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EDUCATION FOR ABORIGINES

REPORT TO THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION BY THE ABORIGINAL CONSULTATIVE GROUP - JUNE 1975

In the August issue we presented the terms of reference of the Aboriginal Consultative Group's Report, their vision of education, and the basic assumptions upon which they operated. In this issue we present the recommendations and thinking with respect to the four areas of need in the education of Aboriginal people as recognized by the Consultative Group.

3. ADMINISTRATORS AND DECISION MAKERS - Involvement, appointment and training of Aborigines to high level administrative and decision-making positions which affect the education of Aboriginal children.

3.1 The establishment of the National Aboriginal Education Commission.

All Australian Government expenditure on the education of Aborigines is administered by the Australian Department of Education, except for "Grants to States" and "Grants to Voluntary Organizations". These grants are administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and are perhaps the most influential in changing policy directions.

We understand that Department of Aboriginal Affairs policy is to devolve responsibility for this area of funding to other specialist Departments and Commissions. While we accept that this procedure may be administratively efficient, we are not convinced that it will allow for the sort of realistic involvement in education by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, which in our view is necessary if education is to properly serve our needs.

Deep concern is felt over the lack of active involvement by Aboriginal people in programs being undertaken on their behalf. At present we know of only two people of Aboriginal descent in Government departments who are in a position to influence decisions regarding the use of these funds. These people are not at a level of decision-making to offer anything more than advice and recommendations.

We believe that only Aborigines can accurately communicate the needs and aspirations of their people to government and other authorities. Government policies should support a system which involves the use of Aboriginal people supported by non Aborigines rather than the reverse. We feel that a policy should be established by governments whereby decisions regarding the spending of moneys in the education of Aboriginal people should be made by bodies with a majority of Aboriginal people.

We also believe that having even a few Aborigines concentrated in the highest level of administration and decision making would have a morale-boosting effect and draw larger numbers of Aborigines into professional and middle levels of employment.

We realize, however, that the number of Aborigines with expertise in educational administration is at present very small, and that there is a larger pool of potential educational administrators who have not yet had the necessary experience. We have made other recommendations in this report, which within a maximum period of two or three years will make it possible for all the necessary Aboriginal expertise to be available. In the interim period we believe that it is most important that Aborigines placed in responsible positions receive the appropriate support. We are against Aborigines without training or experience being given responsibilities without the necessary back-up support, and then being left to provide an inferior service.

RECOMMENDATION 1. We recommend to the Australian Government that it establish a separate statutory funding body called the National Aboriginal Education Commission.

Such a body should have the responsibility for administering all Australian Government expenditure relating specifically to the education of Aboriginal people. It should also have the responsibility for formulating policy for such expenditure. This body should also assume a co-ordinating responsibility for the following:

- a) Formulating national guidelines on education for Aboriginal people after gathering and evaluating policy, programs, proposals and budgets.
- b) Acting as a national advisory body in matters relating to curriculum, development and study programs developed for the education of Aboriginal children or Aboriginal Studies for non-Aboriginal children.
- c) Conducting and co-ordinating investigation and research to

determine the special needs of Aboriginal people and to decide how these needs can best be met by education.

- d) Establishing close involvement and responsiveness to the ideas and aspirations of local community groups and regional associations for educational purposes.
- e) Funding programs necessary for the above.

RECOMMENDATION 2. During the interim period prior to an Australian Government decision and consequent legislation regarding Recommendation 1, we recommend that the Schools Commission should assume responsibility for Department of Aboriginal Affairs funding of primary and secondary education and administer this on the advice of the Aboriginal Steering Committee or an Aboriginal Standing Committee of the Schools Commission.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs should retain responsibility for pre-school, tertiary and further education funding for an interim period of approximately one year. Should that Department not wish to retain this function, then the responsibility should be transferred to the Australian Department of Education.

The Aboriginal Steering Committee or an Aboriginal Standing Committee of the Schools Commission should meanwhile examine and develop overall strategies for all of the present Department of Aboriginal Affairs funds for education.

3.2 Special Aboriginal appointments to administrative and decision making posts in education.

We are concerned at the absence of Aboriginal people in decision-making and administrative levels in almost all Australian and State Government Commissions and Departments concerned with education.

3.2.1 The appointment of an Aborigine to the Schools Commission and other Australian Government commissions.

The commonly presented argument against the inclusion of ethnic group representatives on commissions is that, if one group is represented then all others have a similar right.

