"Jacky Jacky Was a Smart Young Fella":
A study of art and Aboriginality
in south east Australia 1900-1980

Volume 2

Sylvia Kleinert
Appendix 2: 1

Exhibitions of Aboriginal art in Victoria 1900-1980

Text indicates where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists exhibited together. This list may not be inclusive.

1914.

*Exhibition of Aboriginal Bark paintings from the Northern Territory.* Museum of Victoria, July 1914.

References:

"About fifty drawings by natives of the Northern Territory have been hung in the Melbourne Museum near Russell St. Entrance. 'Patronise Australian Art.'" *Victorian Artists Society Journal*, July 1914, p. 6.


1929

*Australian Aboriginal Art: Issued in Connexion with Exhibition of Australian Aboriginal Art, National Museum, Melbourne, July 1929,* Trustees of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery of Victoria.

Catalogue:


Exhibition included models, photographs, drawings and casts of rock art, bark paintings from Western Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory. The catalogue reproduced work by Tommy McRae, the Lake Tyrrell bark painting and the Thomas Bungaleen headstone.

References.


Hain, G. "'Were They So Very Different?': Thoughts on the Exhibition of Aborigine Art and Weapons." *The Hobart Mail*, 17 July 1929.

Leason, P. "Current Art Shows: Australian Aboriginal Art in the Print Room at the National Gallery." *Table Talk*, 18 July 1929, pp. 18, 65.

1930

*Drawings by Tommy McRae exhibited at National Gallery of Victoria.*

Reference:


*Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, Jubilee Exhibition of Natural History, St Kilda Town Hall, 17-18 July 1930.*

Exhibition included Aboriginal weapons, implements and relics loaned by the Museum of Victoria.

Reference:

1934

An exhibition by Melbourne Painters at the Athaneum Gallery, Collins Street, in aid of Hermannsburg Water Supply Central Australia, 29 January-10 February 1934.

Exhibition included drawings by Noonie and Billy together with other anonymous Aboriginal drawings and artefacts.

References:


Outback Australia, Exhibition mounted by the United Missionary Council of Victoria, Melbourne Town Hall, 25-29 September 1934.

References:
"Blacks Astonished by the City: Novel Experience for Them: "Outback Australia" Exhibition."

The Herald, 26 September 1934.


As in 1929, George Aiston bought four Wangkangurru men and a boy to Melbourne to give demonstrations during the exhibition. Artefacts in the exhibition included a boomerang by the Wiradjuri artist, Joe Walsh. Also on
display were photographs and a display by the Australian Inland Mission. The author William Hatfield delivered a talk on Aborigines.

1935


1937


This exhibition screened a film on Aboriginal art that dealt with rock art from NSW, Victoria and Western Australia and the drawings of Tommy McRae. To coincide with this screening, the Museum of Victoria displayed the model of the Glen Isla rock shelter originally commissioned for the 1929 exhibition *Australian Aboriginal Art* together with bark paintings from the Northern Territory.

Reference:


1938

*Northern Territory Exhibition*, Organized by the Commonwealth Government, Lower Melbourne Town Hall, 26 July-3 August 1938.

The exhibition displayed casts of life size busts and face masks of Aranda and other Aborigines, casts of rock art and artefacts. Also included was embroidery stockwhips and watercolours by Western Aranda Aborigines. During the exhibition the Ngarrindjeri blacktracker Jimmy James gave a talk on his work.
References:
Margaret Frances Strongman. Diaries, Dec. 1937-July 1939, Entry for 27 July 1938, p. 89. Box 2753/3, MS 12176, LaTrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria
"Face Masks of Natives at N.T. Exhibition." The Herald, 15 July 1938.
"Blacktracker Astonished by 'Big City'." The Herald, 23 July 1938.

