

**THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

# **Strategies to Help Overcome the Problems of Aboriginal Town Camps**

**House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal  
Affairs**

**October 1982**

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## FOREWORD

Aboriginals are generally acknowledged to be the most disadvantaged group in Australian society. The fringe-dwellers or town campers as they are referred to in the report, are the most disadvantaged section within the Aboriginal group. It was glaringly apparent to the Committee that the deplorable conditions in which town campers live, not only in a physical sense but also in social and economic senses, are of urgent concern to all Australians.

While small in numbers (less than 20 000), they are the real losers of today. Yet, their plight has wider repercussions since to many people the town camper, in a shack on the outskirts of town, represents the Aboriginal people.

The Committee recognises that there are no easy solutions to the problems of town campers. As a result, the Committee has developed strategies on two fronts. Firstly strategies have been devised to overcome the immediate and distressing problems caused by factors such as ill health, poor housing and unemployment, to list but a few.

The provision of appropriate housing is the first step in an integrated approach to overcoming the problems of the town campers. The success of the strategies devised in health and education is strongly dependent on adequate shelter being provided for town campers. The Committee has recommended that all town campers should be housed by 1988. This will first require a survey of the needs of some of the camps but a preliminary estimate, on today's costs, would be around \$200m.

However, the Committee is also conscious of the long term forces which have created town camps and has accordingly developed strategies which will ameliorate those forces which push people unwillingly into town camps.

The Committee has recognised the need for consultation and Aboriginal involvement at both the national level through the Aboriginal Development Commission and Aboriginal Hostels Limited, and at the local level through relevant Aboriginal organisations.

Many of the problems experienced by town campers are specific to their particular region and consequently can be overcome through effective consultation at the local level. The Committee feels therefore that local government authorities have a significant role to play in the implementation of strategies in consultation with the local Aboriginal community.

The 'problems' are not exclusively those of the town camper. One problem is the non-Aboriginal community's perception of Aboriginal people. There is little or no appreciation of the history and culture of Aboriginal people, nor is there much understanding of the factors which have forced some Aboriginals to live in a camp environment.

An important strategy then is that of a public awareness campaign to give the non-Aboriginal community a better understanding of Aboriginals. Such a campaign is of tremendous importance since an unsympathetic community can delay and frustrate efforts to improve the lot of one of the most deprived sections of the Australian community.

Conditions are changing rapidly in Aboriginal communities as more Aboriginal people receive a better education in the ways of the world outside of their areas of immediate contact. The communications revolution, particularly the provision of television and other modern communications facilities in remote communities will profoundly affect those communities. The nature of the changes is difficult to predict but they may result in more people moving into the towns and cities and the strategies outlined in this report may have to be reviewed as the nature of the changes and their effects are able to be assessed.

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Mr A. C. Holding, M.P., *Deputy Chairman*

Mr I. M. D. Cameron, M.P.\*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Aboriginal Alcohol Report	<i>Alcohol Problems of Aborigines</i> . Final Report of House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. PP 299 (1977)
Aboriginal Health Report	<i>Aboriginal Health</i> . Report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. PP 60 (1979)
Aboriginal Legal Aid Report	<i>Aboriginal Legal Aid</i> . Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. PP 149 (1980)
ADC	Aboriginal Development Commission
AHL	Aboriginal Hostels Limited
ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DAIA	Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement
DCW	Western Australian Department of Community Welfare
DEIR	Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
Dept of Education	Commonwealth Department of Education
Dept of Health	Commonwealth Department of Health
DSS	Department of Social Security
Gibb Report	<i>The Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory</i> , Report of the Committee of Review. PP 62(1972)
Heppell and Wigley	Heppell, M. and J. J. Wigley, <i>Black out in Alice—A history of the establishment and development of town camps in Alice Springs</i> , Development Studies Centre, Monograph No. 26, A.N.U., 1981.
Kalano	Kalano Community Association, Katherine, Northern Territory

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has defined a town camper (or fringe dweller) as:

Town campers are any group of Aboriginals living at identified camp sites near or within towns or cities which form part of the socio-cultural structure of the towns and cities, but which have a lifestyle that does not conform to that of the majority of non-Aboriginal residents and are not provided with essential services and housing on a basis comparable to the rest of the community. (para 31)

On the information available there are from 15 650 to 19 600 town campers in an estimated 206 communities in mainland Australia. (para 93)

To overcome the problems of the town campers the Committee recommends:

1. that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs:
  - (a) initiate discussions with local government authorities with town camping communities within their boundaries (identified in Appendix VI) about establishing Aboriginal liaison committees and/or appointing Aboriginal liaison officers;
  - (b) initiate discussions with local government authorities, identified in Appendix VI, to develop projects for the provision of services to town camps; and
  - (c) provide funding to local government authorities where suitable projects are developed; (para 260)
2. each State and the Northern Territory establish a co-ordinating committee on Aboriginal alcohol problems with significant Aboriginal participation; (para 269)
3. the Department of Social Security, as the Department responsible for the administration of the Homeless Persons Act:
  - (a) encourage the appropriate local government authority and relevant Aboriginal organisation to apply for funding for the establishment of night shelters for homeless Aboriginals; and
  - (b) give favourable consideration to such requests for funding when the need for such shelters is established; (para 277)
4. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs be responsible for, and consult with local Aboriginal communities, relevant local government authorities and Aboriginal Hostels Limited about evaluating the need for alternative style accommodation for transients; (para 288)
5. funding be provided to an appropriate agency to establish transient facilities where the need for such facilities has been established; (para 288)
6. the charter of Aboriginal Hostels Limited be reviewed to allow it to provide alternative type accommodation for transients where it is the appropriate funding agency; (para 288)
7. local Aboriginal organisations be given the responsibility for operating transient accommodation wherever possible; (para 288)
8. in the construction of such accommodation the design should be appropriate to the needs of the campers; (para 288)
9. an investigation should be undertaken, co-ordinated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and involving the Aboriginal Development Commission and relevant State and local government authorities, of communities occupying non-tenured land to determine whether:



- (a) those that have not already been surveyed as part of the survey of communities lacking adequate town services, wish to remain on the land;
  - (b) the land of permanent communities will continue to be available; and
  - (c) tenure can be obtained for the community; (para 301)
10. an investigation, co-ordinated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and involving the Aboriginal Development Commission and relevant State and local government authorities, should be undertaken of town camping communities occupying tenured land to determine whether:
    - (a) those that have not already been surveyed as part of the survey of communities lacking adequate town services, wish to remain on the land; and
    - (b) the land title meets the four principles of security of tenure; integrity of boundaries; self-management by the residents; and full consultation with communities affected, to allow development according to the community's wishes to take place; (para 322)
  11. where the land title does not meet the four principles to allow for development according to the community's wishes, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs have discussions with relevant State government authorities to obtain a more suitable form of title; (para 322)
  12. an investigation take place to determine the responsibility for provision of essential services in those camps with land tenure; (para 328)
  13. where local government has the responsibility for the provision of essential services, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs pursue the matter with the appropriate authority and include in its Annual Report details of the achievements and failures by the appropriate agencies in providing these essential services; (para 328)
  14. where local government does not have the responsibility for provision of essential services, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs consider inclusion of the communities in either its Community and Management Service Program or its Public Health Improvement Program; (para 328)
  15. New South Wales and the Northern Territory be urged to establish representative Aboriginal Housing Advisory Boards to their respective State Housing Commissions, and Queensland be urged to establish a representative Aboriginal Advisory Board to the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement; (para 363)
  16. the Aboriginal Development Commission:
    - (a) present a program for meeting the housing requirements of Aboriginal town campers, both as to type and location of houses and dwellings, by 1988; and
    - (b) be provided with increased funding to enable it to meet these requirements by 1988. (para 363)
  17. Aboriginal town campers be involved to the fullest possible extent in the provision of housing for their communities; (para 363)
  18. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs investigate expanding the Aboriginal Family Resettlement Program within New South Wales and extending the program to the other States and the Northern Territory; (para 363)
  19. local government authorities be consulted about all proposed housing developments both in the town camps and within the town; (para 363)

20. the procedure of specifying Aboriginal labour and materials in Commonwealth contracts continue where appropriate; (para 391)
21. the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations survey the training needs of Aboriginal town campers and develop appropriate training courses under its Special Manpower Training Scheme; (para 391)
22. the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations develop a program to encourage local government authorities to employ Aboriginals and to make Local Government aware of existing programs; (para 391)
23. discussions continue with all States and the Northern Territory to put in place the Government's policy of a marked increase in the degree of Aboriginal involvement in all stages of the provision of health care services by the end of 1983; (para 403)
24. in these discussions, special consideration be given to the plight of the town campers and to the benefits of having increased Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of health services to town campers in overcoming the health problems of the town campers; (para 403)
25. the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs take steps to encourage:
  - (a) the recruitment of more Aboriginal police and police aides; and
  - (b) the formation of Aboriginal-police liaison committees at both the State and local level, and particularly in centres with town camping communities; (para 416)
26. the Australian Law Reform Commission fully investigate the operation of community justice systems in town camping communities; (para 416)
27. the Aboriginal Development Commission investigate opportunities for Aboriginal-owned taxi operations; (para 419)
28. where such investigations are favourable, the Aboriginal Development Commission take appropriate measures; (para 419)
29. the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs investigate the feasibility of establishing the Community Development Employment Projects program under an Act of Parliament; (para 430)
30. the Aboriginal Development Commission:
  - (a) expand its activities in the establishment of business enterprises such as stores and service stations to provide, on location, services to remote Aboriginal communities;
  - (b) be provided with adequate funding to allow for these activities; and
  - (c) include details in its Annual Report of employment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff at both the construction and trading stages of the enterprises; (para 433)
31. the Department of Aboriginal Affairs review the level of support given to outstations with a view to increasing the level of support to more positively reflect the benefits from such developments; (para 436)
32. procedures to allow former residents of pastoral properties now living in town camps to apply to have areas excised from those pastoral properties be developed; (para 440)

33. that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs:

- (a) actively pursue its proposal for a public awareness campaign to improve understanding of Aboriginal people and society in the wider community; and
- (b) makes school-based education a particular focus of the campaign. (para 456)

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress.

2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Union.

3. The third part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

4. The fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

5. The fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

6. The sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

7. The seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

8. The eighth part is a report from the Secretary of the Education on the state of the Education.

9. The ninth part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

10. The tenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Labor on the state of the Labor.

11. The eleventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Finance on the state of the Finance.

12. The twelfth part is a report from the Secretary of the Justice on the state of the Justice.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **The Committee**

1. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs is required to inquire into and report on such matters relating to the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and the effect of policies and programs on them as are referred to it by—

- (a) resolution of the House, or
- (b) the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The Committee was first appointed by resolution of the House of Representatives on 16 May 1973. It has been re-appointed in successive Parliaments since then. It was appointed for the present Parliament on 3 December 1980.

#### **Terms of reference**

2. On 20 May 1981, the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator the Hon. Peter Baume, referred the following matter to the Committee for inquiry and report:

The economic and social problems of Aboriginal communities and groups living on the fringes of cities, country towns and other communities, and the development of strategies to overcome these problems.

#### **Conduct of the inquiry**

3. The inquiry was advertised in 37 newspapers in all States and Territories during the week of 12–18 June 1981. The Committee sought written submissions from Aboriginal organisations and associations, relevant Commonwealth, State and Local Government bodies, various academic and tertiary institutions, and other groups in the community. As well, the Committee invited submissions from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals. The editors of Aboriginal publications were informed of the terms of reference for the inquiry.

4. The Committee examined 115 witnesses over 15 days of public hearings held in all State capitals, Darwin and Canberra. The names of witnesses and the organisations they represented are listed at Appendix I. Appendix II lists the persons and organisations who made submissions but did not appear at public hearings. During the inquiry the Committee received documents which were not suitable for incorporation in the transcript. The documents received were treated as exhibits and a list of the exhibits is at Appendix III. The formal record of the inquiry, which includes each submission and the transcript of oral evidence taken at the public hearings, extends over 3000 pages and is available for inspection at the House of Representatives Committee Office, the Australian National Library, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

5. Sixty-nine written submissions were received and considered by the Committee. Where possible the Committee published the submissions received prior to the examination of the witnesses. This procedure allowed additional time for comment on the published material.

6. To gain an appreciation of the social and economic problems of the Aboriginal communities the Committee visited 23 towns and cities. Appendix IV lists the towns and cities visited. During the visits to these places the Committee held informal discussions with a wide range of organisations and individuals. The Committee was conscious of the need to seek the views of the non-Aboriginal community. Accordingly the Committee sought out and had discussions with a number of local government councils as local government will be very involved in any strategies to overcome the problems. The Committee found these discussions to be extremely informative since they were able to provide another perspective to the problems. Chapter 7 of this report is devoted to the role local government authorities can play in implementing the strategies devised by the Committee. A further initiative was taken in the Northern Territory where the Committee arranged public meetings. The response to the meetings varied but the meetings did, in the Committee's view, contribute not only to the inquiry but to the dialogue between the residents of the town and those involved in the fringe camps.

7. The co-operation and assistance given to the Committee during the course of the inquiry is acknowledged. The Committee would like to thank all witnesses who gave evidence, and other individuals and organisations who made submissions. In particular, the Committee is most grateful to members of the Aboriginal communities and organisations who imparted valuable information during informal discussions.

8. The Committee received co-operation from all the State Governments except Queensland, and would like to thank those governments for their assistance. The non co-operation of the Queensland Government was a matter of extreme disappointment to the Committee and has been commented on in a separate report. This lack of co-operation was in contrast to the generous assistance received in other States and the Northern Territory. During the course of the inquiry the Committee was assisted by area officers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) and would like to place on record its thanks for the assistance.

9. The Committee is also indebted to the National Aboriginal Conference for its assistance during the inquiry, and to the representatives who often accompanied the Committee on its inspections.

### **Importance of the Inquiry**

10. As noted in the foreword, while this inquiry is important to the people living in fringe situations, it is of importance to all Aboriginals. According to DAA:

... the fringe-dwellers' situation may make the effectiveness of policies generally for Aboriginal advancement even more difficult to achieve.<sup>1</sup>

### **Previous Committee Reports**

11. Previous reports of the Committee have recognised three different groups within the Aboriginal community, namely: urban Aboriginals; fringe-dwelling Aboriginals; and traditionally-oriented Aboriginals. It was acknowledged that the composition and nature of the different groups fluctuates and that the groups were not mutually exclusive. Further, it was suggested that many of the problems experienced by Aboriginals are common to all groups in varying degrees.

12. The report on Aboriginal Legal Aid by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of August 1980 (Aboriginal Legal Aid Report), defined fringe-dwelling Aboriginals:

The term 'fringe-dwelling Aboriginals' is used to denote Aboriginal persons who live on the fringes of both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures but belong fully to neither; in particular, it refers to Aboriginals who live on the outskirts of or within a non-Aboriginal community who have acquired some of the traits or values common to it but who are neither typical of nor accorded the same status as other members of that community.<sup>2</sup>

That same report noted that the legal problems of Aboriginals living in country towns are more readily identifiable and noted that the 'fringe-dwelling Aboriginals are generally given little assistance to make the transition to town life and experience particular social and cultural problems in their efforts to function effectively within the new community'.<sup>3</sup>

13. The report on Aboriginal Health by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of March 1979 (Aboriginal Health Report) also commented on the special needs of the fringe-dwellers. The report noted that the fringe-dwellers were severely disadvantaged and needed adequate housing and access to community services. The Committee noted that Aboriginals undergoing the transition to town life do not receive sufficient assistance and made specific recommendations for priority funding and an investigation into responsibilities for the services to fringe camps.

14. In the report on the Alcohol Problems of Aboriginals by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of October 1977 (Aboriginal Alcohol Report), it was noted that Aboriginals living on reserves outside country towns were found to have serious drinking problems related to their very low socio-economic status. The evidence was that most males and some females were very heavy drinkers and that a large proportion of the income of Aboriginals was spent on alcohol.

### Definition

15. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, in referring the inquiry to the Committee, did not provide a definition of a fringe-dwelling community. As noted in paragraphs 11 and 12, the Committee has in past reports considered three groups of Aboriginals, namely, urban, traditional and fringe-dwelling. The Committee, however, was presented with differing concepts of what is represented by a fringe-dwelling Aboriginal.

16. The suggestion that all Aboriginal people were fringe-dwellers was made in a number of submissions. Mr Robert Bropho, author of the book, *The Fringedweller*, claimed in a letter to the Committee:

All Aboriginal people became fringedwellers the day the white man set foot upon this continent. All Aboriginal people are fringedwellers until land is given back.<sup>4</sup>

17. The Chairman of the National Aboriginal Education Committee, Mr J. Budby, referred to the problems of definition:

... the use of fringe-dweller in the broad sense could refer to those people who have a position in society which is on the fringe of acceptance into mainstream society. If you consider this as being a definition for fringe-dwelling, then the total Aboriginal society would be fringe-dwellers.<sup>5</sup>

18. The Commissioner for Community Relations and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre expressed similar views.

19. By contrast, DAA took a much more restricted definition, though acknowledging that there was no universally accepted definition:

DAA defines fringe dwellers as any group of Aboriginals which lives as an identifiable unit at or near predominantly non-Aboriginal townships and which is substantially dependent on the township for provision of goods and services, but is physically removed from the town proper.<sup>6</sup>

20. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs accepted that a broader definition could include residents on large reserves and camps at pastoral homesteads, but suggested that the problems facing these groups 'are different from those facing those people commonly referred to as 'fringe dwellers''.<sup>7</sup> Homeless and destitute individuals in cities were also excluded.

21. The Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC) adopted the following definition:

Fringe Dwelling Aboriginal Communities are those Communities living under sub-standard conditions on the outskirts of cities or towns including homeless and transient Aboriginal people.<sup>8</sup>

The ADC asserted that the communities did not have any influence in the social life of the town nor did the members of the community belong to the various social organisations and groupings within the town community. According to the ADC, there is 'little or no interaction with the non Aboriginal residents of the town to which their community is a satellite'.<sup>9</sup>

22. A compromise between these two approaches was taken by the Victorian Government which saw the term 'fringe community' needing a broader definition than that of just geographical location. It said that:

Most Aborigines are on the fringe of communities both economically and socially, even if they live within a city or town.<sup>10</sup>

It highlighted the problems which:

the majority of Aborigines in all communities face, and which combine to make them fringe dwellers and socially isolated, whilst living in the wider Australian community.<sup>11</sup>

Groups of homeless and destitute individuals living in cities were thus included as fringe-dwellers by the Victorian Government.

23. The Commonwealth Department of Health (Dept of Health) took the broader definition of the Legal Aid Report, regarding Aboriginal fringe-dwellers as 'marginal' members of society. Based on this definition the Dept of Health identified three categories of fringe-dwellers. Firstly, there are the permanent fringe-dwellers who live in substandard and permanent dwellings on the outskirts of towns. Secondly, there are transient short-term fringe-dwellers who come to town to conduct business or seek pleasure in an urban environment unrestricted by traditional controls on behaviour. These generally return to the family or tribal area when the purpose for their visit is achieved. Thirdly, there are the homeless drifters. These are generally destitute alcoholics, but their ranks may have been increased by the short-term homeless.

24. A number of submissions were critical of the use of the term 'fringe-dweller'. Dr M. Heppell and Mr J. Wigley in their book, *Black out in Alice*, (Heppell & Wigley) (Exhibit No. 17) noted:

In the white view, then 'fringe-dweller' is an ascribed social status describing those Aborigines who do not conform to European standards of behaviour, who should be resident in an appropriate establishment set up for them where proper behaviour can be learnt, but who have rejected this 'better way' and hang on, living in small groups where they can and eking out an existence on the fringes of society.<sup>12</sup>

Heppell and Wigley went on to note that the expression 'fringe-dweller' is a non-Aboriginal one of opprobrium, having little currency for Aborigines.



