



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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EXTRACTS FROM

DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT 1977-78

ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT

Because of the need to establish clearly the Department's co-ordinating responsibilities in relation to both Commonwealth functional departments and State governments, the Department's functional statement in the Administrative Arrangements Order was revised and now reads:

The development, in consultation with the Aboriginal people, of national policies directed to the advancement of the Aboriginal people, the administration of those policies, and the co-ordination of programs.

A functional statement for Regional Offices was approved. This gives priority to field officers being the means of effective consultation with Aboriginal communities, keeping the Government informed of the state of affairs in Aboriginal communities, and stimulating, co-ordinating and monitoring the activities of all agencies providing services to communities.

The Department will require officers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, of rare commitment and versatility to carry out these functions.

The Department, with the advice and assistance of the Commonwealth Department of Education, is concerned to ensure that, at all levels of education, opportunities and programs are available to Aborigines which are appropriate to their needs and in no way inferior to those available to the general community.

An important element in the development of the Department's programs has been the encouragement of Aboriginal participation from community to national level. The National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) established in March 1977, is a wholly Aboriginal committee which provides the Minister for Education and his Department with informed Aboriginal views on education needs and appropriate methods of meeting them. Its advice is fully available to the Minister and Department of Aboriginal Affairs. As well as the

NAEC, most Education Departments have established Aboriginal advisory or consultative bodies.

In 1977-78 a total of \$9.164m was allocated to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for expenditure on Aboriginal education programs compared to \$8.611m in 1976-77. This allowed continued support for pre-school activities, the training and employment of Aboriginal teaching assistants, employment of liaison officers and units in State Education Departments specialising in Aboriginal education, courses in Aboriginal studies in universities and colleges of advanced education, bilingual programs, adult education programs, independent Aboriginal-managed schools, action-research projects, development of reading material appropriate for Aboriginal students and special courses for Aboriginals in various tertiary and training institutions

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Aboriginal teacher assistants provide a point of identification in schools for Aboriginal children and a bridge between the home and school environments. The distinctive nature of their para-professional role is becoming increasingly recognised as they work closely with teachers in general classroom activities and help teachers understand the culture and special needs of Aboriginal children.

There are now over six hundred Aboriginal teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools throughout Australia. At this stage their salaries are paid from Departmental Grants (except in the Northern Territory where salaries are funded by the Department of Education) but it is hoped they will become integrated into the State schooling systems.

TEACHER TRAINING

Ninety-nine Aboriginal teachers were in training in 1977. A number of these were enrolled in projects which involved adoption of courses to allow Aboriginals without formal matriculation to qualify as trained teachers. Such projects are under way at Mount Lawley College of Advanced Education in Western Australia, Townsville College of Advanced Education in Queensland, and the State College of Victoria.

At a number of teacher training institutions the Department supports courses in Aboriginal culture and language which are designed to equip teachers to understand and to work in cross-cultural situations.

PRE-SCHOOLING

Support is provided for a number of community-based pre-schools and special encouragement is given to those that are Aboriginal managed; Port Lincoln and Port Augusta in South Australia and Murawina in Sydney. There are over two hundred Aboriginal pre-school assistants in Australia whose salaries are paid from Departmental grants.

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NATIONAL ENQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

The National Aboriginal Education Committee wishes to make a substantial submission relating to the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, to the National Enquiry into Teacher Education which is being carried out under the chairmanship of Professor J.J.Auchmuty.

In order to prepare a comprehensive submission, the N.A.E.C. has commissioned a research team to carry out an investigation into the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers throughout the country.

To be able to reflect the views of persons interested in or involved with the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, the N.A.E.C. enquiry invites submissions from any interested body or individual. These submissions to be lodged with the N.A.E.C. Enquiry by 1st August, 1979.

Submissions should be sent to:

Secretariat of the Teacher Education Enquiry
Research School of Social Sciences
P.O.Box 4,
CANBERRA 2600 A.C.T.

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