



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

In 2022 *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* transitioned to fully Open Access and this article is available for use under the license conditions below.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS
WESTERN AUSTRALIA JULY 1974

HIS HONOUR JUDGE L.C. FURNESS, Q.C., B.A., B.Ec.,
COMMISSIONER.

The following extracts from the Royal Commission's Report germane to education are reproduced with permission.

SECTION 3 - EDUCATION (p.128)

In broad terms education is available to Aboriginal children in the same way as to non-Aboriginal children. That is to say that in most settled areas there are facilities for pre-school kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and of course, for the whole of Western Australia there are now 2 Universities, a Technical College, and 2 Teachers' Training Colleges. Like all other amenities, however, they are more accessible to Aboriginal pupils in certain areas of the State than in others.

In the area of education as in most other social, economic, industrial and living conditions, difficulties in using the facilities are greater in the Far North and East of the State than, e.g. in the South West. In the Far North, the Kimberleys for example, there are those children who by reason of great distances inter alia are unable to attend the normal courses to be had in the educational institutions except by leaving their homes and entering hostels and like institutions.

Before analysing in any detail the results achieved by the present educational system which is available to Aboriginal children, I propose to set down certain observations which arise in a most compelling manner from the evidence adduced on the subject.

1. For some twenty years now the Department of Education has been charged with the duty of the education of the Aborigines and since 1972 all forms of education are supposed to be equally available to Aborigines as other Australians but without compensatory educational and other influences recognising the severe handicap imposed by the extremely impoverished environment of most Aborigines, the standard educational facilities hitherto applied to such people must, and do result in, failure for all except the exceedingly competent.

2. The number of Aboriginal children who succeed in attaining success in the tertiary field is minimal, indeed throughout the whole of this Commission's inquiry I can recall hearing of only 1, a male student from a private school who qualified for a Teachers' College Scholarship, but gave up that objective before completing any course to join the Public Service. In New South Wales, of course, Charles Perkins enjoys the distinction with the attainment of the Bachelor of Arts degree of being the first Aboriginal Graduate in the Commonwealth.
3. In the secondary field there is not much achievement either. In the State High Schools my inquiries discovered but one matriculant last year and established that of those who attended secondary schools the "drop-out" rate along the line is staggering. The numbers failing to proceed any further was marked in 2nd, 3rd and 4th year

At one country Senior High School, this tendency was most marked : **

4. In the primary sphere it is clear that most, if not all, Aboriginal children begin their courses with an enormous handicap. For reasons later to be observed they begin "bottom of the class" and with few exceptions, there they remain throughout their primary schooling. Promotion to the next class each year depends not on achievement but on age, so that eventually the pupil emerges from the primary school really unsatisfactorily educated at that stage.

There are many reasons for their disadvantages at the commencement and at the risk of over-simplifying the matter it appears that they lie in the following causes:

1. *The Home Environment* - the material needs to help a pupil just do not exist in many Aboriginal "homes". This of course is particularly noticeable on the Reserves and too, in many of the "transitional" homes. A quiet setting with needed furniture is not there.

.....

** See table Page 39.

Enrolments at one country high school:

	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year
1967 European Aboriginal	150 21	150 14	117 8	68 -	22 -
1968 European Aboriginal	153 25	148 17	114 8	40 1	28 -
1969 European Aboriginal	149 15	134 18	131 9	75 -	22 -
1970 European Aboriginal	136 23	131 7	125 6	69 -	39 -
1971 European Aboriginal	136 9	127 13	128 6	78 2	41 -
1972 European Aboriginal	152 20	135 10	105 10	79 -	45 -
1973 European Aboriginal	161 22	136 12	110 7	74 1	56 -

2. *The Attitude of Parents* - There is a noticeable disinterest by some parents and where this attitude is present with the mother it militates fiercely against the child's educational advancement.
3. *At the School* - Communication with teachers and fellow pupils is difficult, which causes an already submissive disposition to retire into complete inactivity. Absenteeism, control problems, lack of interest, lack of ability, need for special remedial treatment are all apparent. Children in such circumstances suffer great distress and school attendance becomes sheer anathema to them.

Suffering this distress, it is not long before they show in their attitude a complete lack of interest, control problems arise, absenteeism becomes more prevalent and, in short, their education comes almost to a standstill. Competing with more fortunate and better adjusted children, where teachers and curriculum are in a completely foreign idiom previously known to them, they become dejected and hopeless, achieve little or no success and are then soon being recommended for special remedial treatment if it is available.

- (A) "Children of Aboriginal descent have been, in the immediate past, educationally disadvantaged. Because of their special position within the wider Australian society, they have experienced or are experiencing difficulties of varying degree in coping with ordinary educational programmes designed primarily for Australians in general.....Techniques have to be bent to cope with conditions which concern such things as low socio-economic status, limited study opportunities, upset homelife, negative incentives, diffused employment expectations and a general lack of educational motivations.

