

*The Aboriginal Dance Group performing in Sydney after their visit to the South Pacific Festival of Arts in Fiji*

Nineteen Aboriginal dancers from Cape York, Arnhem Land and Bathurst Island recently toured Fiji and also performed in Sydney. They represented part of a growing cultural revival among Aborigines and an emerging awareness of the value of Aboriginal art in the white community.

The tour by the dance group was organized by the Aboriginal Theatre Foundation with assistance from the Australian Council for the Arts. It is the Council for the Arts which is helping promote this revival through its Aboriginal Arts Development Division.

The dancers who represented a variety of cultural groups performed at the South Pacific Festival of Arts in Fiji and made two appearances in Sydney at The University of New South Wales Clancy Theatre. The performances included Northern Aboriginal ethnic and ceremonial dances. The musical accompaniment was provided by clap sticks, the didgeridoo and singing.

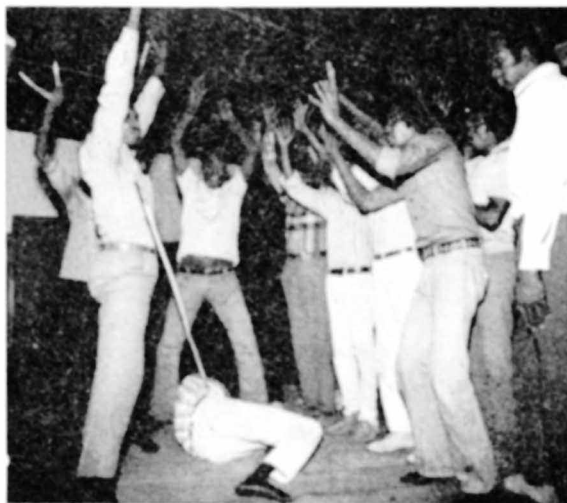
It was the first time such a group had given public performances or travelled overseas. A review of the group in *The Australian* praised the work of the dancers:

“There is no attempt to present a spectacular—the dancers move from one item to the next with an easy air of informality. Yet once you have tuned in to their wavelength, you are involved in an atmosphere that is quite unique.

“They project great warmth and good humor, kicking sand across the stage with lightning-quick foot movements, imitating sharks, brolgas, fishermen and kangaroos with a directness and lack of complication that is rarely seen in a theatre.”

The Australian Council for the Arts organized the dance group. Its special Aboriginal Arts Development Division under the direction of Jennie Isaacs is involved in attempting to revive tribal culture and the arts of the Aborigines. Jennie works in co-operation with Chris King, an Aboriginal from Brisbane.

Aborigines' confidence and self-esteem used to be based on their artistic and cultural heritage. The council is attempting to revive this heritage through theatre where Aboriginal song, dance, music and speech can all be expressed.



## REDISCOVERING ABORIGINAL ARTS

