

# Language discussed in N.S.W.

---

Aborigines at a 3-day school at Evans Head late in May were asked if they wanted to keep their language "alive", reports Lismore's *Northern Star* newspaper.

Language was one of three questions discussed at Evans Head.

Local Aborigines arranged the school, with the assistance of Sydney University's Department of Adult Education.

The other questions were:

- Do they want buildings for family education centres operating on their reserves?
- Do they want their own land for these buildings?

The questions were posed at the beginning of the camp by staff tutor with Sydney University's Adult Education Department in Newcastle, Mr Lex Grey.

He was for many years a pre-school officer for the Maori Education Foundation in New Zealand.

The Evans Head school discussed pre-schools at reserves in the district and heard reports from two Coraki Aboriginal women, Mrs Dorothy Knight and Miss Olga Yuke who recently returned from New Zealand.

A total of 27 adult Aborigines, with seven of their children, attended the camp.

The first Aboriginal pre-schools in Australia were launched in March last year at Box Ridge (Coraki), Tabulam and Woodenbong.

Maori women pre-school teachers visited Australia to assist them.

Mr Grey said the progress of the pre-school movement here generally had been "phenomenal". The two women who went to New Zealand were outstanding examples, he said. They were most articulate and had "really blossomed".

Mr Grey said the Aborigines would have to make up their own minds about the questions he had asked them.

He felt they were being denigrated by losing their own language. It was up to the university to see if they wanted to retain their language.

The "burning question" was land. They had told him they wanted their own land.

He was quite willing to assist with legal angles, but was not going to take the matter back to the university on the Aborigines' behalf. "We have enough to do with educating the children," he said. He said Aboriginal settlements generally were on Crown land.

"I think they have been dispossessed of their land. If a proper case was made they probably could repossess some of it," he said.

## Must make stand

Mr Grey said, "We have to bring Aborigines to the point where they are prepared to make their own stand".

At the school the parents dug clay around Evans Head, with the aim of making their own bowls.

Mr Grey said they had been very receptive to the idea.

Also the women had brought from New Zealand mats, kits and skirts made from flax. They were encouraging others to go into swamps and on beaches to get materials to make similar articles here. These activities would help keep their pride of race, he said.

Mr Grey said he was happy with the attendance. He had stipulated that those present must be willing to go on training. The school was not to be used as a couple of days holiday.

He would rather 27 workers than 60 "just loafing", Mr Grey added.

Mr Clive Williams, who lived at Woodenbong before going to Sydney, opened the school.

Social worker with the Aboriginal Foundation, Miss Eileen Lester, spoke at the opening of the school.

The two Coraki women returned from New Zealand, then gave their impressions.

Also at the school were University of N.S.W. students interested in the Abscol movement, Miss Bev. Henwood, Sydney University Aboriginal student, Mr Charles French, and secretary to a lecturer in adult education at Sydney University, Miss Gwen Watt.