25. Dr D. Bell believed that an alternative term to 'fringe camp' or 'fringe-dweller', which had connotations of semi-permanency and marginality, was needed. A number of the communities had long term associations with the towns and cities and she pointed to the social structures that had developed in the communities. Dr Bell believed that 'fringe-dwellers' should be referred to as 'town campers' as they formed a significant group within the towns. Dr Bell stated:

The term 'fringe' gives the idea that they are peripheral, transient and somewhat haphazard. It gives some weight to statements like ring-barking. It makes people look as if they have no rights, where they are, as if they are on the fringe. It suggests that in some sense they have different sorts of claims whereas the term town campers locates people within the town. It indicates that they are camping there and camping in Aboriginal terms means living.<sup>13</sup>

26. This view was supported by Dr E. Young who claimed the terms 'fringe camp' or 'fringe-dwellers' suggested that members of these groups were not committed to urban life and were essentially itinerants. Dr Young agreed that the term 'town camp' should be substituted to define:

Aboriginal groups which, in varying degrees, form part of the socio-cultural structure of the town (i.e. are not 'fringe' people) but which, for many reasons, have a lifestyle which does not conform to that of the majority of European residents.<sup>14</sup>

27. Dr Drakakis-Smith also referred to 'fringe-dweller' as a non-Aboriginal expression of opprobrium defining Aboriginals 'who have chosen to live in towns but who, in the official view, have no right to be there'.<sup>15</sup>

28. The Committee is conscious of the range of economic and social issues confronting the Aboriginal community and acknowledges, on the basis of their exclusion from mainstream society, the argument for treating those Aboriginal people as a fringe-dwelling community. However, the Committee believes that this reference requires it to report on the circumstances of a particular group of Aboriginal people which is probably the most disadvantaged within the Aboriginal community and which has problems which need a separate focus.

29. The Committee accepts the arguments of those who suggested that the term 'town campers' should be substituted for 'fringe-dwellers' so that the connotations of semi-permanency and marginality connected with 'fringe-dwelling' are avoided. It is acknowledged that the Committee's definition of fringe-dwelling Aboriginals in the Aboriginal Legal Aid Report, while accurately defining fringe-dwellers, did convey a sense of marginality of the communities and another definition should be developed.

30. The definition of town campers provided by Dr Young is inadequate for the Committee's purposes for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Committee identified some town campers located within major cities, e.g. the 'parkies' of Fitzroy and the Lockridge community in Perth. Secondly, to distinguish town campers from the other Aboriginal residents of towns, it is necessary to refer to town campers as 'groups of Aboriginals living at identified camp sites near or within towns or cities'. These camp sites have been identified by the Committee, based on information supplied by the ADC, DAA and the Victorian Government, at Appendix V. Thirdly, this report focuses on those town campers in greatest need, and the town camping communities which have been provided with essential services and housing on a basis comparable to the rest of the community, e.g. the Tingha community in northern New South Wales, have been excluded for the purposes of this inquiry.

31. The Committee has therefore adopted the following definition of town campers:

Town campers are any group of Aboriginals living at identified camp sites near or within towns or cities which form part of the socio-cultural structure of the towns and cities, but

which have a lifestyle that does not conform to that of the majority of non-Aboriginal residents and are not provided with essential services and housing on a basis comparable to the rest of the community.

32. For the purpose of this inquiry, town camp communities are considered to be made up of three types as outlined by the Dept of Health, the permanents, the transients and the homeless drifters. In making this classification the Committee acknowledges that it is not possible to provide a precise identification of Aboriginals who fall within each category as there would be some overlap in the classifications. There would also be movement from one classification to another.

33. As town camp communities, the three groups share similar problems, but the differing nature of the groups means that they will have differing needs and that differing strategies will need to be devised. The needs and problems facing these groups, as well as strategies designed to overcome them, will be considered in the ensuing chapters. Before proceeding to detail these needs the Committee will outline what it considers led to the establishment of the communities and general characteristics of town camps.

### Endnotes

1. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs Inquiry into Fringe-dwelling Aboriginal Communities, Transcript of Evidence, pp. 684-5.
2. *Aboriginal Legal Aid*, Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, PP 149(1980), paragraph 12.
3. *Aboriginal Legal Aid Report*, paragraph 40.
4. Evidence, p. 905.
5. Evidence, p. 1717.
6. Evidence, p. 6.
7. Evidence, p. 5.
8. Evidence, p. 3037.
9. Evidence, p. 3037.
10. Evidence, p. 1617.
11. Evidence, p. 1617.
12. Heppell, M. and J.J. Wigley, *Black out in Alice: A history of the establishment and development of town camps in Alice Springs*, Development Studies Centre, Monograph No. 26, Australian National University, Canberra, 1981, p. 14.
13. Evidence, p. 2727.
14. Evidence, p. 1747.
15. Evidence, p. 290.

## CHAPTER 2

### Causes

#### Introduction

34. In this chapter the Committee considers the reasons which have caused some Aboriginals to adopt the lifestyle of the town camper. The reasons are considered for each of the three classifications referred to in Chapter 1, the permanents, the transients and the homeless drifter.

35. From the earliest European settlement in Australia, Aboriginal people have been forced into, or attracted to, non-Aboriginal communities. Aboriginals were forced to move from their land by settlers and pastoralists who took away their traditional hunting grounds and water holes. Facing starvation because of the destruction of traditional sources of food, many Aboriginals gravitated towards European settlements simply to survive.

36. Other Aboriginals were enticed towards settlements by the desire to experience what they believed were the attractions of the European lifestyle. The continual expansion onto Aboriginal land made it difficult to return to the bush, and Aboriginal town campers became a permanent feature of many non-Aboriginal communities.

37. According to DAA, the location of the town camps 'reflect in part the historic pattern of development perceived by State governments which saw it as convenient to set apart small areas of land near centres of white settlement'.<sup>16</sup>

38. In northern Australia, Aboriginal people are, by a variety of circumstances, continuing to be forced into, or attracted towards, towns and cities. The Darwin Office of Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services suggested a combination of push-pull factors caused Aboriginals to come to Darwin. The pull factors included hospitalisation, visiting relations, attending meetings or courts, as well as seeking employment and for drinking. The push factors were social tensions within the home community and inability to find employment. These push factors created exiles from the home community, either by choice or by force. This combination of factors had led some Aboriginals to take up permanent residence in town camps and others to adopt the town camper lifestyle temporarily or to become homeless drifters.

39. The factors that have led to the creation of permanent town campers are discussed below. Some of these factors no longer operate in some areas. For example, the escape from traditional authority or poor conditions in home communities would not be factors in many parts of New South Wales and Victoria.

#### Permanents

##### *Loss of employment opportunities*

40. Economic developments within primary industries, following increased mechanisation and the need to pay minimum award wages, created pressures that left many Aboriginals with little alternative but to leave the stations to seek employment and welfare services in the towns. Technological improvements in primary industry have reduced the number of job opportunities available to an unskilled workforce of which the Aboriginal community makes up a significant proportion. Reference was also made

by DAA (W.A.) to the effects of the 1968 amendment of the pastoral industry award of Western Australia:

We think that this resulted in a rapid deterioration of the system that had supported the extended families and groups on pastoral properties, usually in locations which had been of some traditional significance to them for many decades. Whilst wages began to be paid at award rates, employment became seasonal and large numbers drifted to nearby towns and centres. Alternative employment and facilities were scarce or non-existent and their lack contributed significantly to the creation of a fringe-dweller type lifestyle in some of these areas.<sup>17</sup>

41. The Report of the Committee of Review of the Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory (Gibb Report) referred to the effects of the introduction of award rates and the change in drinking laws on the attitude of pastoralists towards the employment of Aborigines. Some pastoralists had replaced Aborigines with non-Aboriginal stockmen. Of a sample of 17 properties employment of Aboriginal males fell by 122 from 383 to 261 between 1965 and 1971. At the same time there was an increase in employment of non-Aboriginal males of 111, from 168 to 279. The report also referred to one instance where the Aboriginal community had been encouraged to move off the property.

42. The following table from the Gibb Report<sup>18</sup> shows that between 1956 and 1969 while the Aboriginal population in the Northern Territory increased from 17 042 to 21 394, the number of Aborigines resident on pastoral properties declined from 5393 to 4305.

Table 1:

Date	Aboriginal population	Aborigines resident on pastoral properties	Aborigines on P.P.'s as % of total
31.12.56	17 042	5 393	32
31.12.61	18 677	5 727	31
(Information not available for intervening years.)			
31.12.65	19 681	4 676	24
31.12.67	20 549	4 212	21
31.12.69	21 394	4 305	20
1982*	29 100	3 600	12

\* Supplied by the Northern Territory Administration, October 1982.

### *Escape from pressures of town*

43. The camps are a refuge for those who have not been able to come to terms with urban life. They provide 'a haven or refuge from pressures of the European and general Australian society'.<sup>19</sup> Many Aborigines who have lived in a town environment not only have had to cope with poverty and unemployment, but also have encountered racism, prejudice, discrimination, and disproportionate attention from the law and its enforcers. The result of this has been to heighten tensions and attitudes to such an extent that social separation has occurred. They move to the town camps where they feel more secure living with other Aborigines and sharing each other's problems. Knowledge of a hostile town environment has inhibited many from leaving the town camps.

44. The financial responsibilities of maintaining a home in a town have caused Aborigines to move back to town camps. Payment of rent takes a low position of priority when an Aboriginal has limited funds. In addition, the prospect of a more relaxed lifestyle and freedom from responsibilities such as budgeting, house cleaning and conforming to society's expectation of behaviour have attracted many to the town camps.

45. For those able to acquire accommodation, problems can be encountered maintaining it. Homemaker services have experienced difficulties in teaching families about suburban living (e.g. using household appliances, and storing poisons and inflammables away from children). Additionally, families coming from reserves were used to lighting being turned on and off at certain times and found it difficult to use electricity efficiently. This has occurred even though Aboriginals are rigorously screened for 'suitable experience' with suburban living.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Satisfying environment*

46. A number of the submissions noted that many people found the town camps provide a satisfying environment. The environment allows them to avoid the pressures of living in town while providing access to the services of the town. Dr Bell claimed that the camps are defiantly Aboriginal in their emphasis on family, sharing and the transmission of religious values, beliefs and practices.

47. Many reasons are given as to why town camps are chosen to reside in rather than townships. To many, it is a way of preserving an Aboriginal lifestyle. Town camps provide the only residential environment (apart from outstations) which are not subject to the direct control of non-Aboriginal individuals or authority. Aboriginals who have moved from the towns to the camps have stated the move was prompted by a desire to be more independent.

48. According to the ADC, Aboriginal people on Special Purposes Leases in the Northern Territory can seek happiness in town camps if they are adequately developed. The lifestyle can offer advantages to permanent dwellers. The ADC claimed these advantages include:

- Aboriginal groups are in a position to make decisions affecting their lifestyle;
- these settings assist in stabilising community members' lives;
- settings are usually less institutionalised;
- an easing of race relations problems;
- allows families to regroup;
- some groups are located on land which has traditional significance;
- easy access to employment, health and welfare services; and
- cheaper living costs.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Escape from traditional authority*

49. Some permanents of the camps have chosen (or been forced) to relinquish their traditional lifestyle. Tribal authority is not recognised in many camp situations and some Aboriginals have fled to the camps after violating tribal laws or to escape initiation ceremonies. Others have been expelled from their communities or leave due to a lack of marriageable women.

50. Aboriginal children who have been educated in non-Aboriginal schools have encountered re-adjustment problems on returning to their home communities. Some have subsequently found it necessary to leave their traditional lifestyle and move to a town camp.

#### *Conditions in home communities*

51. The ADC suggested that the conditions in home communities were among the reasons for town camps being established since the conditions in home communities

were often no better than those in town camps. The choice was either 'to live in Hermannsburg in a disgusting situation or to go to Alice Springs and live in the creek beds'.<sup>22</sup>

52. This was supported by DAA (W.A.) which gave the example of the situation in Kalgoorlie. Most of the town campers in Kalgoorlie had come from Cundeelee where facilities were inadequate:

The Cundeelee people who make up the greatest majority of fringe-dwelling people in Kalgoorlie tend to move backwards and forwards. But there are now, as time goes by, people becoming more or less permanent residents. These are from Cundeelee. What they have done is weigh up the advantages of living at Cundeelee as opposed to living in Kalgoorlie and Kalgoorlie is more attractive to them. So there is now, as I understand it, a tendency for these people to become more permanent and to stay in Kalgoorlie for longer periods.<sup>23</sup>

53. The Chairman of the ADC commented that facilities such as a post office, paved roads, electricity, a health centre, decent education and reasonable schools would be expected in a normal non-Aboriginal community of 200 to 300 people yet such facilities were not provided in many Aboriginal communities.

#### *Government decisions*

54. Decisions may have an impact which was not intended at the time a decision was made. One example was the system of housing allocation in the towns, whereby priority was given to fatherless families. The men often live in the camps in order to be near their female relatives and children.

55. Decisions to provide facilities in a town may draw people to the town when the facilities are established. On other occasions decisions such as the establishment of the Woomera Rocket Range have meant that the Aboriginal people have been relocated.

#### *Transients*

56. A number of submissions noted that an Aboriginal could, when he comes to town for whatever purpose, be classed as a town camper should he stay in one of the town camps. These visitors treat the camps as stopover points, generally staying for short periods and either returning home or continuing on once the purpose of the visit is fulfilled, finances are depleted or the hospitality of the friends and relatives ends.

57. On a number of occasions it was suggested that camps had been established to allow for access to alcohol by people from communities which had decided to ban alcohol from the community. It had been contended that these people then come to the towns and cities in search of alcohol. A survey by the Northern Territory Government had found that there was no concrete evidence that the declaration of 'dry areas' in home communities had had the effect of increasing the numbers of people moving into Darwin and other centres to drink.

58. Other reasons for coming to the towns were the services available at those towns such as shopping for food, clothing and equipment, as well as the attendance at meetings, conferences and courses and to sell artifacts. The range of services provided by the town generally exceeded those available in the Aboriginal communities and had a special attraction. Families had also come to town to visit relatives in prison. With Aborigines representing a disproportionate percentage of the prison population this factor is of some importance.

59. It was also suggested that workers on cattle stations came to town during the wet season when work was not available on the pastoral properties. An example was of the

population of town camps in Katherine which increased by about 25-35 per cent during the wet season.

60. Special events, both traditional and non-traditional, also attracted people to the town. Mention was made of the Mount Isa rodeo which caused an influx of people to Mount Isa. The Western Australian Government referred to a number of reserve communities in the North Eastern Goldfields which made visits to Laverton, Wiluna and Meekatharra for tribal law purposes. The visits can last 2 to 3 months.

61. Due to lack of medical facilities in the home communities, Aboriginals often need to come to town to obtain treatment for themselves or their children. They stay in camps while the treatment is being provided. Other services such as the Legal Service, the Department of Social Security and the Commonwealth Employment Service also draw people to the town.

62. Since there is a strong sense of kinship, Aboriginals often visit relatives permanently residing in the camps or townships, especially around school holiday times. For the young and those in search of an alternative lifestyle, the lure of 'bright lights' stimulates the occasional foray into a European style living.

### **Homeless drifter**

63. The third group is the homeless drifter. Their existence is brought about by the interaction of many negative forces, but poverty and alcoholism appear to be the most influential.

64. The Aboriginal Alcohol Report concluded that:

... poverty exacerbates alcohol problems of persons in the lower socio-economic groups, and vice versa.<sup>24</sup>

Further, the interaction between alcohol and poverty has led to the disintegration of families, kinship systems, community structures and cultural heritage. The Kalano Community Association (Kalano) reports that the authority of older Aboriginal people is on the decline, and this decline is directly attributable to social pressures caused by drinking. Also, families have broken up, resulting in communities whose age structures provide them with unbalanced social systems. Under these conditions, and coupled with lost traditional land ties, some Aboriginals have become apathetic and assumed the lifestyle of homeless drifters.

65. Unemployment contributes to this sense of apathy and despair. The continuing lack of employment opportunities increases the stress placed on an individual and can lead to problem drinking with ever decreasing likelihood of re-entry into the workforce.

66. In summary, the Dept of Health offers a description of homeless drifters as being:

... frequently destitute and frequently alcoholic who live in parks, under bridges or in deserted buildings. They have come to this lifestyle by their lack of ability to compete for work and their addiction to alcohol. Their needs are markedly different from those of other groups. Their ranks may be increased by the short-term homeless, or by young people leaving their former homes because of family disputes or breakdown.<sup>25</sup>

The Dept of Health warns that such young people are in danger of becoming trapped in that 'drunken, demeaning form of existence'.

### **Endnotes**

16. Evidence, p. 682.

17. Evidence, p. 942.

18. *The Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory*, Report of the Committee of Review, December 1971, Parl. Paper No. 62, 1972, p. 22.

19. Evidence, p. 682.
20. Evidence, p. 299.
21. Evidence, p. 2149.
22. Evidence, p. 2074.
23. Evidence, p. 949.
24. *Alcohol Problems of Aborigines*, Final Report of House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, PP 299 (1977), paragraph 15.
25. Evidence, p. 806.



## CHAPTER 3

### Features

#### Introduction

67. In the first chapter the Committee provides a definition for the purposes of this inquiry. The reasons why Aboriginals live in camps on the outskirts of Australian towns and cities were considered in Chapter 2. In this chapter the features of these camps are considered. *Conditions vary from camp to camp and even within camps. The number of people residing in a camp will vary considerably according to the time of the year.*

68. Perceptions of a camp also vary. The non-Aboriginal perceptions of the camps are generally negative. The camps are in stark contrast to a planned suburban development, with makeshift dwellings erected with no apparent regard for town planning principles. The image held of the inhabitants is that of poverty, helplessness, lack of appropriate hygiene facilities and perhaps drunkenness. According to DAA the most noticeable features were inadequate housing, poor employment prospects, chronic ill health, lack of effective social organisation and marital and extended family disintegration.

69. There is an established social structure within most camps and camp life does appeal to many of the town campers. The Commonwealth Department of Education (Dept of Education) noted that town camping communities often see themselves as members of a close knit community 'where the needs of the community are paramount to the needs of the individual within that community'.<sup>26</sup> The Department went on to refer to the lack of radio, television and newspapers which meant there was little knowledge of the outside world. Communities tended to be inward looking. The town camp communities are generally based on close family relationships. According to Dr Bell there are very clear family structures and there are very clear decision-making processes in the camps.

70. Professor Sansom, in his submission to the inquiry, suggested there were two types of camps and each had an established social structure. One type of camp was that made up of people who have a long association with a particular area. This was the 'local community'. Examples of this type of community are the Larrakia people of Kulaluk in Darwin, and Mr R. Bropho's group in Guildford, W.A. The second type was the 'hinterland Aboriginal community'. During the wet season the group lived together in the town camp while at other times of the year many of the residents were absent from the camp for extended periods. This group regarded its home as another location such as a cattle station. The group was generally of mixed tribal origins and would speak a number of languages.

71. The Northern Territory Government, in its submission, noted there were two types of camps. One was the 'lie down' or permanent camps where people sleep or live on a more or less permanent basis. The other was the 'sit down' or temporary camps. These were camps of convenience and their purpose was a factor influencing their location. It could be proximity to a liquor outlet or a hostel. These camps were usually on grassed areas, with ample shade and close to a public toilet or similar construction.

## Population

### General

72. Estimates of the number of camp residents in Australia vary according to the definition adopted and to the time of the year. DAA provided the Committee with estimates which were generally agreed to by both the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the ADC. According to DAA, there were 144 communities with a population of 13 800 as at July 1981. This was later revised to 140 communities with a population of 11 415. The revision concerned the estimates for Queensland. The ADC provided details of the 117 communities it considered were town camp communities. These communities had an estimated population of 11 741. The population of the communities fluctuates from time to time and this made it difficult to estimate the numbers in each community.

73. One feature of the estimates was the high proportion of transients in South Australia (50 per cent) and the Northern Territory (41 per cent) when compared with New South Wales (11 per cent) and Western Australia (10 per cent).

74. The population estimates by DAA of the 140 fringe communities did not include those town camps which have become a part of the urban community in a number of cities and towns. This excluded many of the established town camps in Alice Springs. By contrast the ADC included the 14 Alice Springs communities on Special Purpose Leases.

75. Details were provided by DAA of a second survey of 68 communities, with a population of 3352 persons, lacking adequate town services. These 68 communities had been identified by DAA as town camping communities in its first survey referred to in paragraph 72. The communities were referred to as B3 communities and were defined by DAA as:

A group or groups of Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders living at an identified location or camp site near or within an urban area, and having different arrangements from the town for sewage disposal and/or water supply and/or lighting etc., or no such facilities at all.<sup>27</sup>

Of the 68 communities, 25 (pop. 967) did not want a change in lifestyle; 34 groups, representing 1743 persons wanted to improve their lifestyle and the remaining nine communities (pop. 642) were made up of short term residents or transients.

