

Aboriginals in mourning

Hundreds of Aboriginals and their friends yesterday turned their backs on the splendor of the Captain Cook ceremonies and went into mourning.

They mourned the near-destruction of their race in the 200 years that have passed since Captain Cook landed on the southern rim of Botany Bay, south of Sydney.

Less than a mile from the official re-enactment of the landing yesterday about 1000 people gathered to watch Aboriginals throw wreaths into Botany Bay as their leaders spoke eloquently of the past and present.

Mrs Kath Walker, the poet, left many women close to tears, during the ceremony at La Perouse, a suburb on the northern fringe of the bay that overlooks the historic landing point.

"Today at the enactment of Captain Cook's landing we who

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are the strangers now come with sorrow in our hearts," she began and ended with this warning from the history of her race: "Our legends tell us that when our race dies, so too dies this land."

Mrs Trudy Longbottom, a descendant of the Illawarra tribe that used to live on the spot where Captain Cook landed, had been invited to join the celebration and to meet the Queen.

She declined, and went instead to the mourning to make a special plea for the land at La Perouse, traditionally the home of many Aboriginals, to be set aside for their future use.

"It was one of my great ambitions to meet the Queen but

this place means a lot to me," the widowed mother-of-nine said.

"I would have loved to have met her and talked to the Princess but as a representative of La Perouse I wanted to help the fight to make this a decent place, one we can be proud of."

In Hobart, black arm-banded students watched as an Aboriginal demonstrated against the Government's refusal to fulfil the last wish of Truganini, the last surviving Tasmanian Aboriginal — to be buried at sea.

In Canberra, Mr K. E. Enderby, the A.L.P. candidate for the A.C.T. by-election, spoke to participants in a 24-hour vigil for Aboriginal land rights outside Parliament House yesterday. He said: "We have a policy of paternalism which is not much different from apartheid."