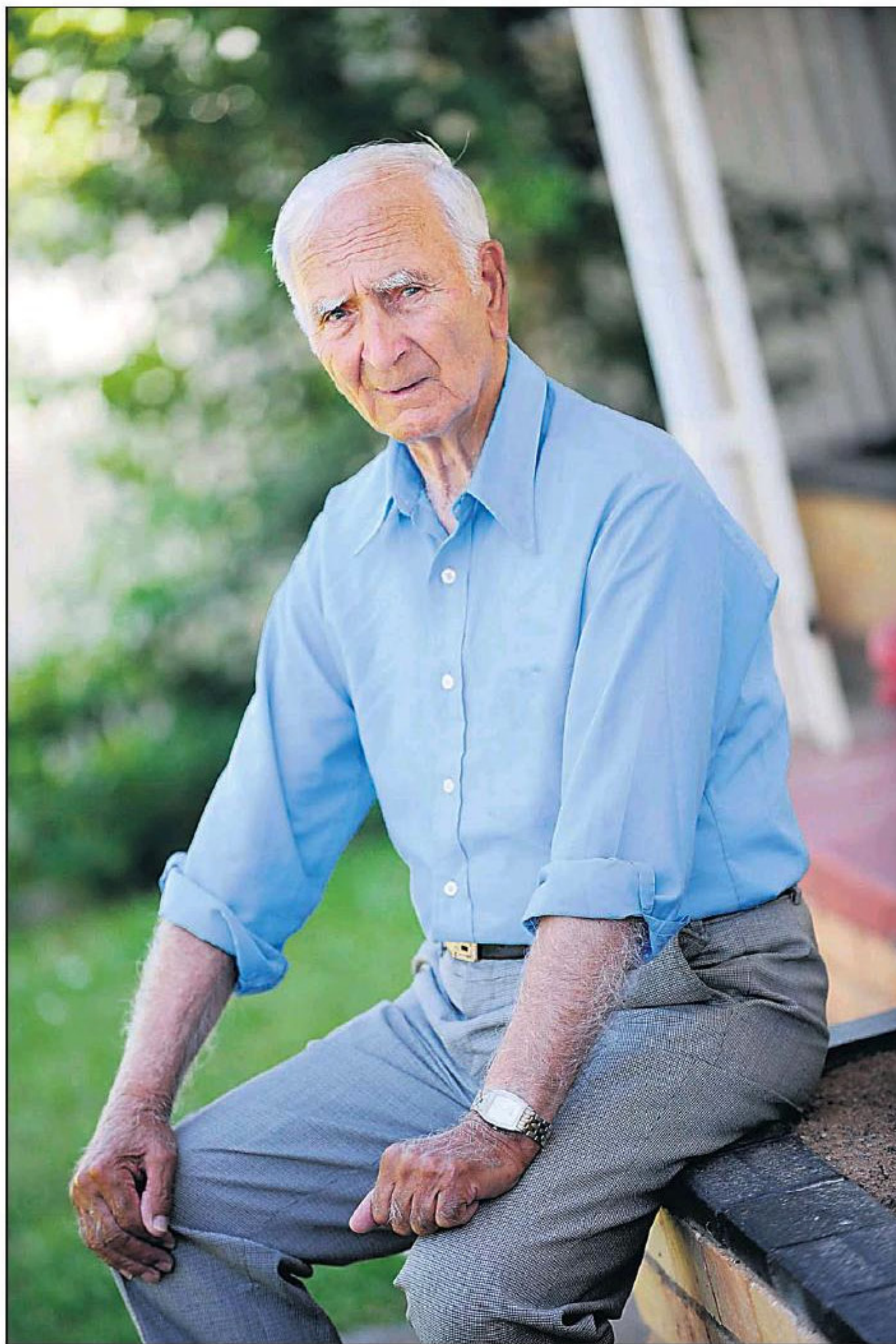
William Cooper

## LETTER EXTRACT

William Cooper's letter (below) in part reads: "Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that Your Majesty will intervene on our behalf and through the instrument of Your Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia: To prevent the extinction of the Aboriginal race and better conditions for all and grant us power to propose a Member of Parliament in the person of our own Blood, or White man known to have studied our needs and to be in sympathy with our Race to represent us in the Federal Parliament."



**Royal audience:** Mooroopna's Alf Turner (above) will today present to Prince William in Sydney a letter about the plight of Australia's Indigenous people his grandfather William Cooper wanted to send to King George VI in 1937, but that never reached the king.



# Fulfilling promise

INDIGENOUS ELDER TO PRESENT GRANDFATHER'S LETTER TO PRINCE WILLIAM



JOHN LEWIS

john.lewis@sheppnews.com.au

A Mooroopna man's dream to fulfil the wishes of his grandfather will come true today when he meets Prince William in Sydney.

Aboriginal elder Alf Turner will deliver a copy of a near 80-year-old letter his grandfather William Cooper wrote asking the Prince's great-grandfather King George VI to support the push for Aboriginal rights.

The letter and a petition with 1800 signatures was delivered to Australian Prime Minister Joseph Lyons in October 1937 requesting that it be forwarded to the King.

However, the letter and an accompanying petition with more than 1800 Aboriginal signatures was never sent.

The letter ended up in the national archive.

Mr Turner said he has no idea what happened to the petition.

**I HAVE WANTED TO DO THIS FOR MANY YEARS. I ALWAYS THOUGHT THIS WAS ONE THING HE WASN'T ABLE TO DO — NOW I CAN DO IT FOR HIM.**

— ALF TURNER

"I have wanted to do this for many years. I always thought this was one thing he wasn't able to do — now I can do it for him," Mr Turner said.

Mr Turner, 85, said he had been planning for the past two years to fly to England to hand the letter to the Queen.

"But then we realised there was an opportunity with the Prince coming here," he said.

He said he only received the news on Wednesday he had been granted a private audience with Prince William in Sydney.

"Yesterday, we had word he would meet with me. He wants to read the letter and find out what my grandfather did," Mr Turner said.

"There has been quite a few people involved helping to

get this meeting," he said.

Mr Turner will travel to Sydney with a delegation of Jewish community representatives who have previously recognised his grandfather's stand for human rights.

Mr Cooper, a founder of the Australian Aborigines League, led a delegation of the league to the German consulate in Melbourne in 1938 to protest against the treatment of Jewish people under the Nazi regime.

A memorial and garden dedicated to Mr Cooper was unveiled at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem in 2010.

Born near Echuca in 1861, Mr Cooper spent most of his life on missions at Maloga and Cummeragunja working for Indigenous rights while

earning his living as a drover, shearer and agricultural labourer. In his early 70s he moved to Footscray, where he continued his work as an activist, organiser and relentless letter writer.

Mr Cooper's lobbying for improved treatment of Indigenous people culminated in the establishment of a National Aborigines Day, first celebrated in 1940.

Mr Turner's daughter Leonie Drummond said today's royal audience would be the culmination of many years' work by her father.

"He's always wanted to finish this. I'm very happy for Dad, it means a lot to him," Ms Drummond said.

Mr Turner said he did not know what Prince William would do after reading the letter.

"I'd be over the moon if he took it back to England, but I don't know," he said.

● For more on William Cooper's enduring legacy in Aboriginal empowerment, see today's Shepparton Region Reconciliation Group column on page 11.