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Abstract

This paper examines the establishment and early years of what was to become known as Point Pearce Mission. Many Australians living in the 21st century have a general understanding that missions were sited on unproductive, unwanted land, that Aboriginal people were forced onto missions against their will and, once there, that they were prohibited from speaking their own language and prevented from maintaining connections with their country. However, a close examination of the historical records relating to the early years of the Point Pearce Mission enables a more historically specific and nuanced understanding of both the origins and everyday life of the mission to emerge. The available historical records indicate that Aboriginal and European residents of the townships and neighbouring districts of Moonta, Wallaroo and Kadina, actively worked together to secure a grant of well-watered, culturally significant, productive land for the area’s Aboriginal people. During the early years of the mission – between 1868 and 1879 – the traditional owners of Yorke Peninsula (referred to as the Narungga)1 used the mission if and when it suited them.

1 The earliest written record of the Aboriginal people of Yorke Peninsula being referred to as the Narungga is in a letter ethnographer Frank Gillen wrote to his colleague Baldwin Spencer in September 1899. Gillen asked his correspondent, Baldwin Spencer, to ask Mr Howitt why he referred to the Yorke Peninsula Aboriginal people as the ‘Adjadura’ tribe, as ‘Adjadura’ is a compound word merely meaning ‘my people’. Gillen had recently conducted fieldwork at Point Pearce with “six old Grey beards, pure black incorrigible heathens who cannot be induced to live disreputably within stone walls” [emphasis in original] – Gillen states that “the blacks tell me [the name of the tribe] is Narung-ga” (Gillen in Mulvaney et al. 1997:162-163). In 1887, the then superintendent of the Point Pearce Mission Station, T.M. Sutton, read a paper at the South Australian Geographical society in which he stated “The name of the tribe on Yorke’s Peninsula is Adjahdurah, or my people. Adjah means my or mine...One individual of the tribe would be called Durah” (Sutton 1887:17).
Introduction

With the release of the popular film *A Rabbit Proof Fence* and the Federal Government’s *Bringing Them Home Report*, the detrimental impacts of government policies which were formulated and implemented in the 20th century have become widely known. Government policies which curtailed the rights and controlled the lives of Aboriginal people in fundamental and significant ways are generally condemned by Australians living in the 21st century. A general understanding that many Aboriginal people were forced onto missions against their will and, once there, that they were unable to leave the mission or maintain connections with their own country prevails in the public consciousness. There is an awareness that on some mission stations Aboriginal people were discouraged from speaking their language and were provided with only a rudimentary European education. Missions are largely understood as being sited on unwanted, unproductive land where Aboriginal people were exploited and used as cheap labour. There is currently a widespread perception of mission residents as victims, passive and helpless in the face of colonialism.

Several people have published information regarding the Point Peace Mission (Graham and Graham 1987; Heinrich 1972:51-65; Hill and Hill 1975:32-38; Wanganeen *et al.* 1987). In *Governor Fergusson’s Legacy*, Heinrich (1972) gives an accurate overview of the years 1868 to 1976 in a sixteen page chapter entitled ‘The Point Pearce Settlement’, and Hill and Hill (1975) devote six pages to the ‘The Point Pearce Mission’ in their *Notes on the Narangga Tribe of Yorke Peninsula*. Two histories of Point Pearce written by Aboriginal people with long-standing connections to the mission were published in 1987. *As We’ve Known It: 1911 to the Present* was written by Doris and Cecil Graham who were born in 1912 and 1911 respectively and grew up on the mission. Residents of Point Pearce, chiefly Eileen Wanganeen and the Narungga Community College, authored *Point Pearce, Past and Present*. In 2002 Doreen Kartinyeri published her genealogy *Narungga Nation* in which thirty pages are devoted to a ‘Brief History of Point Pearce Mission’. These histories of Point Pearce written by Aboriginal people highlight the crucial role played by Aboriginal people in the running of the
mission and the detrimental impact of government policies on Aboriginal culture and society. The authors reflect on the outcome of events and laws that came into being in the 1900s. These histories were never intended to be comprehensive, but were a compilation of personal stories and remembrances, and a starting point for future work (see Wanganeen et al. 1987:ix).

The authors listed above do not thoroughly research the beginnings and early years of Point Pearce Mission. Wanganeen, Kartinyeri and Heinrich rely on a pamphlet written by T.S. Archibald, *Yorke’s Peninsula Aboriginal Mission Incorporated: A Brief Record of its History and Operations*. Archibald (1915:forward) clearly states:

...this little pamphlet is by no means an exhaustive history of Point Pearce Mission. Scarcely any records were kept prior to 1878 and it is therefore impossible to collect sufficient data to do justice to the institution, founded nearly half a century since...