Ways of approaching this differ radically between the metropolitan, near-country and South-western divisions, south-eastern, central and northern areas of this State. For instance, traditional Aboriginal elements vary considerably and in some areas they are virtually absent."

.....

- (A) *Prof. R. M. Berndt, Anthropological Perspective of Aboriginal Education Page 1.*

.....
.....

CONCLUSION (p.209)

The abiding picture one retains after a survey of the educational system in its application to Aborigines in this State is one of partial success.

Comparison with the situation existing a quarter of a century ago reveals quite a remarkable transformation.

The Bateman Report of 1948 disclosed an enormous area of unsatisfactoriness in the field of education. As has been shown earlier in this Report the main matters for dissatisfaction are:

1. the early departure from school education of great numbers, and
2. the preponderance of Aboriginal children "low in the class" from commencement to completion of their courses.

These major matters have been shown to be attributable to many and varied causes, some of which are :

1. Poor communication, due to imperfect preparation for the schooling ahead, and emphasises the need for more pre-school and kindergarten preparation.
2. Parental disinterest. In this regard one must bear in mind that until 1952 attendance at school by Aborigines was in most parts of the State not compulsory, although it was always available to them if they so desired. The result must be that a great number of the children now in the schools and particularly those in the senior classes are the offspring of parents who themselves had little or no education and this could account for some of the indifference of the parents to the education of their children. Being unfamiliar with procedures can frequently destroy enthusiasm for them.
3. Irregular attendance. Many understandable reasons were advanced for this, and of course, truancy is no new phenomenon amongst children of all races. It appeared that there was room for greater involvement in checking this evil by truant officers.

4. Lack of home facilities, or comforts, to assist and encourage the child in the educational process.

I have already expressed the view and feel justified in repeating it, that increased efforts must be exerted to ensure a fuller and more active programme of pre-school and kindergarten teaching.

Various novel schemes are suggested, all of which have received or are receiving trials in known places e.g. Bilingual Education and the Van Leer System.

Institutions for education have been examined : The School, the Hostel, the Mission School. Need for Parent involvement is advocated.

But perhaps behind it all one is driven back to the inevitable postulate that education is only one of the parts of a conglomerate whole in the lives of people; health, housing, economic and social welfare being others; which must all improve together to give really noticeable marks of advancement.

In conclusion, it seems to me that an optimistic appraisal is deserved particularly in view of the obvious keen regard for the task of educational administrators at all levels in the educational system, the avowed interests of Governments in the welfare of Aborigines and the financial assistance with its bountiful increases to aid educational programmes."

.....
.....

SECTION 16 - CRITICISMS (p.445)

.....
.....
Education

"To obtain the fullest value from the schemes already outlined in this Report and readily available to the Aborigine, one is driven to the same conclusion as is dwelt upon in the last two sub-headings. The onus rests upon the individual to lend co-operation to those instituting the plans so that they may be fully implemented. In this regard, the helpful and co-operative assistance of parents to encourage and help their children grasp the opportunities is essential. Much of the unsatisfactory results of the education process with Aboriginal children is due to a large extent to a less than desirable attitude on the part of the parents.

Many examples could be quoted of young children of Kindergarten standing being picked up and transported in the care of those conducting the Kindergarten establishment to school and home again, and if the assistance was not given the child would not attend.

It is not without significance too that children who have gone through the education system into their teens and have had some educational success are practically always from missions, hostels and boarding schools, rarely from the home be it on the reserve or in the town house.

Much of the unreadiness to assist individual effort is undoubtedly directly due to conditions in the past which caused attitudes of depression and hopelessness and it is not remarkable that with the arrival of encouragement for self-determination people are found to be wanting in the very qualities that will attend its acceptance and advancement.

However, despite the noisy assertions to the contrary of many Aboriginal agitators, there does exist a statutory framework and administrative design, coupled with an enormous amount of smaller undertakings some public and some private to uplift the Aborigine and assist him to become an active and recognised part of the one Australian community.

The following is a list of these undertakings, which clearly show, the interested concern there is to arouse in the Aboriginal people that dignity and grace which alone can come from accepting and performing self-determination. (See Appendix L.)

APPENDIX L. - ABORIGINAL ENTERPRISES AND PROJECTS

Mugarinya Group Pty. Ltd., Yandeyarra Reserve

Jigalong Community, Jigalong Reserve

Noualla Community Centre,

also

Own & Manage a Petrol Bowser, Onslow

The Ieramugadu Gardening Service, Roebourne

Balgo Hills Mission Housing Project, Balgo Hills

Karjunna Group Market gardening and Pig Raising, Fitzroy Crossing

Mowanjurn Mission & Pantigin, Derby

Oombulgarri, Forrest River, Wyndham

Wongatha, Wonganara Landscaping, Laverton

.....
.....
SECTION 18 - RECOMMENDATIONS (p.457)

Education

1. Kindergarten and pre-Kindergarten schools to be set up in all areas.
2. Van Leer method of family involvement be adopted wherever possible.
3. Where the Van Leer system is unavailable, there should be pre-school training for mothers.
4. Bi-lingual education be undertaken where appropriate.
5. More definite teaching of known Aboriginal languages for persons not only to take part in bi-lingual education, but also to have a pool of interpreters e.g. Waltmajari, Pitjantjara, Wongi, Googidja etc.
6. There be established an Institute of Aboriginal Studies (similar to the Institute of American Studies established in 1960) to encourage Aboriginal students to shake free from their feelings of inferiority through an acceptance of their own cultural background. The curriculum to include study of tribal languages, Aboriginal culture, philosophy, art forms, music and history.
7. A comprehensive study of the history of the Aboriginal people derived from anthropological and archaeological discoveries and opinions, historical records from first known contact with other people up to the present time. It is recommended that this should become as complete a school study as e.g. English History, Australian History or Ancient History, and available at all levels of education.
8. Educational buildings and programmes should be made immediately available for 3 particular groups of Aborigines at Strelley Station, Yandeyarra Station and One Arm Point.
9. Government create new Division - Early Childhood Services, as in N.S.W. From this Division Governmental advisers be appointed in several regions to complement community based organisations.

10. Where there are relatively large groups of Aboriginal school children in remote areas, appointment of teachers to these places should carry attractive incentives to the teachers to remain in those positions for as long as three years at least.
11. Long range programmes with a formulation of explicit language policies should be undertaken into the learning of some languages of wide usage among Aborigines.

Appendix H of the Royal Commission Report is also reproduced because it is relevant to the total Australian scene.

APPENDIX H. - AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY POLICY AND EARLY DECISIONS (p.489) OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

At its 29th Conference, held in Launceston in June 1971, the Australian Labor Party adopted the following platform in relation to Aborigines:

1. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs be upgraded to Ministerial level and the Commonwealth assume the ultimate responsibility for Aborigines and Islanders accorded it by the referendum of 1967. Labor will evolve ways to regularly consult representatives of Aboriginal and Island people as to their wishes when policies are being developed and legislation prepared.
2. Aborigines to have equal rights and opportunities with all other Australians, and every form of discrimination against Aborigines to be ended.
3. Aborigines to receive the standard rate of wages for the job and to receive the same industrial protection as other Australians. Special provision for employment to be provided in regions where they reside.
4. Provide educational opportunities in no way inferior to those of the general community, with *special programs at all levels where necessary to overcome cultural deprivation and meet special needs*. Pre-school education to be provided for every Aboriginal child including teaching indigenous languages where desirable. Adult education to be provided as broadly as possible.

5. Labor will give priority to a vigorous housing scheme in order to properly house all Aboriginal families within a period of 10 years. In compensation for the loss of traditional lands, funds will be made available to assist Aborigines who wish to purchase their own homes. The personal wishes of Aborigines as to design and location will be taken into account.
 6. A health offensive to be launched to eliminate leprosy, hook-worm, tuberculosis, and contagious diseases and to reduce infant mortality. Efficient mortality statistics to be maintained to measure the effectiveness of these policies among Aborigines.
 7. Aborigines shall have the right to receive social services in the same way as all other Australians.
 8. All Aboriginal lands to be vested in a public trust or trusts composed of Aborigines or Islanders as appropriate. That exclusive corporate land rights be granted to Aboriginal communities which retain a strong tribal structure or demonstrate a potential for corporate action in regard to land at present reserved for the use of Aborigines, or where traditional occupancy according to tribal custom can be established from anthropological or other evidence. No Aboriginal lands shall be alienated except with the approval both of the trust and of Parliament. Aboriginal land rights shall carry with them full rights to minerals in those lands. The sacred sites of the Aborigines will be mapped and protected.
 9. Australia to ratify International Labor Organisation Conventions No. 107 (The Indigenous and Tribal Population Convention 1957) and No. 111 (The Discrimination, Employment and Occupation Convention 1958) and these Conventions apply to all indigenous peoples under Australian authority.
 10. A Parliamentary Committee to be established to study all aspects of policy and report to Parliament regularly and continuously.
 11. Every Australian child shall be taught the history and culture of Aboriginal and Island Australians as an integral part of the history of Australia.
 12. That trained Social Workers be provided in every area where housing of Aborigines has been undertaken.
2. The Conference also decided that a Federal Labor Government would provide special representation for Aboriginal members in the Legislative Council of the Northern Territory. Its legal and

constitutional committee was asked to investigate whether Aboriginal representation could be provided in State and Federal parliaments, the result of such investigation to be considered by the next Federal Conference.

