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ABORIGINAL QUARTERLY

For the Aboriginal people of NSW and ACT

December 1981 Volume 4 Number 2

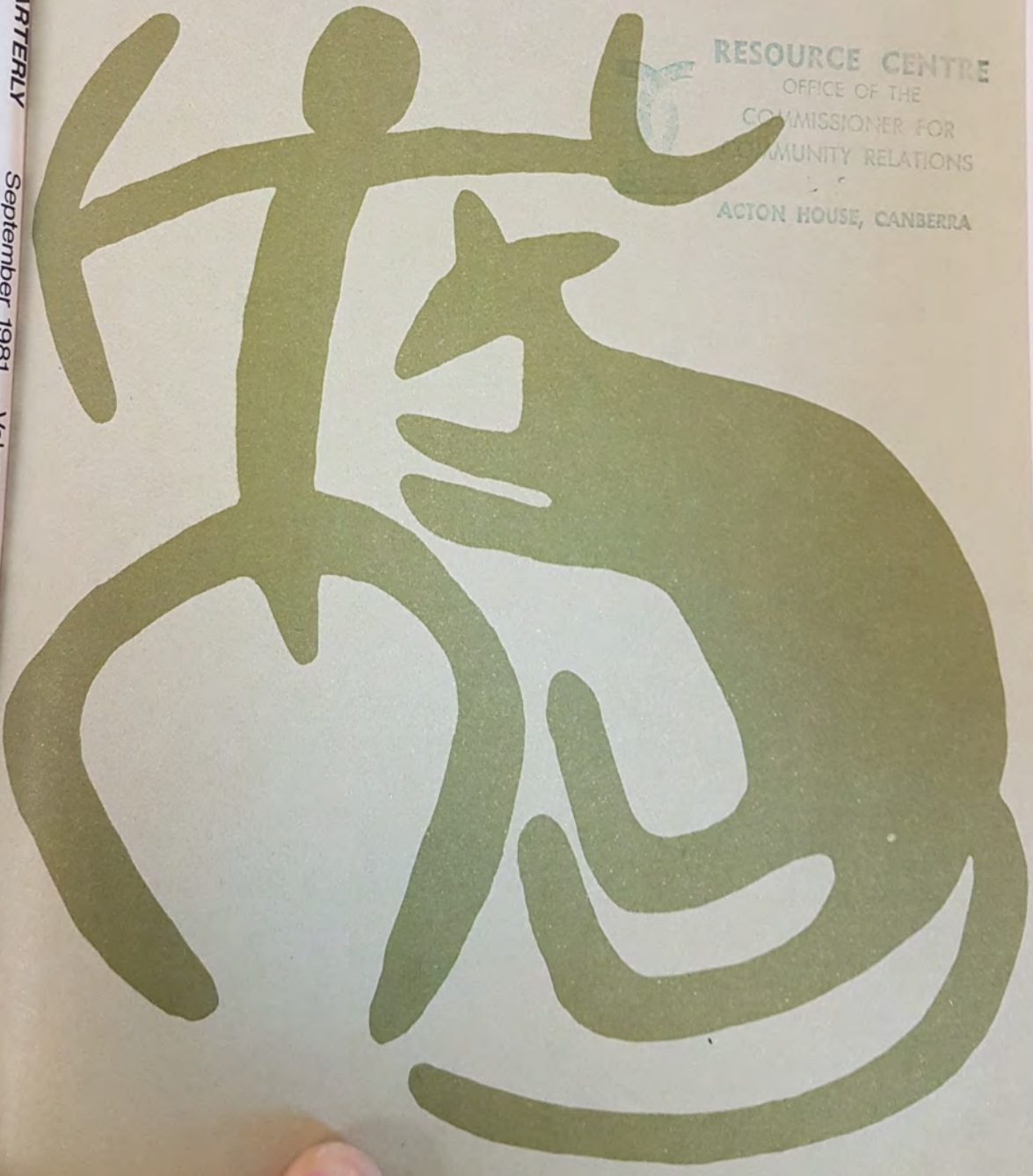
ABORIGINAL QUARTERLY

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Number 1

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FOR SALE

Assistance for disabled persons

Aboriginal people are often not aware of the entitlements and services available to handicapped or disabled persons and their families through Commonwealth and State Governments and other local agencies.

We print here a summary of Commonwealth assistance available through the Department of Social Security.

Handicapped Child's Allowance is paid to a parent or guardian of a seriously handicapped child who is being cared for at home to meet the extra costs for a child who is under 16 years, or who is a full time student aged 16 to 25 years and supported by parents or guardians. The allowance varies with circumstances, but the maximum is \$73 a month.

