

# Margaret (Lilardia) Tucker

People: Wiradjuri/Yulupna

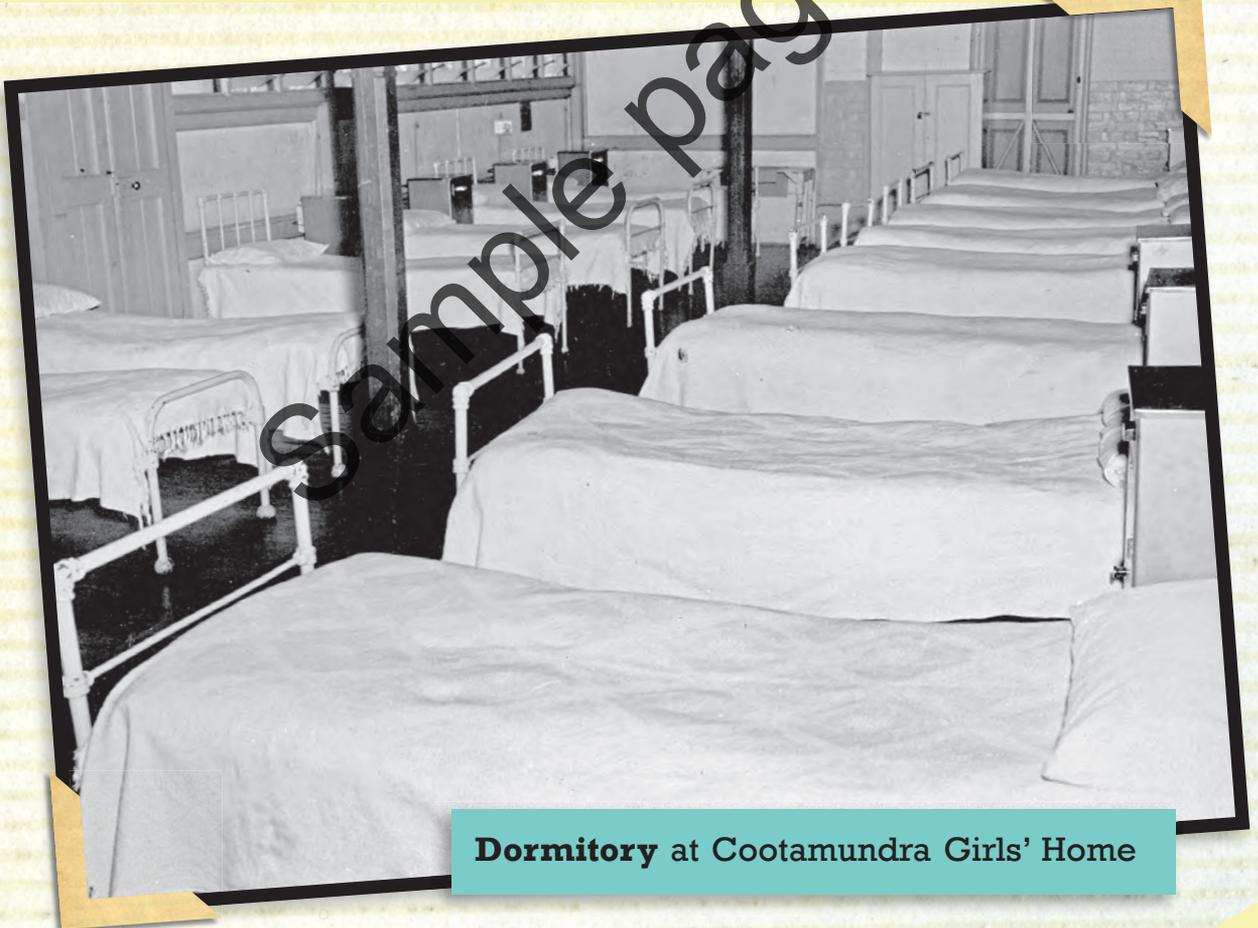


Margaret Tucker was born in 1904 in New South Wales and lived on the Cummeragunja **mission** and Moonaculla mission during her early childhood. When she was 13 years old, police and officials came to her primary school and took her and her sister away. Their mother resisted and followed the police, begging them to return her children. But her pleas were useless, and Margaret recalls waving goodbye to her mother as they were driven away.

The girls were taken to the Cootamundra Girls' Home where they were trained to be domestic servants. After three months of training, Margaret was sent out to work for non-Indigenous families in their homes. Her work was unpaid and she was treated cruelly. Her clothes were made of **hessian** covered with a cotton dress and she had no shoes or stockings. She was often cold and hungry. Margaret disliked the Home so much she ran away several times.