3. After a meeting with Aboriginal demonstrators at the "Aboriginal Embassy" on 9 February, 1972, Mr. Whitlam pledged a Labor Government to the following actions:

- (a) It would reverse the Government's rejection of 'communal ownership for traditional purposes' and instead establish community ownership of land in the Northern Territory by identifiable communities or tribes by way of freehold title.
- (b) It was committed to the establishment of a fully elected legislative assembly in the Northern Territory, but would ensure that the assembly would exercise plenary powers in any field only if it were clear that the assembly was not likely to operate in that area in a discriminatory manner. It would retain power in the Federal Parliament to ensure that the legislative assembly 'abided by these guarantees.'
- (c) It would not hesitate through Federal Parliament to overrule any State laws which discriminated against Aborigines, or which supervised Aborigines, or which reduced the opportunities for Aborigines to conduct themselves as they wished. Queensland was the only State at this stage where this really applied.
- (d) It would make provision for any Aboriginal to have at public expense legal representation of his own choosing in the courts, after the style of the Ex-Servicemen's legal Aid Service.

4. In his election policy speech, Mr. Whitlam said :
We shall legislate to give Aboriginal land rights - not just because their case is beyond argument, but because all of us as Australians are diminished while the Aborigines are denied their rightful place in this nation.

Later he said:

There will be a separate Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs; it will have officers in each State to give the Commonwealth a genuine presence in the States. Specifically, we will :

- legislate to establish for land in Commonwealth territories which is reserved for Aboriginal use and benefit, a system of

Aboriginal tenure based on the traditional rights of clans and other tribal groups and, under this legislation, vest such land in Aboriginal communities;

- invite the Governments of Western Australia and South Australia to join with the Commonwealth in establishing a Central Australian Aboriginal Reserve (Including Ayers Rock and Mount Olga) under the control of Aboriginal trustees;

- establish an Aboriginal Land Fund to purchase or acquire land for significant continuing Aboriginal communities and to appropriate \$5 million per year to this fund for the next ten years;

- Legislate to prohibit discrimination on grounds of race, ratify all the relevant United Nations and I.L.O. Conventions for this purpose, and set up conciliation procedures to promote understanding and co-operation between Aboriginal and other Australians; and

- legislate to enable Aboriginal communities to be incorporated for their own social and economic purposes.

EARLY DECISIONS

5. In the first weeks following the election of the Labor Government several major decisions were made.

6. A Department of Aboriginal Affairs, incorporating the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, was established and the Hon. Gordon H. Bryant was appointed Minister. The Council for Aboriginal Affairs was retained to give additional advice to the Minister.

7. The new Minister announced plans to convene within a few weeks a consultative group of Aborigines from all parts of Australia to advise on Aboriginal problems.

8. The granting of land leases and of mineral exploration licences and leases within Aboriginal reserves in the Northern Territory was halted.

9. Mr. Justice Woodward, who represented the Yirrkala Aborigines in the Gove land claim case, was appointed as sole Commissioner to inquire into make recommendations to the Government on means of giving effect to its decision to recognise Aboriginal land rights in reserves in the Northern Territory and of meeting the land needs of Aborigines outside the reserves, and on 'such other matters' concerning Aboriginal

rights to or use of land as the Minister might refer to him.

10. It was announced that Aboriginal languages would be used in teaching children in Aboriginal communities. English will be taught as a second language, and traditional Aboriginal arts, crafts and skills will be taught also, mainly by Aboriginals themselves.
11. An additional \$12.11 million has been allocated for Aboriginal programs. This includes \$7.5 million for programs through the States additional to the \$14.5 million previously allocated for 1972/73; \$1.26 million for the immediate extension of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme to include all Aboriginal children at secondary level (previously grants were available only to children in the year they reached the statutory school leaving age, usually 15); and \$850,000, for the first six months' operation of a scheme to meet all legal costs of Aborigines before the courts.
12. When the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs visited the Aboriginal group at Wattie Creek in the Northern Territory in January, 1973, he informed them that the Government would see that the land rights of the Gurindji were recognised. He stated that he would be negotiating for the surrender of land for a cattle raising enterprise from the Wave Hill pastoral lease, additional to the 35 square miles surrendered in 1972.

Those involved in the education of children are aware of the significance for education of all aspects of the children's environment. Accordingly, the Royal Commission's recommendations relating to health, housing, social welfare, economic needs and group and cultural needs, are reproduced.

Health (p.457)

1. Recruitment and appointment of additional health sisters.
2. Properly qualified field nurses be allowed to administer immunisation treatment with the authorization of one parent only and without the need of a Doctor's authority.
3. Increased motor vehicles for field work be provided to the Health Services.

4. For the underprivileged and incapable, free medical services, i.e. they be issued with a medical entitlement card, as are Pensioners.
5. Medical and Hospital Benefits systems, particularly in regard to claims, should be greatly simplified.
6. Aboriginal Aides, male and female, should be appointed to Hospitals for general duties, but particularly to assist Aborigines in their approaches to hospital and other health agencies.

