

Parliamentary Paper
No. 271/1977

The Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Health problems of Aborigines

Report

Being a report that the Committee has
been unable to complete its Inquiry

*Brought up and
ordered to be printed 1 November 1977*

The Commonwealth Government Printer
Canberra 1978

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr P. M. Ruddock, M.P. (*Chairman*)

The Hon. L. R. Johnson, M.P. (*Deputy Chairman*)

The Hon. K. E. Beazley, M.P.*

The Hon. G. M. Bryant, E.D., M.P.

Mr S. E. Calder, D.F.C., M.P.

Mr P. H. Drummond, M.P.

Mr R. M. McLean, M.P.

The Hon. W. C. Wentworth, M.P.

Clerk to the Committee: Mr C. S. Boorman

* The Hon. K. E. Beazley, M.P. was appointed on 10 March 1977 in place of Mr L. G. Wallis, M.P.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

1. On 1 December 1976¹ and again, following prorogation of the Parliament, on 10 March 1977,² the following resolution was passed by the House of Representatives:

- (1) That the following matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs:

The health problems of Aborigines with particular attention to:

- (a) the prevalence of different types of disease suffered by Aborigines and Aboriginal communities;
- (b) the relationship between Aboriginal health and environmental, social and cultural factors;
- (c) the effectiveness of existing health care programs for Aborigines generally, and the adequacy of Western European-type health services to cope with the health problems of Aborigines, and
- (d) alternative methods of health care delivery that take account of Aborigines' life styles, including camp situations.

- (2) That the Committee consider ways and means by which:

- (a) persons with appropriate qualifications can be encouraged to assist Aborigines achieve a better standard of health; and
- (b) Aborigines including traditional healers can participate in the development and delivery of health care services to their own communities, and in any modification of existing services.

- (3) That the committee recommend possible courses of action.

2. The Inquiry has just begun in detail. It was not possible to commence it in earnest earlier because:

- (a) The Committee had to complete its Inquiry into the Alcohol Problems of Aborigines. This Report was tabled in the House today.

- (b) Members of the Committee were *ex officio* members of the Joint Select Committee on Aboriginal Land Rights in the Northern Territory. This Committee was first formed on 9 December 1976³ and was required to report to the Parliament by 18 August 1977.⁴

3. The Health of Aborigines Inquiry was advertised in the capital city press and interested persons and organisations were requested to present submissions. The first public hearings were held in Canberra on 21 October 1977.

4. In view of the importance of the Inquiry it is recommended that:

- (a) the Committee be reconstituted by the new House of Representatives;
- (b) the reference referred to in paragraph 1 be given to the reconstituted Committee by the new House, and
- (c) the reconstituted Committee be empowered to consider and make use of the records of the present Committee.

1 November 1977

P. M. RUDDOCK
Chairman

¹ House of Representatives *Votes and Proceedings* No. 73, 1 December 1976.

² House of Representatives *Votes and Proceedings* No. 3, 10 March 1977.

³ House of Representatives *Votes and Proceedings* No. 78, 8 December 1976.
Journals of the Senate No. 78, 9 December 1976.

⁴ House of Representatives *Votes and Proceedings* No. 32, 18 August 1977.
Journals of the Senate No. 31, 17 August 1977.