

'Proud man' in big step

It's a big step from the railway gang at Hamley Bridge to looking after an electorate which stretches from Mount Gambier in the south to Birdsville in the north.

But Alf Agius is keen to do well and "very proud to represent my people."

He will go to Canberra tomorrow to be sworn in as one of SA's four Aboriginal representatives on the newly elected National Aboriginal Consultative Committee.

Aborigines throughout Australia on November 24 elected 41 candidates to represent them on the committee which will advise the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on policy and develop policies of its own.

Mr. Agius, 42, is married with eight children, the eldest of whom is about to join the SA Police Force.

He said yesterday he was not quite sure of the number of his people in the electorate, which is the largest in SA.

But it would be more than 2,000 dotted throughout the north in missions and in Housing Trust houses in the south.

"I will be starting work as soon as I am sworn in," Mr. Agius said.

"I will be travelling around the area speaking to my people, getting their ideas and then putting them to the committee.

"The committee is not going to be the whole answer to the problems of Aborigines, but it will be a part of it."

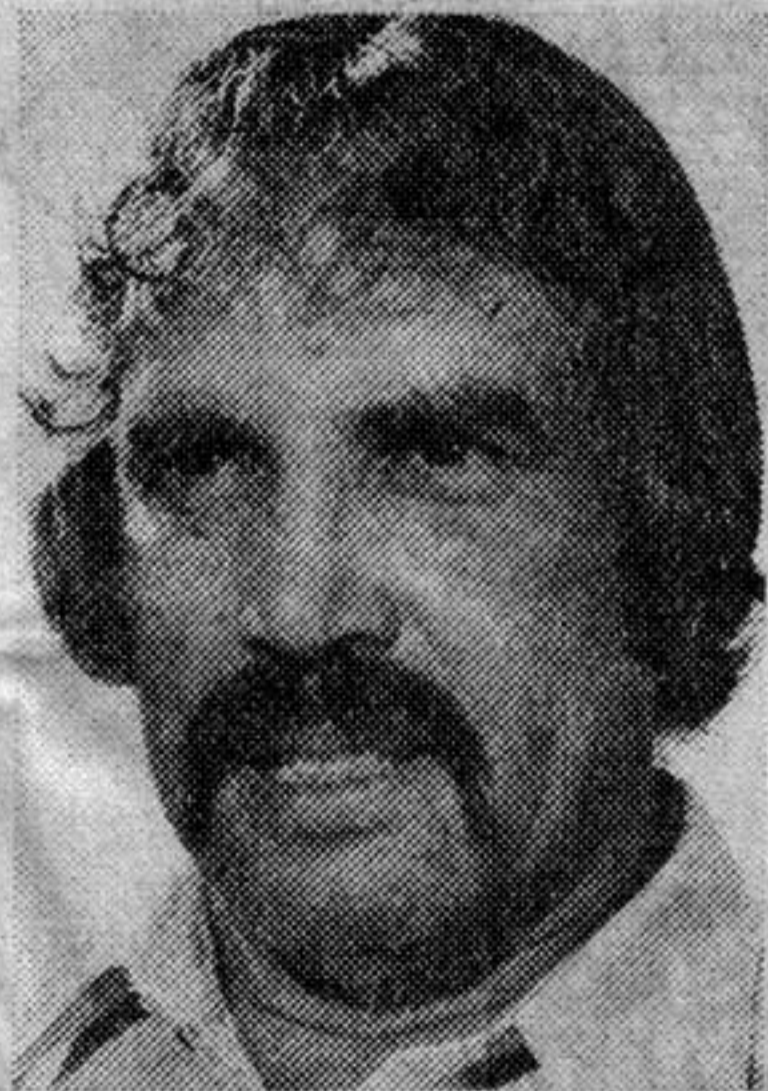
Mr. Agius said he did not understand why so many clear-cut policies on behalf of Australia's 150,000 Aborigines seemed to "bog down in bitter frustration."

"We are still not going to have the right through this committee to say yes or no," he said.

"This is going to be left to the Minister.

"But we have people capable of putting up ideas so he should accept them.

"I am determined to do something for my people."



Mr. Agius . . . "determined to do something."