

(Aboriginal and Islander Identity, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 1971)

The Launching of Identity this year was an exciting occasion. I am hoping that many Aborigines will feel that it is their magazine and join with the rest of us in expressing their views on both social and economic problems. I hope, too, that the legends of our ancestors will be told by many contributors.

Many changes - which I hope will be for the best - have come about in Aboriginal affairs in all States since the referendum. Sometimes I wonder if the general public is expecting too much of us since these changes and it is now we really need them to help adjust ourselves to stand on our own feet. I cannot but pay the highest tribute to those who have raised their voices over the years to bring about the many changes that are taking place both among the people and in the Government, though there is still much to be done. This is where our own people can play an important part in finding answers to the many problems.

I am hopeful that the Government will consult more Aborigines so that they can feel they are part of the changes. This, I believe, is where keen administrators have previously missed out by not involving more Aboriginal people.

With the growth in population, housing is our main problem in all States - in the cities, country areas and on missions. We are hoping that the Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs will give our housing problem first priority.

In the past little value was placed on education by our people but now we realise that the future and security of our children is in education. It is pleasing to see that monies are being made available for Aboriginal students and that some of our young people are taking advantage of the opportunities now available to them.

One cannot deny that since the contact of the two races the Aboriginal has had a hard road to walk. He has lost many of his great values. There has been little respect for his culture and tradition. His land has been confiscated and he now remains an alien in his own country.

Australia has become a nation but we have been forgotten in the march forward. In some States we are still under State legislation while in others, because of insufficient finance, the needs of the native population are not being met.

However, whatever the future may hold we must not forget that two peoples are here and will remain and I believe that if we work together in co-operation, mutual trust and respect, our common heritage will be made secure.

Through the press, radio and TV, the Aboriginal people are saying: "Give us a place in our own land; the right to live; the opportunities to rise to our full potential and to prove that we are not a back number but an asset."

Pastor Doug Nicholls, OBE.