

# PREPARING FOR CITIZENSHIP

## Aiming at Higher Standards

The approved policy of the Aborigines Welfare Board of assisting people of aboriginal descent to prepare for full citizenship and eventual assimilation was further advanced during the year just passed.

The living conditions of aborigines residing on Stations is noticeably improved, and this is the first step to develop them to that stage where they will be qualified for absorption into the general community.

Over the last twelve months or so, further progress has been made in the building of up-to-date homes at Tabulam, Wallaga Lake, Jervis Bay, Cabbage Tree Island, Quirindi, and Moree.

The improved quality of the new homes for aborigines, compared with those provided in earlier years, was designed primarily to awaken in the aboriginal residents a sense of responsibility and a pride in their own homes, and with this end in view a very nominal rent is being charged for the tenancy of the new cottages.

The Board adopted the policy that those people in receipt of incomes should pay rent, and this is a very fair policy, as the rent charged is not based on the economic value of the homes occupied. Payment of rent as a social obligation is a lesson that still has to be learned by the majority, although some recent slight improvement is noticeable in this regard.

When it was decided to embark on a programme for the erection of new homes on Stations, it was estimated that some 600 to 700 homes would be required to meet the present needs of the aboriginal people of this State. During the previous year 120 new cottages were completed, while during the year under review a further 56 cottage homes were finished or nearly so.

The resident staffs of Stations are constantly urging upon the people the development of pride in home ownership. They are constantly advising mothers and inspiring family groups in this regard. There is evidence that the new dwellings are bringing with them some slight improvement on the part of aborigines in their attitude towards home life. Some of the cottages are nicely furnished; others show considerable improvement and most of them are, at least, fairly tidy and clean.

Co-operation of Station Managers has been evinced in the matter of assisting and urging residents to make purchases of furniture and household requisites, pointing out to them that assimilation into the general community, and conformity to the standards of white people would be judged by the way in which they managed their homes.



Jack and Eliza Goulding, of Burra Bee Dee Aboriginal Station, and their family.

## Housing in the Towns

In conjunction with the action concerned with new homes on the Stations and Reserves, the Board is preparing for the next stage of the process of assimilation. This involves acquisition of sites in the towns on which will be built homes for those aborigines who are considered worthy of absorption. It is proposed to provide individual homes where possible, rather than to build groups. By this means the tendency on the part of aborigines to segregate into small communities of their own kind would be avoided.

Towns which have been noted tentatively for the establishment of homes for individual aboriginal families include Nambucca Heads, Yass, Coonabarabran, Wellington, Dubbo, Wilcannia, Bourke, Nowra, Berry, Milton, Coff's Harbour and Forster. Residence in the towns will provide better educational, medical, social and employment facilities and will hasten the achievement of the assimilation policy. Already two building allotments have been purchased at Cobargo and approval has been given to the acquisition of six building blocks at Griffith. During the year four lots were acquired at Cowra for building purposes, but unfortunately, owing to strenuous local opposition and other factors the Board was unable to proceed with the plan for the erection of homes in the town.

The provision of homes to meet the entire State-wide need will take many years to accomplish and as a temporary expedient the possibility is being examined of providing housing in the form of two or three-room units which, although not up to proper housing standards, would provide at least hygienic conditions until proper dwellings can be constructed.