

Taking the First Step

In March of this year a group of Aborigines met in Sydney for the first time. The groups ages ranged from 16 to about 47 years. The reason for the meeting was that they were attending their first series of lectures of a Teachers Aid training course being conducted at Sydney University—Adult Education Department. They are training to work in primary schools.

All were chosen from a number of applicants, who had applied to local advertisements, asking for applications from Aboriginal people to train and work as Teachers Aids in their local Schools. Twenty women and two men were chosen from all over the State.

The areas from which the trainees come (such as Narrandera, Menindee, Brewarrina, Foster, and Bomaderry) are as varied as their ages and education. They range in Education standard from "just left in primary school" to Higher School Certificate level.

The course consists of periods spent in their schools with visits to Sydney to attend lectures at the University. While working in the schools the trainees will have assignments to work on and present at their next series of lectures.

All expressed enthusiasm in working in the schools, helping teachers in planning lessons, helping feed duplicating machines and helping in various ways with the pupils. They were quite aware of the link that they were between their



Teachers Aid Trainees during a break in lectures

communities and the local schools and the Education System in general. Since they were working at their local school, they found they could fit into the school situation quite easily and felt that their communities would be able to approach them on education problems.

The course was planned by Mr Alan Duncan of Sydney University, Adult Education Department, two years ago with the help of the Aboriginal Education Council, who employed two teachers aids for two years. One of the aids, Heather Allen of Walhallow took part in a pilot training programme last year. The programme was so successful that the scheme is now state wide.