76. The estimates of numbers of town campers in each State by both the ADC and DAA are set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Estimated number of Town Camp Communities and population by State**

State	DAA (first survey September 1981, as amended)		DAA (communities lacking adequate town services)		ADC	
	No. of camps	Population	No. of camps	Population	No. of camps	Population
N.S.W.	59	6 330	20	792	23	922
N.T.	23	1 150	8	340	36	2 685
QLD	23	1 565	13	469	25	3 663
S.A.	4	370	3	195	4	370
TAS.	..	..	..	..	..	..
VIC.	..	..	..	..	..	..
W.A.	31	2 000	24	1 556	29	4 101
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>11 415</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3 352</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>11 741</b>

Source: Evidence, pp. 1557-8, 3168, 3072-3107

### *New South Wales*

77. It was suggested by Dr Eckermann that most country towns in New South Wales have one or more reserves or missions where Aboriginal people live socially and economically segregated lives. DAA estimated there were 59 town camping communities in New South Wales with a population of 6330 of whom 700 were considered to be transient. Of the camps in New South Wales only 13 were listed as having a transient population. The communities ranged in population from around 600 at both Stanley Village and Top Camp in Moree, to a camp with only three people at North Bourke. However, 18 of the camps had a population of over 100 and eight had a population of less than 20. Twenty-two of the camps were listed as reserves.

78. There were an estimated 20 communities lacking adequate town services in New South Wales with a population of 792. Of these communities, 12 did not want changes to their present situation, two were transient groups, and six communities (pop. 344) wanted to improve their standard of living. Eight of the communities with a population of 587 were on Aboriginal Lands Trust land. The ADC identified 23 camps in New South Wales, with an estimated total population of 792 persons.

### *Western Australia*

79. According to DAA, there were 31 town camps in Western Australia with a population of 2000 persons of whom only 200 were considered transient. Of the communities 24 were classified as lacking adequate town services. The population of these communities was 1556. Of the 24 communities, 12 (pop. 662) were on unacceptable sites, and eight (pop. 552) did not want any change. The ADC identified only 29 camps in Western Australia, however there were over 4100 persons in the camps. There were five communities in the Perth metropolitan area, with a total population of over 2200.

80. The Western Australian Department of Community Welfare (DCW) administers 19 reserves within the north of the State. It was estimated that around 800 people lived on the reserves. The Department had, under a program funded by DAA, closed eight reserves in the south-west of the State. Thirty families were rehoused in conventional housing in the towns. The Department also noted there were groups who live around country towns other than on the reserves.

### *Queensland*

81. DAA estimated there were 27 town camps in Queensland with a population of 4000, however this was later revised to 23 communities with a population of approximately 1565 persons. Only seven of the communities (pop. 150) in Queensland occupied non-tenured land.

82. The ADC identified 27 communities in Queensland. A community of 800 people (of a population of 1800) on Palm Island was included by ADC but not DAA. DAA suggested that the Palm Island residents were not outside the mainstream society. In addition, there were a number of groups of homeless people who lived in the creek or river beds. The ADC identified such groups in Rockhampton, Townsville, Mackay, Charters Towers and Tully. There was a group of from 40 to 60 Aboriginal people who spent most of the day in Musgrave Park, Brisbane.

### *Northern Territory*

83. There were 23 town camps in the Northern Territory according to DAA. These communities had a population of 1150 of whom 700 were permanent. Sixteen of the communities, with a population of 500, occupied non-tenured land, and 19 of the communities, with a population of 900, did not have any services. As noted earlier, a number of communities on Special Purpose Leases in the Territory were, because of their development, considered to be part of the town.

84. In contrast the ADC considered the groups on Special Purpose Leases should be included since 'they clearly have shown what fringe-dwelling groups can achieve when given recognition and support from Government sources'.<sup>28</sup> The ADC identified 14 such communities around Alice Springs, three in Katherine, three in Darwin, three in Tennant Creek and one in Elliott.

85. Details of groups living in Alice Springs on non-tenured land were also provided by the ADC. There were 14 such groups and the population fluctuated. Four of the groups (with a population of around 100) were in permanent camps. Each of these camps had made application for a Special Purpose Lease. There were also nine groups living in temporary camps. These included the creekbeds and pockets of land in and around the town proper. It was suggested that the people in the camps 'aren't able to adjust to living in permanent camp settings'.<sup>29</sup>

86. The Northern Territory Government provided details of a survey of town camps within the Territory. The survey included the residents on Special Purpose Leases. It noted that there was no single definition of a town camp but provided an estimate of the permanent town camp population. In Darwin it was estimated there were 85 residents, in Katherine 228, in Tennant Creek 160, and in Alice Springs 1500. It was noted that several hundred of the Alice Springs residents were transients.

87. Any estimate of the numbers of town campers in the Northern Territory will depend in part on the definition adopted. As can be seen from Alice Springs, different organisations made different interpretations of the definition and came up with different results. However, there are town campers in the Territory whose problems can and should be tackled.

### *South Australia*

88. The South Australian Government identified four groups of Aboriginal people in South Australia which fitted the town camper category. The first group, which could number up to 50, were people living in the sandhills at Port Augusta. The second group, of about 20 people, lived at a camp outside Ceduna. There were also groups of people living around the towns of Oodnadatta and Coober Pedy. This was supported by the DAA survey which found there were four communities in South Australia with a population of 370, of whom 200 were transient. Several ex-reserve communities in South Australia were excluded because of their level of social and economic organisation and the permanency of the communities. The ADC also identified four communities in South Australia.

89. The second DAA survey of communities without adequate town services, found three communities (pop. 195) in this category. Only one community (pop. 40) considered its site unacceptable.

### *Victoria/Tasmania*

90. According to DAA, there were no town camp communities in Victoria or Tasmania. The Victorian Government suggested that there were groups within that State,

at Lake Tyers, Framlingham and Melbourne, which could be considered town campers. The Tasmanian Government considered that a strong case could be made that all Aborigines in Tasmania were fringe dwellers and this was supported by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. However, as noted earlier, in order to concentrate on the circumstances of a particular group of Aborigines which is probably the most disadvantaged within the Aboriginal community, the Committee has had to adopt a more restricted definition. On the basis of this definition, Tasmanian Aborigines have been excluded from the Committee's inquiry.

91. Lake Tyers has a population of 120-130 permanents and 60 transients. The transient population see the Aboriginal community at Lake Tyers as an alternative to living in the nearby towns. It was suggested there was an urgent need for housing at Lake Tyers. There was also the comparatively small population of about 40 at Framlingham in the Western Districts of Victoria. The community has severe problems of isolation and there are inadequate services and facilities. There were seven houses on the settlement with other people living in substandard conditions in dairies, caravans and a bus.

92. There were 30-40 homeless men who congregate in a park near a Housing Commission high-rise block in the suburb of Fitzroy in Melbourne.

### *Summary*

93. Both the ADC and DAA have identified town camps for the purposes of this inquiry. They have agreed on the inclusion of some camps but disagreed on others. The Victorian Government also suggested the inclusion of camps in that State. The Committee proposes that, subject to the agreement of the communities themselves, they all be considered as town camps and be included in the strategies proposed later in this report. Some of the camps, e.g. those on Special Purpose Leases in Alice Springs, have obtained land and funds for community development and will not have the same need for particular strategies as other town camps. The Committee believes though that the full range of strategies will be of benefit to all town campers regardless of their present circumstances. On this basis there are an estimated 206 town camp communities with a population of 15 650 to 19 600. A list of the town camps identified is at Appendix V.

**Table 3: Summary Statistics—Town Camps by State**

<i>State</i>	<i>No. of camps</i>	<i>Population</i>
New South Wales	63	5 860-6 547
Western Australia	37	3 491-4 892
Northern Territory	67	2 568-3 016
Queensland	32	3 403-4 288
South Australia	4	135-605
Victoria	3	190-270
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>15 647-19 618</b>

*Source:* Appendix V

### **Location**

94. Most of the camps are located on the geographical fringes of the towns which, while providing access to the services of the town, allow the camps a degree of autonomy. Camps located within urban boundaries often find themselves in conflict with the local authorities, largely due to their conspicuousness. Camps located away from towns are less likely to evoke opposition from the non-Aboriginal community.

95. Some camps which were initially located outside the town have, with urban expansion, become very much a part of the town. DAA noted that 'what was yesterday's fringe community may be tomorrow's suburb'.<sup>30</sup> Alternatively, the camps can be located on what is considered to be industrial land and thus create a problem for town planners.

96. The riverbank has been a factor influencing the choice of location as it can provide both shade and water. This choice of location can create problems in times of flood.

### **Physical environment**

97. According to the Dept of Health, the general picture is one of deprivation and includes buildings of low quality, often with overcrowding and lack of adequate safe water supplies, drainage and sewage services. The Department also made reference to the lack of adequate food storage facilities, electricity, sealed roads and grassed playing areas for children. Housing in the permanent camps, which is generally overcrowded, ranges from corrugated iron and hessian bag shacks to tiny cottages and standard housing.

98. According to DAA, there is a problem with improving the environment of camps which do not have secure tenure to the land. Shelters on these camps include lean-to's, wurlies and humpies. Construction materials are generally limited to those materials which are readily available.

99. The layout of shelter within the camps will generally reflect social organisation and kin relationship as well as making allowances for visitors. According to the Northern Territory Government: 'A sudden increase in population does not pose a problem as these structures are lived around, rather than in'.<sup>31</sup>

### **Social environment**

100. It was suggested that the social environment is negative. According to the Dept of Health, the camps are:

characterised by a poor environment, low economic status, low educational standards and severely limited employment opportunities which frequently create frustration, mental illness, family breakdown, child neglect, delinquency, apathy and helplessness as people find themselves trapped in a situation over which they have little control.<sup>32</sup>

This was supported by Dr Eckermann who referred to 'poor health/frequent under-employment/intra-group hostility such as fighting or malicious gossiping/ tension release behaviour such as drinking, gambling/conflict with the law/inter-group hostility such as fighting with non-Aborigines'.<sup>33</sup>

101. However, anthropologists have identified a positive social organisation within the camps which is reflected in camp layout. Dr Bell commented 'that some camps very often look as though they are haphazard but in fact once you get inside them you find they are structured along the same sorts of principles that a camp in any other Aboriginal community is structured'.<sup>34</sup>

### **Economic environment**

102. Most of the income derived by camp inhabitants is from government sources (pensions, sickness benefits, supporting mothers benefits, child endowment and unemployment benefits). One survey found that 76 per cent of Alice Springs camp residents receive some form of welfare assistance. However, the Northern Territory Government

survey found that 'relatively few Aboriginal campers receive funds from either the Department of Social Security or Community Welfare Division'.<sup>35</sup> The source of income for these camps was from the visitors to the camps:

The town camp economy depends to a large extent upon the holiday pays and wages of visiting relatives and miscellaneous cash gifts through obligatory skin relationships.<sup>36</sup>

Most expenditure was on food and transport (taxis) and to a lesser extent, alcohol.

103. The employment opportunities in the camps are few, though limited seasonal work may be available. This can range from stock work on pastoral properties to fruit picking and cotton chipping. However, these avenues can only offer limited scope. In general, the campers are limited to unskilled jobs because of their lack of education and camp location.

104. Employment details were provided by DAA for the communities lacking adequate town services identified in its second survey. The survey covered 68 camps with a population of 3352 and represented those camps which were considered to be the most deprived. The unemployment rate was 83.4 per cent and the labour force participation rate (total employed plus those unemployed who want to work as a proportion of the population over 15 years) was 42.8 per cent.

### Alcohol

105. Previous Committees have acknowledged the deleterious effects alcohol has had on Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal Alcohol Report cited statistical evidence which suggested that 53.2% of the Aboriginal male population of Bourke, N.S.W., consumed alcohol at a daily rate above that which was considered to be hazardous and causing physical deterioration. From its own observations, the previous Committee considered that similar drinking problems existed in other country towns throughout Australia.<sup>37</sup>

106. During the present inquiry, the Committee received evidence confirming that alcoholism and alcohol abuse are continuing problems among Aboriginal communities. In the Northern Territory, Kalano submitted that 'alcohol abuse and gambling have taken over from most of the traditional social activities',<sup>38</sup> and that the level of alcoholism among Aboriginals in Katherine had reached 'epidemic proportions and will continue to become worse'.<sup>39</sup> The South Australian Government stated that any contact the police had with residents of the town camping communities in that State was generally related to 'liquor affected behaviour'.<sup>40</sup>

107. Sansom, in his book *The Camp at Wallaby Cross*<sup>41</sup>, describes a Darwin camp where alcohol is consumed regularly and where abstainers are known as 'missionaries'. It was suggested that drinking openly is symbolic of the rights that were ceded Aboriginals in the 1960s.

108. Some communities recognise that alcohol is a major problem area and have attempted to resolve it. Additionally, although camps may have a permissive attitude towards alcohol, they do impose their own social controls:

... fringe camps allow Aboriginal people to form residential groups where membership is regulated by their own cultural norm.<sup>42</sup>

### Role of Women

109. One feature of some town camps was a developing trend towards the leadership and strength in Aboriginal town camps being derived from the women. In Tennant

Creek, women have taken a stand against unruly behaviour and alcoholism. Eighty-five per cent of household heads at Erambie, N.S.W., are women.

110. It was suggested that camp life is less devastating for women:

They still have their children and some of their family responsibilities, and they seem to be able to hold some kind of authority and control over things<sup>43</sup>

Dr Heppell noted that the females are often good leaders. This was supported by Dr Bell:

Women have always had the responsibility for maintaining a certain degree of harmony in communities. It is probably more a reflection of the disruption that is occurring in people's families. Women are becoming perhaps more strident in the way they are expressing it and coming more to the notice of Europeans.<sup>44</sup>

## Endnotes

26. Evidence, p. 735.
27. Evidence, p. 3166.
28. Evidence, p. 2145.
29. Evidence, p. 1252.
30. Evidence, p. 5.
31. Evidence, p. 114.
32. Evidence, pp. 806-07.
33. Evidence, p. 563.
34. Evidence, p. 2705.
35. Evidence, p. 126.
36. Evidence, p. 126.
37. Aboriginal Alcohol Report, paragraphs 17-24.
38. Evidence, p. 182.
39. Evidence, p. 195.
40. Evidence, p. 853.
41. Sansom, B.L., *The Camp at Wallaby Cross: Aboriginal fringe dwellers in Darwin*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1980.
42. Evidence, p. 446.
43. Evidence, p. 1009.
44. Evidence, p. 2736.



## CHAPTER 4

### Economic Problems

#### Introduction

111. The terms of reference require the Committee to inquire into, and report on, the economic and social problems of town camping Aboriginal communities and groups. The inter-related nature of the problems facing town camp communities referred to earlier makes it difficult to separate economic and social problems, but a division has been made for the purposes of the inquiry. Housing (both for permanents and transients), land tenure, employment, community facilities, transport and motivation have been considered as economic problems. Considered as social problems were health, education, alcohol and drug abuse, social disruption, law and order and community attitudes.

112. There is a very strong feeling over almost the entire spread of the Aboriginal community about the question of land rights. As noted earlier, Mr Bropho claimed that Aboriginals would remain 'fringe-dwellers' until their land was given back.

113. Dr Drakakis-Smith said that while health, education and shelter are important considerations, they are secondary factors in the underprivileged position of Aboriginal campers to that of lack of employment.

114. A number of inter-related factors were seen by the ADC as producing a vicious cycle of poverty for town campers. In its submission the ADC claimed that a typical scenario involving these factors would see:

... inadequate housing or accommodation leading to poor health (including alcoholism) which in turn could be linked to poor education, with the resultant inability for job training or employment development and the consequential poverty and financial problem completing the vicious cycle.<sup>45</sup>

115. The ADC believed that improved housing could break this cycle. Mr Bourke, former General Manager of the ADC, suggested:

If we can provide housing children will have somewhere to sleep, they will not get sick, they will have somewhere to study, they will be able to keep warm and employment will be given at the time to people to construct the housing.<sup>46</sup>

The Committee is also aware from its informal discussions with town camping Aboriginal communities throughout Australia, that the provision of adequate housing must be given priority.

#### Housing

##### *Permanents*

116. The extent of the problem of inadequate housing in the communities is indicated in figures provided by DAA on the standard of dwellings in town camp communities. In New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, 817 of the 1090 dwellings on tenured land were substandard. The 326 dwellings on non-tenured land were also considered to be substandard.

117. The Aboriginal Development Commission stated that the 270 Aboriginal Housing Associations own 4900 houses and 1600 shelters throughout Australia. Of the houses only 37% were in good condition and 35% required minor repair and maintenance. Of the remainder two-thirds needed major repairs and maintenance and one-third needed replacing. No details were provided of the specific situation in town camps, but it would be little different from, and probably worse than, that reflected above.

118. As discussed above, the ADC believed that the provision of adequate housing was one of the most important issues facing town camp communities and that other problems of poverty, poor health, lack of employment and poor educational achievement flowed from poor housing. Mr C. Perkins, Chairman of the ADC, said that:

If you have reasonable housing then you have a chance to stabilise yourself and your family.<sup>47</sup>

The Eastern Region Office of DAA (N.S.W. and A.C.T.) also saw housing as being part of the 'armoury of social development and change'.<sup>48</sup>

119. A number of submissions referred to the provision of adequate housing as being a major factor in improving the standard of living of Aboriginal town campers.

120. The Commonwealth Department of Education stressed the inter-relatedness of health standards and housing conditions. This was supported by DAA which saw the provision of adequate housing as being the first step in the improvement of health.

121. Overcrowding in houses was a major problem. Infectious diseases, which were bred in overcrowded conditions, were a major cause of ill health in the community. The education of children was also affected by overcrowding as children were often unable to get proper rest or find a quiet place to do homework.

122. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs said that essential services were rarely connected to substandard dwellings. The lack of essential services created obvious health problems for the community. The educational attainment of children living in dwellings without electricity was seriously affected.

123. Damage to houses occupied by Aboriginal families, particularly in town camp communities, had been considerable according to DAA. Mr C. Perkins of the ADC believed that about \$2 million could be involved in:

... that sort of house destruction for entertainment, if I can put it that way.<sup>49</sup>

124. It was suggested by DAA that home-ownership would lead to a decrease in vandalism and many Aboriginal people, particularly in New South Wales, appeared to want individual ownership of houses. However, where housing was located on reserves the question of individual ownership was a complex one.

125. One of the major problems in past Aboriginal housing projects, and at least a partial explanation for the damage caused to Aboriginal houses, was the lack of sufficient consultation and involvement of the local Aboriginal community. This lack of consultation had led to houses being built which were considered unsuitable by the community, either because of their design or because of their location, or for both these reasons. There was evidence that State Housing Commissions had shown an insensitivity towards Aboriginal wishes in their housing projects.

126. The rehousing in Roebourne, Western Australia, of Aboriginals from the Roebourne reserve was referred to by DAA (W.A.) as a 'classical example of houses imposed on people who did not want them'.<sup>50</sup> Surveys had indicated that about 50% of the reserve dwellers did not want to live in a conventional house in town, but wanted to move into a village development on Mount Welcome station. Some of those who did

not want to go to the urban areas moved to another camping location outside the town. Many however:

... were simply forced into taking these houses [in town] because the reserve was bulldozed and there was nowhere else for them to go.<sup>51</sup>

According to DAA, the resultant problems of the housing development 'have been traumatic and they still exist'.<sup>52</sup>

127. Research in the Aboriginal community on the Erambie Reserve, Cowra, had suggested to Dr Lea that a number of Aboriginal people found the New South Wales State Housing Commission's guidelines for obtaining a Commission home to be 'onerous'.<sup>53</sup> These people would not even bother putting themselves on the Housing Commission list. This was confirmed in a joint DAA-New South Wales Housing Commission review of the Housing for Aboriginals program in September 1979. The review claimed that the number of applications for housing under the program understated the actual demand by Aboriginals for welfare housing, both because of the Aboriginal Housing Association's construction and purchase programs, and because of 'the degree of mistrust within the Aboriginal community concerning Commission policies'.<sup>54</sup>

128. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs also referred to statements by Aboriginal spokesmen that there was a growing tendency for Aboriginals, who had moved from town camp communities into State Housing Commission homes, to move back to town camp communities. This tendency emphasises the need for full consultation and involvement of local Aboriginal communities in housing projects in town camp areas if they are to be successful.

129. Another difficulty for Aboriginal people in town camp communities was their ineligibility for housing loans. The Aboriginal Development Commission offers housing loans for Aboriginal people at very attractive interest rates, but town campers generally do not qualify because of their low incomes.

### *Transients*

130. Apart from the importance of providing improved housing for permanent town campers, there is also a need for temporary accommodation for a considerable number of transients and homeless. DAA referred to a 1980 survey by Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) which showed that of the 4367 new beds required, 2224 were for transients. According to the Department, the survey had assessed the level of demand for transient accommodation, but not the level of need.