Housing (458)

1. Improvement in reserve houses of tribally oriented groups choosing to remain and retain their culture.
2. Construction of the Howroyd type of houses first at Laverton, and later in areas where the traditional identity remains.
3. Continuance of present policy of State Housing Commission with a strong recommendation for more funds to implement it.
4. There should be increased communication between officers at senior Administrative level so that harmony may be achieved to enable advancement of the State's housing programme on satisfactory lines. Before annual submissions are made for allocations from the Federal Budget meetings should be held between State Heads of Departments concerned with Aboriginal Welfare in Western Australia and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Quarterly progress reviews should be held also.
5. With regard to the building of self-contained Villages for remote Tribal communities, training programmes to fit Aborigines to take over technical management of the village when the Commission withdraws from the site on completion of building should be undertaken.

Educational programmes of basic mechanical, electrical and plumbing skills are envisaged - together with a course of elementary book keeping and accounts. These courses could be run in conjunction with the Departments of Education and Community Welfare, and held at such places as the Aboriginal Training Centre, Port Hedland.

6. Where communities are having housing needs specially dealt with, greater emphasis should be placed on increasing effectiveness of economic enterprises by the adoption of plans and

policies of increased working efficiency.

7. Female Homemakers have proved such a success, that it seems feasible and desirable to recommend the appointment of male Homemakers. The conditions and times of employment could be quite elastic to suit the applicants, and the matters they would be expected to deal with would be those 'property chores and tasks normally falling to the lot of the Father of the House'. Without excluding many other tasks which one could call to mind one immediately thinks of : Improvement of surroundings; gardens, tree planting, fence repairing, lawn making and mowing, whilst within and around the house the various minor tradesman's repairs, as replacing screws on fallen doors, painting, fuse wire replacement, furniture repair and the like.
8. It would appear in many instances more rooms to a dwelling are desirable for larger Aboriginal families. After all, families of 6, 8, 10 children must find difficulties in a small 2 and 3 bed-roomed house. Aboriginal families with a good record as tenants should be given assistance in the procuring of furniture, furnishings and such necessary household tools as rakes, spades, lawn mowers, hammers, saws, screw-drivers, and the like.
9. Employment of Aborigines on as many building projects as possible.

Social Welfare (p.460)

1. Recruitment of more out-door personnel in the Department of Community Welfare. The need for Aborigines to be approached by the Officer would thus reverse the present need of approach being made by the less resourceful Aborigine. For this purpose, direct grants from the Federal Government to the States, as is done for the employment of social workers to work among migrant families.
2. Television, Radio and Cinema Programmes should be given a larger area containing Aboriginal content, designed to show appreciation for the cultural heritage and innate good qualities of the Race.
3. Professional Research Staff to investigate methods of coping with social problems and to investigate appropriate areas of social retraining should be attached to State instrumentalities concerned with Aborigines.

4. As the State Welfare Department already performs many Australian Government functions on an informal basis, that Government should provide administrative expenses to the State and so assist the State to provide adequate staff to perform these duties in a manner which meets professionally required standards. By assisting the State Government to perform these functions, the Australian Government will thus be avoiding duplication of services with all its associated problems; for example, it would not be necessary to expand the Australian Department of Labour and Department of Social Service as the State with its existing structure could more logically expand into these areas.
5. As there now exists a Legal Service for Aborigines, the operation of which is described in this Report, its existence and operation should be given the fullest publicity particularly amongst Aboriginal groups.
6. The informal and unofficial Aboriginal 'policemen' known to operate in parts of the Kimberley is a plan that should be extended to all parts of the State. Their functions can be determined along the lines of those existing e.g. at Halls Creek. The hours of service and remuneration should be less than those of the ordinary police, and they can be accorded official recognition.
7. As for recommendations in respect of 'Drinking', it would seem that two ideas are worthy of a trial - The Half-Way House, and Dr. Gerald Milner's Plan, in Victoria.
8. Any authority formed to take over the management of such a scheme as that of Dr. Gerald Milner, Victoria, should observe the following precepts :
 - a. Liaise with, foster and co-ordinate with existing facilities e.g. The Byford Centre, Salvation Army etc.
 - b. Strive towards early intervention.
 - c. Encourage and advise church and voluntary bodies which are prepared to be involved.
 - d. Promote research.
 - e. Appraise and use new methods of treatment and refine assessment techniques.
 - f. Embark in close consultation with existing bodies on long term educational procedures.

