

## High Hopes Realized— Success of Centre Now Seems Assured

The high hopes which greeted the official opening of the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs Centre by the Chief Secretary, Mr E. A. Willis, on 15th October last year appear now to have been well based.

The Centre has proved a success. The dedication of its supporters, referred to by Mr Willis in opening the Centre, has made it so, and although much remains to be done its future seems assured.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Centre, situated in George Street near Central Railway Station, is its arts and crafts shop, now well on the way to becoming a tourist attraction. Dealing solely with authentic hand-made goods, checked by experts, the shop had a turnover of \$80 for its first week of operation. Since then its turnover has gradually increased until today it varies from between \$200 to \$400.

In the course of the next few months a drive to attract more tourists to the shop will be made by the Foundation, including a direct approach to incoming passenger ships. There is no doubt that the average tourist will more than welcome advice about the Centre's art shop, and business should boom as a result. Manager of the shop is Mr Harry Williams, a full-blooded Aboriginal of the Wiradjuri tribe.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Mr Williams was educated at a State school, then found work locally. Until five or six years ago he knew little of the traditions and tribal ceremonies or the art of his race.

"I was ashamed of being different and wanted to be apart from my people," he said.

But when he went to Melbourne he saw some fine Aboriginal art. He started reading and became very interested in the history and work of his people.

"Now I've read a lot about tribal customs, seen a lot of this work, and today I'm proud to be an Aboriginal," he said.

The centre exhibits and sells only authentic work. A voluntary committee—including Mr David Moore of the Australian Museum, who checks all pieces, and Mr Athol Burgland, anthropologist, who buys and prices—ensures this.

The money is paid direct to the artist or craftsman—the centre takes only bare running costs.

The Foundation has great plans for this art centre, as well as for their building next door, where there are club rooms and offices and library and other amenities, and where Aboriginal artists hold a concert every Sunday evening, attend typing and guitar lessons, or play table tennis and billiards.

When they have enough money the Foundation hopes to bring an artist from Yirrkala to carve a great totem pole to reach from the ground floor to the top floor of their building.

The chairman of the Shop Committee, Mr Athol Berglund, thinks it is possible that the future of Aboriginal craftworkers may lie in sculpture and perhaps the making of quality furniture.

If any show inclination and ability in this direction the Foundation will try to set up lathe and carpenters' shop there for them.

The Art Centre and Shop is divided into sections—one devoted to the authentic traditional weapons, implements and ceremonial artifacts, and the other to craftwork.

Among the artefacts are interesting things like a honey axe, and even tjuringa stones. These are not prominently displayed, because Aboriginal women coming into the shop would be upset if they saw them.

Exhibits in the shop include desert weapons from Hooker Creek, which is almost on the W.A. border, southwest from Darwin; bull roarers from Mornington Island; the beautiful traditional representation of the Morning Star from Elcho Island; gay feather amulets, woomeras, boomerangs and throwing sticks.

There are ritual fish (used in fertility ceremonies) from Maningrida.

In the craft work section was a purple stole with the feel of softest wool. It was woven from wool mixed with rabbit fur, and perhaps human hair. The weavers create something of beauty using whatever materials are to hand.

Beside the stole, which comes from Ernabella, were framed pictures—landscapes built up in bark. These came from the Erambie settlement at