131. Aboriginal Hostels Limited said that the survey revealed an expressed need of 1599 beds in the transient and multi-purpose categories which could include a component for town camping needs. Appropriate accommodation for these people would need to be provided in line with other accommodation provided by AHL for other categories.

132. The survey also revealed an expressed need for 535 beds in an alternative camp style category. AHL had designed an alternative concept accommodation. The design included a practical accommodation complex with central ablution blocks and open camp fires and accommodation facilities made of durable materials.

133. In developing the concept of alternative camp style accommodation for transients, Aboriginal Hostels Limited said it had been responding to expressed needs. There had been a general reluctance by Aboriginal people to use the services administered by non-Aboriginals, and other agencies had not established the necessary facilities to cater for alternative camping accommodation. AHL had to become involved beyond its charter of providing temporary hostel accommodation facilities.

134. Some concern was expressed during the Committee's informal discussions about aspects of Aboriginal Hostels' policy. These concerns included high tariff rates, the requirement of cleanliness of residents, the 'no alcohol' rules, and the hours of operation. The Central Gippsland Aboriginal Advancement Co-operative Ltd referred to the high tariffs and restrictive rules applying at the Lionel Rose Hostel, Morwell, Vic. as being among the reasons for the under-utilisation of the hostel. In regard to the rules applying at the hostel, it stated that:

A host of restrictive rules, such as no drinking, residents in by 11.00 p.m., evening meal at 4.30 p.m., kitchen is locked up, no snacks, visitors to knock and wait to be admitted. So our people find this too much of a hassle, better to stay away from there, and find something or somewhere else.<sup>55</sup>

### Land tenure

135. According to DAA, lack of land tenure was a problem for some town camping communities, however the majority of communities did have tenure to the land on which they were camping. There were 63 town camping communities with a population of 3500-4130 people occupying non-tenured land. Details of those communities occupying non-tenured land are set out below.

#### Town camping communities occupying non-tenured land\*

<i>Community</i>	<i>Land Owner</i>
<b>NORTHERN TERRITORY</b>	
Railway Hill Camp, Darwin	Crown Land
Palmerston Park, Darwin	Darwin Council
16 Mile Camp, Darwin	Crown Land
Katherine Gorge National Park, Katherine	Maude Creek Station
Binjarri Camp, Katherine	Manbulloo Station
Northmeat, Katherine	North West Beef Industries
Katherine Dump, Katherine	Katherine Council
High Level Top Camp, Katherine	Crown Land
Brown St. Camp, Tennant Creek**	Crown Land
Karguru Camp, Tennant Creek	Crown Land
Bunny's Camp, Tennant Creek	Crown Land
Bush Camp, Tennant Creek	Crown Land
Stanley Camp, Tennant Creek**	Crown Land
Brunette Downs Group, Tennant Creek	Land title unknown
Under new bridge, Alice Springs	Crown Land
Charles Creek, Alice Springs	Crown Land
East Side, Alice Springs	Crown Land
Creek bed opposite Mbutjara Special Purpose Lease, Alice Springs	Crown Land
Areyonga, (Karnte) Alice Springs	Crown Land
Kunoth Camp, Alice Springs	Crown Land
Leo's Camp, Alice Springs	Crown Land
<b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>	
Morgan Camp, Broome	Crown Land
Meatworks, Broome	Crown Land
Skippers Camp, Wiluna***	Private Land

Boor St., Carnarvon***	Crown Land
Tent City, Carnarvon***	W.A. Dept. of Health
Fringe Camp, Laverton	Crown Land
Fringe Camp, Kalgoorlie	Crown Land (covered by mineral leases)
The Brockman, Marble Bar	Two privately owned blocks and Crown Land
9 Mile Camp, Pt. Hedland	Crown Land
Lilly Creek, Kununurra	Town Common (Shire Council)
Lake, Kununurra	Crown Land
Nullywah Group, Kununurra	Wyndham/East Kimberley Shire Council
Ngoonjuwah Rockhole, Halls Creek	Shire common
Blueberry Hill, Halls Creek	Town common
Coolgardie	Crown Land
Central Metropolitan, Perth	Crown Land
North Metropolitan, Perth	Crown Land
South-eastern Metropolitan, Perth	Crown Land
South-western Metropolitan, Perth	Crown Land
East Metropolitan (Lockridge North), Perth	Crown Land

#### QUEENSLAND

The One Mile, Stradbroke Island	Crown Land
Camooweal Transients	Private property and Crown Land
West End, Dajarra	Crown Land
Far Beach Fringe Camp, Mackay	Council Land
Pioneer River Camp, Mackay	Council Land
Happy Valley, Townsville	Townsville Cemetery Trust
Bridge dwellers, Townsville	Council Land
Cairns	Tenure diverse

#### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Fringe Camp, Oodnadatta***	Australian National Railways Lease
The Flat, Coober Pedy	Crown Land (covered by mineral leases)

#### NEW SOUTH WALES

Goodooga Camp, Goodooga	Crown Land
3 Mile Camp, Lightning Ridge	Crown Land
Walgett town, Walgett	Camping reserve (Crown Land)
River bank, North Bourke	Bourke Gun Club
Town common, Wellington	Crown Land
Brown's Flat, South Nowra	Shoalhaven Council common and sporting ground
Police Paddock and Tip Road, Brewarrina	Crown Land
Dareton	N.S.W. Water Resources Commission
Merinee, Dareton	N.S.W. Water Resources Commission
Gol Gol, Mildura	N.S.W. Water Resources Commission

\* Based on information supplied by DAA (November 1981) (Evidence, pp. 1284-5) and ADC (June 1982) (Evidence, pp. 3072-3107).

\*\* The Brown Street and Stanley Street camps, Tennant Creek, no longer exist (Evidence, p. 3281).

\*\*\* The residents of Boor Street and Tent City, Carnarvon, Skipper's Camp, Wiluna and the Oodnadatta town camp have since been housed (Evidence, pp. 3268, 3252).

136. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs said that land tenure must be seen as the first step in improving the living standards of town camping Aboriginals. Communities occupying non-tenured land were unlikely to receive essential services. The practical necessity of obtaining tenure to land before development could take place was also referred to by the Dept of Health.

137. The Aboriginal Development Commission believed that land ownership could provide town camping communities with:

... a secure base for future social and economic development. This is particularly important to fringe dwellers who will need land to plan and create resources within their varied groups, so that they can reconstitute themselves as distinct and viable communities with opportunities and incentives for rebuilding their pride and independence.<sup>56</sup>

### Community facilities

138. The general physical picture of deprivation of many town camp communities, with a lack of community facilities like adequate, safe water supplies, drainage, sewerage and other services was referred to earlier. There were a number of reasons for the lack of general community facilities in town camp communities.

139. As noted earlier, DAA and other government departments and authorities were not in a position to fund the provision of facilities on non-tenured land. Apart from the problem of providing services to communities without land tenure, DAA claimed that:

Quite often ... water mains or town-style street paving, litter receivers and public telephones have not been extended to fringe or reserve areas because they have been seen as 'outside' the town areas.<sup>57</sup>

The Department also noted that:

The cost of extending essential services to small communities located a considerable distance from the town proper can be prohibitive.<sup>58</sup>

140. An indication of the numbers of town campers without access to essential services was given in figures provided by DAA in its first survey. In New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory there were 56 communities with a population of 2300 people without water, sewerage and electricity. The Department's survey of communities lacking adequate town services in Queensland, covered 13 communities with a population of 469 people. There were six communities with a population of 114 people with inadequate water supplies, and six communities with a population of 120 people were without electricity.

141. The absence of essential services could cause conflict with government legislation and municipal authority by-laws in such areas as health, litter, town planning and building requirements. Local government officials had sometimes taken action to remove dwellings which did not meet requirements.

142. Problems also arose with the bulk-billing of services. For example, several former reserve communities in New South Wales were bulk-billed through the Aboriginal Lands Trust for their use of electricity even though the amount used by each dwelling was individually metered. On several occasions a community's electricity supply

had been discontinued when the total account was not paid, even though many of the residents had paid their portion of the account. The bulk-billing of charges for water and sewerage services to the Wirrajarai Reserve in Moree meant that residents were forced to pay for the flushing of the main sewer by the Council as well as for services to individual homes.

143. The health, educational and other social problems created for town campers by the lack of adequate community facilities were referred to earlier and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

### Employment

144. A comparatively high rate of unemployment characterised the Aboriginal community generally, and DAA had no doubt that the rate was higher in town camp communities. The Department believed that the rate, in many cases, could be close to 100 per cent. This impression was confirmed by figures from the Department's survey of communities lacking adequate town services (discussed in paragraph 104) and by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR) which said that the unemployment rate in Walgett, a typical town camping community in New South Wales, was between 80 and 85 per cent. This rate would be confirmed in other town camps.

145. The importance of reducing the level of unemployment amongst town campers was emphasised by DAA which suggested that:

In the long term, unemployment amongst fringe-dwellers must be improved if any progress is to be made towards achieving self-sufficiency.<sup>59</sup>

146. As noted earlier, Dr Drakakis-Smith believed that lack of employment was the most important factor in the underprivileged position of town campers. He believed that welfare payments were no substitute for employment and saw it as no coincidence that the healthiest camp (in all senses) in Alice Springs was the one where there were more residents with jobs.

147. Aside from welfare payments, DEIR believed that employment was the only realistic economic basis for town camping groups to replace the traditional hunting and gathering productive system. The Department characterised the Aboriginal labour force as being:

... an unskilled (to semi-skilled at best) labour pool, usually called upon only for seasonal, rural types of jobs.<sup>60</sup>

148. The changes in the structures of rural industries, the inclusion of Aborigines in award wage provisions and competition from non-Aboriginal workers had seen many Aboriginal people excluded from former areas of employment in rural industries. The Victorian Government pointed to the seasonal work in the harvesting of fruit and vegetables which had been available for Aborigines in rural areas of the State, but which was rapidly becoming mechanised. The pastoral industry in the north of Australia was another which had significant Aboriginal involvement and for which, according to the Western Australian Government, Aboriginal people continued to have a preference. The significant effect on Aboriginal involvement in pastoral properties of the granting of award wage provisions to Aborigines in the industry was discussed in Chapter 2.

149. Some attempts to create employment opportunities for Aborigines had presented difficulties. The former Department of Housing and Construction referred to instances where contracts for building in Aboriginal areas which had specified the use of Aboriginal labour and materials had led to increased costs while only resulting in the employment of one or two Aborigines who would not normally have been employed. The Department suggested that the use of such clauses was not effective as on occasions

the labour and/or materials were not available. An example was a contract let on a project in Papunya which was to use local Aboriginal labour and local Aboriginal community manufactured concrete blocks. At the appropriate stage of construction neither the Aboriginal labour nor the concrete blocks were available. The contractor brought in replacement labour and concrete blocks from Alice Springs resulting in an additional cost of over \$29 000. As the contract based on the use of local Aboriginal labour was \$25 000 more than if the contract had been let utilising normal labour sources, the total additional cost to the Commonwealth of accepting a tender based on using local Aboriginal labour and materials was over \$54 000 and the initial tender price was \$571 610.

150. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs suggested that it was difficult to encourage industries to establish themselves in town camps and so provide additional employment opportunities because of the lack of support facilities needed by industry.

### **Transport**

151. Transport to and from town represents a real difficulty for town campers. Town camps are usually located some distance from town and are often not on bus routes. They usually have no shopping facilities, and the lack of food storage facilities means people have to make frequent trips to shops in town. Few people own motor vehicles because of their low incomes, although Drakakis-Smith refers to Alice Springs where:

Welfare benefits are often pooled to amass funds for the purchase of second-hand cars, but because of the cost and scarcity of spares the vehicles bought often breakdown within a very short time and are simply abandoned.<sup>61</sup>

152. With limited access to private vehicles, and with the 'difficult access (if any) to public transport'<sup>62</sup> in many town camp communities, town campers rely heavily on local taxi operators. Drakakis-Smith estimated that town campers in Alice Springs provided local taxi companies with \$120 000 per annum worth of business. Lea and Sinbandhit referred to a similar dependency at the Erambie Reserve, Cowra:

There is no public bus service to the reserve apart from that provided for school children. The only form of transport available are the taxis which cost an average of \$3.20 for a return trip to the shopping centre in Cowra where groceries and other goods are purchased.<sup>63</sup>

153. References were made during the Committee's informal discussions with town camping communities to taxi operators providing services to Aboriginal town campers, such as delivering grocery items and liquor to town camps, at exorbitant rates.

154. The problems with transport have been reduced in some town camp communities with the provision of a community bus service by local Aboriginal organisations. Kalano runs a regular daily bus service from outlying communities to Katherine and return. The amount spent on taxi fares by Alice Springs town campers has been significantly reduced following the provision of community bus services by the Tangentyere Council.

### **Motivation**

155. There has been reference to the dependency of Aboriginal town camping communities on welfare benefits and to the degree of poverty which exists among town campers.

156. Dr Eckermann suggested that Aboriginal people congregated around the fringes of towns in order to survive on handouts when their traditional land had been usurped. Kalano claimed that this dependency had created a welfare society for Aboriginal people which had 'destroyed incentive and created a state of apathy'.<sup>64</sup>



157. The effects of poverty, the Dept of Education said, had caused many Aboriginals to experience:

... a general feeling of powerlessness brought about by their depressed living situation and low position in Australian society ...<sup>65</sup>

The lack of incentive and feelings of powerlessness that many Aboriginals experience are exacerbated for town campers by their physical and social isolation from other groups in the community.

158. The Aboriginal Development Commission believed that the welfare syndrome was being broken in many places through the establishment of Aboriginal-controlled organisations like itself, through land purchases and through the establishment of enterprises. It believed though that the welfare syndrome was not being broken quickly enough and that it was necessary to:

... stimulate Aboriginal people to realise their responsibilities today and take it from there.<sup>66</sup>

## Endnotes

45. Evidence, p. 2125.
46. Evidence, pp. 2093-4.
47. Evidence, p. 2075.
48. Evidence, p. 1893.
49. Evidence, p. 2113.
50. Evidence, p. 961.
51. Evidence, p. 962.
52. Evidence, p. 961.
53. Evidence, p. 1913.
54. Evidence, p. 2982.
55. Evidence, pp. 3140-1.
56. Evidence, p. 3039.
57. Evidence, p. 12.
58. Evidence, pp. 28-9.
59. Evidence, p. 15.
60. Evidence, p. 2623.
61. Evidence, p. 295.
62. Evidence, p. 806.
63. Evidence, p. 483.
64. Evidence, p. 297.
65. Evidence, p. 734.
66. Evidence, p. 2094.

## CHAPTER 5

### Social Problems

#### Introduction

159. In the previous chapter the inter-relationship between the economic and social problems of town camp communities was noted. A number of problems facing town campers were identified as social problems for the purposes of this inquiry. In this chapter it is intended to outline the social problems associated with health, alcohol and other drug abuse, community attitudes, education, social disruption, and law and order.

#### Health

160. Although little authoritative data has been collected specifically in relation to the health of town campers, the Dept of Health reported in its submission that:

. . . empirical observation and study of those few reports available would indicate that the health status of Aboriginal fringe dwellers is likely to be the lowest of any segment of the Aboriginal population.<sup>67</sup>

The Department continued:

. . . their unfavourable environmental conditions clearly indicate that fringe dwellers are very much at risk of illness of many types including respiratory, intestinal, skin and eye infection, mental illness, dietary disease and problems relating to alcohol abuse . . .<sup>68</sup>

The possible health effects on the general public were of concern to the Northern Territory Department of Health, which commented on:

. . . the unhygienic conditions in which Aboriginal squatters and transients are living . . . place themselves and the wider community in a position of serious health risk.<sup>69</sup>

161. The effects of diseases on communities whose environmental conditions render them highly susceptible requires little elaboration. The Aboriginal Health Report stated:

. . . it is unrealistic to expect any group to maintain reasonable standards of hygiene in the absence of basic facilities such as clean and adequate water supplies, adequate sanitation and appropriate housing.<sup>70</sup>

Illnesses which in themselves may not be very serious when contracted, can have important repercussions. For instance, the Dept of Education noted in its submission that Aboriginal children may contract complaints such as ringworm, scabies and headlice due to their living conditions. This can affect school attendances as well as cause loss of sleep, energy and concentration.

162. A number of health workers have commented on the diet of, and malnutrition amongst, town campers. In a 1976 *Report on Alice Springs Fringe Camps* to the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Dr T. N. Cutter wrote:

With the lack of food storage facilities, the distance from stores, the lack of home grown vegetables and limited funds available, the diet appeared to consist of fresh meat, tinned foods and bread. Very little fresh vegetables and fruit was consumed. This is an obvious matter of concern.<sup>71</sup>

Later, Dr E. J. Beck observed:

The unfavourable health indices of the children of the Alice Springs town camps have been documented. Of the total population, 50% show signs of past or present malnutrition and are either stunted, wasted, or wasted and stunted.<sup>72</sup>

163. Dr Cutter also remarked on a related health problem. There is an apparent preference, and early substitution by mothers, for bottle rather than breast feeding. With a lack of available refrigeration facilities there is a consequent higher risk of gastro-enteritis.

164. The high incidence of mental illness and suicide in Aboriginal communities was referred to in a number of submissions. Again, while much of the evidence was of an empirical and subjective nature, it was very likely that the problem was even more prevalent in the 'marginal situation occupied by fringe-dwellers, who, being neither traditional nor urban, face the stress and frustration of being trapped in a depressing social and physical environment'.<sup>73</sup>

165. It was reported to the Committee by the Dept of Health that existing mental health services were inadequate and inappropriate to meet Aboriginal needs.

166. The procedures relating to payment for health care under the current health insurance system were criticised for presenting problems to Aboriginals. The Dept of Health commented on the hesitancy many Aboriginals exhibit when attempting to register as disadvantaged clients 'due to their past experiences of dealing with white officials, some of whom may have exhibited either insensitivity, or direct racist behaviour'.<sup>74</sup> The Department noted that any health care scheme for disadvantaged groups should be easily accessible and have a minimum of official procedures.

#### *Aboriginal involvement in health*

167. The Committee is aware of the importance of Aboriginal involvement in health care and visited a number of Aboriginal Medical Services. According to DAA, there are eight Aboriginal Medical Services which provide health services to town camp communities. The Services are located in Townsville, Mackay, Kempsey, Port Augusta, Broome, Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine. The Committee is also aware of the role of the Aboriginal Medical Services in Perth and Brisbane in providing services to town campers. Services have recently been established in Cairns and Wilcannia which would provide services to town campers. On a preliminary analysis, it would appear that around 80 of the 206 town camps identified by the Committee could and probably do use the Aboriginal Medical Services. However, the availability of the Services varies from State to State.

168. In the Northern Territory, 56 of the 67 town camps identified by the Committee have access to Aboriginal Medical Services. Yet, in N.S.W. only the town camps of Wilcannia and Kempsey would have access to Aboriginal Medical Services. This leaves some 59 camps dependent on the State Government for medical services. A similar situation occurs in Western Australia where only the town camps in Broome and Perth (10 out of a total of 37) have access to an Aboriginal Medical Service. In Queensland the town campers only of Brisbane, Ipswich, Townsville, Mackay and Cairns are not dependent upon the State health services.

169. One of the recommendations of the Aboriginal Health Report was that:

Aboriginals be involved to the fullest possible extent in all stages of the provision of health care services . . .<sup>75</sup>

The recommendation was endorsed on behalf of the Commonwealth Government by the then Minister for Health, the Hon. M. J. R. Mackellar, MP, who, in a Ministerial Statement on 26 May 1981 in response to the report, said:

The Government therefore wishes to see, and will actively work towards, a marked increase in the degree of Aboriginal involvement in the control, management, design, delivery and evaluation of health care programs affecting Aboriginal people.<sup>76</sup>

170. In that same statement the Minister referred to a program effectiveness review which had been conducted by Commonwealth officials during 1980. The purpose of the review was to determine 'as far as possible the health status of Aboriginals and the effectiveness of current Aboriginal health programs and of other programs which affect Aboriginal health'.<sup>77</sup> The officials visited Aboriginal communities and consulted with people directly involved in community based health care programs. The review:

... had proposed that future funding arrangements should be focussed away from State programs to Aboriginal medical services. The proposal envisaged this being done at a predetermined rate or by reference to a set formula.<sup>78</sup>

The Minister acknowledged that the Government had looked carefully at the proposal but considered that:

... more effort [should be put] into encouraging the States to involve Aboriginals in the planning and provision of all health services to their people.<sup>79</sup>

171. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs provided the Committee with details of developments which had taken place in the States since the report was presented. Discussions have been held in all States and it would appear that little has been achieved in ensuring increased Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of health care.