Archibald was writing in 1915 when the government sought to remove the Institution from the management of the local trustees and place it under State control, and when the lives of Aboriginal people were becoming increasingly regulated. His pamphlet, written “at the request of numerous friends of the mission” (Archibald 1915:title page), not surprisingly emphasised the industry, discipline and orderly running of the station.

A close examination of the historical records relating to the early years of the Point Pearce Mission enables a more historically specific and nuanced understanding of both the origins and everyday life of the mission. The first missionary to work amongst Narungga people, Julius Kühn, sent numerous letters home to his superiors in Germany. These letters are held in the Unitaetsarchiv, Herrhut in eastern Saxony, Germany, and were transcribed and translated in the early years of the 21st century at the instigation of the Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association. In his letters, Kühn provides invaluable information
which casts new light on current understandings of both the establishment of the mission and the first decade of mission life.\textsuperscript{2} While the information contained in Kühn’s letters is subjective – the pious thirty-two year old missionary had his own motivations for viewing and describing events as he did – his accounts can be counterbalanced with other sources such as articles and letters published in local and Adelaide newspapers and Government correspondence. Kühn provides detailed descriptions of Narungga practices and actions. He explains when and why Bookooyanna (Point Pearce) was perceived to be the most suitable site for the mission. An examination of both Kühn’s letters and local and Adelaide newspapers enables a more complex account of the origins and early days of the mission to emerge.

Kühn’s letters provide evidence that Narungga people living on Yorke Peninsula in the 1860s and 1870s were not helpless victims dependent upon the mercy of settlers or the government, forced onto the mission against their will, coerced into a life they did not wish to live. Instead they innovatively adapted to new circumstances and used the mission and the missionary to make the best of a disadvantageous system and secure a future for their children and grandchildren. If satisfied with the unfolding events, Narungga people showed their support for Kühn by their presence (or that of their children) at the mission. If Kühn and his practices and beliefs were not satisfactory, Narungga people made their displeasure known by moving away from, and taking their children away from, the mission. Although actively involved in moves to establish the mission, Narungga support for the enterprise varied over the years and amongst individuals. Of the hundreds of Narungga people on the peninsula in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, only a small proportion chose to reside permanently at Point Pearce (Krichauff 2008:150).

\textsuperscript{2} All letters written by Moravian missionaries Kühn, Walder and Meissel, as well as Congregational minister William Wilson referred to in this paper are held in the Unietaetsarchiv, Herrnhut, Germany under ‘Papers, correspondence, transactions, diaries etc of the Moravian Missionaries in Australia’, R.15.V.I.a, 1866-79. Translated transcripts of these letters are in the possession of the Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association, Moonta.
Impetus for the Mission

During the years of pastoral occupation, much of the land on Yorke Peninsula remained uncleared and unfenced, the European population remained minimal, and Narungga could live a largely traditional lifestyle. Following the discovery of copper at Wadla Waru (Wallaroo) in 1859 and Moonta Monterra (Moonta) in 1861, Narungga people living in these districts incorporated the changed circumstances (namely the huge influx of people into the district and the rapid felling and clearing of trees for building and fuel) into their established movement and subsistence patterns. They found employment in the mines and townships as miners, bullock drivers, domestic helpers and general servants. By 1866 the population of the mining towns increased to 10,000. The influx of such large numbers of people and the clearing of vast tracts of country made it increasingly difficult for the traditional owners to procure an adequate supply of food. Local townspeople began speaking of the need to improve the condition of the local Aboriginal people in 1865. However, numerous expressions of concern and pleas for aid did not compel the Government to act, one of the excuses being that the number of Aboriginal people living in or near the mining towns was unknown (see Meredith 1866a:2F; for more extensive references see Krichauff 2008:154). It was in this climate that a Narungga man, whose name (typically) went unrecorded, decided to take matters into his own hands. In a penny memorandum book he recorded a census of his people. He found the number of Aboriginal people living in the Moonta, Wallaroo and Kadina district totalled 252 (Cox 1866:3E).

