

Jack Patten

Jack Patten and the Aborigines Progressive Association

Jack Patten was an Aboriginal Australian leader, rights activist, public speaker, journalist, boxer and soldier. He was considered to be the founder of modern Aboriginal Australian political actions.

Jack was born John Thomas Patten in 1905 in New South Wales. He was the eldest of six children. After Jack finished his education he attempted to join the Navy. Unsuccessful in his attempt, he became a labourer like his father. He married in 1931.



Jack organised Aboriginal Australian political groups along the north and south coast of NSW. He spoke on Aboriginal Australian rights every Sunday in the Sydney Domain and was known to be a passionate orator with a natural ability to engage his audiences.

Aborigines Progressive Association

In 1937, Jack became President of the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA). Together with Bill Ferguson, they wrote and distributed a pamphlet, 'Aborigines Claim Citizens Rights', promoting a Day of Mourning protest on Australia Day in 1938. The purpose being to propose Aboriginal Australians receive full citizenship rights and equality in the community. He also fought for Aboriginal Australian children to receive an education.

The three aims of the APA were:

- Full citizenship rights for Aboriginal Australians;
- Aboriginal Australian representation in Parliament;
- Ending the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board

Jack Patten



Jack Patten (far right)

Jack enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force and was sent to the Middle East in 1940. He was discharged in 1942 with a shrapnel-damaged knee.

Jack Patten died after a car accident in 1957. He left behind his wife and seven children.