If you accept our view of the Australian population mentioned in 2.1. this argument is irrelevant. We feel that it is unrepresentative that the country's indigenous people are not represented on any Australian or State Government commission. The commissions on these bodies represent only the non-indigenous people of Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 3. We recommend that the Australian Government appoint an Aboriginal person as a Commissioner to serve on the Schools Commission, either in a full-time or part-time capacity.

Pre-schooling has been recognized as a most important part of the education of an Aboriginal child. We realize that possible future funding for this part of education may become the responsibility of the proposed Children's Commission but as yet no Aboriginal person is represented on this body.

RECOMMENDATION 4. We recommend that Australian and State Governments take steps to ensure adequate Aboriginal representation at State and national level on all Australian and State commissions and statutory authorities that are responsible for Aboriginal people.

RECOMMENDATION 5. We recommend to the Australian Government that an Aboriginal person be appointed as a member of the proposed Children's Commission.

3.2.2 Appointment of Aborigines as senior administrative officers in State Departments of Education.

Over the last three or four years special officers have been appointed in all mainland State Education Departments with responsibility for special programs in the education of Aborigines. Since then the numbers of special educational programs for Aboriginal people has increased rapidly.

In the first quarter of 1975 the Victorian Education Department also took the very welcome step of appointing an Aborigine as Supervisor of Aboriginal Education.

We appreciate the difficulty experienced by State Education Departments in finding suitably qualified and experienced Aboriginal people to fill such positions, but we believe it would benefit all Aboriginal people and the appointees themselves if Aborigines (preferably trained teachers) be appointed to assist in a professional capacity:

- a) The Assistant Director of Special Education in New South Wales
- b) The Inspector of Schools (Indigenous) in Queensland
- c) Superintendents of Aboriginal Education in South Australia and Western Australia
- d) The Directors of Primary and Secondary Education in Tasmania

Each Aboriginal person would provide an advisory and consultant service to Aboriginal communities and to schools with a significant Aboriginal enrolment and would generally assist in a professional capacity the State Officers listed above. If no suitable Aboriginal is immediately available in a particular State, provision should be made for that State to recruit an Aborigine with suitable qualifications from elsewhere. These Aboriginal officers should receive special training and special assistance in gaining the educational qualifications necessary to enable them to aspire to the highest administrative positions. The training ought to be based on the assumption that the officers be capable of working at superintendent level within three years.

RECOMMENDATION 6. We recommend that the Schools Commission provide funds for State and Northern Territory Education Departments to appoint and provide special training for senior Aboriginal administrative officers.

In the Northern Territory there is no position comparable to that of the State Superintendents of Aboriginal Education. We feel that Aboriginal people here would benefit as much if not more than the States by the establishment of such a position. The position should be advertised nationally and the appointee should be Aboriginal.

RECOMMENDATION 7. We recommend that a position of Superintendent of Aboriginal Education be established in the Northern Territory of similar level and having similar duties to those positions in the States.

3.3 Involvement of parents in the education of their children.

Parental involvement. We are aware of recent research that emphasizes the importance of adult and parent involvement in the educational process. This is particularly relevant in an Aboriginal context, where traditionally the education of children was the responsibility of the family. We are keen to see Aboriginal parents become more active in their children's education, and in turn develop more skills and greater confidence in themselves.

We are impressed by reports of Aboriginal parent involvement in the Aboriginal Family Education Centres in New South Wales. All the centres are operated by Aboriginal parents and co-ordinated by the A.F.E.C. Federation, whose staff is Aboriginal. The children enter the program as babies and continue until about nine years of age. During this period the children are involved with their parents as a family group.

3.3.1 The appointment of Aborigines to school councils

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are rarely nominated or are reluctant to accept appointment to councils of schools with Aboriginal children. The Consultative Group believes that headmasters and staff have a serious responsibility to encourage, support and assist Aborigines to become members of school councils and to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

In a vast number of situations Aborigines and Islanders when appointed need to be given opportunities to become better informed about their role and the relevant education issues affecting the school. Local conferences, visits by specially appointed Aboriginal liaison officers (see Recommendation 12) and other efforts to improve the effectiveness of Aboriginal appointments to school councils should be initiated.