When published in the Adelaide newspaper the Register on 3 January 1866, the ‘Aboriginal Census’ caused an immediate reaction. The document was considered ‘quite remarkable’ and was believed to be “the first effort of a native to draw up a census of his own race” (Cox 1866:3E). The census was accompanied by a cover letter from Reverend Wilson of Kadina who stated that the “intelligent blackfellow” who collected the census had “got it into his head that there is a teacher coming to teach his people; and he has put numbers of them in possession of the same idea, and they are very glad” (Wilson in Cox 1866:3E). The census was interpreted by Europeans who were sympathetic to the plight of Aboriginal people as a ‘cry’ from the
Narungga to come over and help them (Cox 1866:3E). Thirty-two year old Moravian missionary Julius Kühn, who was temporarily residing in Adelaide while waiting for the 1865-1866 drought to break before travelling with three fellow Moravian missionaries to Cooper’s Creek, felt compelled to travel to Yorke Peninsula and offer his services. With Kühn’s arrival in Kadina on 2 February 1866 the mission movement intensified. Meetings were held and committees established with the aim to petition the government for lands and funds (see for example Anon. 1866a:2C; Anon. 1866b:2F). Kühn and fifty Narungga people attended the Wallaroo meeting on 7 February 1866 (Anon. 1866b:2F). Within days of arriving in the mining towns, Kühn began teaching. On 10 February, Kühn visited Narungga people at their camps and “told everyone that if anyone wanted to come to school [he] was prepared to make a start the next day, and soon [he] had about 30 pupils” (Julius Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866).

The historical records indicate that a strong rapport rapidly developed between Kühn and Narungga people (see Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 21 March 1866; William Wilson to Mr Morris, The Manse, Kadina, South Australia, 4 May 1866; William Wilson to Reichel, The Manse, Kadina, 20 March 1866). This was partly due to Kühn’s nature – Kühn was described as earnest and sincere, a man of “warm sympathies” and of a “self sacrificing spirit” who was highly regarded “by ‘all who kn[e]w him” (see Anon. 1866c:2D; Anon. 1867a:2AB; Meredith 1867:2G) – and King Tommy’s influence. King Tommy held much influence over his people, and was apparently “loved by all the natives both young and old” (Anon. 1886:2G). This “fine old man” was held in high regard by Europeans who described him as ‘benevolent’, ‘firm’, ‘morally upright’, ‘intelligent’ and ‘kind’ (see for example Anon. 1874:7B; Anon. 1886:2G; Meredith 1866a:2F). Prior to Kühn’s arrival, King Tommy had decisively indicated that should a teacher arrive, he would send his children to school and would use his influence amongst his people (Anon. 1866d:5H). It seems King Tommy recognised literacy as a way of securing a place in the dominant society. School attendance was not compulsory on Yorke Peninsula until 1877 (Anon. 1877:2D). As such, Narungga children taught by Kühn would have been better educated than many mining and farming children. While waiting for the government to grant land for a mission, Narungga willingly
attended Kühn’s lessons and clearly demonstrated their eagerness and ability to learn how to read and write.

Kühn made his school readily accessible to potential students. He immediately began learning their language which he spoke as much as possible throughout his time on the peninsula (Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 22 November 1866; Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January 186[7]). He held lessons in various locations around Kadina, Moonta and Wallaroo. Many Narungga people living in the district came willingly and asked Kühn “to come as often as he could” (see Krichauff 2008:158). Numbers steadily increased, and in May 1866 Kühn stated:

For 12 weeks now I have had 40-50 blacks around me...some have been coming to school twice a day, I am hardly able to keep track of them all...I am so overloaded I don’t know where to start and where to finish.

(Kühn to Hagenauer, Kadina, 8 May 1866)

Lessons were held in various buildings including a stable and a shearing shed. Kühn often had to walk up to four miles to visit Narungga in their camps which he found “very tiring” (Kühn to Haganauer, Kadina, 6 May 1866; see also Krichauff 2008:163-164). The community recognised Kühn’s difficulties and rallied to alleviate them (see Krichauff 2008:156-157).

