

ON THE ROAD TO ASSIMILATION

Wallaga Lake is Proud

● *This interesting article was contributed
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The policy of the Aborigines Welfare Board, as it has been reiterated on several occasions, is "Assimilation." But the question is often asked as to what is being done towards assimilating the Australian aborigine.

What has been done and what is being done is very difficult to enumerate, for the process is a very slow but sure one, and covers a vast area of New South Wales. To the layman, only getting a bird's-eye view of the situation, much change will not be perceived; but the Board and its officers in the field can observe a steady progress towards our ultimate goal.

To give our interested readers an idea of the position, we shall turn to a portion of this vast area, where much has been done for the aboriginal people in a matter of only three years.

The Board dismantled the old homes and built eighteen new fibro cottages, a manager's residence, treatment room, office, ration store, workshop, recreation hall, teacher's residence and an up-to-date school at Wallaga Lake, one of the most picturesque spots on the South Coast of New South Wales, where many notable personalities have stood and gazed around with amazement at the magnificent landscape.

The Station is surrounded by lovely pine and gum trees, with the wide sea in the background and beautiful Wallaga Lake on three sides of the settlement. Mt. Dromedary stands majestically towards the north and the Brown Mountain range is on the far south-west.

From this Station, three years ago, two families—the Morgan and Thomas family—were chosen for assimilation with the white community, and now two more families are ready for assimilation.

Two modern fibro cottages were built for Rex Morgan and Percy Thomas at Cobargo, a progressive town about 14 miles from the Settlement.

Both the men are permanently employed by the Department of Main Roads; and are not only popular with their working mates, but have been wholeheartedly accepted by the local residents of the district.

Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Thomas are members of the local tennis and golf clubs, and have participated in the Cobargo golf tournaments, and have won several prizes.

One of the Morgan children attends the Bega High School, and the others attend the local primary school. Young Ruth Thomas and Monica Morgan recently

took part as miniature debutantes at the Catholic and Church of England Balls, which are considered the balls of the season in the district.

Some of the aborigine men of the Station are permanent employees of the Department of Main Roads; and they and their families mingle freely with their white fellow workmates and their families, and they spend their holidays together at one of the famous country beaches.

Several of the aborigines form part of the local white football teams, and the people attend all the football matches. Also, many of the boys enter for the local boxing tournaments, and have competed in other sporting events along with the white contestants of the district. The mutual feelings on all these occasions have been very cordial and happy ones.

In turn, the white people of the district have been invited to take part in sporting and social functions held on the Station, and the response has been very good.

A dance and boxing tournament was organized by the Station at Central Tilba to raise funds for the District Ambulance which was very well patronized by the white community.

Church services are held once a month at the Station Hall where both white and aborigine people attend, and no differentiation in seating is made.

Marriage ceremonies are mostly performed in the local churches; and many of the white community attend the service.

The aborigines attend the Bermagui picture theatre in a special bus run solely for this purpose. At the theatre no colour distinction whatsoever is made.

Four aborigine lads are permanently employed on dairy farms in the district, and they live at their employers' homes and are treated as members of the families. They attend all the local balls and dances and are members of the Life Saving Clubs and football teams.

They have a number of good friends—mostly white lads from respectable families. Two of these boys are courting white girls from good homes.

The acceptance of the aboriginal people by the white community has greatly helped the assimilation policy, and, therefore, one can quite confidently say that with more co-operation and understanding from the white Australian, the aborigine will continue to be well on the road to assimilation.