Exhibition of Child Art from Many Countries, Atheneum Gallery, 22 November-30 November 1938, Arranged by Mrs A. P. [Frances] Derham and Miss Christine Heinig.
Catalogue: No 12. Collection of Aboriginal drawings from Central Australia.
References:

Catalogue: Robert Croll. Foreword.
Exhibition included forty-one watercolours.
References:
Lawlor, Adrian. "Black Meets White." MS12145, LaTrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

1939

*Central Australian Exhibit of Aboriginal Work and Art at the Royal Show*,
Arranged by O Gration and members of the Victorian Aborigines Group including Miss A. P. [Frances] Derham, November 1939.
Aboriginal art and craft including watercolours by Albert Namatjira were also shown at the Group's Depot.
Reference:
Victorian Aboriginal Group. Tenth Annual Report, 1939, MS 9212, LaTrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.

1942

Exhibition included bark paintings, ceremonial items and artefacts.
Reference:
1943

*Primitive Art Exhibition*, Public Library, Museums and National Gallery of Victoria, Swanston Street Melbourne, May 1943.

**Catalogue:** Leonhard Adam. Introduction.

Included were bark paintings, a Wondjina (sic) painting, reproductions of rock art, sculptures, ceremonial items and artefacts. Individual items included the Lake Tyrrell bark painting, work by William Barak and Tommy Barnes (McRae). In addition there were items from New Guinea, Melanesia, Polynesia, Indonesia, America, Africa and Iran.

**References:**


1944

*Albert Namatjira*, Exhibition at Myer Mural Hall, Bourke St. Melbourne, 17-28 April 1944.

Thirty-eight watercolours exhibited

**References:**

"Native Artists at Work: Ten Art Students in Aboriginal Tribe." *The Herald*, 17 April 1944.


1945

*Child Welfare Exhibition*, Exhibition of native work at Childrens Week.

**Reference:**

Victorian Aboriginal Group: Sixteenth Annual Report, 1945, MS9212, LaTrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
Contemporary Child Art to Aid Red Cross Funds, Arranged by Woman's World, Exhibition opened by Lady Brookes at Velasquez Gallery, Tye's Building, 100 Bourke St, Melbourne, 2 July-13 July.

1946

Edwin Pareroultja, Athaneum Gallery, Melbourne, 12-23 November 1946.
First solo exhibition.
Reference:

1947

Otto Pareroultja, Athaneum Gallery, Melbourne, 8-20 December 1947.
First solo exhibition.
References:
"In the World of Art: Aboriginal Artist's Efforts." The Herald, 6 December 1947, p. 8.

1948

Catalogue: Forty-four watercolours exhibited.
References:
"Admirable Results In Silk Screen Prints." The Herald, 1 November 1948.
Otto and Edwin Pareroultja
Exhibition in Melbourne.

1951

*Jubilee Exhibition of Australian Art*, Organised by the Plastic Arts Committee for the Commonwealth Jubilee Celebrations, 1951


Exhibition incorporated Aboriginal art within a general survey of Australian art. The Aboriginal art in the exhibition included bark paintings from the collection of the Museum of Victoria with reproductions of rock art and carved figures from Arnhem Land.

1952

*Exhibition of Hermannsburg artists*, Athaneum Gallery, November 1952.

**Reference**:


1953

*Exhibition of Aboriginal Art and Craft*, Melbourne University Gallery, Organized by National Union of Australian University Students.

**Catalogue**:

Derham, Frances. "Aboriginal Child Art." unpaged

Lowe, Allan. "Use of Aboriginal Motifs." unpaged.

Exhibition included bark paintings, Hermannsburg watercolours, ceremonial items, artefacts and articles made and entered by Aboriginal children in the Leroy-Alcorso design competition.
Exhibition of Aboriginal Women's Art from Mornington Island and Ernabella Missions, (Fig 1) Australian Missionary Auxiliary, Assembly Hall, 18 November 1953.
Included embroidery, woven rugs and stationery.
Reference:

1954
Exhibition of Art from Ernabella, Assembly Hall, Melbourne, November 1953
Reference:
Bell, G. Letter to Frances Derham, 9 May 1954, Melbourne University Archives.

1955
Second Leroy-Alcorso Design Competition
Reference:
Six bark paintings from Yirrkala and Milingimbi (Fig. 1) purchased by the Victorian National Gallery, Victorian National Gallery Archives.

