

CWA ABORIGINAL SCHOOLS TEACHING LEADERSHIP, NUTRITION AND FAMILY CARE.

Mrs Raigh Roe (later Dame Raigh Roe DBE) had for many years envisaged holding a Residential School for Aborigine girls. As early as **1932**, the Association had pledged "*to do everything we can to help Aborigines*", but efforts to assist were fragmented.

A practical approach was made by Mrs Roe in **1958** when she took the unprecedented step of going on to the Moora Aboriginal Reserve where she taught the girls simple hygiene. Moora was the Reserve in close proximity to Piawaning where Mrs Roe lived.

In **1961** a seminar was organised dealing with "*The Role of CWA in Relation to Aborigines in our Community*" and this was attended by three ladies from the community of Allawah Grove.

In **1966** an officer of the then Native Welfare Department approached CWAs Mrs Lillian Higgins to teach simple sewing and crafts at the Aborigine Centre in Perth. For twelve months, three members gave time each week to do this. With a change in administration at the Centre the project ended. However, individual branches continued to hold sewing and craft classes in their districts.

From **8th to 14th March 1969**, the inaugural School for sixteen teenage girls, selected by the Department of Native Welfare, was held at CWA House in Hay Street, West Perth. The theme was "*Learning to Live Together*". The girls came from diverse backgrounds from all over the State – Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Onslow, Broome, Port Hedland, Geraldton, Roelands, Boulder, Kalgoorlie, Narrogin, Boddington, Wickpin, and Coomberdale. Ages ranged from 14 to 16 years.

Topics in the School included handicrafts, Music, "Why is This?" Current Affairs, Office Administration, a visit to a theatre, and other places of interest, health and hygiene, a visit to a hairdresser, leadership and vocational guidance. There were many first time and sometimes frightening experiences for them, for example riding in a lift.

Implementing the resolution on nutrition carried at the ACWW 14th Triennial Conference, and as a contribution to International Women's Year and one of a series of projects under the theme of the "Family Unit", a residential basic nutrition seminar, financed by ACWW (LAS), CWA of WA and the Department for Community Welfare in WA, under the direction of Mrs J A Roe, was held at CWA House, Western Australia, **16th to 19th June, 1975**.

Six months earlier, in what was probably the first follow-up to the World Conference, a Seminar was held in Marble Bar from **18th to 21st November 1974**.

From **23 to 28th May 1975** the first Residential School for Aboriginal Boys under the direction of Mrs Raigh Roe CBE JP and assisted by Mrs Betty Hudson was held at CWA House.

The average age of the eight boys attending was fourteen years and they came from Geraldton, Wiluna and Moora.

In addition to personal development and instructional sessions, visits to Police Headquarters, a tour of the Apprentice School at the Australian Iron and Steel Workshops were organised.

Not only were the Schools held in the city, members travelled as far afield as Marble Bar, Derby, Pundulmurra, Jigalong, Halls Creek, Kununurra, Wiluna, Geraldton and closer to home to Busselton.

Many members participated in the Schools and people from outside the Association with special skills and knowledge were engaged to assist.

A total of 29 Schools were held from 1969, with the final School being held in November 1983.

Over the years the scope of work was widened, with schools for teenage girls and boys, young adults and Aboriginal women occurring.

The project cumulated in CWA being awarded an inaugural Queen's Silver Jubilee Award for a school for teenage girls.

Posters used as teaching aids:



