

'We all had a laugh'

Moomba 'just a trick word'

MOOMBA? There is no such word.

It is not an aboriginal word meaning "Let's get together and have fun."

It doesn't mean a thing.

This was clarified yesterday by Lin Onus, 21, of Belgrave.

He is the son of the late aboriginal leader, Bill Onus, who suggested the name to the first festival committee in about 1953.

"Dad and his brother, Uncle Eric, came up with this word as a bit of a joke," Lin said.

"The first syllable, moom, is aboriginal for bottom or backside."

Lin said his father and uncle liked that word because they thought "the guys were sitting on their backsides as far as aboriginal affairs were concerned."

"They added the 'ba' just to make it sound a bit more pleasant.

"Dad told them it meant 'let's get together and have fun.'

"Every time we heard the word we all had a good laugh," he said.

Lin, who is carrying on his father's aboriginal handcraft business, has

been studying aboriginal dialects for years to create one national language.

He said moomba did not exist in any of the 680 dialects.

"Ba means nothing at all, although it may mean 'have a drink' to one or two tribes in WA."

Lin said he only once heard aboriginals using the word. They were in a small group living in squalor in a Victorian country town and used it as an obscenity.

The chairman of the Moomba festival, Mr Rob-

ert Hughes, said last night the board would not consider changing the name.

"We have taught the Melbourne public to translate the word and I think this is how Mr and Mrs Melbourne will continue to look at it," he said.

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