



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600
21 May, 1982

Dear Reader,

I welcome this opportunity to write to you as the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Over the past eighteen months or so, many of you have come to know Senator Peter Baume who has been appointed Minister for Education. Now that you have a new Minister some of you may wonder what the change may bring.

The basic direction of the Government's policies will not change. Although many Aborigines live and work successfully as ordinary members of the Australian community, the Federal Government does recognise that Aborigines are a disadvantaged group requiring special programs and assistance. As Minister I will continue to support these programs.

The position of Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is very important and carries a great deal of responsibility. It is a position which I value highly. I am looking forward to the challenging task ahead.

More and more Australians recognise the unique contribution that Aborigines and Aboriginal culture have made to the development of Australia.

Especially in recent years, Aborigines themselves have assumed increasing responsibility for managing their own affairs and choosing their own lifestyles. That willingness to make their own choice has seen Aborigines, including those who continue to live in the traditional tribal system, assume their responsibilities as members of the wider Australian community.

Of course, the excellent work that a lot of you are doing in Aboriginal affairs needs little explanation. In my previous position as Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, I heard frequently of the efforts and achievements of Aboriginal-managed organisations.

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Much has been achieved in recent years particularly in the field of Aboriginal land. I hope the spirit of tolerance and patience that has provided the environment for those achievements will be sustained in the future.

It may take time for me to become fully acquainted with the many specific issues facing Aboriginals but this period of learning promises to be personally fulfilling.

The Government's programs in Aboriginal affairs are based on consultation. One of my priorities will be to travel in the field and to be available to meet as many of you as possible.

While some problems remain unresolved (and indeed the Government recognises that much remains to be done) I am looking forward to working with Aboriginals and the whole community to continue the progress that has been made in recent years in Aboriginal affairs.

Ian Wilson

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