



# MOREE—A SENSE OF CHANGE

**Not many years ago Moree was a by-word for the problems that faced Aborigines in country towns. Today it provides an illustration of how that situation is changing.**

This is not to suggest that Moree is an Aboriginal paradise or that it is typical of all such towns. The people still have housing problems and prejudice is not unknown.

Lyle Munro, former secretary of the Moree Aboriginal Advancement Association, says "Discrimination has improved 1000 per cent in Moree, although it will never be eradicated. It persists today, but more for the community than for the individual. Laws making it an offence will help eradicate it".

Lyle was sitting in the lounge of Moree Services Club. "We're sitting here in the club okay," he said, "but some bloke coming in that door might not get in. Ten years ago, though, we wouldn't be sitting here. There's still and will always be isolated cases involving individuals."

Just why Moree has changed so much, nobody can explain. However the change dates from the "freedom rides" of the mid-1960's. "There was no backlash as a result", says Lyle. "The situation seems to have begun improving from that time. It seemed to unearth something. For instance, the regulations preventing blacks swimming in the baths changed. But still nobody in Moree under-

stands how or why this has happened. If somebody can tell me I will be happy."

Lyle Munro and Eric Craigie, president of Moree Advancement Association, agree that the two most important problems facing Moree today are housing and education.

Housing is a serious problem partly because of Moree's rapidly expanding population which is expected to reach 7,000 by 1980. The employment opportunities at Moree are attracting people from other areas to the town. Lyle and Eric believe that those most in need of town housing are the young people because they can adapt more easily than the older people and because social mixing among young whites and blacks would be to the benefit of both groups.

One of the problems associated with Aborigines moving into town is the possible loss of their Aboriginal identity. Commenting on this, Lyle said: "It is a problem but not a real one. It worries me, but the answer is simple: Be proud to be black. For instance, in tribal language "gin" means lady. It is not insulting when blacks say it, only when whites do. Another way of maintaining identity", he says, "is for blacks to be taught their tribal language."