Without the enthusiastic acceptance of Kühn and his lessons, plans for the mission would have stalled or remained modest. From January 1866, northern peninsula residents campaigned tirelessly for a permanent school (see Krichauff 2008:157). They organised and participated in regular committee meetings and Congregational, Baptist and Presbyterian ministers preached sermons encouraging parishioner support. Appeals and petitions were sent to the government and monetary subscriptions and donations were regularly collected. This concern and support came from all sections of society: from mining families to doctors; from the local policeman to the captain of the Moonta mines. Some people lent buildings for the school, others gave food, animals or wood (Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, September 1866, 23 February 1867, 16 June 1867, 24 July 1867 and Anon. 1867b:3A). Women met regularly to make clothes for Narungga (Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 23 November 1866). Fundraising concerts (in which Narungga children participated) were so well-attended that many people
were unable to gain admission (Anon. 1867c:4BC). The historical records indicate that the townspeople were sensitive to the plight of Narungga people and critical of the inaction and lack of concern of the Government and individuals who had profited handsomely from the occupation of Narungga land. Numerous letters and petitions published in local and Adelaide newspapers illustrate a genuine questioning of the ethics of colonisation and concern regarding Aboriginal dispossession (see for example Anon. 1866c:2E; Anon. 1866e:2H; Meredith 1866a:2F; Meredith 1866b:3E). For example, Mary Meredith pointed out the Aboriginal people were “the real owners of the land” (Meredith 1866b:3E) and raised the question of the immorality of Europeans enriching themselves “with the produce of the land or its mineral wealth” while leaving “the original possessors untaught and uncared for” (Anon. 1866c:2F). The Editor of the Register referred to the Narungga as “the poor creatures whose lands we have taken possession of” (Meredith 1866a:2E). Another contributor pointed out the hypocrisy of many “whose interest in the welfare of the natives has not yet gone beyond a mere feeling of sorrow and a wish that something would be done for them”, adding that such people should “set aside indifference and love of ease, and...do simply what the opportunity affords” (Anon. 1866e:2H).

Prior to Kühn’s arrival, ideas regarding the form the mission would take were unclear and small scale. Mission advocates envisaged a ‘home’ or depot where the children would be educated and where adults would receive food and clothing when necessary (Anon. 1866a:2D). It was suggested the home might be run by a schoolmaster and matron (Meredith 1866b:3E). Initially “a reserve of 400 acres” was perceived as adequate (Anon. 1866b:2F) but by January 1867, the Committee were applying for 8 square miles (over 5000 acres)(Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January [1867]) and envisioning a self-supporting agricultural community. The ‘Executive Committee of the Yorke’s Peninsula Native Mission’ was made up of committee representatives from each of the three towns and was comprised of four church ministers, two doctors, one chemist, one Member of Parliament, two Justices of the Peace, (one of whom, Captain Duncan, was the brother-in-law of Walter Watson Hughes, the principal shareholder in the mining company). The committee chairman was Captain Hancock, Captain of the Moonta Mines
G.N. Birks, Secretary, Yorke’s Peninsula Native Mission to E.B. Scott, Acting Protector of Aborigines, Kadina, 17 August 1867, GRG 52/1/1867/345). It appears that the rapport which developed between Kühn and Narungga, and the enthusiastic support for a mission by numerous Narungga people and the wider non-Aboriginal public increased the scale and scope of proposed plans.

Mission Location

The choice of where to locate the mission can be interpreted as demonstrative of Narungga and settler communication and co-operation. Between 1866-1867, committees met to determine the most suitable site. It seems Narungga people were vocal about their requirements and desires. The site needed to be near the sea so they could fish. It needed permanent water, good soil for cultivation, and scrub to provide timber and shelter (Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January [1867] and Anon. 1866f:2F). Committee members recognised:

...the Home must be on a spot where [the aborigines] most congregate. To build at a place they only visit once a year...would...cause the failure of the mission. The blacks have their own ways, their favourite haunts, and their own ways of resorting to them, and we must meet them...

(Anon. 1866e:2H)

The initial suggestion of Port Hughes (only three miles from Moonta) did not meet the ten mile distance believed necessary to protect Narungga from ‘the danger’ of ‘intoxicating liquor’ available in the towns (Anon. 1866e:2H). Tipara Springs (thirteen miles from Kadina) was considered until it became clear that Narungga would not reside in that area as a number of their people had died there (Anon. 1866e:2H). On the 31st of December 1866 Kühn was one of a deputation of five sent by the executive committee to investigate land at Point Pearce, which Kühn typically referred to by it’s Narungga name of Bookooyanna, meaning “oil bush plains”. Here the deputation found good land and very good permanent water, it was by the

3 According to Gillen, ‘Boorkooyanna’ translates as ‘oil bush plain’ (see Francis Gillen, Anthropology Notes, Volume 5, Barr-Smith Library, SR 09 G47, p. 706).
sea, had grass for stock, timber and stone for building, plus fish, kangaroos, wallabies, wombats and possums (Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January 1867). But Boorkooyanna was forty miles south of the mining towns and did not meet the requirement of being readily accessible to committee members. The land had not yet been surveyed. The leasee, Samuel Rogers, did not willingly or readily relinquish his lease. Despite these drawbacks, mission advocates chose to wait patiently for this land which they were finally granted at the beginning of 1868.