Second Exhibition of Aboriginal Art and Craft, Melbourne University Gallery, Organized by National Union of Australian University Students.
Reference:
M. Atkinson. Letter to Frances Derham, 7 July 1955, Melbourne University Archives

1956.
Australian Aboriginal Art, The Fine Arts Exhibition 1956, Olympic Games Melbourne, The Trustees of the National Museum of Victoria on the occasion of the 1956 Olympic Games, Exhibition of Australian Aboriginal Art at the

**Catalogue:** Aldo Massola. "Australian Aboriginal Art." pp. 5-16.

The cover of the catalogue reproduced Percy Leason's design from the 1929 exhibition *Australian Aboriginal Art.*

The exhibition included ceremonial objects, artefacts, rock art and bark paintings.


Included Aranda watercolourists, sculpture by William Ricketts and paintings by other non-Aboriginal artists.

**Catalogue:**


The exhibition included Hermannsburg watercolours, bark paintings and artefacts.

**1958**

*Exhibition of Aboriginal Art and Craft,* Melbourne University Gallery, Organised by National Union of Australian University Students.

J. Weetman. Letter to Frances Derham, 3 July 1958, Melbourne University Archives.

**1961**

*Exhibition of Arunta Art Including work by the sons of Namatjira,* Yallourn Library in Association with the Aborigines' Advancement League, Arranged by J. A. Davidson (Secretary), August 1961.
Exhibition also included paintings by Nyungar artist Revel Cooper and rugs and scarves from Ernabella Mission.

References:
“Arunta Art to be Shown: Namatjira the Father of the Movement.” James Davidson Archives, unmarked cutting.
“Aboriginal Paintings on Show at Yallourn.” James Davidson Archives, unmarked cutting.

Watercolours from the Hermannsburg School and Art from Western Australia and Arnhem Land, Argus Gallery, Melbourne, 9-18 August 1961, Arranged by James Davidson. Reference:

Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Sponsored by the Geelong Branch of the Aborigines' Advancement League and Mr Jim Davidson, Geelong Art Gallery, 17-19 November 1961. 
Catalogue: Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, bark paintings, artefacts and handcrafts from the Ernabella Mission. References:
“Aboriginal Art and Handcrafts Exhibition.” James Davidson Archives, unmarked cutting.

1962

Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, sculptures and bark paintings from Arnhem Land, handcrafts from Ernabella Mission and the Western Desert and paintings by Revel Cooper.

Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Opportunity Youth Club, 18 March 1962.
Included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School and bark paintings.
References:
“Aboriginal Art ” The Advocate, 19 April 1962, p. 10.

First exhibition by Ronald Bull.

1963

The Melbourne Moomba Festival 1963, Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Myer Gallery, Presented by the Aborigines' Advancement League in conjunction with the Myer Emporium and arranged by Mr J. A. Davidson, March 1963.
Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, bark paintings, ceremonial items, sculptures and artefacts from Arnhem Land.

Maryborough 1963 Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Presented by the Maryborough Community Youth Club in association with the Aborigines' Advancement League of Victoria.
Catalogue:
Reference:

The Mayor Cr. B. A. Thornhill said that it was fitting that the exhibition be staged in Maryborough because of the current interest in the Aboriginal initiation ground near Carisbrook and other relics in the Maryborough area.
1964

The Melbourne Moomba Festival 1964, Exhibition of Aboriginal Arts in conjunction with Myer (Melbourne), Arranged by J. A. Davidson, Proceeds from the sale of catalogues to the Aborigines' Advancement League.

Catalogue:
Exhibited were watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, the Queensland artist Imanka, and bark paintings.

References:

Statement in James Davidson Archives: 1385 catalogues purchased @ 2/- each, 2347 children attended free of charge and £587.10.0 work sold.

Other exhibitions organized by James Davidson prior to 1965.
Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Arranged by the Noble Park Branch of the Aborigines' Advancement League and J. H. (sic) Davidson, Proceeds from the Sale of Catalogues to the Aborigines' Advancement League.

Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, sculpture and bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Arranged by the Adult Education Board. Tasmania and J. H. (sic) Davidson, Proceeds from the Sale of Catalogues to the Aborigines' Advancement League.

Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, sculpture and bark paintings from Arnhem Land.


Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, sculpture and bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Arranged by J A. Davidson and Annette Barrette, Eastside Gallery, Jolimont, Proceeds from the Sale of Catalogues to the Aborigines' Advancement League.

Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, sculpture and bark paintings from Arnhem Land.

1965

*The Melbourne Moomba Festival 1965*, Exhibition of Aboriginal Arts presented by Myer (Melbourne), Arranged by J. A. Davidson, Proceeds from the Sale of Catalogues to Methodist Mission to be used for the purchase of equipment for the Technical School for Aborigines at Yirrkala.

*Catalogue*.

Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Revel Cooper, Imanka, Richard Barnes from the Northern Territory, bark paintings, artefacts and ceremonial items.


1966

*The Melbourne Moomba Festival 1966*, Exhibition of Aboriginal Arts presented by Waltons Stores, Arranged by J. A. Davidson, Proceeds from the Sale of Catalogues will be donated to the Methodist Mission for the purchase of Hospital Equipment for use in the inadequately equipped hospitals for Aborigines in Arnhem Land, 4-19 March 1966.

*Catalogue*:

Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg, School, paintings by Revel Cooper, Imanka, Richard Barnes, bark paintings from Arnhem Land and Australian and New Guinea artefacts.

*Parkes Boomerang Festival Week 1966*, Exhibition of Aboriginal Art presented by the Parkes Apex Club, Arranged by J. A. Davidson, 16-30 April 1966.

*Catalogue*:

Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg school, paintings by Imanka, Revel Cooper and Richard Barnes, bark paintings, artefacts, and sculptures.

*Reference*


Most district schools are taking the opportunity to include visits to the Aboriginal Art and Culture Exhibition as part of normal school studies. For the first time in the town's history, a major exhibition of Aboriginal art and craft work has been brought to the town.
1966 or 1967
Ronald Bull and Keith Namatjira, Capital Arcade Melbourne.

1967
The Melbourne Moomba Festival 1967, Exhibition of Aboriginal Arts, 3-18 March 1967, Presented by Waltons Stores and Monash and Melbourne University Aboriginal Scholarship Scheme, Arranged by J. A. Davidson. Proceeds from the sale of catalogues will be donated to the Monash and Melbourne University Aboriginal Scholarships Scheme to provide secondary and tertiary scholarships for students of Aboriginal descent.

Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Richard Barnes, Revel Cooper, bark paintings, sculpture, ceremonial items and artefacts from Arnhem Land.

1967
Exhibition of Aboriginal Art, Geelong Art Gallery, Organized by James Davidson.

1968
The Melbourne Moomba Festival 1968, Exhibition of Aboriginal Arts, Presented by Waltons Stores and Monash and Melbourne University Aboriginal Scholarship Scheme, Arranged by J. A. Davidson, 23 Feb-9 March 1968. Proceeds from the sale of catalogues will be donated to the Monash and Melbourne University Aboriginal Scholarships Scheme to provide secondary and tertiary scholarships for students of Aboriginal descent.

Catalogue:
Exhibition included watercolours from the Hermannsburg School, paintings by Richard Barnes, Revel Cooper, bark paintings, sculpture, ceremonial items and artefacts from Arnhem Land.


Reference:
Battersby, (Dr.) J. Letter to James Davidson, 27 June 1968, James Davidson Archives.
1969
World Psychiatric Association Exhibition, Melbourne, 5-7 May 1969.
Exhibition included and Aboriginal bark paintings and medical artefacts.