Margaret sent her mother letters during this time, which her **mistress** read before they were sent. The only way Margaret could let her mother know that she was miserable was by drawing pictures on the envelopes as she walked to post them. Her mother responded by locating her daughter and travelling to where she lived. They had a tearful reunion.

After three years, Margaret was allowed to leave her life of service. She made her way to Melbourne, working along the way. After she reached Melbourne, she married and had a daughter of her own.



**Dormitory at Cootamundra Girls' Home**

Margaret began to **campaign** for Aboriginal rights. By the 1930s, she was Vice President of the Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League.

During the Second World War, Margaret worked in several factories, but it was her singing that made her well-known. She used her talent to help others, singing to raise money and lift the spirits of those in need. In 1938, she took part in the first National Day of Mourning protest, which drew attention to the **plight** of Indigenous Australians on the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet.

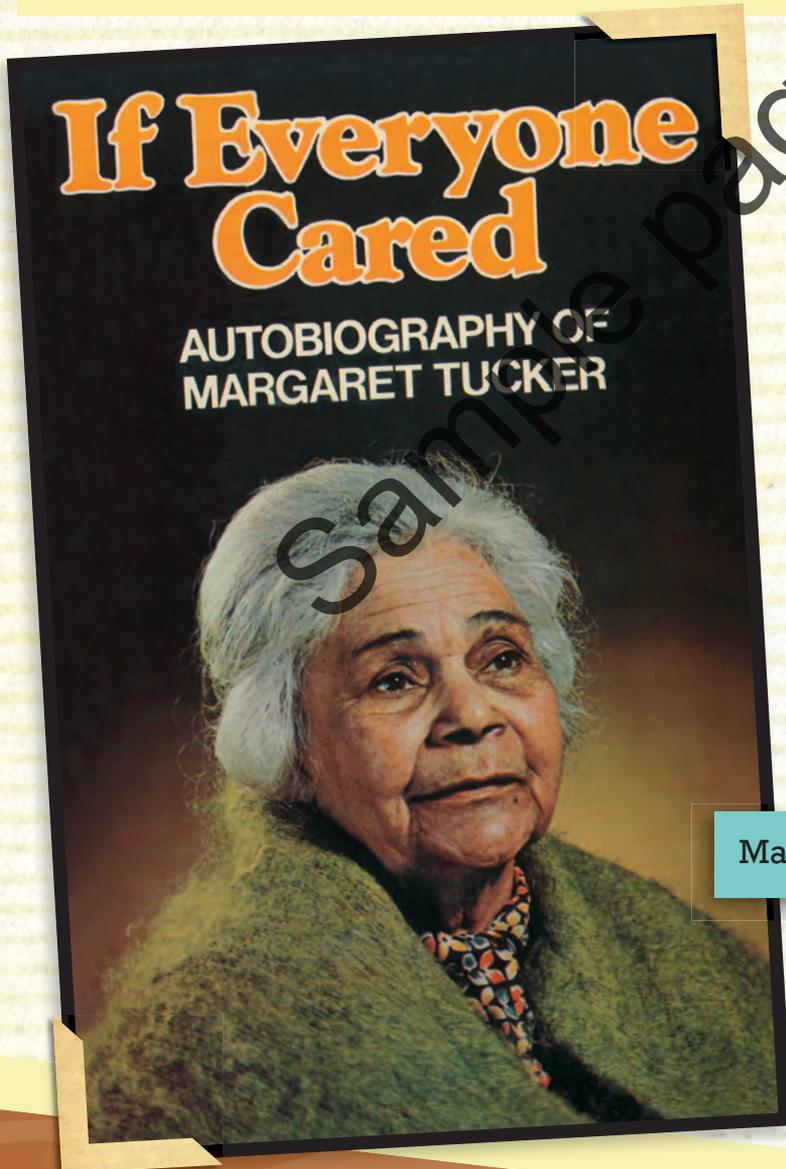


First National Day of Mourning protest, 26 January 1938

Margaret's work on Indigenous issues continued, and in 1964 she was the first Indigenous woman to sit on the Victorian Aborigines' Welfare Board. Four years later she was appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Later in life, Margaret joined a religious group, which helped her deal with the suffering caused by being taken from her family. She wanted to write her story, but her education had been interrupted when she was taken from the mission and she feared she could not write well enough. She eventually completed her **autobiography**, *If Everyone Cared*, with the support of the group. This personal story is now an important record of part of Australia's history.

During her amazing life, Margaret also acted in the television drama *Women of the Sun* and the **documentary** *Lousy Little Sixpence*. She died at the age of 92, very much loved for the leadership she had shown.



Margaret's autobiography