

Aborigines' Festival

float and open-air concert

Mr. Eric Mason, writing to the Editor of the *Macleay Argus*, on behalf of the chairman and members of the Aborigines' Welfare Board, said:—

“On behalf of the Chairman, the Superintendent and members of the Aborigines Welfare Board, may I express their sincere thanks to the people of Kempsey for the magnificent reception given for our open-air concert on Saturday, the gala night of the Festival of Spring, and to our artists who appeared in the show.

It was most inspiring to hear the 1,000 or more people who attended the celebration express their appreciation of our artists by calling out, ‘more, more’ after each presentation.

Although I have only been in my office a little over two hours (today, October 3rd), I have had 27 calls from townspeople congratulating our float and concert. (Saturday night proved to me my statement of some months ago: ‘There is no colour bar in Kempsey’).

It must be remembered that there were many hours of work preparing the concert by both the manager of Burnt Bridge Station, Mr. Henricksen, and the supervisor of Bellbrook Reserve, Mr. Harrhy.

The co-operation given by Mr. Harrhy in bringing his artists to Burnt Bridge for the final rehearsal, and last, but by no means least, the artists themselves, who also put in many hours rehearsing.

I think you will agree with me, sir, that our aborigines proved by their dignity, dress and demeanour, they are true Australians and able to take their place in any community.

The manner with which the aborigines portraying the various events, of the three arms of the Services (in which they fought) and others depicting other activities, wore their uniforms with great dignity, and the girls with grace and charm.

Those representing the year 1788 were Mr. Sid Quinlan and Mr. Darby Ward; sailor, Mr. Kevin Marr; army officer, Mr. Richard Archibald; air force, Mr. Andrew Pacey; nurse, Miss Leah Pacey; scouts Master Robert Lang; school teacher, Mr. Ken Carter; students, Master Charles Bradshall and Miss Lynette Drew; high school student, Miss Valda Moylan; sportsman, Mr. Athol Davis; and stockman, Mr. Peter Byers.

Designer of the Australian Coat of Arms on float, Mr. Clarrie Newman; signwriter, Mr. Andrew Pacey; decorators, Mesdames Allen Davis, Vi Lang, A. Campbell and J. Knox; with a special mention to Mr. Alf. Drew for the amount of time and labour that he expended.

The fact that this was the first year we entered a float, plus the fact that we won third place, speaks for itself, and all the credit for this must go to our manager, Mr. Henricksen, the matron and the people of the Station; also Sister O'Brien, for her assistance in obtaining and collecting uniforms, etc.

Artists were: Bellbrook, Dianne and Grace Quinlan, Carl and Master Tony Quinlin, rock and roll; Burnt Bridge, Clarrie Newman, George Davis, Edna Dotti, Patricia Dixon, Ken Carter, Rhonda Kelly and Lynette Drew, The first four of these were also representatives on the float.

Great credit must go to our local Welfare Committee, our president, Mr. Chisholm, and fellow school teachers, who obtained the various articles and decorated our window display, Mr. Condie and all their helpers.

Especial thanks must go to Mrs. Emery, the untiring secretary, who organised the stall and her helpers. I, personally, know of the hours of labour Mrs. Emery put into this task for three weeks prior to the opening. To Mr. Dodds, who supplied the buffet stall with goods at cost, plus a great deal free of charge.

To Messrs. Schrodgers Ltd., for the use of their window and truck for the float and the great help given by their staff. To Messrs. Clinch and Payne (to use Mr. Payne's words: ‘Anything you need from our shop is yours’), who supplied a guitar and amplifier. The committee of the Festival of Spring for the platform, piano, lights, etc. To the compere, Mr. Watters, senr., and to 2KM for their offer and help when assistance was needed.

It would take too much space to mention everyone to whom we owe our success, but to all many thanks.

I am deeply conscious of my position and more than proud to be actively associated with the descendants of our original Australians; and to them, with all humility, I say thank you for your grand display.

To our townspeople, thank you for your great reception of our artists, and the work done by the committee, our manager and supervisor and their folk.

May I, sir, on behalf of the aborigines, congratulate the organisers of the Festival of Spring, the designers of the great array of floats, and express to them our thanks for inviting us to participate.”

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(Photographs of the Float will be published in the January issue of *Dawn*.—Editor).