RECOMMENDATION 8. We recommend that a variety of means be examined for involving Aboriginal parents in their children's education. One method that should be explored is for State and non-Government education authorities to require that the percentage of Aborigines on school councils is equal to the percentage of Aboriginal children enrolled at a school.

3.3.2 Parental control over the activities and behaviour of their children.

We feel that it is important for parents to have the dominant control of their children's activities and behaviour. This could be supported by having principals of schools made responsible for the adoption of a policy which reinforces parental authority over their children. Although at this stage we do not wish to make any specific recommendations, we consider it desirable that such a policy should be promoted.

3.3.3. Learning Centres to be established.

Many Aboriginal and Islander home situations are not conducive to successful educational achievement. However, we are unwilling to allow the responsibility for providing a substitute (such as a homework centre) being taken away from the parents and bestowed on the school. Furthermore, we see a possibility for side benefits such as adult education in a learning centre organised on the community's terms. The human resources of the school could be a supportive rather than a directive factor. School facilities could also be utilised for this purpose, and Aboriginal liaison officers (see Recommendation 12) could provide additional support. It is critical

that the nature and organisation of such centres reflect the wishes of the local communities. In very depressed circumstances separating education into various levels is often ineffective and an integrated or total education approach may be necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 9. We recommend to the Schools Commission and State education authorities that Learning Centres organised on the community's terms, should be established in areas where there are large numbers of Aboriginal and Island children. Where extremely depressed conditions exist we recommend that the Consultative Group investigate the establishment of total education programs.

3.4 The establishment of an administrative staff college for the training of Aborigines.

The area of greatest need in terms of available Aboriginal manpower was seen by the Group to be at the administrative and decision-making level. The strategy decided upon was to recruit experienced Aboriginal people from the professional and trade areas, and provide them with intensive administrative training in specially designed institutions.

These institutions would train Aboriginal and Island people in specialised skills to equip them for the highest decision-making level and to prepare them to effectively assist in educational programs and Aboriginal development generally.

We realise that initially there would be a loss of Aborigines from professional and trade areas, but we believe that the normal training programs, particularly teacher training schemes, would be able to cope with the loss provided that the school systems maintained a flow of students into these areas.

RECOMMENDATION 10. We recommend to the Commission on Advanced Education that it form an Aboriginal Curriculum Committee to develop suitable courses for training Aborigines. This is seen as an immediate first step to establishing a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Administration College with campuses either in, or available to, each State and the Northern Territory.

The Group felt that a great deal of experience and knowledge in relation to such a venture could be available from the study of projects and courses such as the Task Force program at the South Australian Institute of Technology, the Aboriginal Community College in Adelaide, the Community workers course operated at the Western Australian Institute of Technology and the new project designed for

adult Aboriginal people at the Swinburne Institute of Technology in Victoria.

We feel, however, that before any real usefulness could be attached to such information, systematic and properly planned evaluation of the centres should be undertaken. This would include educational investigation of course objectives, assessment methods, instruction methods and psychological effect on students.

Special areas which should be considered are :

1. evaluation of courses
2. selection of teaching staff
3. selection of governing bodies
4. staff training and qualification
5. employment placement of graduates.

4. PROFESSIONALS - Strategies to meet some of the needs at the professional and trade levels.

4.1 Training of Aboriginal Teachers.

Measures to increase the numbers of Aborigines at the highest administrative levels should be complemented by special efforts to increase the numbers of trained Aboriginal teachers. As an interim measure teacher training institutions should look to the upper levels of Aboriginal teaching assistants as a source of students. We wish it to be impressed upon all Australian teacher-training authorities that the end-point qualification of Aboriginal teachers should be at an equivalent level to that required of non-Aboriginal teachers in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 11. We recommend to all Australian teacher-training authorities that special provision should be made for entry of Aborigines into teacher-training institutions similar to the special provisions for European mature age students.

4.2 Aboriginal liaison officers.

We believe that non-Aborigines generally are not attuned to the particular needs of Aboriginal people. In order to meet some of the special needs of Aboriginal children in schools, we propose that specially trained Aboriginal liaison officers be appointed. These officers would also assist and support many of the projects we have recommended. We think it desirable that these officers be employed

by State Education Departments, and the initial project be funded by the Schools Commission. Once established, projects should become the responsibility of State Education Departments.

