



• THE Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe, speaks to Lake Tyers residents and guests on Saturday. *Sun-News Pictorial 26th July 1971*

# Aboriginals get their land

By MALCOLM ELDER

ABORIGINAL Charlie Carter waved the deeds above his head and said in a voice cracked with emotion: "This is the most wonderful thing that could happen to anyone."

The Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe, had just handed him the deeds to the 4000-acre Lake Tyers Aboriginal Settlement.

To cheers from 600 aboriginals Mr Carter added: "This is our land and we are proud of it."

"After all, you white fellows didn't discover Australia, we were here first."

Sir Rohan said it had taken almost 170 years for one area of land in Australia to be returned to the aboriginals.

And he was proud to give them their first land title.

"Land means a lot more to the aboriginal than the European," he added.

"His life used to be linked with the land through both materialistic and mystic ties and totems which asso-

ciated persons with birds and animals.

"Imagine the aboriginal's bewilderment when he was faced by Europeans who thought land was something to bargain over.

"When John Batman first came to Victoria he thought he had secured rights over 100,000 acres from aboriginals he had taken to the chiefs for the price of a few gifts."

The Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Mr Meagher, took Mr Carter's arm and handed him a document.

"You had better take this to complete the handover," Mr Meagher said.

"This is the official document handing over the plant and stock on the property to the aboriginal trust."

Shaken, Mr Carter replied: "I didn't ex-

pect this...the land means more to my people."

The director of the Aboriginal Advancement League, Pastor Doug Nicholls, said the future of the aboriginals in Australia now lay with the Lake Tyers Trust.

But he was worried because at Lake Tyers aboriginals didn't fully realise what the presentation meant.

He said: "A close watch will be kept to see how the trust runs this place."

"If successful, it will be the biggest step forward ever made by the aboriginal."

"This is only the thin end of the wedge and

will lead to aboriginals taking over their own land in all parts of Australia.

"This is going to force public opinion to press for aboriginal land rights."

The pastor added: "I fought to keep this place and Mr Meagher was my bitterest opponent."

"Now we stand here together... the winds have changed in five years."

The Bishop of Gippsland, the Rt. Rev. D. A. Garner, conducted a thanksgiving service for restoration of St. John's Church, Lake Tyers, and blessed the residents and officials who would help them

**The people who live in a home on the hill...**

LAKE TYERS settlement stands on a windswept hill overlooking a panorama of lakes and coast line.

A 20-mile car ride from Lakes Entrance, it is one of the most beautiful spots in Gippsland.

A hundred aboriginals live and work on the property under a seven-member committee headed by Mr Charlie Carter.

The title deed gives each adult trust member 1000 shares in the property and everyone under 21 500 shares.

have been legally admitted to the reserve, are eligible for the register of ownership.

They can sell or transfer their shares to other people under certain conditions.

These prevent non-aboriginals from easily obtaining shares.

The trust already runs stock and crops and is negotiating a milling operation.