Economic Needs (p.461)

1. Extension of opportunities for employment with mining companies of as many Aborigines as possible. Where training is necessary, this should be an incident of employment.
2. Vocational training of Aboriginal youths, such as those displaced on Stations and farms in : Truck driving, maintenance and handling of mechanical gear and machines; building construction and repair work, fencing, market gardening, pig raising etc.
3. Subsequent work records of all Aboriginal persons to be filed and kept, especially those of apprentices.
4. Special Works Project Scheme which is administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, from the Aboriginal Advancement Trust Account Fund, would be of greater value if it provided for a greater length of time for the projects it assists.
5. House-homes for Aborigine working girls after the style of N.E.A.F. House, referred to by Mr.Carson, should be established in numbers in the City of Perth and larger towns. Similar homes with housekeeper could also be set up for teenage youths.
6. Where there is Industrial expansion and where there are Aborigines available for the work force, Companies engaged in industrial enterprises should be required to train and employ a reasonable number.
7. Government Departments, especially those concerned with public utilities, should be required to train Aborigines as a certain proportion of their work force.
8. Employment training institutions should be set up in both city and country areas to train Aborigines in skilled and semi-skilled occupations to service expanding industrial growth.

Group Cultural Needs (p.464)

1. Increased financial assistance for advancement of the activities of the Aboriginal Theatre Foundation.
2. Increased financial assistance for the Aboriginal Arts Centre, Wellington Street, Perth. Enlargement of the premises is

recommended. Internal reconstruction of the premises for more effective and fuller display in galleries of artistic work, artifacts etc.

3. Encouragement by financial assistance of Elizabeth Durack for the compilation of a work of Aboriginal Art Studies with accompanying narratives.
4. Aboriginal stories, songs, myths to be given a greater share in the Radio and Television shows and performances.

SECTION 19 - CONCLUSIONS (p.466)

It had become apparent to me that certain distinctive peculiarities were present to me as a Commissioner which were not always present to Royal Commissions in this State enquiring into the subject matter of the Aboriginal Race.

Firstly, the terms of reference were so wide as to encompass a much larger area of enquiry than had been the case in earlier Commissions.

Secondly, there had been in the meantime, marked changes in attitudes to members of the Aboriginal Race as has been evidenced by legislative and administrative changes and the attitude of the Australian Government and many citizens towards them.

Thirdly, earlier inquiries on this subject matter were generally faced with existing legislation that in many instances deservedly was receiving sharp criticisms.

It was a matter then of natural sequence to make recommendations in some instances for the repeal of parts and, in other instances for the repeal of the whole of the offending legislation.

When this Commission was set up in July, 1973, the state of the legislation was such that all the old legislation affecting Aborigines exclusively had been repealed only 12 months previously and the only legislation exclusively relating to Aborigines was in two Acts of Parliament; the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act and the Heritage Act. It was the policy of the Government that all other legislation applicable to the Australian community was equally applicable to the Aboriginal people in this State.

As has previously been explained, Departments of Administration had been set up to implement the provisions of the new Acts. At this

time reorganisation brought about by those activities had been in existence barely two years and therefore the shortcomings would need to be blatantly obvious or alternatively, a Commissioner would require inordinate boldness readily to recommend any large changes. Indeed, for reasons in addition to those two, I would feel utterly disinclined to venture upon a campaign either against the legislation or the methods of its implementation.

Throughout the whole State, it has been made perfectly clear to me that the Leaders of all Departments concerned with the running of those Departments and all the officers engaged by them, are for the most part very dedicated to the proper carrying out of the provisions of the legislation.

Despite my encouraging expressions herein, of course there are matters which can still call for some attention but not in any way on a wide scale or to a very serious degree. Many of the recommendations which will be made have been advanced by witnesses themselves who have the knowledge of shortcomings in a practical adaptation of the provisions of the legislation to the particular circumstances.

I feel more convinced than ever that the most desirable policy to be adopted towards the Aborigines in Western Australia is one that seeks on the one hand to preserve as much as possible of the tribal Aboriginal identity side by side with assisting the integration into our way of life of the remainder. Whichever path is to be followed by any Aborigine must be the subject of the individual's own choice. Broadly, this means that where now there remains most of the real Aboriginal identity and culture that is to be fostered and assisted, the emphasis at all times must be upon Aboriginal direction and little white interference. This latter indeed one would hope, would be in the way of welfare assistance only, i.e. finance, health, housing, education and general welfare. I apprehend that areas most likely to be suitable are the Kimberley, Balgo Hills, Cundeelee, Warburton Range, Wiluna, and sections of the Pilbara.

It seems certain that if present trends are allowed to continue uninterrupted there will inevitably result a complete loss of the Aboriginal identity, and all that means e.g. loss of culture, story, legends and tribal beliefs, practices and languages. It is plain that a great many of Aboriginal descent have already suffered this loss as they pass through the intermediate unsettled state towards full integration with the white population. Indeed, it appears that there are only isolated groups, mainly north of the 20th Parallel and in the

Eastern areas who may be held to be composed of those Aborigines who may still, before it is too late, be treated in such a way as to preserve the identity. Such a theory requires a maximum of contact among themselves and a minimum of interference by outside white authorities.

To be certain that the individuals own will and choice shall predominate, I would suggest that the following questions should be asked of those wishing to retain as much as possible of this traditional existence.

