

Eartha backs Aborigines



Eartha Kitt.

Australia's Aboriginal rights campaigners have found a new champion — American singer-actress Eartha Kitt.

The husky-voiced negress arrived in Melbourne yesterday after spending three days inspecting "terrible" black housing conditions around Perth.

She settled herself on a lounge at Tullamarine and spoke for an hour on the plight of Aborigines, their frustrations and what should be done.

It was an older, more thoughtful and more philosophical Eartha than the alluring pussy-cat of previous visits, the woman Orson Welles once described as "the most exciting in the world."

Clutching a copy of Douglas

By MARK BAKER

Lockwood's *I The Aboriginal*, she spoke of a house in Perth where 15 Aborigines live.

"These are homes that have been condemned. They are very squalid. The conditions are very very bad. It's a shame to see," she said.

"These fringe dwellers are fighting desperately to adjust, to survive.

"They don't know exactly how to cope with the white man's society.

"The whites expect them to walk into productive society without proper help and training.

"I really don't think the white Australians know enough of the Aborigines' problems."

Miss Kitt was taken on a three-day tour around Perth and Fremantle by the chairman of the National Aborigines Consultative Committee (Mr. Eddie Bennett).

She said the Aborigines in need could not be heard: "I suppose that's why they called me.

"The Aborigines, I think, are like little babies. They don't understand the society they are forced to adapt to.

"They don't understand the white law, and their own tribal laws are not recognised."

"I am one of them. A black American."

Miss Kitt said she felt an association with poor Aborigines because she came from a poor family of cotton pickers in the South.