



Left, the Mayor of Moree, Ald. H. G. Bulluss, welcoming Board members to Moree. Left to right: Ald. Bulluss, Mr. Kingsmill, Mr. Smee, Mr. Green.

Aborigines' Welfare Board Visits Moree

£ 60,000 Housing Project Discussed

A delegation from the Aborigines Welfare Board visited Moree on July 8 to discuss with Moree Municipal Council plans for a nine-acre subdivision on Bingara Road.

It is proposed to establish a modern housing settlement on the subdivision to re-house 27 Aboriginal families at present living in squalid circumstances on the opposite side of Bingara Road.

The delegation was headed by the Board Chairman, Mr. A. G. Kingsmill, and comprised Board members Dr. A. Douglas (Metropolitan Medical Officer of Health), Messrs. J. Morgan, A. Ferguson, J. Purcell (Chairman of the Housing Commission), R. Smee (N.S.W. Regional Director of the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service), H. Green (Superintendent of Aborigines Welfare), and the Board's Planning Officer, Mr. T. Craig.

The delegation was met at the airport by the Mayor, Ald. H. G. Bulluss and the Deputy Mayor, Ald. W. A. Lloyd.

Prior to discussions with the council the delegation made an inspection of the Moree Aboriginal Station, the site of the proposed subdivision and the Bingara Road encampment.

At a meeting subsequent to the frank and friendly discussion between delegates and councillors, Council decided to approve the subdivision.

Opening the discussion Mr. Kingsmill said: "This is virtually an application to Council for permission to subdivide and to spend some £60,000 on housing for Aborigines in Moree."

He said that after a lengthy survey of surrounding areas the Board had purchased the Bingara Road property as being the most suitable for a housing scheme.

The Aboriginal families at present living on a squalid and unsightly encampment opposite the property were now to be given the opportunity of living an ordinary and normal domestic life.

The project had been made possible by greatly increased funds made available by the Government, Mr. Kingsmill said.

"If approved, we hope to have the work completed in this present year," Mr. Kingsmill said.

He said the Board was in favour of placing Aboriginal families who desired it in town houses, and in this respect the Board's views ran parallel to those of the Council.

However, there was a large body of people who were still in need of transitional training and help in the arts of domestic living, and many of the families living in the encampment fell into that category.

Mr. Craig said the majority of the homes would have three or four bedrooms, and would cost in the vicinity of £2,500-£3,000 each.

The subdivision would include a clinic and playground for the children.

Ald. Lloyd asked if the Board had considered that it already had an established Aboriginal station in Moree with churches, a school, a swimming pool and all amenities.

"You must have some good reason for wanting to establish another mission," he said.

He asked why a few towns like Moree should have to deal with problems of assimilation, and why Aboriginal families should not be dispersed right throughout N.S.W. on a population basis.

"My view is that the way to attack this problem is by decentralisation," he said.

Mr. Kingsmill said that what the Aboriginal people wanted themselves had to be considered. The Board would not be a party to forcing families to go to areas to which they did not want to go.

He added that the cost of establishing Aboriginal families in individual homes scattered throughout Moree would be prohibitive because of the high price of the land. In any case, many of them were not yet ready for normal town housing.

"We are a welfare authority, but we've got to exercise some business sense, and above all we have got to respect what the Aboriginal people want," Mr. Kingsmill said.

"From what I have been advised the people in the Bingara Road encampment want to remain together.

"It would be unrealistic, on the scale necessary to deal with this urgent matter, to acquire individual blocks of land in Moree."