1. Are they prepared to do all in their power to preserve their identity?
2. Will they remain on the spot, using land having traditional, sacred values to them?
3. Will they co-operate in the tribal practices and rituals of their forefathers and inculcate them into the young?
4. Bearing in mind they are still a section of the wider Australian community, will they adhere to the laws of the land?
5. In order to have some economic independence, are they prepared to co-operate in such a venture as may be made available for them e.g. Pastoralism, fishing, etc, under the guidance and direction of white controllers until able to control it themselves?

I would expect that when selected, these groups would each be composed of aged men and women, husbands and wives, unmarried adults and teenagers and children. Their places of living would be the town reserves, station and mission settlements. These areas are not exclusive and anyone living in town houses expressing a willingness to become a member of a group could be included.

There is no reason why these people should not enjoy all the benefits which are given to other Aborigines in the community e.g. Unemployment Relief, Commonwealth Finance and all the assistance flowing from other channels of support.

For some of this class I have shown a support for retention of the Town Reserve, which has waned enormously in popularity amongst those concerned with Aboriginal housing.

I would in no way lessen the very extensive measures being

taken to bring the Aborigines into the housing already dealt with. But I am satisfied that some of these people, unique as they are, have a real fondness for and devotion to that earth over which their forefathers roamed and whose spirits still remain there. After all the full-blood simply wants a windbreak, especially in the hot weather, and a bark hut of some sort in the rain. And he does not want floors, whether of wood or cement. Unfortunately because we have interfered with his nomadic life and brought him into a sedentary one we have created problems particularly of hygiene and diet. These should now be particularly attended to and herein lies a task for the Homemakers and the Public Health Sisters.

It has been our reformers' idea that they should be got off the ground and from our point of view there is sense in this, but for the real Aborigines this makes no sense. The earth, dust and all, is their country - it is their mother who gives them all they want and need. After all, they like to lie on the ground with nothing between their skin and the earth and normally with only the sky above. Bearing these facts in mind, there is a point in maintaining the existing small houses on the reserves. Admittedly, more tidiness might be directed and also a little more comfort. Vide Mt. Magnet Reserve, five houses surrounding an ablution block and improved by the efforts of the dedicated Community Welfare Officer.

Already there have been discussed matters that would be effected by such a policy. On the subject of housing I have already envisaged the possibility of a retention in parts of reserve housing, uplifted by suggested improvements, but also if it meets with the satisfaction of the people these could in due course be replaced by the type of housing planned by Mr. Howroyd and discussed earlier, or any other type of housing deemed by them to be suitable.

Of course any policy that prescribes different treatment for different sections of the race will meet with much criticism. Terms such as separatism, racism, apartheid, and the like will be the catch words for criticisms and verbal assaults but such words are as inappropriate as they are destructive of the design which has as its primary objective the preservation of an identity sufficiently recognisable in some groups but which will drift into the limbo and be lost if efforts are not made immediately for its retention.

It is trite to say that any way of living can only hope to be preserved if there are present and fully able to function the three principal requisites : The People, The Place and the Opportunity.

I have chosen that section of the Aboriginal people who are known still to retain a good deal of the knowledge handed down by their forefathers of the great mass of information about their culture. They are sufficiently contained in groups in particular places to render it possible to carry out the practices and performances required, and with the present day atmosphere of sympathetic approval and practical assistance by Governments and many private citizens, it would seem the opportunity is as great as it ever could be. One is aware that the setting is a far cry from the bush conditions existing for their nomadic ancestors, but there are no better conditions for the implementation of such a policy in this state than in the areas chosen. Close attention could be given to the members of these communities by all those concerned with Aboriginal Arts, Music, Song, Literature, Language, Theatre etc. Indeed, all sections concerned with Aboriginal Welfare would be expected to continue their helpful support, to this theme of preservation.

As to the remainder of the people, who are found in the cities, in the towns and as part of the mixed populations in many areas of the State, the continuance of all existing endeavours towards their integration is strongly approved and recommended.

A learned writer on this topic of integration has said: 'There are four major goals that Australian Society could have for Aborigines. These are laissez-faire, apartheid, assimilation and integration.' *Aboriginal Advancement to Integration, H.P. Schapper, p.55.*

The first two goals are rejected spontaneously, but as to the last two, he goes on to say: 'Assimilation was clearly enunciated as official policy by Commonwealth and State Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs, in 1961, and re-affirmed in 1963. But the aims and schemes generally followed are those of integration.' *Ibid. p.56.*

'There is nothing in the requirements for integration of Aborigines that is not tacitly prescribed by Australian Society for all its members. *Ibid. p.57.*

'A basic requirement of Australian Society is that each person with the potential achieve a role that enables him to become an adequately self-sustaining and independent individual. This requirement is inherent in the pattern of mutual rights and responsibilities between society and the individual. In order to achieve independent status, the individual requires fulfilment of the socio-economic needs of freedom from want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness, for which

'he requires income, health, education, a house and employment. Not only does the individual require them, society now has undertaken the responsibility to ensure that he gets them. It is the individual's right to have them, his responsibility to contribute appropriately for each, labour for income, rent for a house, and it is society's right to expect him so to contribute.