172. An important exception to this was in Victoria where agreement was reached with the former Minister for Health, The Hon. W. A. Borthwick, MP, for substantial increased control over health care policy and programs by Aboriginal communities. There was to be a substantial State contribution to a joint effort by the Commonwealth and the State in Aboriginal health. The new arrangements in Victoria have led to the establishment of two new community based Aboriginal Medical Services, the upgrading of another two centres to full Aboriginal Medical Services and the establishment of five new basic health care units. A Victorian Health Consultative Group has also been established. The arrangements in Victoria were considered satisfactory at both community and State levels. The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Co-operative Ltd acknowledged that:

... only within the last year has the Victorian Health Commission acknowledged its responsibility to allocate some of its own budget for positive discrimination programs to Aborigines.<sup>80</sup>

173. Acceptance of the need for closer relations with Aboriginal Medical Services was acknowledged by the South Australian Minister for Health. The Aboriginal Health Organisation of South Australia has been established and is under the control of a Board of Management with a majority Aboriginal membership. It has formed a sub-committee to undertake negotiations with the Aboriginal Medical Services in that State to establish how the Board can work in close co-operation with the Services. The South Australian Health Commission saw it as possible that the Aboriginal Health Organisation could devolve health care delivery to Aboriginals at local centres. DAA believed that the arrangements for Aboriginal advice in providing health care in South Australia were satisfactory.

174. The New South Wales Minister for Health has announced the establishment of a task force to review the total pattern of Aboriginal health care delivery in New South Wales. The task force will include representatives of Aboriginal Medical Services, and

other Aboriginals, as well as the Dept of Health and DAA. The New South Wales Health Commission claimed that it was not in competition with the Aboriginal Medical Services in the State, but rather saw itself as providing a complementary service.

175. In the Northern Territory and Western Australia priority has been given to training Aboriginal Health Workers. These Health Workers will work with Aboriginal people and will also take increasing responsibility for the health of their own communities. In Queensland an Aboriginal Health Advisory Council has been established to advise the State Minister for Health.

176. The Committee considers that the Aboriginal Medical Services have been able to relate to their Aboriginal patients. These organisations, operating at the local level, are in contrast to the bureaucratic State Health Departments. In these Departments the Health Workers appear to be very much just another arm of the bureaucracy. This is not to say that the State Health Workers are not committed to the improvement of Aboriginal health, but rather that the structure of the organisations for whom they work can and do place undue restrictions on them.

### **Alcohol and other drug abuse**

177. According to DAA, town camps are identified by Aboriginals as being places where alcoholism and alcohol abuse are particularly severe. However, the Department contends that there is research to indicate that alcohol abuse by Aboriginals may be no more severe than that of non-Aboriginals; it is just more public.

178. A view expressed by the Dept of Health was that alcohol abuse was more likely in town camps, than in other settlements and reserves, owing to their closer proximity to town liquor outlets.

179. Another organisation maintaining that alcohol abuse was a major problem facing town camp communities was Kalano. It stated that alcohol abuse was of great concern to the Aboriginal people as, in addition to causing ill health, it tended to break down their 'families, kinship systems, community structures and cultural heritage'.<sup>81</sup>

180. The Dept of Health referred to the high levels of emotional stress in town camps which led to:

the adoption of escapist behaviour patterns, such as heavy use of alcohol, gambling, and a high reliance on medically-prescribed drugs such as valium or aspirin abuse.<sup>82</sup>

The South Australian Department of Education also referred to 'incidents of glue and petrol sniffing'.<sup>83</sup>

181. The problems associated with the excessive use of alcohol are recognised in all States. The following paragraphs outline responses undertaken in the States and the Northern Territory.

### ***New South Wales***

182. In its second report, the New South Wales Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines acknowledged the devastating effects alcohol has had on the Aboriginal people, producing physical or mental illnesses and contributing to the economic problems of communities.

183. The Select Committee noted claims that properly trained Aboriginal people were best able to help Aboriginal alcoholics. It also stated that the excessive use of alcohol stems from the 'poor environment and desperate economic situation of the Aboriginal people',<sup>84</sup> and that treatment and rehabilitation programs can only operate effectively to reduce alcoholism if the prime socio-economic causes are eliminated.

### *Victoria*

184. The Victorian Government reported success in some communities of centres combining accommodation, employment and alcohol rehabilitation programs.

185. The need for alcohol rehabilitation programs was acknowledged by the Victorian Government which emphasised that such facilities should be run by community organisations and in order to do so a commitment from all levels of government was necessary.

### *Queensland*

186. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs channelled \$803 340 into the nine Alcohol Rehabilitation Services in Queensland under its Grants-in-Aid scheme during the financial year 1981-82.

187. During its visit to Queensland the Committee inspected alcohol rehabilitation centres in Mount Isa and Townsville, and was impressed with the programs running there. However, a proposal to establish a retreat at Aratula outside Brisbane for Aboriginal people with alcohol problems met with 'an unresponsive attitude from the relevant local authority, [and] an unresponsive attitude from the relevant State authorities'.<sup>85</sup>

### *South Australia*

188. In South Australia, Aboriginal alcohol services are co-ordinated through the Commonwealth funded WOMA Committee. The Committee consists of representatives of Aboriginal alcohol projects, State drug and alcohol authorities, DAA and the Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal Alcohol Report noted that the allocation of funds by WOMA meant that the setting of priorities was transferred from DAA to the Aboriginal people themselves.

189. Commenting on Aboriginal involvement, the Executive Officer of the South Australian WOMA Committee said:

... when the Aboriginal people themselves are able to come to a point where they overcome their alcohol problem, they do become very progressive leaders of that community. So if, in fact, Aboriginal people ... [can be] ... given positions of responsibility, you do see a very gross change in that community. But until that happens, the decisions are not theirs to make, are taken away from them and continue to be kept away from them and you will see the continued fringe-dwellers who are usually very, very frustrated people.<sup>86</sup>

190. The Aboriginal Alcohol Report took the view that if an Aboriginal community desired to be 'dry' it should be able to implement its decision to do so. However, it is evident that under South Australian law there is no basis upon which an Aboriginal community could exercise such an option. This situation has been considered by the Crown Law Office with the intention of drafting legislation to empower specific Aboriginal communities with the authority akin to local government.

### *Northern Territory*

191. In the Northern Territory, drug and alcohol responsibilities are co-ordinated by the Drug and Alcohol Bureau of the Northern Territory Department of Health. As a response to the Aboriginal Alcohol Report the Legislative Assembly passed liquor licensing legislation and established the Northern Territory Liquor Commission.

192. To a degree, the recommendation contained in the Committee's Aboriginal Alcohol Report that Aboriginal communities themselves should be able to decide whether they become 'dry' has been adopted in the Northern Territory. However, it is

the Liquor Commission which has the ultimate power to declare a community 'dry'. Any community which desires to become 'dry' approaches the Commission and consultation ensues.

193. A Report on Restricted Areas by the Northern Territory Liquor Commission of March 1982 concluded that the number of people who moved to the towns from the home communities was small. The Report noted that Town Councils were not able to provide evidence to support their belief that the populations of the town camps had risen as a result of the declaration of dry areas. According to the Report:

. . . the Department of Community Development and the N.T. Police Force were adamant that, on their words, there had not been a significant movement of Aboriginal people from dry areas into towns.<sup>87</sup>

#### *Western Australia*

194. An Aboriginal alcohol and co-ordinating committee, Kulila, similar to the South Australian WOMA Committee, has been established in Western Australia.

#### **Community attitudes**

195. The Commissioner for Community Relations said that 'attitudinal discrimination is deep and widespread in Australia'.<sup>88</sup> A review of the casework of the Commissioner showed:

. . . that as fringe dwellers of Australian society, Aboriginal communities have suffered infringements of their rights at the hands of the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments, of bureaucracies, of businessmen, politicians and average citizens.<sup>89</sup>

196. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs submitted that there was no substantial body of research to indicate the attitudes of the general Australian community towards Aboriginals. However, surveys conducted in 1965, 1969 and 1975 had demonstrated the following trends:

- older people tend to accentuate the differences between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals;
- non-Aboriginal residents of country towns are less favourably disposed towards Aboriginals than city residents;
- the longer non-Aboriginal residents had lived in a country town, the more unfavourable attitude towards Aboriginals they are likely to have;
- the more the behaviour of Aboriginals is unacceptable to non-Aboriginal community norms, the more unfavourable non-Aboriginal community attitudes will be;
- the more unfavourable non-Aboriginal community attitudes are, the more likely Aboriginals will appear to behave in an unacceptable manner.<sup>90</sup>

197. Reasons given for unfavourable and stereotyped attitudes towards Aboriginals centre around their visibility. DAA commented that, although the number of Aboriginals living in town camp communities is small, there is:

. . . a view prevailing that the Aboriginal people living in country towns are more visible to other people living in country towns and that, therefore, those other people have greater opportunities to observe aspects of Aboriginal behaviour which they find unacceptable.<sup>91</sup>

Further, Kalano believes that 'Aboriginal homelessness in urban centres, Aboriginal lack of privacy in their homes and on reserves, and group drinking' all contribute to make the situation more visible.<sup>92</sup>

198. The unfavourable attitude of the non-Aboriginal community is a major constraint on improving conditions in the camps. While it is unlikely that the dwellings of many town campers would comply with the requirements of local and State Government officials, action taken to remove them achieves little. The Dept of Health stated that:

The level of action by officials on these matters is frequently determined by local political demands which are mainly expressed by local government councillors. It would appear that racial intolerance may be a strong factor in determining whether action of this type is taken.<sup>93</sup>

199. This unfavourable attitude reinforces a negative stereotyped image of Aborigines which lowers Aboriginal people's self-image leading to self-debasement and loss of pride, and often promotes the development of barriers between themselves and programs designed to assist them. A resultant state of apathy has been put forward as a reason for turning towards alcoholism.

### Education

200. The Committee is presently conducting an inquiry into Aboriginal education and will produce a comprehensive report dealing with all aspects of Aboriginal education.

201. In this report, the Committee will focus on the particular educational problems of Aborigines in town camp communities while being conscious of the full range of educational issues which face all Aboriginal people.

202. There is no statistical evidence on the educational achievements of town camp Aborigines. However, DAA stated that the educational problems facing town campers 'are almost certainly worse for all children coming from fringe areas than for their peers from elsewhere'.<sup>94</sup>

203. The Commonwealth and South Australian Departments of Education offered a number of factors which were detrimental to the education of town camp children. Firstly, the poor physical conditions in the communities, together with overcrowded living arrangements and a lack of electricity are not conducive conditions for students to study effectively. Poor health, resulting in unsatisfactory attendance has been described earlier. (para 161)

204. Additionally, families constantly moving around mean children receive discontinuous schooling. Children living in camps physically located on the fringes of towns and cities may have to walk long distances to school.

205. Poverty is another factor inhibiting education. Often, funds are not available for the purchase of books, school clothing and lunches. Coupled with a lack of adult models who have achieved some success (i.e. obtained permanent employment), town camp children are poorly motivated to participate fully in school activities.

206. Earlier, the existence of unfavourable community attitudes was discussed. Dr Betty Watts confirmed that commonly in country towns where schools have a sizeable Aboriginal population, racial tensions create uneasiness. She continued:

... you have stereotypes floating around so that often the Aboriginal peer group becomes a peer group against the school—almost inevitably.<sup>95</sup>

207. The effects of these attitudes are pervading. Some teachers are reported to have poor attitudes towards Aboriginal students and as a result have low expectations of Aboriginal academic achievement.



208. Additionally, while negative, stereotyped images of Aboriginals exist, few Aboriginal parents become involved in school activities. Schools are seen as hostile white institutions from which Aboriginal parents and children are alienated. There is evidence to suggest that some parents delay enrolling their children in school for fear of their early school experience being unpleasant.

### **Social disruption**

209. It is widely acknowledged that in many town camp communities there has been a general breakdown in traditional authority structures owing to social pressures placed on the communities, coupled with the loss of traditional land which supported traditional authority.

210. Kalano suggested that a concern frequently expressed to it was the breakdown of Aboriginal family units and the declining authority of older Aboriginal people. As discussed earlier, Kalano saw the overconsumption of alcohol as both a cause of, and reflection of, this breakdown in community structures.

211. There is some evidence that alternative community structures have developed in many town camping communities to replace traditional authority structures. In its submission to the Committee the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) stated

It appears that many fringe-dwelling communities have developed their own methods of resolving internal problems and disputes even though they may not be classified as traditionally oriented.<sup>96</sup>

212. Visitors to fringe camps, while providing social support to permanent residents through contact with kin and friends, can also place stress on permanent dwellers if they prolong their stay. Financial resources and hospitality are taxed, accentuating existing social pressures and leading to social disruption.

213. Overcrowding in houses also causes social tensions. It becomes difficult to avoid the disruptive behaviour of others, creating tensions amongst neighbours and a breakdown in camp co-operation.

214. The existence of a number of different tribal groupings living within the same town camp can lead to tensions and possible conflicts. The ADC submitted that history had shown that the practice of putting together different tribal groups on town camp areas promoted inter-tribal tensions and conflict.

### **Law and order**

215. The Australian Law Reform Commission informed the Committee that it is impossible to generalise with regard to the level with which town campers have contact with the criminal justice system due to a lack of sufficient statistical information. However:

The incomplete picture which the Commission has gained in its research so far indicates that Aboriginal fringe-dwellers have a regular and almost certainly disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system.<sup>97</sup>

216. Social disruption and breakdown of traditional authority, coupled with excessive alcohol consumption, are the causes of many of the law and order problems in the communities. These problems in town camping communities are often exacerbated by the poor relations between the police and the communities. DAA stated that:

Some of the most well publicised acts of racial discrimination emanate from the interaction between Aboriginals and the police.<sup>98</sup>

217. A further factor is that the police forces are seen to be part of an alien, white establishment. The Aboriginal Legal Aid Report acknowledged this situation as an area of concern, and recommended that Aboriginal police and police aides be actively recruited into the various forces.<sup>99</sup> Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory have taken steps to recruit police aides. Formal Aboriginal-police liaison committees have been established in South Australia and Western Australia.

## Endnotes

67. Evidence, p. 801.
68. Evidence, p. 809.
69. Evidence, p. 130.
70. *Aboriginal Health*. Report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, PP 60(1979), paragraph 162.
71. Cutter, T.N., *Report on Alice Springs Fringe Camps*, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, 1976, p.4.
72. Beck, E.J. *The Enigma of Aboriginal Health: Interaction between biological, social and economic factors in Alice Springs town camps*, B.M.S. (Hons) thesis, Monash University, Clayton, 1979, p. 171.
73. Evidence, p. 810.
74. Evidence, p. 811.
75. Aboriginal Health Report, paragraph 351.
76. House of Representatives Debates (26.5.81) p. 2549.
77. H.R. Deb. (26.5.81) p. 2547.
78. H.R. Deb. (26.5.81) p. 2551.
79. H.R. Deb. (26.5.81) p. 2551.
80. Evidence, p. 2680.
81. Evidence, p. 187.
82. Evidence, p. 809.
83. Evidence, p. 832.
84. *Second Report from the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines*. Part I-Report and Minutes of Proceedings, N.S.W., 1981, p.156.
85. Evidence, pp. 1591-2.
86. Evidence, p. 1498.
87. Evidence, p. 2933.
88. Evidence, p. 2021.
89. Evidence, p. 50.
90. Evidence, p. 17.
91. Evidence, p. 717.
92. Evidence, p. 187.
93. Evidence, p. 808.
94. Evidence, p. 16.
95. Evidence, p. 1607.
96. Evidence, p. 1794.
97. Evidence, p. 1793.
98. Evidence, p. 19.
99. Aboriginal Legal Aid Report, paragraph 273.

## **CHAPTER 6**

# **The Development of Strategies**

### **Introduction**

218. In the earlier chapters the problems facing the town camp communities have been identified. The problems were classified, for the purpose of the inquiry, as either economic or social though the problems are inter-related. While the relative importance of the problems varied from community to community, land tenure, housing and health were generally accorded a high priority.

219. The Committee identified three types of town campers, namely the permanents, transients and homeless drifters. The broad range of strategies should assist all town campers, however certain groups require special strategies. The problems of the homeless drifter and the transient require separate attention. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the background to the detailed development of the strategies in the ensuing chapters.

220. There is no doubt that many Aboriginal people desire to continue to live in a town camp environment. Assistance is needed to help these people overcome the problems facing them. However, these problems will only be overcome if the town campers themselves decide they must be solved. Thus, any strategies must involve a substantial degree of self-management on the part of the town campers. The Committee is aware of, and impressed by, what has been achieved by the Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs.

221. Strategies to improve conditions in the existing town camps could add to the pull factors referred to in Chapter 2, attracting people to the towns. The Committee would not suggest that people be precluded from visiting the towns but rather that conditions in the home communities be improved so that people would not move to the towns to live in better conditions than at home.

222. There are also push factors which will force people into the town camps. Self-management will not be able to deal with these factors and strategies will have to be devised to counter such a push. The detailed development of these counter-balancing strategies will be considered in the final chapter.

### **Possible strategies**

223. Any strategies to overcome the problems of the town camps must have two strands; firstly, to overcome the existing problems of the permanent town campers and, secondly, to take steps which will reduce the drift of people into the town camps. The problems of the transients and homeless drifters have been considered separately.

224. In devising strategies to overcome the existing problems of permanent town campers, consideration must be given to three possibilities. The first possibility is to improve conditions in the town camp, the second is to assist people to relocate into conventional housing in the town, and the third, to move away from the town on to either a pastoral property or traditional land.

225. A recent survey in Carnarvon illustrated the different aspirations of town campers. An Aboriginal Housing Committee was formed in Carnarvon in 1978. As part of its terms of reference it was required to identify the need for Aboriginal housing, determine how the need should be filled and the number of Aboriginals requiring housing.

226. The Aboriginal Housing Committee identified four classifications of dwellings. The classifications considered were a communal estate, conventional scattered urban housing, rurally located housing and housing on pastoral properties. While the rehousing program in Carnarvon was not able to offer the four choices it did indicate the choices which ought to be available to town campers.

227. The recent survey of 68 communities lacking adequate town services by DAA sought details of the communities' attitudes to a change in the community. The responses of the communities are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4:

	<i>No. of Communities</i>	<i>Estimated Population</i>
Permanent group not wanting change	25	967
Short term acknowledge another location as home	9	642
Permanent group want to improve conditions	34	1743
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3 352</b>

Source: Evidence, p. 3168.

228. It needs to be acknowledged that there may be different opinions within each camp and these would have to be given consideration. The communities must be given the opportunity to improve their living conditions, be it by improving the existing housing, or by assisting them in the move to an alternative location, either on a property or in the town.

229. The survey by DAA is but the first stage in the development of a strategy. What needs to be kept under constant review are the wishes of the campers themselves, not what others think they require. Eliciting these wants from the campers will require a sympathetic approach, something which is most likely to be offered by a local Aboriginal organisation.

230. Communication is very important as previous government programs to 'assist' fringe communities have largely failed because of one basic common factor, the lack of communication with the communities themselves. Dr Drakakis-Smith claimed that the provision of 'standardised dwelling units in rigid geometrical plans' was an example of where government officials had 'not really listened to the admittedly ineloquent, but none the less rational, arguments of their Aboriginal counterparts'.<sup>100</sup>

### **Responsibilities for implementing the strategies**

231. The implementation of the strategies will require a co-ordinated approach from a number of Commonwealth departments and authorities as well as the relevant State and local government authorities. However, the crucial element in any successful strategy must be the involvement of the town campers themselves and of the local Aboriginal organisations. While the strategies can be devised, their implementation requires co-operation at the local level and in this regard the importance of local government involvement must not be overlooked. The role that local government authorities should play in the implementation of the strategies is discussed in the next

chapter. The States have a major responsibility in Aboriginal affairs, yet, as is noted later in the report, the acceptance of this responsibility varies from State to State.

