

Smoke Signals

►THE GIRL ON THE COVER

By now Roslyn Watson is familiar to most people as the first professional Aboriginal ballerina. She comes from a family of six in Brisbane and did not take up ballet till she was 12 years of age, though only because of lack of opportunity. After winning honours in her examinations she obtained a study grant to join a Melbourne ballet academy and from there was admitted as the first Aboriginal student at the Australian Ballet School. Now aged 18 Roslyn graduated at the end of last year and went to Sydney to join the Dance Company of N.S.W. She danced with the company on its tour of South Australia in February and March, in a programme of classical and contemporary dancing. The cover photo shows Roslyn in a scene from one of the contemporary dances. In April she starred at a special concert to raise funds to establish a ballet scholarship for Aboriginal children. One of Roslyn's goals is to see the creation of an all-Aboriginal ballet company. "Dancing can be a meeting place of black and white—a unique way of bridging the two worlds", she is reported as saying. Currently she is nearing the end of a lengthy tour of New South Wales schools by the dance company. Also accompanying Roslyn on this tour is the brilliant traditional dancer, David Gulpilil. In an attempt to introduce the children to Aboriginal culture she and David perform the dance of the Brolga myth. At the end of the year, after performing with the company at the opening season of the Sydney Opera House, Roslyn leaves for New York where she will work with the all-black School of Dance Theatre in Harlem.

►THE PRESSURES OF ADJUSTMENT

A Melbourne psychiatrist recently found that Aborigines living in towns are more susceptible to psychiatric illness than their tribal counterparts. Dr Ivor Jones is reported as saying that "A strong belief system protects tribal Aborigines against the increased incidence of psychiatric illness that the Aborigines of the cities show. In contrast, town Aborigines have lost a great part of their traditional culture. They haven't been accepted by the whites". Similar studies at Bourke have revealed that despite the negligible tribal structures surviving in that area, there is still a clear difference in the degree of anxiety and tension between people living on the reserve and those living in modern homes in town. It is thought that higher tension and anxiety found among town-dwellers is a result

of the absence of emotional and group support that is available on the reserve, and of the pressures from many sources to adopt white values.

►ABORIGINAL ARTS BOARD CHOSEN

The photo on this page is that of Goobala Thaldin. Translated it means "rough seas", so for the convenience of Europeans, Goobala often goes by the name of Dick Roughsey. This was the name most people heard when the Prime Minister announced the chairman of the new Aboriginal Arts Board. The Board is not simply another group of Aborigines set up to advise but not make decisions. An indication of the extent of its power is that it is one of the few Aboriginal bodies in the governmental structure that can sign its own cheques. In its own field it is the policymaking body of the Federal Government's Australian Council for the Arts. "The board will investigate ways of involving Aborigines in a wide range of cultural activities in the visual arts, performing arts, filmmaking and literature", said the Prime Minister in announcing the members of the Board. "Projects aimed at the preservation of Aboriginal art, crafts, dance and music will be sponsored in communities", he said. One of the Board's first jobs was sponsorship of the first national seminar on Aboriginal arts, a week-long affair held in Canberra in late May. The new Board has a strong tribal representation, although its members are drawn from every State. N.S.W. is represented by Terry Widders and Chicka Dixon. Dick Roughsey has been a member of the Council for the Arts for several years. Born on Mornington Island in about 1920—he was 9 years old before he saw a white man which so surprised him that he ran away because "I'd never seen anything like it before"—he is a

Dick Roughsey tying the knot of ownership in the leaf of a pandanus palm. The knot symbolises ownership of the tree and its fruit.

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