It seems highly likely Narungga people directed Kühn’s attention to Point Pearce which was a traditional meeting place and contained numerous, vital sacred sites. In the 1960s, Narungga Elder Tim Hughes said this was:

...a most sacred part of our land...the most important...the biggest part, and most special. That’s what makes us grow up...that’s older than everything, all the land and islands.4

From the historical evidence it appears that many Narungga people approved of this site; during his second visit to Boorkooyanna on the 9th of January 1867, Kühn met about fifty people there. All had heard of Kühn and asked him “when [he] would come and build the mission house, they promised to come to [him] and learn then” (Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January 1867). It is extremely telling, and more than coincidental, that the land chosen for the mission was popular with Narungga people. By collaborating with Kühn and other members of the committee, Narungga managed to secure this area for future generations. Narungga people and Europeans worked together; some settlers listened to and respected Narungga people’s wishes.

A Complex Relationship

Prior to Kühn’s arrival, King Tommy and other Narungga had said they wanted their own township, a place where the helpless old and young would be taken care of, and the sick cared for (Anon. 1866e:2H). Rather than envisaging the mission as primarily a Christian institution in which they were subjugated

4 Transcript of interview with Elizabeth Fisher, Part III, Stories, p. 1. Transcripts held by the Narungga Aboriginal Progress Association, Moonta.
inmates, Narungga imagined their own township in which Europeans provided support and aid. In Kühn they found a hard-working and kind servant. He cared for, minded and fed their children, nursed the sick, escorted immoral white men from the camps when men were away hunting, and taught people how to read and write. Narungga were free to move about. School was not compulsory. If they did not like Kühn’s personality, methods or doctrines, they would not have gathered around him nor attended his lessons. Instead, Narungga entrusted Kühn with their sick, elderly and their children for weeks at a time while they went into the bush hunting and making skin rugs (see Krichauff 2008:158, 162-164, 168). Kühn exhausted himself administering to Narungga and they appreciated his efforts. Kühn describes an occasion when he informed the Narungga people he was with that he might have to leave, upon which two women “had tears in their eyes and wept and begged me to stay with them” (Kühn to Hagenauer, 6 May 1866). Kühn wrote that he loved the blacks and they loved him (Kühn to Reichel, 16 January 1867). Kühn was also a useful protector and advocate who gave the impression he was on Yorke Peninsula primarily to serve them.

However, Kühn’s letters also reveal the complexity of his relations with Narungga. Kühn was not a passive or docile servant but a pious man of strong evangelical faith and there existed a complicated power play between Kühn and those he was administering to. An investigation into the ways Narungga both accommodated and challenged Kühn and his beliefs can increase current generations’ awareness of 19th century Narungga people’s agency and motivations. Kühn believed Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and rituals were primitive and heathen. As his familiarity and confidence with Narungga people grew, he began to deride Narungga beliefs and intervene in Narungga customs. He disliked corroborees being held on Sundays, and interfered in traditional marriage regulations. He made people choose between baptism and participating in Narungga rites of passage. In April 1867 Kühn wrote:
...we caught a bat and the young people told me the old blacks believe...bats created the blacks and can make rain. I told them that we might kill it and they agreed willingly, I thought that if they really believed in bats they would advise me against killing it. When we had killed it...they recognized how mistaken the old people were.
(Kühn to Reichel, Gooduttera, 25 April 1867)

The bat was Mudatju, a highly significant Creation Ancestor (see Gillen’s notes [832]). But rather than admonish and denounce Kühn, several Elders appear to have accepted and even condoned Kühn’s sacrilegious act. Several days later King Tommy told Kühn “he would like to stay with [Kühn] now, it was not good to wander around” (Kühn to Reichel, Gooduttera, 25 April 1867). King Tommy promised to leave his children with Kühn if he were to go travelling (Kühn to Reichel, Gooduttera, 25 April 1867).

Over the first four years of Kühn’s permanent move to Boorkooyanna in 1868, the number of children at the mission steadily increased and ‘old people’ attended Sunday services if they were in the neighbourhood. By 1872, a report reviewing the operation of the mission noted that the “wandering blacks” were “beginning to send for Mr Kühn to pray beside them when they are ill, and to speak of sending their children to the Mission Station as a matter of course” (see Wallaroo Times Office 1872:7). Why did these confident, proud and independent people allow Kühn to deride their ancient beliefs? Why did they leave their impressionable children with him? Certainly he provided food, shelter, clothes, and was instrumental in securing the land at Point Pearce. But these obvious, practical reasons are somewhat superficial. To understand Narungga tolerance of (or even preparedness to accept) Kühn’s beliefs, we need to dig deeper.