Invalid Pension is paid fortnightly to people aged 16 or older who are permanently unfit for work because of physical handicaps, or who are permanently blind. The amount of pension is the same as the aged pension, and is increased twice each year with cost of living adjustments. Invalid pensioners may also be entitled to other assistance — such as payments for children, and certain health benefits.

The **Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service** aims to help disabled people make the best use of their abilities and take on jobs, carry out household duties, and live as independently as possible. Disabled people may be provided with rehabilitation, training and other services if it is decided that these services will be helpful.

This help is often given in places near where disabled people live, but it is often necessary for them to go to large centres in capital cities. There is usually a waiting list for rehabilitation, and more serious cases are accepted first.

Under the **Handicapped Persons Welfare Program** financial assistance can be given to certain non-profit groups to help them provide facilities such as training and therapy centres, sheltered workshops and homes for handicapped people.

Handicapped Children's Benefit may be paid to certain non-profit groups which provides homes for handicapped children under 16 years of age.

Under the **Children's Services Program** run by the Office of Child Care, cash help may be given to suitable projects which provide services for disabled children with special needs.

If you think that you, or somebody you know, could be helped in any of these ways, contact your local office of the Department of Social Security, or ask somebody to do it for you — a friend, a welfare worker, a health worker, or a DAA officer.

Aboriginal Health Services (Continued)

- **Durri Aboriginal Medical Service:** Clinic at Green Hill Reserve — 2 doctors, nurse, 2 nurses' aides, 3 Aboriginal health workers (funded by Commonwealth Dept. of Health). Administrator. Dental service (dentist and dental nurse) to commence early 1982. 3 cars.
- Newcastle:** Clinic in Community Health Centre — Aboriginal health worker. 1 car.
- Bellbrook:** Reserve Clinic — Aboriginal health worker.
- Taree/Purfleet:** Gillawarra Aboriginal Medical Service at clinic on Purfleet Reserve — doctor. Also at the clinic — Aboriginal health worker, community health nurse and 1 car (funded by N.S.W. Health Commission Aboriginal Health Program).
- Kinchela:** Benelongs Haven residential alcoholic rehabilitation centre — administrator, teacher, 2 counsellors, 1 bus, 1 car. Hostel staff funded by Aboriginal Hostels Ltd. Reserve clinic served by Kempsey health staff.

Kevin Coombs — disabled but able



Kevin Coombs.

Since March, Kevin Coombs, an Aboriginal paraplegic, has travelled the length and breadth of Australia from his home in Melbourne — to the Kimberleys, the Northern Territory, north Queensland, as well as the more populous areas. All this has been accomplished in a wheelchair.

His travels have been part of his job as a national co-ordinator of the Aboriginal involvement with the National Committee of the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP). DAA gave a grant to the National Aboriginal Conference to employ Kevin to encourage the development of projects for disabled Aboriginals.

When Kevin Coombs came to our office earlier this year, we asked how he had managed to get here from Melbourne on his own. The answer made it all sound simple . . . plane from Melbourne ('I roll off and roll on — they have narrow wheelchairs, and the forklift puts me in the plane'), then by car to North Sydney where the steps up to our lift lobby caused no trouble — he just went around by the carpark ramps!

Kevin hails from Balranald, and lost the use of his legs 27 years ago when he was 11 — accidentally shot while rabbiting. 'I was in a small country

hospital and they didn't know much about spinal injuries in those days', he says.

Nevertheless, in spite of long periods in hospital after his accident, he says he was never out of a job in the last 20 years. 'I was a glassblower for six years, in the printing trade four years operating a letterpress machine, then on the sales side. Then I was a NESA trainee with a Victorian State department; looked after Aboriginal State wards; and then took this job', he said.

Kevin has been closely associated with sport for disabled people over all those years. In 1960 he started to play wheelchair basketball, and represented Australia in four 'Wheelchair Olympics' — in Rome, Israel, West Germany and Holland (when the Moscow Olympics were on). He represented his country a number of times in New Zealand, and in England in 1977 for the Queens Silver Jubilee Games.

'I met Prince Charles,' Kevin says proudly, 'and presented him with a plaque made of Australian ironbark, and with a racing axe — to trim a few trees at Windsor Castle.'

Wherever he has travelled on his IYDP mission, Kevin Coombs has managed to draw publicity to his cause, and shown the way for Aboriginal people and communities to gain the grants available for projects to help handicapped Aboriginals.

His personality and dedication even gained 3000 colour posters for his IYDP cause when there was no money for such things. Out went Kevin to his contacts among the printing industry and had them produced free, and they have drawn attention to the plight of disabled Aboriginals throughout Australia.

A Western Australian journalist said, in a report about Kevin and his work: 'To be disabled is a difficulty; to be an Aboriginal is a disadvantage. But to be disabled and an Aboriginal is a very serious handicap'. Kevin agrees, but that has been the challenge of his present job.