

# *Fun and Games at*

## **Lennox Head National Fitness Camp**

*By Sister D. O'Brien (Aborigines Welfare Officer)*

Take fifty-two excited girls, mix them with seven happy women; add miles of golden beach and a fresh-water lake; add sunshine and plenty of fun—and you have the first National Fitness Camp for North Coast Aboriginal Girls.

Held at Lennox Head National Fitness Camp, midway between Byron Bay Lighthouse and Ballina, this seven day Vacation Camp was an outstanding success.

The girls, aged from ten years to fifteen years, came from Forster, Taree, Burnt Bridge, Greenhills, Bowraville, Nambucca Heads, Box Ridge, Cabbage Tree Island, Cubawee, Tabulam and Woodenbong. Four very disappointed girls from Baryulgil were unable to attend, owing to mumps—better luck next Camp, girls.

The Camp was run by the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Aborigines' Welfare Board. Staff consisted of Camp Director, Miss Pat Downie ("Rusty"), five counsellors: "Sandy", "Mac", "Dunk", "Jo", "Curly" and "Sis" (me). With the exception of myself, all the girls were from the Education Department. Permanent Camp Warden is Mr. J. N. Brown, whilst "Queens of the Kitchen" were Mrs. J. N. Brown and Mrs. E. Chilcott, who did a mighty job keeping us all supplied with such excellent meals.

The girls were housed in spacious, well ventilated lodges furnished with double-decker beds, with space at ends for hanging clothes, stacking suitcases etc. Blankets and pillows are provided, but campers bring their own bed-linen and towels. The ablutions block, with hot showers, is a marvellous asset, and the hygiene of the girls so excellent that the hot water frequently ran out. None ever had to be prompted to do "toothbrush drill", and here I must compliment the girls on having such well kept teeth.

The lodges were divided into three, each in charge of a leader (appointed by the girls themselves). They were:—"Redbills", Valerie Hoskins of Greenhills; "Heron", Cecilia Bradshaw, Burnt Bridge; and "Cormorants", Loretta Donnelly of Tabulam Station. All girls were responsible for bed making, sweeping and general cleanliness of own lodges. "Rusty" and I held inspection each day after breakfast and awarded marks, which were added to the point score, which at the end of the week, taking in all activities, including bush-craft, nature studies, beach sports, etc., finally went to the "Cormorants".

### **HOW DID WE SPEND THE WEEK ?**

The special bus from Lismore arrived during the late afternoon, and by tea-time all the girls had been allotted their places in lodges and dining hall, their pocket money "banked", shown round the Camp, and were ready to do justice to an excellent meal.

The first night is always Introduction Night. The few simple rules are explained, new songs learned and old ones renewed. As all the girls were tired, and some a little shy, it was not long before the National Fitness Anthem was sung, and the familiar nightly call of "Supper is Served" was heard, and then to bed.

By next morning all vestige of shyness had disappeared, and everyone eager to participate in the various programmes, which were continuous, each Counsellor having mapped out her events the previous night. The day commenced with a seven o'clock swim (optional), and each day another swim at twelve o'clock. An outstanding swimmer was Eileen Button of Forster. Canoeing and swimming seemed, to me, to outstrip everything in popularity, and to those who helped to make those possible, a special "Thank you".

Wednesday was a special day. We all went to Byron Bay by bus, were conducted through the butter, bacon and sausage factory, and out and up to the immense lighthouse. This has recently been converted to electricity, three million candle-power. Back to the beach for lunch and the beach sports, and many were the various items—the victorious lodge being "Heron", who defeated "Cormorants" by a mere half point. The sand castle competition brought forth some wonderful ideas in architecture, both modern and medieval, and Rusty and I had a difficult task in deciding the winners. Biscuits all round, and then into the bus for the trip home, to the accompaniment of much laughter and singing—hot favourites throughout the Camp being "Dinah" and "Ging Gang Goolie".

On Sunday afternoon the Water Carnival was held, watched by many visitors. "Redbills" stole the honours, as they did also in Lodge inspections—congratulations, Valerie !

Each night was completely different. Indoor tabloids were excellent and required much skill and good team work. Lodge concert—tape-recorded by Mr. J. Mollison, film night given by Junior Farmer Supervisor, Mr. C. Purdue, colour slides shown by "Rusty".

Another night was given to skits and stunts and entertainment by the staff. Have you ever seen a Lady Welfare Officer sitting in a tin dish? Well, sufficient to say I've not been the same since—nor probably has the dish.