There should be an emphasis on training liaison officers. Special training should be designed to equip these people with the specialised knowledge and skills necessary to effectively carry out their duties. Recruitment could be from graduates of the South Australian Institute of Technology Task Force, Torrens Aboriginal Community College, the Western Australian Institute of Technology Task Force, or from Aborigines now working as teacher-aides or community workers. Selection could be by the State Education Departments in consultation with members of the Aboriginal community. The positions should be part of a career structure for Aborigines working in education.

The pupil load for each officer should be within the range of 50 to 100 depending on the location. It is recommended that initial salary should be equal to Public Service Clerk Class 4 rates - at present \$8406 per annum.

We see the duties of Aboriginal liaison officers as including:

- a) Liaising with parents, children and teachers.
- b) Assisting in involving parents with school councils and school activities.
- c) Publicising scholarship and other schemes relevant to furthering education in co-operation with education officers administering the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme.
- d) Assuming responsibility for arranging liaison with vocational guidance counsellors, and help in other cases where there is no other service available.
- e) Assisting and counselling school leavers and immediate ex-students in employment.
- f) Generally counselling students in their educational activities and plans.

Evaluation would be an integral part of the scheme. Whilst the Schools Commission is providing funds it could perhaps be undertaken by teams of three, consisting of a State Superintendent of Aboriginal Education, a member of this Consultative Group and a local headmaster. Aboriginal participation in evaluation would be critical.

Representatives from Queensland strongly wish to urge that the above scheme be administered by the Queensland Department of Education and not by the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION 12. We recommend that the Schools Commission provide funds for State education authorities to establish a specialised scheme using trained Aboriginal liaison officers who would be available to assist all Aboriginal students enrolled at primary and secondary schools.

4.3 Training of Aboriginal teacher-aides.

Aboriginal teacher-aides are now employed in all mainland States and the Northern Territory. A major concern, however, is employment conditions and opportunity for professional advancement.

We wish to encourage appropriate State education authorities to ensure that Aboriginal teacher-aide programs in all States should be designed with these criteria in mind:

- a) Status and duties of Aboriginal aides should be para-professional and not ancillary.
- b) Comprehensive training schemes which will lead to full teacher qualifications should be organized for those who are capable of and desire to be teachers, but do not possess normal academic qualifications. We realise that this may require legislative changes in some States.
- c) Employment conditions should be designed to allow for a progression in salary scale similar to that operating in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.
- d) All Aboriginal teacher-aides should be employed on a permanent basis.
- e) Where teacher-aide training courses are acceptable as matriculation they should also require a level of English equivalent to that necessary for acceptance into teacher training institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 13. We recommend that the Schools Commission make special efforts in the upgrading and development of appropriate Aboriginal teacher-aide schemes.

4.4 Professional upgrading of Torres Strait Island schools.

We are concerned over several aspects of the educational

provisions for Aboriginal and Island children attending schools in the Torres Strait Islands.

In the area of salaries, for example, we have been informed that non-Islander teachers currently earn over four times as much as their Islander colleagues. Islander teachers with responsibility for classes and two years training were earning even less than Queensland Department of Education Classroom Assistants in 1974.

4.4.1 Transfer of Torres Strait Island schools administration to the Queensland Department of Education.

We consider it unsatisfactory that the Torres Strait Islands should be the only place in Australia where government schools are not administered by a government education authority. We further believe that most of the professional upgrading needed in the Torres Strait Island schools could best be managed under the following recommended administrative change :-

RECOMMENDATION 14. We recommend to the Queensland Government that it consider transferring schools in the Torres Strait Islands from the administration of the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs to the Queensland Department of Education as quickly as possible. We would wish that those Islanders already employed in the schools in Torres Strait Islands be retained in the schools and receive an appropriate salary.

4.4.2 Staffing of Torres Strait Island schools.

We oppose the appointment of unqualified Aboriginal and Islander staff in the Torres Strait Islands and we have made a number of recommendations designed to upgrade the quality of teaching particularly with regard to English usage in all Torres Strait Island schools. The following recommendation suggests alternative means. The important goal we wish to realise is the professional upgrading of Torres Strait Island teachers.

As an interim measure, we suggest a team of professional resource persons could be sent to the Torres Strait Islands to provide inservice education to Torres Strait Islander teaching staff. Such in-service training should involve the acquisition of some recognized standing towards future teacher training.