232. Strategies must aim at the long term solutions rather than a 'band aid' approach. An effort must be made to overcome existing problems, yet at the same time steps must be taken to prevent the problems arising again. In this respect two national Aboriginal organisations will have a central role. The ADC has as its responsibility the provision of 'practical assistance necessary for Aboriginals to secure stable physical, economic and social bases, from which they can advance confidently towards ultimate self-sufficiency'.<sup>101</sup> Since its establishment in 1980, the ADC has been given a large degree of power and flexibility over its own affairs. It provides advice, finance and support to a range of projects and programs including cattle stations, pastoral properties, farms, co-operatives, community stores and fishing ventures.

233. The other Aboriginal organisation is Aboriginal Hostels Limited which operates and funds 111 establishments with a total bed capacity of about 2500. It assesses the need for, and operates, suitable accommodation facilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

234. Former Committees in preceding Parliaments have commented on the necessity for Aboriginal involvement in the determination and implementation of policies for Aboriginals. The Aboriginal Health Report commented that one of the factors in the reduction of the level of Aboriginal ill health is maximum participation by Aboriginals in all stages of the planning and delivery of health care.<sup>102</sup> The ADC and AHL, with their high degree of Aboriginal involvement, are able to provide this participation at the national level. Local organisations can provide the detailed local information and involvement necessary to ensure that such policies are implemented with due regard for the wishes of the local community.

### **Strategies for permanents**

#### *Option one—improve existing conditions*

235. There have been instances where a concerted effort by the local Aboriginal community, coupled with adequate funding, has led to a significant improvement in both the physical and social environment of some town camps. DAA referred to Alice Springs:

... where the former 'fringe communities' are now located well within town boundaries on special purpose leases and they are reasonably well housed, with water, sewerage and electricity services connected.<sup>103</sup>

This comment was supported by Mr Lovegrove of the Northern Territory Administration, who stated:

I would not describe many of the places around Alice Springs now as fringe camps but it was not long ago that they were. I would describe them more as group housing projects.<sup>104</sup>

236. The DAA survey of the camps lacking adequate town services found that there were no such communities in Alice Springs.

237. A number of submissions made reference to the town camp at Mt Nancy in Alice Springs as an example of what had been achieved. Since 1975, DAA has provided \$750 000 for improvements to the camp. The improvements included housing, fencing, landscaping, as well as roadways, drainage and associated services. The submission also made the point that funds alone would not have led to a significant improvement. Other factors involved were the Aboriginal involvement and the leadership within the camp. Dr Heppell makes reference to the early construction of an ablution block which served as a community centre. Prior to 1975 Mt Nancy lacked both essential services and

houses. It is now considered by DAA to be 'an example of how yesterday's fringe can become tomorrow's suburb'.<sup>105</sup>

238. The Western Australian Department of Community Welfare, in its submission to the Committee, noted that the residents on the State's Aboriginal reserves in Derby, Kununurra, Wyndham, Broome, Onslow and Port Hedland wished to remain on the reserve 'in more conventional homes in a cluster situation with individual ablution and cooking facilities'.<sup>106</sup>

239. In considering this option it must be realised that there will be transients who visit the town camps. Provision must be made for visitors in the design of the camps.

*Option two—encourage a move to houses in town*

240. This option, which in some areas is referred to as 'salt and pepper' housing, involves providing Aboriginals with conventional housing within the town proper. Such a program generally involves the relevant State Housing authority.

241. The Committee was informed of such a program which was undertaken in the town of Tingha in northern New South Wales. The success of this program was confirmed in discussions which the Committee had with the local community. There had been an outbreak of tuberculosis in the town which was attributed to the small number of houses, overcrowding and makeshift facilities. The Tingha Aboriginal Corporation now owns 16 houses and a further two houses and one unit were under construction at the time of the Committee's visit (March 1982). The improved housing had in turn led to improvements in health and education. One drawback was the lack of employment opportunities in the Tingha area.

242. Another instance where, it was claimed, town campers had been successfully relocated in a nearby non-Aboriginal centre, was in the south-west of Western Australia. The program was conducted by the Western Australian Department of Community Welfare with \$900 000 being provided by DAA for acquisition and servicing of land, purchase of houses and furniture as well as administration and maintenance costs. Under the program, reserves in Albany, Beverley, Borden, Pingelly, Quairading, Tambellup, Williams and Moora were closed with the residents being accommodated in either standard Housing Commission homes or houses which had been built under the program. The Homemaker Service of DCW reported to DAA 'that the majority of families relocated under the program are settled and happy with the houses' and made reference to improvements in health and education.<sup>107</sup>

243. There had been problems with rent arrears, overcrowding and maintenance but the State Housing Commission considered that most families had been acceptable as tenants and there had been few tenancy changes.

*Option three—relocation to a pastoral/traditional environment*

244. It was suggested by the ADC that the purchase of pastoral properties by Aboriginal organisations had led to a reduction in the number of people moving to the town camps. Reference was made to Utopia and Willowra stations and to the number of Aboriginal people staying on the properties:

... at Willowra cattle station 200 to 300 people are living there. If they did not have that area they would be gravitating between Yuendumu and Alice Springs, mainly living in Alice Springs.<sup>108</sup>

It was also suggested that the establishment of excision communities on pastoral properties would lead 'to a significant reduction in camp numbers in respect of centres south of and including Katherine'.<sup>109</sup>

#### *Option four—Enforce existing health regulations*

245. The enforcement of existing health regulations is not really an option. While it may provide some sort of satisfaction to town authorities in 'cleaning up the town' it does little to overcome the problems. Rather, the problems move to another location.

246. The removal of substandard dwellings in the town camps in the hope that such action will force the campers to move to another location is not an option. The Dept of Health comments: 'Little is really gained by the removal of dwellings, as those affected seek shelter with relatives or friends'<sup>110</sup>, which adds to the overcrowding problem.

#### **Strategies for transients**

247. It was suggested that the needs of this group could be easily satisfied by the provision of camp style accommodation. AHL has become involved in the planning for this style of accommodation and has now acquired some design expertise. The detailed development of the strategy is considered in Chapter 8.

#### **Strategies for homeless drifters**

248. Strategies for this group include alcohol rehabilitation programs. However, work with Aboriginal alcoholics at the Intercultural Health Centre at the Prince Henry Hospital, Sydney directed by Professor Cawte had demonstrated that problems labelled as 'alcohol abuse' problems were often much more complex and could be based on psychological or physical disorders of the patients. As part of its overall approach the Centre was using an antabuse treatment involving a drug that was taken voluntarily by patients and which produced a toxic substance which caused vomiting when alcohol was drunk. The treatment was given under careful medical supervision and was a fairly safe form of treatment. Professor Cawte claimed that the results at the Centre had been excellent. Environmental conditions must also be improved otherwise the ex-alcoholic will only return to the environment which drove him to alcoholism.

#### **Endnotes**

100. Evidence, p. 264.

101. Evidence, p. 3035.

102. Aboriginal Health Report, p. iii.

103. Evidence, pp. 5-6.

104. Evidence, pp. 2233-4.

105. Evidence, p. 1283.

106. Evidence, p. 1076.

107. Evidence, p. 1283.

108. Evidence, p. 2065.

109. Evidence, p. 119.

110. Evidence, p. 808.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Role of Local Government

249. The Committee was aware of the importance of local government authority involvement in overcoming the problems of town camping communities and particularly sought out the views of local government authorities on its visits throughout Australia. This chapter discusses the positive role that local government authorities should play in the implementation of strategies for town camps. A list of local government authorities with town camps within their municipal boundaries is at Appendix VI.

250. It is essential firstly that local government is consulted about the developments proposed for existing town camps within municipal boundaries. The Committee agrees with Mr Collins, Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party in the Northern Territory, that it 'would be an intolerable situation' if town camps are developed 'against the wishes of local government'.<sup>11</sup> Local government authorities need to be involved at an early stage in proposals for the improvement of conditions in town camps and planning their future.

251. This involvement can be achieved by local government authorities taking part in tenure negotiations for town camping communities, and this is recommended in Chapter 9. Housing programs, both within town camps and to re-settle Aboriginals in the towns, should be developed in consultation with local government authorities. The example of Carnarvon, where an Aboriginal Housing Committee comprising representatives from the Carnarvon Shire Council, the local Aboriginal community and relevant government departments, developed proposals for the future of the residents of the Aboriginal reserve (the proposals were discussed in Chapter 6), shows what can be achieved with local government authorities working in consultation with the local Aboriginal community. The Committee makes recommendations for the involvement of local government authorities in housing programs in towns and town camps in Chapter 9.

252. The Committee believes that the involvement of local government authorities should extend beyond that of consultation about developments for the future of town campers. As established bodies with experience and expertise in the delivery of services to their communities, local government authorities can play an important role as funding agencies for the delivery of services to town camping communities. It is important that as such agencies, local government authorities involve Aboriginals in the planning, implementation and management of programs developed. The Drop-In Centre supported by the Townsville City Council is an example of where a local government authority, in consultation with the Aboriginal community, has become involved as a funding agency providing services to town camps.

253. Recommendations are made in the next chapter for government to fund the establishment of shelters for homeless Aboriginals through local government authorities, in consultation with the relevant local Aboriginal organisation. It will also be recommended that relevant local government authorities be consulted about the establishment of transient camps within municipal boundaries.

254. Local government should be making greater use of existing programs to enable it to employ more Aboriginals. The failure to use existing programs is often a reflection of



the failure of government to inform local authorities about the programs, and recommendations are made to remedy this in Chapter 9.

255. In conjunction with their involvement in developments in town camps, local government authorities should be accepting the responsibility for providing essential services to the camps on the same basis as that provided to the rest of the community. DAA claimed that where State or local authorities did not, or could not, provide municipal-type services, it took an active role in the provision of such services. Recommendations are made in Chapter 9 for DAA to consult with the relevant authorities about the provision of essential services to camps.

#### **Liaison with town camps**

256. The expansion of the role of local government authorities in the town camps can only be effective if local government develops consultative mechanisms with the local Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal Development Foundation, the Aboriginal organisation servicing some town camps in Darwin, stated that it would like to co-operate and establish formal liaison with the Darwin City Council but only 'provided the Council does not come down with what it would like done without consideration of the feelings of the people'.<sup>112</sup> The Foundation saw co-operation with Council as enabling Aborigines to be involved in Council's decision-making processes about town camps and as promoting 'a cross-flow of information . . . to try to get some compatibility between the two sides'.<sup>113</sup>

257. However, the Committee is aware from its informal discussions with local government authorities that these authorities often reflect the prejudice and inherited attitudes towards Aborigines of their communities. As noted in Chapter 5, the Dept of Health referred to action taken by local officials to remove the dwellings of town campers which were unlikely to comply with local and State government regulations. The Department claimed that:

The level of action by officials on these matters is frequently determined by local political demands which are mainly expressed by local government councillors. It would appear that racial intolerance may be a strong factor in determining whether action of this type is taken.<sup>114</sup>

*These attitudes need to be overcome if local government is to play an effective role in the provision of services to town camps.*

258. The Committee is aware that some local government authorities have taken steps to consult with the local Aboriginal community. The Alice Springs Town Council has established an Aboriginal Liaison Committee as a sub-committee of Council. The Committee meets monthly for discussions, mainly with local Aboriginal organisations. The Moree Plains Shire Council has arrangements in hand for closer liaison with the local Aboriginal community. The appointment of an Aboriginal liaison officer by the Port Augusta Council has been, according to the Council, 'a great success' and has 'narrowed the communication gap between the different races in our community significantly'.<sup>115</sup> Carnarvon Shire Council's establishment of an Aboriginal Housing Committee to develop proposals to provide housing for Aborigines in Carnarvon has been described above.

259. The Committee commends these initiatives as far as they go, and believes that all local government authorities with town camping communities within their boundaries should be encouraged to establish formal consultative mechanisms with the local Aboriginal community. Local government councils should be encouraged to create Aboriginal liaison committees with council and Aboriginal representation, and to appoint Aboriginal liaison officers.

260. The Committee recommends that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs:

- **initiate discussions with local government authorities with town camping communities within their boundaries (identified in Appendix VI) about establishing Aboriginal liaison committees and/or appointing Aboriginal liaison officers;**
- **initiate discussions with local government authorities, identified in Appendix VI, to develop projects for the provision of services to town camps; and**
- **provide funding to local government authorities where suitable projects are developed.**

#### **Endnotes**

- 111. Evidence, p. 2417.
- 112. Evidence, p. 2322.
- 113. Evidence, p. 2323.
- 114. Evidence, p. 808.
- 115. Evidence, p. 3162.

### Strategies for Transients and Homeless Drifters

#### Alcohol

261. Alcohol consumption is a feature of many town camps and it was suggested that access to alcohol was one of the reasons for a visit to the town. In earlier chapters comment has been made on the effect of alcohol on some Aboriginals. It has led them to adopt the lifestyle of the homeless drifter. Alcoholism is a problem facing all three groups of town campers and while the strategies to overcome alcoholism are of major importance to the homeless drifter group, they are important to all three groups.

262. Kalano noted that alcohol abuse is a problem which 'is producing illnesses and early death in a growing number of individual people'.<sup>116</sup> Alcohol is generally consumed in groups and it was suggested that there is companionship between alcoholics. However, it can also lead to brawling and other problems.

263. The Aboriginal Alcohol Report referred to a range of psycho-social and environmental factors which contributed to excessive consumption of alcohol by Aboriginals. The Report noted that 'In some metropolitan areas and some country towns the environmental factors and associated low socio-economic status are the major contributors to the alcohol problems of Aboriginals'.<sup>117</sup> Included in the environmental factors were overcrowding, poor housing and poor health.

264. The relevant recommendations of that earlier report were:

- that the Government continue to improve the environmental conditions of Aboriginals;
- that emphasis be given to preventative measures when developing programs; and
- that there be adequate consultation with and participation by Aboriginals in all matters affecting them.

265. During the course of the inquiry the Committee visited alcohol rehabilitation centres at Mount Isa, Townsville, Moree and Coober Pedy. DAA supports 40 predominantly Aboriginal organisations which provide alcohol services including pick-up services, day centres, rehabilitation centres and farms. Significant finance was also provided for alcohol counsellors and other community based services but it was not possible to estimate the proportion of expenditure which would be of relevance to town camps.

266. One problem facing such rehabilitation centres which was identified by Kalano was that those who do undergo rehabilitation programs usually have to return to the environment that produced their addiction. The strategies outlined later in this report will help to overcome many of the causes of alcoholism. The support to existing organisations should continue.

267. The Committee supports the continued funding of alcohol rehabilitation services for Aboriginal people, but notes that it will be reviewing previous Committee reports and will make a long-term assessment of the need for such services at that time.

268. In its Aboriginal Alcohol Report, the Committee acknowledged the valuable contribution made by the WOMA Committee, South Australia, in co-ordinating

alcohol rehabilitation services for Aborigines. Accordingly, the Committee recommended that similar bodies be established in the other States and the Northern Territory. The recommendation was supported by the Federal Government when it responded to the report. However, to date the Committee is aware only of similar co-ordinating bodies in Western Australia and New South Wales. The Committee is concerned at the lack of action on its previous recommendations.

269. Although the Committee has foreshadowed a review of the need for alcohol rehabilitation services for Aborigines in paragraph 267, it is nevertheless concerned that there should be a significant Aboriginal involvement in the provision of existing services. The Committee therefore recommends that:

- each State and the Northern Territory establish a co-ordinating committee on Aboriginal alcohol problems with significant Aboriginal participation.

### **Homeless drifters**

270. Homeless and destitute individuals in the cities were considered by DAA to be different from town campers and had different problems. It was inferred that such individuals would be less than 10 per cent of all the Aboriginal town camping population. However, groups of homeless Aborigines have been identified, included in the Committee's definition, and commented on in paragraphs 63-66.

271. The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service referred to the group of men who frequented the parks in Fitzroy and, while acknowledging that there had been an element of choice in adopting the lifestyle of a park-dweller, suggested many were resigned to a life of poverty and early death. It was claimed that the 'parkies look for companionship and some light relief in their collective life of misery'.<sup>118</sup>

272. Sister Winch of the Aboriginal Medical Service in Perth, referred to 'the so called 'anti-social' people who do not fit into the stringent rules of the Hostels'<sup>119</sup> and preferred to camp on vacant land. She suggested that a night shelter be set up for these itinerants who were not able 'to conform to the rules and regulations of white society'.<sup>120</sup>

273. Assistance is provided to homeless persons under a range of Acts, including the Homeless Persons Act, by the Department of Social Security. Aboriginal organisations have had limited access to these programs because they have been unable to match the subsidy required. Organisations which had received funds included the Eastern Goldfields Aboriginal Advancement Council in Kalgoorlie for meals and rent, the Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Health Service for its meals delivered to the parks, and the Ki-Meta Shelter in Townsville, for accommodation and counselling.

274. Payments can only be made to organisations approved by the Minister for Social Security. This makes it difficult to fund organisations in town camps. DSS stated:

Our subsidy programs generally work on models which require some contribution and organisation from a community and if in those cases those communities cannot come forward with their part of the funds—for example, as in many cases 20 per cent or 33 per cent—or they cannot organise themselves to run an establishment once it is set up then there is some difficulty about our providing subsidy money to them.<sup>121</sup>

275. Concern was expressed by the Townsville City Council about the future of a Drop-In Centre which it supported. The Centre provides meals and washing facilities as well as recreational and counselling services. The Commonwealth requirement under the Homeless Persons Act showed a lack of understanding of the management problems of a community agency involved with the economically disadvantaged. According to the Council, the DSS was prepared to fund half the salary of a social worker at the Centre provided no other Commonwealth Department contributed to the other

half of the salary costs. (One hundred thousand dollars was provided to the Centre in January 1982.)

276. In Townsville, the City Council was also involved in the purchase of a boarding house for use as a night shelter. Once funding was approved by the Minister for Social Security, the administration of the shelter was handed over to the Aboriginal and Islander Health Service. Such co-operation between local government and an Aboriginal organisation is welcomed and should be encouraged.

277. The Committee recommends that:

- the Department of Social Security, as the Department responsible for the administration of the Homeless Persons Act:
  - (a) encourage the appropriate local government authority and relevant Aboriginal organisation to apply for funding for the establishment of night shelters for homeless Aboriginals; and
  - (b) give favourable consideration to such requests for funding when the need for such shelters is established.

### **The transients**

278. The need for temporary accommodation for transients was outlined in paragraphs 130 and 132. Aboriginal Hostels Limited estimated that there was a requirement for over 500 beds in an alternative camp-style category.

279. In addition to providing separate camps for transients, provision also needs to be made for transients in the permanent town camps. It was suggested that this might be achieved by a house design which incorporates an area of covered open space.

280. The reasons why people might want to come to town were considered in Chapter 2 and while it may be possible to reduce the frequency of visits by improving services in the home communities, such action will not stop all visits. Dr Young established that while the reason for the visit to town might vary, there was generally a specific reason for the visit. According to the Dept of Health:

They can come into a town area; they can conduct what business they want; they can see their children at colleges and places like this; they can go on a binge if they want to; but then at the completion of a period of time they go back to their own areas.<sup>122</sup>

281. Assistance to the transients should be in the form of basic facilities such as sewerage, waste disposal, drainage and water supply. DAA suggested the provision of facilities such as ablution blocks, soup kitchens and various other temporary arrangements, however housing was not included. Professor Sansom suggested that it would not be possible 'to create one great caravan park' in Darwin because of tribal differences.<sup>123</sup> He suggested a number of discreetly located parks, well screened by trees and serviced with ablution blocks and other facilities.

282. Aboriginal Hostels Limited is only able to offer temporary accommodation and provides such accommodation as a base for development and rehabilitation. It has a major role in providing support by way of temporary accommodation for the programs initiated by others.

283. Details of projects in Parkeston and Camooweal were provided by AHL. The projects were considered 'pioneer concepts in the development of appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of transient and fringe-dwelling Aboriginals in remote areas'.<sup>124</sup>

284. The Parkeston Hostel at Kalgoorlie will provide short-term accommodation. The facility, when completed, will include four dormitories, nine open shelters, an ablution/laundry block, plus a kitchen, dining and office complex as well as a manager's residence. The fifty bed facility is being funded by the ADC and will provide shelter for town campers living in caves, creeks and condemned houses.

285. The Camooweal Hostel will provide short-term accommodation for transients who presently live in substandard buildings and self-made shelters. The budget for the project is \$200 000 and will be provided by DSS under the Homeless Persons Assistance Program. Two sites are to be developed to cater for incompatible differences between the major Aboriginal groups using the area. The first stage of the project is the construction of ablution blocks on each of the main sites. It is expected that the hostel will reduce overcrowding during the wet season and holiday periods when there is a large influx of Aboriginals from outlying regions.

