

The end of a hard road for Pastor Nicholls, sick and worn-out at 61



Doug Nicholls, for years a father figure for Victoria's aborigines is to retire, sick and worn-out at 61.

He will return to the bush of his childhood. Talking with him yesterday was a saddening experience as he said: "I say to myself I have done nothing. I have accomplished nothing".

Near his feet a three-year-old grandson, Jason Tamiru, played with slot-cars in the modern Aborigines Advancement League hostel in Cunningham Street, Northcote.

"This is my dream," said the co-director of the league, gesturing around the carpeted room. "This is the Gladys Nicholls Hostel.

"Across the other side is the Doug Nicholls Recreation Centre.

"This my dreamplace". Across the unmade road came the crash of cement as flats were built. Pastor Nicholls, father figure to Victoria's Aborigines for many years, explained that he had been taking it easy since a heart attack two years ago.

"I have felt the strain ever since. I am chairman of a National Sporting Foundation set up in Canberra, I've sat on the bench as a JP, I've been Minister of the Church of Christ Aborigines Mission . . ."

His voice died in the gloom . . . Doug Nicholls, was one of five children, the son of full-blooded Aborigines. Although football-mad he was knocked back by Carlton as too small at 5 ft. 2 in., so he drifted away and later got a game with the Northcote Association side, then

Aborigines lose their 'father'

By KEVIN CHILDS

Fitzroy and the State sides.

The talk turned to the militants coming up in the Aboriginal movement. To them he is never an Uncle Tom, but always Uncle Doug—he understands.

"Militancy is part of the change that's coming and nothing can be done about it.

"Government departments are contributing to it because they won't move fast enough . . . there are too many promises.

"Our State takes the lead in Aboriginal advancement, yet it hasn't reached its goal.

"More Commonwealth money is needed for all States."

Some of the younger Aborigines, he said, did not regard him as progressive.

"But in public life I am dealing with men of my age. Young people can't get through to these people."

Pastor Nicholls talked about the shameful conditions of Aborigines in the outback.

"I saw the plight of the unfortunate people at Todd River. I saw them in hospital in Alice Springs, one chap lying

on the floor. I am glad that "The Age" has come to the forefront on this.

"I am happy that Mr. Hunt, the Minister for the Interior, says he will accept the challenge, with his colleagues, to do something practical. There must be a crash programme, even if it means disturbing those who have comfortable positions.

"I am disappointed . . . as a nation we stand condemned. For years we have been crying out about the depressed situation and poverty.

"It's a crisis point when Governments have got to get together . . . if they fail this is the thing that causes young people to become revolutionary."

He turned to the Bible to explain his feelings. "We have built an empire, raised a kingdom, yet we have done nothing. There is so much more to be done.

"I have bellowed from Parliament House and from the ashes of the camp fire. I have represented the State six times at football, dined with the Queen, walked with the highest in the land, yet what have we

accomplished?

"What more can be done? What more can I do? Eventide has come. We have finished our course. We kept faith. Now we press on to the higher calling."