It is desirable that Torres Strait Island teacher trainees receive professional qualifications comparable to other teachers graduating from Kedron Park Teachers College.

RECOMMENDATION 15.

- a) *We recommend that the Queensland Department of Education consult with Torres Strait Island communities with a view to employing non-Torres Strait Islander teachers in all schools in the Torres Strait Islands. At this stage we feel a 1:1 ratio of non-Islander and Islander teachers is necessary.*
- b) *We recommend select numbers of Torres Strait Island teachers be sent to Townsville or Brisbane for advanced training until such time as all Torres Strait Islander teachers have been retrained.*
- c) *We recommend that the Queensland education authorities extend the present Torres Strait Island Teacher Training program at Kedron Park to a minimum of two consecutive years initial training.*

4.4.3 Post-primary facilities in the Torres Strait Islands.

We hope the above recommendations will ensure that all children at schools on the islands have a standard of primary education which will enable them to cope with a normal secondary course.

We consider that curriculum and instruction in these schools should be worked out jointly by the teachers and local communities.

RECOMMENDATION 16. We recommend the establishment of a three year high school with boarding facilities on one of the central Torres Strait Islands, and post-primary facilities in the schools on those islands where such facilities have been requested by the Islanders.

4.5. Technical education and Aboriginal students.

We recognise that a serious problem exists in the field of technical education, with regard to Aboriginal people. In our experience one feature of successful schemes for the education of Aborigines has been the recognition that a special approach is necessary.

We are very conscious of the lack of opportunity that we have had in the short time available to us to come to useful conclusions in this area. We have, however, had encouraging discussions with the Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education. In response to our initial suggestions we mutually agreed that a

study carried out by investigators who are familiar with the scope and organisation of technical and further education in the States, who are skilled in carrying out surveys among disadvantaged groups and who have knowledge of Aboriginal people, would be the best method of approach. We consider it essential that there be maximum Aboriginal participation in the project at both the operational and decision-making level, if effective programs are to come from the initial study.

This study should examine the possibility of providing basic technical training through existing school facilities on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, and in Aboriginal tribal communities.

RECOMMENDATION 17. We recommend that the Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education fund a study program to determine the real needs associated with the specific disadvantage suffered by Aboriginal people, as we feel that the Kangan Report did not adequately cover this area.

5. CHILDREN. Children who are either still in school or of pre-school age.

5.1 Children of pre-school age.

The Group recognizes that pre-school and related activities are not within the terms of reference of the Schools Commission. However, it takes the opportunity to draw attention to the need of Aborigines for child-care centres, family-day care programs, pre-school teacher training, parent/family involvement and community self-help generally.

We consider that an appropriate approach might be a co-ordinated national study of the community needs of Aborigines in respect of their children of pre-school age. We consider maximum Aboriginal participation necessary if the study is to be followed by effective programs.

Meanwhile we would wish to encourage present Aboriginal pre-school programs in the various states to continue and follow their current growth rate.

RECOMMENDATION 18. We recommend that the Schools Commission request the Interim Committee for the Children's Commission to collect, collate and evaluate existing programs using suitable Aboriginal personnel on the evaluation team.

5.2 Achievement of Aboriginal children enrolled in Australian schools.

We recognize that under-achievement of Aborigines in all areas of education is serious and debilitating to their success in later life. We attribute this to a wide range of social, environmental and educational factors.

Because of the social history of European settlement and development in this country, many Aborigines live today as a dispossessed people. This has resulted in a loss of dignity and an inability to cope with the system they have not been permitted to be part of.

The changes necessary to adapt to Australian society have been detrimental to the cohesion and relationships that existed in Aboriginal communities.

Values of social responsibility which form a basic part of Aboriginal culture are often in serious conflict with the individualism and destructive competitiveness which has become a feature of industrial free-enterprise society. Such conflict is reflected in the inadequate home environment, the alcoholism and nutritional and hygiene problems among some disadvantaged groups of the Aboriginal population.

Under-achievement in a single area of human endeavour is frequently generalised into an overall lack of ability for that person, persons or race. Aboriginal children with a particular language or mathematical or environmental problem are often regarded as educational "write-offs".

Educationally the group identified the following specific areas of under-achievement.

- a) Early language and linguistic development
- b) Lower primary mathematical concepts and the associated language.
- c) The general low performance at secondary level.

We feel that serious thought should be given to the whole concept of secondary education with a view to developing alternative forms more relevant to the diverse needs of Australian society.