1972
Reference:

1973
Moomba Interstate Artists Exhibition, Halmaag Galleries, Melbourne.
Exhibition included paintings by Ronald Bull.
Reference:

1974
Exhibition of Paintings by Australian Artist Ronald Bull, Kew Gallery, 26 Cotham Road. Kew, Director, Tom Roberts, 18 August-1 September 1974.
Exhibition opened by Reg Worthy, Director of Aboriginal Affairs.
Reference:

1975
Exhibition of Paintings by Australian Artist: Ronald Bull, Kew Gallery, 26 October-2 November 1975.
Exhibition opened by Doug Nicholls.


Lin Onus, Exhibition at the Victorian Aborigines' Advancement League, Melbourne.

1978
Ronald Bull, Simon Art Galleries, 629 Burwood Rd. Hawthorn, Director, Joan Moerland.
Reference:

1979

Appendix 2: 2

Present Location of the Percy Leason Series: The Last of the Victorian Aborigines.

The catalogue for The Last of the Victorian Aborigines lists the 46 'full-blood' Victorian Aborigines whom Leason intended to paint. As Chapter 3 revealed, the series of portraits were never completed. Questions remain regarding the number of portraits Leason executed and their precise identification. Leason's diary indicates 28 portraits were completed and of these, 23 have now been located. The system of documentation adopted here follows the original catalogue and relies to a considerable extent upon the expertise of the Picture Collection of the State Library of Victoria.

1. Percy Leason. Annie Alberts. oil on canvas, 74 x 59.7 cm. Not signed or dated but 1934. Subject's name inscribed in paint on verso of canvas. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86. 82/3 LT 1098.

2. Percy Leason. Hector Bull. oil on canvas, 74.5 x 59.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Subject's name inscribed in paint on verso of canvas. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86. 82/11 LT 1106.


5. Percy Leason. Adam Cooper. oil on canvas, 100 x 74.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Isobel Leason, 1969, Acc No H 32097 LT 495.

6. Percy Leason. Edward Foster. oil on canvas, 100 x 74.9 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Isobel Leason, 1969, Acc No H 32093 LT 854.


9. Percy Leason. Charles Foster. oil on canvas, 76.5 x 61.5 cm, Inscribed on verso of canvas. Eastgate Gallery, Melbourne.

10. Percy Leason. Charles Green. oil on canvas, 107 x 75.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Subject's name inscribed in paint on verso of canvas. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86. 82/7 LT 1102.


13. Percy Leason. **Stewart Hood.** Portrait not located.


15. **Ethel Hood.** Portrait not painted.

16. **Noel Hood.** Portrait not located.

17. Percy Leason. **Johnson Hood.** oil on canvas. Acc No and Size not available, Victorian Koorie Heritage Trust.

18. **Mrs Ada Harrison.** Portrait not painted

19. Percy Leason. **Norman Harrison.** oil on canvas, 74.5 x 59.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Subject's name inscribed in paint on verso of canvas. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86.82/9 LT 1104.


22. Percy Leason. **William Johnson.** oil on canvas. 78 x 59.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Isobel Leason, 1969, Acc No H 32095 LT 1149.

23. **Maggie Johnson.** Portrait not painted.

24. Percy Leason. **Robert Johnson.** oil on canvas, 76.5 x 61.2 cm in contemporary wooden frame 89.5 x 74.0 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Inscribed in black paint on verso of canvas u. r. Robert Johnson. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Cathy Culbard, 1990, Acc No H 91. 32.2 LT 1149.

25. **Violet Johnson.** Portrait not painted.

26. **Mrs Ellen Johnson.** Portrait not painted.

27. Percy Leason. **Robert Kinnear.** oil on canvas, 102 x 75.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86. 82/8 LT 1103.

28. Percy Leason. **Bobby King?** oil on canvas, 74.5 x 59.2 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Inscribed on original frame: Julian Hood; inscribed on card attached to frame: Bobby King/Born at Coranderrk 1909. The recent purchase of the portrait of Julian Hood by the State Library of Victoria suggests that this is the portrait of Bobby King (see also catalogue entry No. 12), Picture Collection. State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86. 82/4 LT 1099.

29. **William Logan.** Portrait not painted.
30. Mrs Alice Logan. Portrait not painted.