Kühn saw himself as an instrument of an all-powerful God, with whom he could communicate through prayer. Narungga may have viewed Kühn as a protector or authority in more than the physical sense. On numerous occasions Kühn successfully nursed the sick and cured wounds and illnesses (see Krichauff 2008:176-178). Kühn doctored to people suffering from colds. He prayed beside sick people. He bathed, and then applied sticking plasters, poultices or cold compresses to sores
and wounds which consequently healed quickly. On one occasion
he prepared an eye-mask for a young girl with bad eyes. Her eyes
got ‘visibly better’ and Kühn found her a suitable pair of glasses
after which she could see quite well. Kühn noted:

...the blacks believe I can cure any illness, they come to me very
often and the medicine I give them is very simple, but I am
convinced that their trust in me and their belief in the medicine
make them well.
(Kühn to Reichel, Kadina, 16 January 1867)

Kühn’s basic medical skills, his care, attention and diligence, built
an impression that Kühn had the magic touch in curing the sick.
This is crucial to understanding Narungga people’s trust in Kühn,
and their willingness to accommodate his beliefs.

This hypothesis is strengthened by comparing Narungga
people’s actions during and after 1872. Between March and
September 1872, sixteen mission residents died of whooping
cough or croup. Narungga people’s faith in Kühn and tolerance
of his teachings dramatically diminished. Parents and
grandparents took their children away from the mission. After
1872, very few people dutifully attended the assemblies or
listened respectfully to Kühn’s beliefs. In April 1874 Kühn wrote:

Last winter and until Christmas I had about 50-60 blacks here in
the neighbourhood. I visited them as often as time permitted...they were too lazy to come 6-8 English miles to the
Station. I asked them all to assemble at my place so that I could
hold an assembly with them. They all asked if I had brought
them anything to eat. I told them that they were free to fetch
rations at any time. With a great deal of trouble I managed to
get them all together.
(Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 7 April 1874)

In 1877 Kühn rode out to the camps every Sabbath to conduct a
service but “set out on [his] return journey with a heavy heart,
since [he] had the feeling that the people showed little or no
interest in spiritual matters” (Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 20
June 1877). In 1877, Kühn was still lamenting “the prejudice
against the mission station” caused by the deaths of 1872 (Anon.
1875; Anon. 1876a:2B ). In 1879 Kühn pessimistically reflected
that “to break down the walls of superstition and heathenism is
not...easy work” (Kühn 1879a:5G).
Desperate to get Narungga to return to the mission station, Kühn stated that “everything that can be thought of [was done] to make them feel at home” (see Wallaroo Times Office 1872:8). Kühn offered high weekly wages of 5/- plus half a sheep and rations (Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 27 February 1875). When a hunting party of between thirty to fifty Narungga camped 10-15 miles from the station, Kühn “visited them twice a week”, “supplied them with flour, sugar, tea, soap and some clothing” (Kühn to Reichel, Boorkooyanna, 27 February 1875) and bought their skins, noting “all were well pleased with the price given” (Anon. 1876b:13B). But, after finishing hunting, most dispersed to woolsheds across the Peninsula where they were employed in shearing; only the old and infirm came to the station (Anon. 1876b:13B). Narungga came and went as they wanted. In 1879 critics complained “there were only about thirty natives at the station”, “it was a rule for them not to remain there” (Anon. 1879a:4G) and those on the station “only go for food” (Anon. 1879b:7B). Kühn answered “of course some come and go, staying a short time at the station, then wandering off again” (Kühn 1879b:12E). He pointed out it is customary for them “to disperse themselves through the peninsula, visiting different parts where friends are to be found and where they can enjoy fishing” (Kühn 1879b:12E).

During these years, the records indicate that Narungga people were not forced against their will into the Point Pearce Mission Station. Instead, they used the station for food and goods when alternative options were unavailable. In this sense, King Tommy’s and other Narungga people’s initial wish – for a township of their own where the sick, old and young could be attended to and where their children could learn how to read and write – was fulfilled. Through their foresight and wisdom, and because of the rapport, co-operation and communication which existed between them, Kühn, local European townspeople, and Narungga people living in the northern districts of the peninsula actively and successfully secured the important country of Boorkooyanna for future generations.
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