Much research has been done in the general area. The priority need we see now is to collect existing research material on Aboriginal education programs. Work already undertaken, especially successful programs, should be assessed with a view to their general applicability. We then consider it might be useful to institute pilot projects.

One rationale for the national program that we envisage is to combat claims of under-achievement amongst Aboriginal children. We believe these create stereotypes detrimental to Aboriginal psychological well-being. They also have a self-fulfilling prophecy effect on school performance.

We consider it most desirable that State education authorities will be involved. The Schools Commission would work in a co-ordinating capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 19. We recommend that the Schools Commission provide funds for collating research and initiating action-research projects.

5.3 Language compensatory programs

We have considered a number of language projects which are at present operating in various school systems, and which are designed to compensate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children who either do not learn English as a first language or who learn other regional vernaculars and therefore are disadvantaged in the normal school situation..

5.3.1 Bilingual education

Bilingual education is one area we propose to study more closely in the near future.

Bilingual education has been used for some time in South Australia and, recently, at some schools in Western Australia and Queensland.

Until these schemes have been systematically evaluated we wish education authorities to be guided by the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 20. We recommend:

- a) *That State or Australian Education Departments introduce bilingual or vernacular programs into schools only with the agreement of the local Aboriginal and Island community.*

- b) *That only Aborigines should teach Aboriginal or Islander languages and vernaculars in schools running bilingual programs for Aboriginal children.*
- c) *Where native speakers of the language are not sufficiently experienced in language teaching then opportunities and facilities should be provided for intensive training in linguistic teaching.*

5.3.2 English as a second language

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children English is a second language which they learn at school. As a result of this many of these children are placed at a distinct disadvantage in schools where English is the language of instruction.

RECOMMENDATION 21. We recommend to the Schools Commission and all State education authorities that:

- a) *Suitable language programs be developed for Aboriginal children who speak English as a second language. This includes immediate evaluation and adaptation of existing techniques used by State education authorities, and, if feasible, modification of second language techniques used in migrant programs.*
- b) *Teachers working with Aboriginal and Island children be specially trained in Teaching English as a Second Language techniques that are suitable for Aboriginal students.*

5.4 Aboriginal studies for teachers

RECOMMENDATION 22. We recommend to each appropriate authority that all teacher trainees in Australia should study courses relating to Aboriginal social organisation, traditional and contemporary culture, and where possible, trainee teachers should be able to gain experience in teaching Aboriginal children.

RECOMMENDATION 23. We recommend to the Schools Commission that it convene meetings of teacher training authorities in Australia to negotiate with them about the basis on which they would be prepared to be involved in such a program, and to discuss with them methods of involving Aborigines in the conduct of the courses, and in reviewing course content.

5.5 Aboriginal studies for Australian schools

We have expressed concern at the general lack of understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Island culture in the wider Australian society, and the incompatibility of present education systems and curricula with many aspects of Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal studies could be promoted in a variety of ways:

- a) The provision of useful and accurate resource materials such as textbooks, instruction manuals, films, video tapes, etc.
- b) The fostering of Aboriginality as an active part of the cultural activities of schools, for example: the dramatisation of Aboriginal legends and dances in school plays and speech nights; the encouragement of Aboriginal art such as bark painting in school art displays; the development and use of Aboriginal dances for football teams, as the Haka is used by New Zealand teams.

This can be achieved by proving funds to enable schools to obtain special resource materials.

There is an urgent need to provide suitable textbooks on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders which present balanced and accurate historical accounts. All textbooks should display non-racist attitudes.

Teaching of the basic economic, social and political structures of traditional Aboriginal and Island cultures should be encouraged, especially those aspects such as the dreamtime concept, skin groupings, and kin-relationships.

Aboriginals and Islanders should be the authority for all matters relating to the preparation and implementation of such study programs and the development of curricula. We envisage the National Aboriginal Education Commission performing this function.

RECOMMENDATION 24. We recommend to the Schools Commission and appropriate authorities that they provide funds for supporting teaching programs within schools designed to interest and inform both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children about the history and culture of Aborigines.

5.5.1 Textbooks on Tasmanian Aborigines

We have made a survey of textbooks used in schools curricula in Tasmania and available in the Southern Teachers Centre Library, Hobart.

