

# Minister Says Australian Conscience on Aborigines Disturbed



Australia's public and political conscience regarding Aborigines had been disturbed in recent years, the Chief Secretary, Mr E. A. Willis, said when he opened National Aborigines' Day on 14 July.

Mr Willis was addressing civic leaders and about 2,000 secondary school children at a conference organized by the National Aborigines' Day Observance Committee and Sydney University's Consultive Committee on Aboriginal Education, in Sydney Town Hall.

Speeches on the needs and particular problems of Aborigines were given by the Lord Mayor, Alderman J. Armstrong, the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Mr G. R. Crawford, and prominent Aboriginal citizens. Martin Royal, of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, compered the conference, as he has in previous years.

Mr Willis said: "This is a time when we should be looking to the future, but one necessarily recalls the past, particularly the errors of the past.

"We have come to regret much of this stage of our history.

"Perhaps it is more important to recall that the public and political conscience has been disturbed in recent years.

"The recent referendum is evidence of this—evidence of the fact that people in Australia in overwhelming numbers want to do something more than they have done in the past."

Mr Willis said it had been estimated that in 1788 there were 300,000 Aborigines in Australia but today there were considerably less than half that number.

*Mr E. A. Willis, the Chief Secretary, opened the National Aborigines' Day Conference in the Town Hall on 14 July*

*Mr Leslie Darcy, recently elected Aborigines' representative on the Aborigines Welfare Board*

*Popular Aboriginal singer Colin Hardy was one of the prominent Aborigines who took part in the conference*