For Aborigines to be integrated with an Australian community, the requirement is that they learn to cope as independent self-sustaining persons and families. For most Aborigines this requires that they leave their present sub-cultures of extreme, dependent poverty, or that these sub-cultures be transformed into socio-economic situations that are similar to typical communities in Australian Society. Aborigines will need to become more like us in many more respects than they are now.' *Ibid.* p.58.

Appreciation of it as an aspiration was given by no less a speaker than the late Martin Luther King Jr. to the American Psychological Association Washington D.C., September 1967, when he said 'And I assert at this time that once again we must reaffirm our belief in building a democratic society in which blacks and whites can live together as brothers where we will come to see that integration is not a problem but an opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity.' That could well be the abiding message of hopefulness for our Society.

Certain conclusions of varying importance forced themselves upon me and I feel that they should be borne in mind in any consideration of the Report I am making.

1. The Aboriginal people themselves should be fully consulted about all steps proposed to be taken. In this State that is readily and easily achieved with the policies adopted in the formation of consultative Councils and Committees.
2. Aboriginal involvement in the process of decision making must be a reality. And the Aborigines involved must be those who will be affected by the decision.
3. It is important that Aboriginal communities should have as much autonomy as possible in running their own affairs. They should receive without having to account for them except by way of audit, the necessary funds to cover all administration and other normal recurrent expenditures.

Only major decisions involving the expenditure of public monies should have to be approved by outside Authority.

4. Aborigines should be free to follow their own traditional methods of decision making.
5. Aborigines should be free to choose their own manner of living. This involves a freedom to change transitional ways as well as a freedom to retain them.
6. Aborigines will find that these aspects can best be achieved by a concentration on the development of local and regional organizations and arrangements.

Those views are expressed substantially in the same language in the Report on Land Rights of Mr. Justice Woodward released this month, and with respect I entirely agree with them. They arose out of the inquiry into the land rights question in the Northern Territory. They express sentiments and opinions which have received recognition in Western Australia for some time now and indeed are basically the foundation for much of the direction to be found in the legislation of 1972, already referred to. The carrying out of the views is perfectly obvious in such institutions as the Consultative Committees formed in each region, the Aboriginal Advisory Council and the Aboriginal Lands Trust.

Might I say that conducting this Royal Commission has been for me a great challenge. I have found the subjects inquired into on a par with the people themselves, always diversified, scattered, variable, contradictory and puzzling. I have experienced joy and displeasure, happiness and sadness, encouragement and opposition, hopeful delight and abysmal exasperation, but in spite of all interest never waned.

I have now completed the exercise and I will shortly put my signature to this Report, a final act in an overall interesting experience.

The comprehensive and final picture of people of Aboriginal descent in Western Australia that I will take away with me is one again of mixed ingredients; for the most part I feel a great sympathy for many of the less fortunate and tolerant members, an admiration for the noble bearing and patient tolerance particularly of tribal elders, and an abiding disappointment in many who show capacity to achieve better results in living but an unreadiness to marshal all their human gifts and resources in playing a full and complete role

in a society that is ready and prepared for their advancement and absorption.

I regret profoundly the sometimes uncharitable and ungrateful outbursts of those members of the Community who adopt abrasive and sometimes inaccurate terms to criticise the activities of the larger European group without any expressed observation and acceptance of the many and varied efforts made to improve their lot.

Withal, however, my hope and expectation is that self-determination and all that that brings with it will be achieved by the Aboriginal people in the not too distant future.

It would not be proper to conclude this report without grateful reference to the many helpful acts of assistance given to me and those accompanying me in the exercise of the Commission's powers. All Governmental Departments without obtruding unnecessarily into the conduct of the affairs of the Commission, were very willing to extend able and valuable aid. This thanks goes to all of those in the various Departments of Government and in many instances private citizens activated by a generous wish to assist and not least of all, to some very magnificent Aboriginal Elders and other members of the Aboriginal race who I have always found ready and willing to answer enquiries and to assist my investigation.

I extend my sincere thanks to all members of the Staff who have had much to do in assembling the evidentiary material for record purposes and both learned Counsel, Mr. J. Thomson and Mr. T. Cranley for their consistent helpfulness.

Such thanks also I give to that numerous band of unnamed helpers who made our travels easier and assisted in comfortable accommodation.

Finally, my very sincere thanks must go to the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. K. T. Johnson, whose many and manifold duties were always performed with care, skill, and abiding patience. Without his very great knowledge of the Aborigines in Western Australia, who seemed always ready to welcome him, my task would have been enormously increased.

In short, to all concerned, may I say 'Thank You.'

I have the honour to be, Sir, Your Excellency's most
obedient servant.

-sgd- L. C. Furnell - COMMISSIONER