The books we studied were mainly concerned with Tasmania, its past and present, its people famous and infamous, and events affecting its notorious early history.

These books are used in schools throughout Tasmania for reference and projects by both teachers and pupils. There are twelve dealing with Aborigines. Only two of these mentioned that there are people of Aboriginal descent in Tasmania today. Most of these books state that "the Tasmanian Aborigines are extinct" but do not mention the fact that there are approximately 5,000 Aboriginal descendants living in the State. Some items written today state "some groups like the Tasmanians disappeared entirely." (Encyclopaedia Family of Man). A Reader's Digest December 1974 (Armchair Travelogue) article on Tasmania's history, has references like "Tasmania's tragic and now extinct race of Aborigines". There is a quotation that convicts were "our true pioneers".

If this is to continue descendants of Tasmanian Aborigines will have no heritage claim. History and historians will write that the race is extinct.

5.5.2 Aboriginal languages for Australian schools

An important part of the development of Aboriginal Studies programs for Australian schools is the ability to offer Aboriginal language studies.

The Consultative Group was interested to discover senior students at Canberra's School Without Walls already embarked on such a project and busily engaged in obtaining the necessary tapes and materials.

Aboriginal language studies should be available to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Where a State Education Department or a non-Government school decides to do this, it should be done in consultation and with the permission of the community from which the language originates.

RECOMMENDATION 25. We recommend to the Schools Commission that it foster where practical the introduction of Aboriginal languages into secondary school studies, in the short term as a non-examinable elective then as part of secondary educational qualifications.

5.6 Curriculum initiatives: a three level approach

Further support should be given to the development of special curriculum initiatives designed to meet the particular needs of schools with a high percentage of Aboriginal children.

The Consultative Group concluded that there was no single approach to curriculum development, but favoured a comprehensive approach at three levels.

5.6.1 Centralised unit or Aboriginal Education Foundation

This would be in the form of a research unit established at some fixed location and staffed by various experts.

This could constitute part of the proposed National Aboriginal Education Commission or otherwise be set up as a National Aboriginal Education Foundation.

If the second alternative was the only possibility it would be essential that appointments to the key positions should be Aboriginal people.

RECOMMENDATION 26. We recommend to the Schools Commission that it initiate the establishment of a national unit or Aboriginal Education Foundation with the particular responsibility for the overall co-ordination and development of curriculum for schools with high percentages of Aboriginal children.

5.6.2 An intermediate approach

This would consist of teams comprising numbers of experts who would work in consultation with teachers and communities at various schools.

One of these units would be based in each State and Territory and would be both guided and assisted by the central body, and provide feed back to the centralised unit.

RECOMMENDATION 27. We recommend to the Schools Commission and State education authorities that they establish units with the responsibility of developing curriculum material for schools with high percentages of Aboriginal children.

5.6.3 The localised or operative level

At this level we see curriculum being developed at the individual schools by school staff and the local community.

This operation would have a similar relationship to the intermediate State-based units, as we see existing between the national unit and the State curriculum units.

RECOMMENDATION 28. We recommend to the Schools Commission and State education authorities that initiatives at the localised or operative level be encouraged and co-ordinated.

5.7 Retention of suitable teachers in schools

It is essential that teachers and Aboriginal children have continuity of involvement in the educative situation over a prolonged period and where satisfactory relationships are established these should be maintained.

RECOMMENDATION 29. We recommend to Australian and State education authorities that provision should be made in State and Territory schools for teachers to obtain promotion positions without transfer.

5.8 Independent schools

Independent schools and the outstation schools amongst Aboriginal people are one of the three areas we propose to study in the near future.

RECOMMENDATION 30. We recommend that the Schools Commission promote among the State and Northern Territory education departments the idea of funding the establishment of Aboriginal and Islander primary and secondary schools.

5.9 Additional financial assistance for primary school students

We are concerned with the decision-making and professional areas of Aboriginal education and consider that fundamental change must occur here. But we are faced with the present reality of the Aboriginal child attending school after his morning meal of bread

and black tea, saturated with sugar. Aboriginal children today are living in some of the most impoverished conditions found anywhere in the world. Health housing and employment make up a culture of poverty that is just as important as any cultural difference for the school failing the majority of Aboriginal children.

We consider that a grant to assist primary children would go a long way towards repairing the inequalities that occur in primary schools. Such a grant would restore the dignity and sense of responsibility denied in the past and would provide for Aboriginal people with large numbers of children of school age, and assist them to make financial ends meet, so improving the child's home environment.

