

BOARD WELCOMES ITS FIRST ABORIGINAL WELFARE OFFICER

Herbert Simms, the Aborigines Welfare Board's first Aboriginal welfare officer, commenced duty late in December and was welcomed by the Chief Secretary, Mr E. A. Willis, and Mr A. G. Kingsmill, Board Chairman.

Mr Willis described Mr Simms' appointment as a "significant break-through". "Ever since I have been a Minister I have advocated that Aboriginal leadership should come from within their own ranks," Mr Willis said.

Mr Kingsmill said that Mr Simms would be assigned to welfare work in the Sydney metropolitan area for the next few months under the supervision of the senior welfare officer, Mr T. W. Humphreys.

Mr Simms was born at La Perouse and educated at the Board's Kinchela Boys' Training Home, near Kempsey. He is 39, has been married for 10 years, and a week after his appointment his first son was born. The Simms family live in Tower Street, Panania—a Sydney suburb.

Until 18 months ago, Mr Simms was a fully-qualified motor mechanic; then he accepted an invitation to become the first manager of the

Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs. He resigned from that position three months ago and, before joining the Board, travelled throughout New South Wales on a survey for the Commonwealth Social Science Research Council.

The experience he gained during the survey will aid his understanding of Aboriginal problems.

"He is no stranger to the work and I expect him to settle in to his new job comfortably," Mr Kingsmill said. In recent years there had been a large influx of Aborigines into the inner city area of Sydney, and Mr Simms should prove invaluable to the Board in determining his peoples' problems, Mr Kingsmill said.

The appointment of Mr Simms brings to 15 the number of welfare officers employed by the Aborigines Welfare Board.

Mr Simms reads the article in DAWN about Kinchela Home where he was educated. With him is Mr Willis (right) and Mr Kingsmill (Photo courtesy Sydney Morning Herald)