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ABORIGINAL HOME SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICERS IN TASMANIA

*C. Anderson

Home School Liaison Officers provide a vital link in the communication bridge between the home, the school and the education system for Aboriginal families.

In order to do this, officers regularly visit Aboriginal families and the schools attended by their children.

They assist Aboriginal children and their families:

1. Reinforcing parents' interest in their children's education and encouraging parent participation in their children's schooling.
2. Talking to school principals and staff about the concerns of Aboriginal families and communities.
3. Building self-esteem and encouraging Aboriginal students to explore interest, career and educational options.
4. Responding to calls for assistance from parents, children and teachers.
5. Assisting with the development of regional parents' groups, informing them of available community resources and encouraging their use.
6. Providing a link with other government and community agencies and their officers.
7. Recommending financial assistance for uniforms, transport, lunches, and school camps.

* Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Education, Education Department of Tasmania.

8. Being available to talk with teachers and students about Aboriginal history and culture.

Presently there are three Home School Liaison Officers in the State, based:

1. North West Region: Mr Laurie Padmore
51 Alexander Street
Burnie 7320 Phone (004)302357
2. Northern Region: Ms Suzanne Maynard
27 Canning Street
Launceston 7250 Phone (003)322595
3. Southern Region: Mrs Marlene Drysdale
"Westella"
181 Elizabeth Street
Hobart 7000 Phone (002)306027

The Home School Liaison Officers are an essential link between the family and the school, and confidentiality is a highly valued part of their work. They have promoted a greater understanding in the Aboriginal community of the available education resources and have assisted the Education Department to develop special programs to meet specific needs of Aboriginal children and their families.

With regard to the Aboriginal Secondary Assistance Scheme, this program is designed to assist Aboriginal students to remain at school for as long as possible to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.

When problems arise in the course of a student's secondary education, parents can contact Commonwealth Education and speak with an Education Officer. This officer may visit the student at school and/or at home to assist in overcoming problems related to school.

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