286. Aboriginal Hostels Limited had become involved in the projects in response to requests to use its expertise even though such facilities 'are not really within the charter or rather the agreement of the company'.<sup>125</sup> A conventional hostel would not be appropriate for either project. It was claimed by AHL that:

... both Parkeston and Camooweal provide unusual Hostel accommodation, specifically suited to the needs of the Aboriginals who will use the facilities. It is envisaged that there will be a camp-style arrangement of buildings, open shelters, open fireplaces in both developments.<sup>126</sup>

287. There is a need for alternative accommodation for transients in a number of locations around Australia. The local Aboriginal community and relevant local government authorities should be consulted about the establishment of the facilities. Funding should be provided to an appropriate body to establish the facilities, and the experience that AHL has gained in providing alternative accommodation for transients in Kalgoorlie and Camooweal is noted. The Committee also believes that local government authorities often have experience in providing similar facilities, such as caravan parks and camping areas, for the general community and could be an appropriate agency to receive funds to provide transient accommodation. The operations of such hostels should, where possible, be the responsibility of local Aboriginal organisations. The Tangentyere Council was involved in proposals for the establishment of three camps in Alice Springs. The camps, which would cost around \$120 000, would provide basic facilities for use by transients.

288. The Committee recommends that:

- the Department of Aboriginal Affairs be responsible for, and consult with local Aboriginal communities, relevant local government authorities and Aboriginal Hostels Limited about evaluating the need for alternative style accommodation for transients;
- funding be provided to an appropriate agency to establish transient facilities where the need for such facilities has been established;
- the charter of Aboriginal Hostels Limited be reviewed to allow it to provide alternative type accommodation for transients where it is the appropriate funding agency;
- local Aboriginal organisations be given the responsibility for operating transient accommodation wherever possible; and
- in the construction of such accommodation the design should be appropriate to the needs of the campers.

## Endnotes

116. Evidence, p. 187.
117. Aboriginal Alcohol Report, paragraph 58.
118. Evidence, p. 2678.
119. Evidence, p. 1085.
120. Evidence, p. 1086.
121. Evidence, p. 1946.
122. Evidence, p. 996.
123. Evidence, p. 2802.
124. Evidence, p. 2865.
125. Evidence, p. 1989.
126. Evidence, p. 2867.

## CHAPTER 9

### Strategies to Overcome Existing Problems

#### Introduction

289. The strategies developed in this chapter are those which will help overcome the existing problems of Aboriginal people living in town camps. The economic and social problems which exist in town camp communities were identified in Chapters 4 and 5.

290. In developing these strategies the Committee believes that Aboriginal self-management must be the major consideration if the strategies are to be effective. The ALRC referred to the difficulties that can arise when Aboriginal people are not sufficiently consulted:

... we may in fact be making things worse if we offer ... to Aboriginal communities structures which then undermine particular power structures within the community or even reinforce them in a way which is adverse to the interests of the community.<sup>127</sup>

This problem is largely overcome by ensuring adequate involvement of Aboriginal people in decisions that are taken. Kalano believed that:

The government agencies should at least consult with Aboriginal people and be guided in whatever action is necessary to deal with the present and plan for the future.<sup>128</sup>

291. The ADC referred specifically to 'more Aboriginal involvement in terms of taking control and decision-making responsibilities'<sup>129</sup> as being among the solutions to the problems of town camping communities. The ADC believed that there was a need for:

... more self-management and self-sufficiency ... to develop independence and move more away from this welfare syndrome which the fringe-dwellers seem to have more than any other category of Aboriginal people in Australian Society.<sup>130</sup>

While the wider community had a role to play in giving greater understanding and co-operation to the communities, the ADC believed that more effort was needed by Aboriginal people themselves to overcome their own situation. This would mean Aboriginal town campers doing two things:

Firstly, creating the opportunities outside and then taking advantage of them as they would want to, to the best of their ability, but secondly, developing the inner Aboriginal person to be able to create and develop more confidence, dignity and self-respect in interacting with other people.<sup>131</sup>

292. All levels of government, Commonwealth, State and local, have responsibility in areas where action will have to be taken to overcome the problems of town campers. They will need to be involved, in concert with the Aboriginal communities, in the strategies that are devised.

#### Land tenure

##### *Non-tenured camp sites*

293. A list of town camping communities occupying non-tenured land was given in paragraph 135. Table 5, below, shows the number of communities on non-tenured land, total population and land ownership on a State basis.



**Table 5: Communities Occupying Non-Tenured Land (based on information supplied by DAA September 1981 and ADC June 1982)**

	<i>N.T.</i>	<i>W.A.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>S.A.</i>	<i>N.S.W.</i>	<b>Total</b>
Number of Communities	21	20	8	2	12	<b>63</b>
Population	600	2 550	350	100	300	<b>3900</b>
Land ownership						
Crown land	16	13	2	1	5	<b>37</b>
Local Government	2	4	3	..	2	<b>11</b>
State Government	..	1	..	..	3	<b>4</b>
Private	3	2	2	1	2	<b>10</b>
Unknown	1	..	1	..	..	<b>2</b>

Source: Evidence, pp. 9, 1285 and 3072-3107.

294. Until these communities are provided with tenured land, little can be done to improve their standard of living by providing community services and adequate housing. Town camping communities occupying non-tenured land would appear to have the least, in economic terms, of all the communities.

295. The Committee believes investigations should be undertaken to determine whether tenure can be obtained for those communities occupying non-tenured land and which desire to remain on the land. The first step would be to determine the permanency of the communities. A number of the communities have already been asked about their long term wishes as part of the survey of communities lacking adequate town services.

296. The investigations should be co-ordinated by DAA and should involve the relevant State and local government authorities. The ADC could also have a role in the investigations, particularly in assisting approaches to the local communities. Aboriginal umbrella organisations like Tangentyere in Alice Springs and the Aboriginal Development Foundation in Darwin, would perform a similar role.

297. The Committee has visited some of the communities occupying non-tenured land and is aware that some of the camps are convenient camping spots for Aboriginal people. However, the Committee is also aware that these are not always the only possible places for Aboriginals to camp. For example, a nearby alternative site has been proposed for the residents of Happy Valley. The Townsville Cemetery Trust has agreed to lease the site to the Happy Valley residents and DAA has programmed funds for an open housing development but the Queensland Department of Lands has not yet approved the lease transfer. The residents of another camp, the sixteen-mile camp, Darwin, were awaiting the granting of a Special Purpose Lease on nearby land.

298. Other non-tenured sites in the Northern Territory could also be the subject of Special Purpose Lease claims. There remain a number of camps in the Northern Territory without tenure to land.

299. Special Purpose Lease claims could be made on a 'needs' basis in recognition that Aboriginals camping in urban areas could not claim that land on the basis of traditional ownership under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. The Northern Territory Government considered the policy of Special Purpose Lease grants 'to be an interim measure and not ongoing and open-ended'.<sup>132</sup> It has now adopted a moratorium for two years on the granting of future leases 'until adequate and rational use is made by Aboriginals of existing land grants'.<sup>133</sup> Four applications for Special Purpose Leases in Darwin, Katherine and Pine Creek would be considered before the moratorium.

300. The Committee is aware that negotiations have been taking place to resolve the long-term future of a number of the non-tenured camp sites and that in some cases the situations have been resolved. DAA referred to Skipper's Camp, Wiluna, where the people who resided at the camp have been accommodated in Wiluna following the completion of nine houses and four pensioner units by the State Housing Commission. The people of Boor Street and Tent City, Carnarvon, have been accommodated in a State Housing Commission housing complex at Boor Street completed in late 1981. The town campers of Oodnadatta have also been accommodated. According to DAA, Brown Street Camp, Tennant Creek, is no longer in existence and the residents of Stanley Street Camp, Tennant Creek, are now living at the Village Special Purpose Lease nearby. The situations of the other non-tenured sites remain unresolved.

301. The Committee recommends that:

- **An investigation should be undertaken, co-ordinated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and involving the Aboriginal Development Commission and relevant State and local government authorities, of communities occupying non-tenured land to determine whether:**
  - (a) those that have not already been surveyed as part of the survey of communities lacking adequate town services, wish to remain on the land;
  - (b) the land of permanent communities will continue to be available; and
  - (c) tenure can be obtained for the community.

#### *Tenured camp sites*

302. There is also a need for investigations to determine the aspirations of town camp communities occupying tenured land which are not among those surveyed as part of the communities lacking adequate town services survey. Where communities express the desire to stay an assessment may have to be made about whether the form of tenure is sufficient to provide a degree of permanency and the freedom it allows the community to develop in the way it wants.

303. As with similar proposed investigations on non-tenured sites, those proposed for tenured communities should be co-ordinated by DAA and should involve the ADC and relevant State and local government authorities. The role of State authorities will be of particular importance as all have looked, to differing degrees, to providing a number of town camping communities with tenure over the land on which they are camping. Existing State government policies as they affect tenure in town camping communities are discussed below.

#### *New South Wales*

304. At present the Aboriginal Lands Trust holds title of the former reserve land in trust for the benefit of the State's Aborigines. Government policy and the *Aborigines Act* 1969 are under review following recommendations of the Select Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines, tabled in August 1980.

305. The Select Committee in its Report on Land Rights and Sacred and Significant Sites stated that:

... all acquisitions of land made on behalf of Aboriginal communities, or grants of land to Aborigines should be vested as freehold in the appropriate community or Aboriginal organisation.<sup>134</sup>

The Select Committee specifically suggested that claims to land should include urban and fringe areas of towns and cities.

306. The Premier of New South Wales in a letter to the Committee Chairman on 14 January 1982 said:

My Government sees the Land Rights issue as having top priority and I have publicly announced that we will implement a Land Rights policy. I have indicated that, as a first step, Aboriginal reserves in NSW will be restored to the ownership and control of the local Aboriginal communities.<sup>135</sup>

The New South Wales Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. F. J. Walker, has since said that the legislation would be introduced into the Parliament by the end of 1982. However, information from the New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, dated August 1982, indicates that 'it is not anticipated that the legislation will be passed until some time in 1983'.<sup>136</sup>

307. In February 1980, a study was commenced of each former Aboriginal reserve in New South Wales. The first stage was a pilot study of six reserves. A further two reserves were later included in the study. The pilot study was completed, however it had been decided that it would be inappropriate to extend the study to other reserves because of administrative changes that had taken place. The changes included the establishment of the New South Wales Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and the transfer of the grants-in-aid housing function to the ADC. A further factor was the possibility of new land rights arrangements in the State. The pilot study indicated that a number of residents of the former reserves wished to remain living there and did not want to move into housing in town. This highlights the importance of implementing the Select Committee's recommendations to see ownership of former reserves vested in the local Aboriginal communities.

#### *Western Australia*

308. The current policy of the Western Australian Government is aimed at the eventual closure of Department of Community Welfare reserves as residents acquire better accommodation. As discussed earlier, it is claimed the policy has worked well in the south-west of the State where former reserve dwellers appear to have been successfully rehoused in towns. However, the Government has had difficulties implementing the policy in the north of the State, as it explained:

With our program closure on the south-west, that was the level of aspiration of the people we talked to. They wanted to be part of a town community; there was no desire to live in an enclave situation or in a group situation doing something different from other people. This is not the case in the north of course and that makes it difficult ...<sup>137</sup>

309. A survey of residents in the north of the State showed that they found attractions in living on the reserves. The Western Australian Government has adopted interim measures of up-grading the facilities on the remaining reserves while stating that the reserves should not be seen as permanent dwelling places but as 'a temporary stage until a better alternative has been developed'.<sup>138</sup>

310. The local Aboriginal community can apply to use land on closed reserves for other purposes such as a recreation facility or an economic enterprise. Where such applications are made the land is usually vested, on behalf of the local Aboriginal community, with the Western Australian Aboriginal Lands Trust. The Government claimed that:

Certainly it is our policy, where there is a community that wishes to retain the land for community purposes, that we do so.<sup>139</sup>

311. According to the Western Australian Government, land which is reserved land, mission land or pastoral lease land is usually vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust. Aboriginal community groups can sublease the land if they are incorporated groups, and

can run it. The Aboriginal Communities Act gives communities the right to administer their own by-laws as regards buildings, transport and essential services and also regulate behaviour on community land through a management council. The Western Australian Government believed that:

... with regard to security of tenure or certainly being able to control community life on Aboriginal land, the access is there to do so.<sup>140</sup>

### *South Australia*

312. Two of the communities in South Australia, Ceduna and Davenport have title to their land. Both are sub-leased to local Aboriginal associations by the South Australian Aboriginal Lands Trust. A report on the Ceduna camp by the Australian Housing Research Council Project 90 on Aboriginal housing needs in South Australia claimed that most residents of the camp would prefer to maintain their present lifestyle in Half Way Camp than move to Ceduna. It recommended that improvements be made in the camp.

### *Victoria*

313. Land rights in Victoria have been granted to the Lake Tyers people and to residents on an area of 250 acres in the Framlingham District. Some areas of land have also been purchased for Aboriginal co-operatives in Robinvale and Echuca. The Victorian Government believed that the land rights granted to date were extremely limited and it was 'as important to enable other Aboriginal communities in Victoria to regain possession of land through Victorian land rights legislation'.<sup>141</sup>

314. In looking to the introduction of land rights legislation, the Victorian Government said that:

It is our view that there will be a very important psychological impact in returning land formerly in Aboriginal ownership back to Aboriginal ownership and it will also have the effect of providing an economic base in many areas.<sup>142</sup>

Consideration would be given to land claims being able to be made on the basis of need and historical association as well as traditional association. The Government was also looking at the question of compensation for 'dispossession'.

### *Queensland*

315. The Queensland Government recently announced that the Queensland Land Act would be amended to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island councils on reserves in Queensland deeds of grant in trust to the reserves. According to DAA:

The objective of the proposals was to encourage local inhabitants to assume an increasing role and responsibility in the development of townships, lands, enterprises and cultural activities within the relevant council areas. In addition, the present Council management roles, including the existing capacity for the making and enforcing of by-laws, entry and residence requirements and decisions on availability of alcohol, would continue within each community.<sup>143</sup>

316. The Queensland Government is also drafting legislation to replace the *Aborigines Act 1971-1979* and the *Torres Straits Islanders Act 1971-1979* under which the reserves are presently administered.

317. The Queensland Regional Office of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs advised that Yallambee reserve in Mount Isa was designated as a Reserve for Recreation and did not fall into the category of reserves that had received deeds of grant in trust. It was the only Aboriginal settlement in Queensland designated as a Recreation Reserve. Another Mount Isa reserve, Orana Park, was designated as a Reserve for

Housing. According to DAA at a meeting on 2 April 1980 between the Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs, State officers and the Mount Isa City Council to discuss the handing over of responsibility for these reserves to the Queensland Government, the Council was informed that:

- Yallambee and Orana Park reserves would not become reserves under the Aborigines Act; and
- the State Government's long-term plan was to wind up these reserves and either encourage people to return to their original place of habitation or to be absorbed into conventional houses in Mount Isa.

This intention had been reiterated to DAA by the Director of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement (DAIA).

### *Northern Territory*

318. Twenty-six Special Purpose Leases have been granted in urban areas in the Northern Territory to local Aboriginal communities in perpetuity and without cost. These camps include more than 60 per cent of all town camp dwellers in the Northern Territory. Four more lease applications are still to be considered before the moratorium, discussed earlier, (para 285) comes into force.

319. The granting of Special Purpose Leases has allowed facilities and housing to be provided to town camps. The Northern Territory Government believed that the town camps could be more properly described as 'developed urban leases'.<sup>144</sup> The advantages which permanent dwellers on Special Purpose Leases saw in their lifestyle were noted earlier. (para 48)

### *Recommendations*

320. The Committee is aware that the States will make different arrangements to provide land tenure to town camping Aboriginal communities. State Governments should be guided in making their arrangements by the four principles established by the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Baume, in considering the recent Queensland proposals to amend Queensland legislation. Land tenure arrangements made for town camping communities should provide:

- security of tenure;
- integrity of boundaries;
- self-management by the residents; and
- full consultation with the town campers affected.

321. The adoption of these four principles in regard to land tenure would allow development of town camping communities to take place according to the wishes of the community. The Committee commends the existing land tenure arrangements for town campers in the Northern Territory, as being the model that other governments can follow.

322. The Committee recommends that:

- **an investigation, co-ordinated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and involving the Aboriginal Development Commission and relevant State and local government authorities, should be undertaken of town camping communities occupying tenured land to determine whether:**
  - (a) **those that have not already been surveyed as part of the survey of communities lacking adequate town services, wish to remain on the land;**
  - and**

- (b) the land title meets the four principles of security of tenure; integrity of boundaries; self-management by the residents; and full consultation with communities affected, to allow development according to the community's wishes to take place.
- where the land title does not meet the four principles to allow for development according to the community's wishes, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs have discussions with relevant State government authorities to obtain a more suitable form of title.

### **Community services**

323. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs provided details of 117 town camping communities in New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Of these only 46 communities had all community services—water, sewerage and electricity—provided. Fifty-three communities had no services. At least 11 of these communities had tenure to land and so were in a position to be provided with services.

324. Where a State or other authority does not or cannot provide essential services to communities, DAA plays an active role in the provision of services. A considerable proportion of the estimated \$25.6m appropriated for 1982-83 for DAA's Community Management and Services Program is devoted to the installation and maintenance of essential services in communities where no State or local authority has the responsibility or provides such services. The program provides training and work experience for Aboriginals in the maintenance and operation of community services.

325. The Committee commends the Aboriginal Public Health Improvement Program instituted by the Government in response to the Committee's report on Aboriginal health. This program, which is part of the Community Management and Services Program, and envisages the expenditure of \$50m over five years (to date \$8m in 1981-82, and \$12m appropriated for 1982-83), is concerned with improving the environmental health conditions of Aboriginal communities by upgrading the standard of essential services. It is noted that only a few town camping communities are included in the program although the figures above indicate the need for essential services in these communities.

326. The role of local government in providing essential services to town camping communities needs to be considered. Local government authorities should be encouraged to accept the responsibility for the provision of essential services to town camps. They should involve the local Aboriginal community to the fullest possible extent in the provision of those services, particularly in employing Aboriginals to do the work.

327. The problems which arise in some communities because of the bulk billing of essential services is referred to in Chapter 4. There is a need for the individual metering of essential services provided to communities. A solution to the problem of bulk billing of electricity charges in the Orana Park Reserve, Mount Isa, was for each family to have its own fenced-off block of land with an electricity supply pole to which appliances could be connected. Payment was through individual coin operated meters.

328. The Committee recommends that:

- an investigation take place to determine the responsibility for provision of essential services in those camps with land tenure;

- where local government has the responsibility for the provision of essential services, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs pursue the matter with the appropriate authority and include in its Annual Report details of the achievements and failures by the appropriate agencies in providing these essential services;
- where local government does not have the responsibility for provision of essential services, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs consider inclusion of the communities in either its Community and Management Services Program or its Public Health Improvement Program.

## Housing

329. The lack of adequate housing was the most readily identifiable problem of town camping communities. It was a characteristic of most communities. It was emphasised that improved housing could lead to improved health and education for town campers. It would enable families to stabilise themselves and give them hope for the future.

330. The lack of adequate consultation and involvement of Aboriginal people in many previous housing projects was also referred to in Chapter 4. This had led to houses being constructed which were unsuitable, either because they were in the wrong location or because they were not designed according to Aboriginal wishes, or for both these reasons.

331. The Aboriginal Development Commission's final submission identified a need for 2110 houses at a cost of \$96m to provide adequate housing for town camping communities. A 1980 DAA survey had indicated that for the whole Aboriginal community about 2300 houses needed upgrading and about 8600 new houses were required, the majority of these being in rural centres. The ADC referred to a 1981 DAA survey which showed that at 30 June 1981 there were 10 303 new houses needed and 2778 houses required upgrading. Assuming that present funding was maintained in real terms, and allowing for new household formations, the ADC believed that it would take until 1993-94 for its Housing Grants-in-Aid Program and the Aboriginal Special Housing Program to overcome the Aboriginal housing backlog. However, it could take longer than this as large sums would need to be directed to upgrading existing houses.

