



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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* EDUCATION COMMISSION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The Education Commission of New South Wales was established in October, 1980, as a response to efforts made by teachers, parents and others to achieve effective community participation in the decisions which affect public education in this State.

Membership of the Commission provides for the representation of teachers, parents, Government administration and other community interests. The Commission is a representative body which acts as the prime adviser to the Minister for Education and, through the Minister, to the Government.

The Commission has statutory responsibilities in terms of its role as the employing authority for teachers in public schools and colleges of technical and further education, and as the Minister's major advisory body on broad policy and planning matters.

The Commission's charter in respect of policy, planning and resource issues for public education includes primary and secondary education, technical and further education and higher education. The Commission consults with Departments and other statutory bodies and operates by furnishing reports and making recommendations to the Minister for Education. These may be on the initiative of the Commission or at the request of the Minister.

During its first two years the Education Commission identified nine major issues arising from pressures for change. The Commission has sought to identify viewpoints about the most important aspects of these issues with the intention of preparing proposals for Government consideration.

Viewpoints have been identified through consultation with interested groups as members of working parties, through preparation and distribution of discussion papers, through visiting schools and colleges in urban and rural areas, by holding public seminars, by calling for submissions, and by meeting with individuals and groups in a variety of other situations.

During 1982 and 1983 the Commission undertook, at the request of the Government, a comprehensive review of education for rural areas of NSW. This was a major review of policies and practices, and the Commission received more than 1,300 responses to its call for submissions. The Commission provided its report to the Government late in 1983.

* Information Sheet No.1 1/2/84. Education Commission of NSW,
Box 33 G.P.O. Sydney, 2001.

During 1984, the Commission will be conducting a series of projects funded through the Community Employment Program, which is a joint Commonwealth-State project. As well as creating employment opportunities, the Commission's projects are aimed at improving links with community groups and providing more practical information for educational policy-makers.

Other initiatives of the Commission during 1984 will include publication of a number of discussion papers on important issues, including options for post-compulsory education, as well as developing contact with the community in a variety of ways.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSION *

As a result of experience gained in its initial period of operation the Commission has evolved a supporting structure which for 1983 and 1984 will include three Standing Committees, a number of Working Parties and specific project groups.

In general, project groups are used to gather information. Working Parties are the Commission's method of keeping up to date with evolving social, political and industrial issues as they relate to education. Standing Committees coordinate the information obtained by project groups and working parties, examine options and prepare recommendations for consideration by the Commission. The Commission considers these recommendations and advises the Minister.

STANDING COMMITTEES

- Standing Committee on Curriculum, which is concerned with questions of general policy and philosophy, as well as specific issues referred by the Commission.

- Standing Committee on Structure and Resources, functions of which are to analyse portfolio policies, identify and respond to structural questions related to coordination of services, assess resource implications, and review progress.

- Standing Committee on Employment and Industrial Relations Policy, which is concerned with developing employment policies, and the making of determinations in relation to the employment of teachers.

* Extract from Education Commission of NSW, Information Sheet No.2.

WORKING PARTIES

Generally the Commission approaches the identification of issues through the establishment of small working parties. Since these working parties are intended to be responsive to emerging needs, they vary from time to time in response to pressures for change. For 1983 and 1984 these Working Parties will focus on - equal opportunity in education; Aboriginal education; special education; multicultural education; rural education; education and the labour market; recurrent education; technology in education; budget and priorities.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION *

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders numbered 159,897 at the Australian Census in June 1981. New South Wales accounted for 22 per cent of this total. Between 1976 and 1981 the recorded population in New South Wales declined by 5,084 to 35,367, with the reduction concentrated in major urban centres (Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong).

Age-structure of the Aboriginal population in 1981 is not yet available. At the 1976 Census, however, the 5 to 19 year age groups accounted for 40 per cent of the State's Aboriginal population, compared with 27 per cent for the total population. In brief, the Aboriginal population is significant in numbers, is young and is largely urbanised although rural dwellers (centres less than 1000 persons) still number some 8000.

The Aboriginal school population is not evenly distributed over NSW, so that a small number of schools tend to have a high proportion of Aboriginal students while others have none or very few. Only 14 out of more than 2000 schools in New South Wales have a majority of Aboriginal students.

Although Aboriginal groups in our community are clearly an important part of our multicultural society, the NSW State Government has chosen to give their needs special emphasis through the establishment of a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs separate from the Ethnic Affairs Commission in NSW.

In 1977 the National Aboriginal Education Committee was established to advise the Commonwealth Minister for Education. Within each State Aboriginal Consultative Groups have been established.

* Education Commission of NSW, Information Sheet No.4: 25/3/83

In NSW an Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) has been established to provide education authorities with informed Aboriginal and Islander opinion. Both the Department of Education and the Department of Technical and Further Education have specialised units with advisory and supervisory roles in Aboriginal education. The President of the AECG in New South Wales is a part-time member of the Education Commission of New South Wales.

Many areas of the day to day work of the Commission have potential significance for the Aboriginal people and to ensure that there is continuing analysis of Commission policy to identify Aboriginal issues for reference to the AECG it is proposed that a Working Party on Aboriginal Education be established by the Commission for 1983.

Through its Working Party on Aboriginal Education the Commission proposes to

- continue to work closely with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group in exploring ways in which the special educational needs of Aborigines can be met most effectively;
- liaise with other bodies outside the Commission which have responsibilities for Aboriginal education;
- identify emerging issues and provide advice to the Minister in respect of appropriate action;
- monitor the implementation of proposals embodied in the existing Aboriginal Education Policy Statement in respect of schools;
- determine trends in enrolment patterns for Aboriginal students in post-school education;
- develop, in consultation with the AECG, a statement regarding short and long-term goals for Aboriginal education;
- facilitate the work of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group in developing a policy statement in respect of post-school education;
- develop a more closely co-ordinated approach to the identification of Aboriginal needs within the Education portfolio;
- provide advice on priorities for Aboriginal education in relation to allocation of resources within the Education portfolio;
- examine the provision of present State and Commonwealth support systems for Aboriginal students;

- in conjunction with the Commission's Working Party on Education and the Labour Market, consult with the Public Service Board and other employing authorities, with a view to examining employment of young Aborigines in relation to their educational status;
- monitor the employment of Aboriginal personnel in schools and colleges;
- encourage the training and professional development of Aboriginal teachers and support staff;
- encourage awareness of Aboriginal education issues amongst teachers, support staff and teacher educators.

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NOTE:

A very comprehensive and useful publication has been produced by the Creche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland.* It is *A Resource Catalogue for Aboriginal and Islander Early Childhood Education Centres*. The editor, Vera Budby, has compiled a catalogue of organizations that could provide support for Aboriginal and Islander early childhood education in Queensland.

The two principal sections list educational institutions and Aboriginal organizations. Each is described in terms of its functions (aims) and operations (organizational and specific programs) as well as listing contact people (accurate to August 1983).

The catalogue provides a useful reference in the field of Aboriginal and Islander early childhood education.

* The Creche & Kindergarten Association of Queensland,
14 Edmonstone Street, Newmarket. Tel. 356.7444