Because of its pattern of administering funds the Aboriginal Education Incentive Scholarship scheme in Victoria, which was terminated in December 1974, was also able to provide side benefits of increasing teacher-parent interaction and helping families to cope with the system.

We would like to consider the Watts report mentioned in 5.10 before making a specific recommendation in this area, but provision should be made for some sort of primary scholarship available to all children of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent to be introduced in the 1976-78 triennium.

5.10 The Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme evaluation

As part of our consideration of a primary scholarship scheme we hope to talk with Professor B.H. Watts after the completion of her study of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme later on this year. We believe that the Australian Department of Education, which commissioned the study, should publish it and make it available to all Aboriginal organisations.

6. THE EXCLUDED. People who do not have the opportunity to take advantage of education, or who have withdrawn because of deficiencies in some education systems.

6.1 Special seminars for members of Aboriginal communities

Another important support strategy to promote Aboriginal community involvement in education is the setting up of special seminars each lasting up to a week and funded by the Schools

Commission. At least some of them should be run by the State Education Departments for members of Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people should be nominated by their local committees in response to invitations from Education Departments to attend such seminars. The seminars should be designed both to educate and to acquaint the participants with current innovations and trends in education, and be based on the workshop principle used for in-service seminars of teachers of Aboriginal children.

The establishment of different and effective communication networks are an important part of such seminars. (See Recommendation 37)

RECOMMENDATION 31. We recommend to the Schools Commission that it initiate and fund as pilot projects special educational workshop seminars for Aboriginal people.

6.2 Part-time studies for Aboriginal people

If adult and continuing education studies are to attract Aborigines they must be:

- a) relevant to their social situation and
- b) specifically for Aboriginal people in most situations.

It has been observed that the most successful adult classes have been those where the majority of participants were Aborigines.

RECOMMENDATION 32. We recommend that universities, colleges of advanced education and technical college courses provide part-time courses for Aboriginal people living in isolated areas in the form of:

- a) *Extension facilities developed by these institutions that accredit local suitably qualified school staff and allow them to offer courses to Aboriginal people under the supervision of the institutions.*
- b) *Itinerant tutors who visit Aboriginal part-time or external students on a regular basis.*

RECOMMENDATION 33. We recommend to State education authorities that part-time study courses organised for Aboriginal people be advertised as such and that the majority enrolled be Aborigines.

6.3 Aboriginal Visitors to Schools schemes

We believe that the schemes whereby Aborigines have visited schools and discussed Aboriginal folklore, tribal life and culture have proved highly successful. We believe these schemes could be extended and that interstate exchanges of Aboriginal speakers should be arranged.

The speakers role should be to create awareness and more positive attitudes in school children towards Aboriginal people.

RECOMMENDATION 34. We recommend to the Schools Commission that it finances State and Northern Territory education authorities to establish panels of Aboriginal and Islander speakers in each community to visit educational institutions with films, slides, tapes, etc., and speak on the Aboriginal situation with a view to creating better understanding of Aboriginal values.

6.4 Local initiative in education to be encouraged amongst Aboriginal and Island organisations

Aboriginal and Islander organisations should be encouraged and funded by the Australian Government to initiate Aboriginal and Islander study courses of all types among local Aboriginal and Islander groups.

RECOMMENDATION 35. We recommend that the Schools Commission support and fund initiatives in education, study courses, Aboriginal studies, etc., by local Aboriginal and Island groups. That where other Federal or State authorities are involved, it co-ordinate and liaise where appropriate or as required.

6.5 An Aboriginal education studies film unit

RECOMMENDATION 36. We recommend that the Schools Commission provide finance for on-the-job training for an Aboriginal and Islander Film Group. This film group would travel to all States and the Northern Territory to compile documentary films. The group should also document special Federal and State Aboriginal conferences.

6.6 Public relations and communications

We see a need to develop special communication procedures which are an effective link between education authorities and the Aboriginal communities. At present advertisements for special

projects, such as the Schools Commission's Innovations Program, only show photographs of non-Aborigines. Many Australian Government schemes are unknown to Aboriginal communities.

RECOMMENDATION 37. We recommend that the Schools Commission and other Australian and State government departments make special efforts to effectively publicise social programs among Aboriginal people.

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