31. Mrs Priscilla Logan. Portrait not painted.

32. Percy Leason. Laurie Moffatt. Oil on canvas, 77.0 x 61.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Inscribed in black paint on verso of canvas: Laurie Moffatt. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Purchased 1993, Acc No H 93/252/3 LT 1206.

33. Percy Leason. Foster Moffatt. Oil on canvas, 74.5 x 59.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Subject's name inscribed in paint on verso of canvas. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86.82/10 LT 1105.


35. Mrs Elizabeth McRae. Portrait not painted.

36. Percy Leason. Unidentified Woman (Angelina McRae?) oil on canvas. 75 x 59.5 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. The author identifies this portrait as Angelina McRae as the only female portrait executed but not yet located. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86.82/1 LT 1096.

37. Percy Leason. Sydney McRae. Oil on canvas, 74.3 x 59.5 cm. Not signed, not dated but 1934. Subject's name inscribed in paint on verso of canvas. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria. Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86.82/2 LT 1097.
38. **David McRae.** Portrait not located.

39. **Mrs Sylvia O'Rourke.** Portrait not painted.

40 **Mrs Louise Parsons.** Portrait not painted.

41. **Mrs Lily Penrith.** Portrait not painted.

42. **Archie Pepper.** Portrait not painted.

43. **Percy Leason.** **Bragan Scott.** Portrait not located.

44. **James Scott.** Portrait not painted.

45. **Frederick Stewart.** Portrait not painted.

46. Percy Leason. **Dorothy Turner.** oil on canvas, 74.2 x 59.3 cm. Not signed not dated but 1934. Subject's name inscribed in paint on verso of canvas. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc No H 86. 82/6 LT 1101.

?. **Percy Leason. Unidentified Man.** oil on canvas. Acc No and size not available, Victorian Koorie Heritage Trust.

?. Percy Leason. **Edward Hood.** oil on canvas, 75 x 59.4 cm. Signed I. I. Leason Inscribed on original frame: Edward Hood; inscribed on card attached to frame, William Logan/ Born Ramahyuck 1896 however there is no record of
Leason having painted either man. Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Gift of Mrs Everard Baillieu, 1986, Acc. No H 86. 82/5 LT 1100.
Appendix 2: 3

Documents Relating to Moomba


SIR— The controversy over the running of Moomba omits to deal with one curious facet of our annual festival—its name.
It may interest your readers to know that the word 'moom' in the southern Aboriginal languages means 'bottom' (in the anatomical sense) and 'ba' means 'and.'
How the words came to be placed together is a mystery.
I can only surmise that the original part-Aboriginal informant offered the only two words he still knew and which sounded sufficiently authentic to enable him to hoax the white populace.
Come to think of it, how could two brief syllables convey such lengthy concepts as 'let's get together and have fun' in any language?
(Signed) (Mrs) Lorna Lippman, Research Officer, Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, Monash University Clayton.


Sir—Aboriginal research officer (Mrs Lorna Lippman 6/12) referring to the name of Melbourne's annual festival Moomba, said, "How the words came to be placed together is a mystery", which prompts me to state that there is no 'mystery' about the origin of the word.
A member of the first Moomba Committee approached my father, Bill Onus, to give them a suitable name for the festival.
He gave them 'Moomba,' and added, with his tongue in his cheek, it was the only Aboriginal word which had the same meaning all over Australia.

Had the committee stopped to think they would have known this was impossible because, at the coming of the white man, there were over 600 different Aboriginal dialects in this country.

The 'Moomba' thing was a private joke among the Koorie, and one of our white man friends for many years, and a well kept secret in the old Aboriginal tradition.

As my father has passed beyond the white man's injustices, now it can be told.

(Signed) Lin Onus, Belgrave.
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Aileen Mongta. Interview. 5 March 1993.
Nellie Moore. Interview. 13 March 1993 (taped).
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Ronald Bull. Weekend Magazine. March 1976. Australian Broadcasting Commission Archives. This film includes significant footage from an earlier silent black and white film which records Bull as a teenager with his foster mother, Pauline Edmonds and the artist, Ernest Buckmaster.


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