332. The function of providing grants-in-aid to Aboriginal Housing Associations was transferred from DAA to the ADC on 1 July 1981. In 1981-82, expenditure on the program was \$23.7m. Grants can be given for:

- the purchase of land to build housing;
- construction or purchase of housing;
- provision of shelters, toilets, washing and storage facilities and other camp improvements at established communities serviced by an Aboriginal body; and
- other purposes related to the provision of, or administration of, housing.<sup>145</sup>

According to the ADC, grants:

are intended to assist in the provision of housing of a type, and at locations, suitable to the needs of Aboriginal people, enabling them to enjoy accepted standards of health and social well-being.<sup>146</sup>

333. Applicants for ADC concessional housing loans have to meet a number of conditions. The applicants must be unable to obtain or reasonably afford housing finance from other sources. There are price limits set to ensure loans are only provided for modest homes. The rate of interest and terms of repayment are set in accordance with the level of the borrower's income. The rate of interest ranges from 2 per cent to 5 per cent (for cases of genuine hardship) to 10 per cent. Cases of extreme hardship receive priority in the provision of housing loans. Pensioners and other welfare beneficiaries are

generally ineligible for concessional housing loans as past experience has shown they are unable to meet the increased financial costs of repayments and home ownership. The present waiting list was closed in November 1981 and the last family on the list will not be invited to apply for a loan until November 1986.

334. Responsibility for the Aboriginal Special Housing Program, which provides special earmarked grants to the States for Aboriginal housing, was recently transferred from the former Department of Housing and Construction to the Department of Social Security. The former Housing for Aboriginals Program of DAA was incorporated in the Aboriginal Special Housing Program from 1 July 1981. Estimated expenditure on the program in 1981-82 was \$34.2m. The program allows the States to provide rental housing to Aboriginals. Aboriginal people are also eligible for housing provided through the non-earmarked general Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) assistance. Apart from Queensland and Western Australia, the Aboriginal Special Housing and Housing for Aboriginals Programs have been applied only to the provision of housing in towns.

335. States Grants housing funds for Aboriginals are administered by the Housing Commissions in each State, except in Queensland where it is administered by the DAIA. State policies vary and details of these were provided by the former Department of Housing and Construction.

#### *New South Wales*

336. Commonwealth funds for Aboriginal housing in New South Wales were administered by the New South Wales Housing Commission. The selection criteria applied were those used for all Commission applications. According to the New South Wales Government, there were no Aboriginals on the waiting list who were considered unsuitable for tenancy. A team from the Health Commission, Youth and Community Services and the Housing Commission had assisted these applicants during the waiting period.

337. The New South Wales Housing Commission stated that Aboriginals were consulted about where their house would be located. Difficulties in buying land or houses in some areas (e.g. Moree) meant that people could not always be located where they wanted. Aboriginals were able to choose from a stock of designs that were available for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal dwellings. The Commission claimed that the extent of Aboriginal involvement in its operations:

... has only been in a limited way through building programming input with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (in consultation with Aboriginal Communities), the appointment of NESA trainees to some Commission Offices and the employment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer who maintains the Sydney Metropolitan Area waiting list and processes applications for assistance in Sydney.<sup>147</sup>

338. A joint DAA-New South Wales State Housing Commission review of the Housing for Aboriginals program in September 1979 claimed that there was:

... within the Aboriginal community a pervasive lack of confidence bordering on antipathy towards the NSW Housing Commission. The mistrust arose in part from inaccurate and/or historical information built up from hearsay, and in part because the Commission was 'government'.<sup>148</sup>

The review believed that the objective of the Housing for Aboriginals program was to place it 'under Aboriginal control with the Commission acting on the advice and direction of an Aboriginal Housing Board'.<sup>149</sup> The employment by the Commission of Aboriginal liaison officers, the review believed, could also 'assist to bridge the communications (and credibility) gap'.<sup>150</sup>



339. The Family Resettlement Aboriginal Corporation, funded by DAA, operates in New South Wales in co-operation with the State Housing Commission. The Corporation assists Aboriginal families interested in relocating voluntarily from remote, depressed rural areas to the more prosperous, advantaged provincial centres. Resettlement Counsellors provide advice, counselling and support to the families. Each family is provided with a house by the Housing Commission in the resettlement town, and job placement through the assistance of the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. One hundred and seventy-seven families had been assisted under the scheme to 30 June 1981.

340. In discussions with the Committee the Corporation said that, although some assisted families would go back to their former homes, about 70 per cent to 80 per cent stayed in their new areas. About half of the 15 families resettled per year would have jobs within three months. The Corporation believed that the resettlement program was a success and was providing an opportunity for Aboriginal families that wanted to resettle in places offering work.

341. The Aboriginal Development Commission was critical of the scheme because of the small number of people who benefitted. It claimed that the scheme:

... took the best people from the reserves and settlements and put them near the towns, so that the group was left leaderless and the people were left by themselves. All the best people had gone.<sup>151</sup>

The ADC concluded that:

It is an expensive exercise and what it basically is doing is widening the gulf between the haves and the have-nots.<sup>152</sup>

The Family Resettlement Corporation acknowledged that resettlement could cause upheaval in Aboriginal communities.

342. The Committee, while accepting that the program has some drawbacks, believes that it does cater for those Aboriginals who are keen to relocate to obtain better employment prospects for themselves and greater opportunities for their children. DAA suggested that a much wider program would be needed for it to have a substantial impact. An expansion of the program could overcome some of the criticism that the existing program is only benefitting a small number of people. The Committee believes that DAA should investigate expanding the scheme within New South Wales and consider extending it to other States and the Northern Territory.

#### *Western Australia*

343. The Western Australian Housing Commission was responsible for provision of Aboriginal housing under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. An Aboriginal Housing Board was established by the Western Australian Government in 1978 to provide for:

- Aboriginal representation and involvement in policy formulation and decision-making;
- representation of Aboriginal interests at Commission level through a full-time executive Chairman; and
- greater involvement and representation of Aboriginal people through the medium of Regional and Local Housing Committees.<sup>153</sup>

344. Housing construction for Aboriginals, under the Housing Assistance Act and Commonwealth Grants, falls into three categories —urban housing, 'fringe' housing and village housing. The procedure for recovery action was the same as for all Commission tenants although the Aboriginal Advancement Council was represented at Ar-rears Committee meetings when the position of Aboriginal tenants was examined.

345. The Department of Community Welfare provides homemaker support services to families provided with housing and who need to gain experience in house maintenance. The Department employs about 170 homemakers of whom about 48 are Aboriginal.

#### *South Australia*

346. The South Australian Housing Trust established an Aboriginal Funded Unit for the management of the special housing program funds for Aboriginals. An Aboriginal Housing Board and regional Aboriginal Housing Management Committees recommend to the Trust policies which determine the location and allocation of houses provided for Aboriginals with funds from the earmarked grants. The Trust's aim has been to house families in standard type accommodation in the midst of established communities in Adelaide and country towns. Selection criteria for Aboriginals are the same as those for all tenants.

347. Houses provided for Aboriginals generally do not differ in design from houses in the general community. However, the local community is closely involved in design of housing and design changes can be catered for.

348. The Aboriginal Housing Board, in conjunction with the Australian Housing Research Council, undertook a comprehensive survey of Aboriginal housing needs in South Australia and Alice Springs in 1979 and 1980. The survey is commonly referred to as 'Project 90' and the documents which resulted from it are used by the Housing Trust 'significantly together with the Aboriginal Housing Board in its forward program and planning'.<sup>154</sup>

#### *Victoria*

349. The Victorian Ministry for Housing indicated that its policy in regard to the allocation of dwellings has been to empower an elected Aboriginal Housing Board to make allocations within the stock of houses provided for Aboriginals with the State Grants. Selection criteria applied to Aboriginal tenants were the same as for other applicants in regard to income level and houses built for Aboriginals did not differ in any respect from the Ministry's general stock of housing.

350. The policy was more lenient towards Aboriginals in regard to tenancy arrears. If the present lenient policy concerning eviction for large rent arrears was reversed, the Ministry for Housing believed that Victoria's small number of town campers would grow.

#### *Queensland*

351. Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement funds for Aboriginals in Queensland are administered by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement. The Department has not provided details of its programs.

352. The Aboriginal Development Commission claimed that DAIA:

... has been responsible for the provision of housing to communities living on Aboriginal reserves throughout Queensland. The State Department also provides housing for low income families at areas other than reserves. It spends funds from both State and Commonwealth sources on Aboriginal housing.<sup>155</sup>

#### *Northern Territory*

353. The Northern Territory Housing Commission administered funds under the (Commonwealth-Northern Territory) Aboriginal Housing Agreement (AHA).

Houses constructed under the AHA had incorporated some design differences to enhance the 'livability and utility of the houses from the tenants' point of view'.<sup>156</sup> According to the Commission:

The majority of tenants of the AHA dwellings have come from camp environments, usually on the fringe of the town in question.<sup>157</sup>

354. The Commission's general public housing programs made no differentiation between applicants on ethnic grounds. In major urban areas Aboriginal applicants were housed in the same way and under the same policies and conditions as all other applicants.

#### *Catering for Aboriginal needs*

355. Aboriginal involvement is essential if housing funds are to be spent effectively. The establishment of Aboriginal Housing Advisory Boards to the State Housing Commissions with significant involvement in the Aboriginal Special Housing Program is one way of achieving this. The ADC claimed that these Boards enable Aboriginal people to be involved in policy formulation and management matters in respect of Aboriginal housing administered by the State Housing Authority. They have gained a good reputation within Aboriginal communities. It is noted that New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory have yet to establish such Aboriginal Advisory bodies, although New South Wales is presently considering a proposal to establish such a Board.

356. The approach of State Housing Commissions in providing housing for Aboriginals has been that adopted in providing welfare housing for the general community. Assistance in the provision of standard housing in towns and cities has been provided to Aboriginal clients on low to moderate income levels. Selection and eviction policies, with some exceptions, are generally those which apply to all clients, and housing provided for Aboriginals generally does not differ greatly from that provided to other clients. The Western Australian and South Australian Housing Commissions provide alternative designs for Aboriginal housing. Tenants may purchase their houses except in certain areas where the Housing Authorities are unable to obtain replacement houses.

357. A contrast to the general approach of the State Housing Commissions, was that of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Panel. The Panel was an independent incorporated association with an Aboriginal chairman and majority Aboriginal membership. It was funded by DAA and worked with Aboriginal communities on community building and house design. One of the Panel's architects worked in Alice Springs town camps, particularly Mt Nancy, from 1975 until the Panel was disbanded in 1978. Drakakis-Smith claimed that the Panel:

... built up a deservedly favourable reputation amongst the town campers in Alice Springs for careful consultation and consideration of any improvement scheme.<sup>158</sup>

He went on to note that an important outcome of this consultative process was:

... the emphasis given to gradual improvements in security, services, and ablution facilities prior to the construction management procedures subsequent to this construction.<sup>159</sup>

The Panel's involvement in Alice Springs was described in detail in Heppell and Wigley. Following the disbandment of the Panel, Tangentyere has taken over many of its advisory and planning functions in Alice Springs, and it continues to employ an architect to consult with communities about housing design.

358. The example of the Aboriginal Housing Panel emphasises the importance of Aboriginal housing projects being developed in continual consultation with the local Aboriginal community, and at a pace that allows the community to make a meaningful contribution and assess developments as they take place. The communities should be consulted about the location and design of housing to be provided. Alternative designs should be available, although the Committee is aware that individually designed homes cannot be made available to all.

359. Another approach is that of the ADC which provides grants-in-aid for housing through local Aboriginal housing associations. The associations have total responsibility for their own management, including selection of tenants, determination and collection of rents and insurance, and maintenance of houses. The ADC has issued rental guidelines to the associations. It has informed the associations that they must operate in an efficient manner and comply with certain accounting requirements. Housing associations are only funded by the ADC if they act in a responsible manner. The role of the housing associations is being reviewed by the ADC. The ADC believed that communities could be built up through the housing associations by giving them greater responsibility and control. According to the ADC:

The Aboriginal people are ready to pick up the responsibility of control of their own organisations and rationalisation of their activities in order to produce a good end result.<sup>160</sup>

360. The Committee believes that the ADC funded Aboriginal housing associations, which enable substantial Aboriginal self-management at a local level, provide an appropriate structure for meeting the housing needs of town campers. As noted, the ADC has surveyed the housing requirements of town campers and believes that 2110 new houses are needed at a cost of \$96m.

361. The Committee believes that the ADC should receive increased funding to allow it to meet these requirements, both as to type and location of houses by 1988. To achieve this target, priority may have to be given to the provision of housing for town campers. Housing projects will need to be co-ordinated so that conditions in nearby communities are also improved. The ADC should liaise with State Aboriginal housing bodies and State Housing Commissions on the most appropriate methods of meeting the requirements of those town campers who decide to move into conventional housing in town. This will necessitate a State-by-State approach, and the Committee notes in this regard the success in New South Wales where, it is claimed by DAA, existing Aboriginal housing requirements will be met with 'a correct standard house of the type that they would like and where they would like' by 1985.<sup>161</sup> After that it will be only necessary to cope with family formations which should number about 180 families per year.

362. The ADC, local Aboriginal Housing Associations and the State Housing Commission should consult with local government authorities about programs to provide housing both in town camps and within towns and cities. Local government has an obvious interest in these housing developments and the example of the Aboriginal Housing Committee in Carnarvon, described earlier, demonstrates what can be achieved with local government involvement.

363. The Committee recommends that:

- **New South Wales and the Northern Territory be urged to establish representative Aboriginal Housing Advisory Boards to their respective State Housing Commissions, and Queensland be urged to establish a representative Aboriginal Housing Advisory Board to the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement;**

- the Aboriginal Development Commission:
  - (a) present a program for meeting the housing requirements of Aboriginal town campers, both as to type and location of houses and dwellings, by 1988; and
  - (b) be provided with increased funding to enable it to meet these requirements by 1988;
- Aboriginal town campers be involved to the fullest possible extent in the provision of housing for their communities;
- local government authorities be consulted about all proposed housing developments both in the town camps and within the town;
- the Department of Aboriginal Affairs investigate expanding the Aboriginal Family Resettlement program within New South Wales and extending the program to the other States and the Northern Territory.

### Employment

364. As noted earlier, Drakakis-Smith believed that lack of employment was the primary factor in the underprivileged position of Aboriginal town campers. He considered that:

It is essential to create more jobs for Aborigines (with employers who are prepared to accept the different work-ethic), particularly through Aboriginal-run enterprises.<sup>162</sup>

The ADC agreed that 'the question of employment is critical'.<sup>163</sup>

365. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs referred to the need for 'the development of realistic long-term programs'.<sup>164</sup> Thirteen thousand Aboriginals had received assistance in some fashion in 1980-81 from Commonwealth Government employment and training programs.

#### *Commonwealth programs*

366. The Government has endorsed the National Employment Strategy for Aboriginals (NESA) to significantly increase the number of Aboriginals employed in the public sector. A pilot scheme, the Clerk (Aboriginal Services) program, has been introduced to recruit Aboriginals to the public service. Public sector employers can also apply for Commonwealth funded NESA trainees.

367. The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations referred to the lack of 'access' of town campers to the established labour market making it difficult for NESA to work in town camp communities. Although many town camps are physically proximate to towns and cities where employment is available, the attitudes of employers and Aboriginal people themselves, and the other economic and social problems which face town campers, makes access to the employment market for town campers in reality very difficult.

368. The Department believed that another aspect of NESA should be examined. NESA had proposed that:

... in relation to Commonwealth Government building and similar contracts, suitable employment and training opportunities were to be explored together with the possibility for communities/groups to contract for small-scale works in their localities.<sup>165</sup>

369. However, the effectiveness of such measures was queried by the then Department of Housing and Construction which provided details of projects where the inclusions of clauses for the employment of Aboriginals or the use of Aboriginal-made materials had added to the costs of the project. One of these projects was described earlier. (para 149)

370. The Committee does not consider these instances discredit the operation of the scheme, but there is a need for a detailed assessment in deciding whether or not to include the clauses.

371. Special Works Projects funded by DAA provide employment for Aboriginals in local government, Aboriginal organisations and with private employers. During 1980-81, \$2.9m was spent on the program.

372. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs referred to its training programs financed through Grants-in-Aid and States Grants. In 1980-81, \$3.58m was spent on the programs, and about 7300 Aboriginals received training in vocational skills, community management and welfare assistance.

373. The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations believed that there was an urgent need to provide Aboriginals with skilled training in areas where they identified a need for training. The Department referred to its Special Manpower Training Courses for Aboriginals. These courses were developed where a group training need was identified, often by local Aboriginal people, but no suitable course existed. Training courses were developed in areas such as stockhand station work, mining and community services maintenance. At the end of May 1982 only \$750 000 of the \$1.4m allocated to the program had been spent. DEIR claimed that courses were difficult to initiate and Vocational Officers often spent weeks developing programs. About 60 special courses were provided each year. Preliminary study had revealed that about 40 per cent of Aboriginal Special Course trainees found employment at the end of their training.

374. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs believed that it was difficult to determine the effect of these programs on the long-term employment prospects of Aboriginal town campers, although it considered it was:

... unlikely that there would be any benefits from the provision of training or temporary employment opportunities for fringe dwelling Aboriginals in country areas where there is little prospect of permanent employment . . . .<sup>166</sup>

375. The Department believed that there were only three possibilities for long-term employment for town campers in country areas:

The options are to relocate (on a voluntary basis) individuals and their families to areas where employment is available, to assist with the establishment of industries in centres with high Aboriginal unemployment; and to assist with the establishment of Aboriginal enterprises, either on an individual or a community basis.<sup>167</sup>

### *Relocation*

376. The Committee has already referred to the relocation program operated by the Family Resettlement Aboriginal Corporation. The scheme is providing employment for those Aboriginal families which take benefit from it and the Committee has recommended that DAA investigate expanding the program within New South Wales and extending it to the other States and the Northern Territory.

### *Establish industries*

377. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs believed that it would be difficult to encourage industries to decentralise to centres with substantial town camping communities because of the general lack of facilities in these centres to support industry.

### *Establishment of Aboriginal enterprises*

378. The establishment of Aboriginal enterprises is among the roles of the ADC. In 1980-81 it provided \$3.7m in grants and \$2.4m in loans to Aboriginal organisations and individuals to establish Aboriginal enterprises.

379. The establishment of Aboriginal-run pastoral enterprises has had some effect on town camping communities. The ADC noted the effect of acquiring the Robinson River cattle station in the Northern Territory:

Some of the community living in a fringe capacity around Boorooloola — which is not the ideal place to live at the best of times — have moved on to Robinson River.<sup>168</sup>

A similar trend was evident in Western Australia. The Western Australian Government observed that:

... the development of Aboriginal pastoral enterprises has meant that there have been significant drifts of the population out of towns on to those properties. Certainly we have noticed on some of our reserves that there has been a population decrease where an Aboriginal development program incorporating, say, pastoral development has got off the ground.<sup>169</sup>

It also noted the long-term employment prospects as:

... in some Aboriginal properties there has been great interest in getting the property viable. That means that a lot of work has gone into the infrastructure of developing that property if it has been run down or if it has not been worked as a station.<sup>170</sup>

The movement of town campers back to pastoral properties is referred to in more detail in the next chapter.

380. During its visit to Roebourne, the Committee was informed that the local Aboriginal organisation, the Ieramugadu Group, had established a gardening group which employed 24 people of whom only three were employed with Commonwealth funds. The group does work for various organisations around Roebourne, including the Roebourne Shire Council. Sub-contracting work is also carried out. Ieramugadu is making a profit of \$30 000 from the operation, most of which goes towards providing community recreational facilities. The Committee commends the enterprise shown by Ieramugadu to other town camping communities.

### *Employment in the States*

381. The policies of the State and Northern Territory Governments towards the recruitment of Aboriginal people to the State Public Services will have an effect on employment opportunities for town campers. The policies are set out below.

#### *New South Wales*

382. The Public Service Board of New South Wales stated that Aboriginals:

... are entitled to fair and non-discriminatory consideration for all positions for which they apply. They should also receive every encouragement to participate in training courses and on-the-job training experiences. Where appropriate, special training courses or course segments should be devised to meet the particular needs of Aboriginal staff or trainees.

The Board has prepared guidelines for Departments to assist in the task of implementing equal employment opportunity policy for this group of people. These guidelines suggest ways to implement this policy in a manner consistent with initiatives taken by the Australian Public Service, the Public Service Board of NSW and other NSW Government organisations.<sup>171</sup>

### *Western Australia*

383. The Western Australian Government advised that its departments and instrumentalities were requested to devise an action plan for the implementation of NESA:

The plan calls for positions to be identified where an Aboriginal background could be a positive factor in the performance of the duties and for the nomination of areas within the organisation where Aboriginal trainees could be placed under the NEAT scheme.<sup>172</sup>

### *South Australia*

384. According to DAA:

The South Australian Government supported the NESA Scheme when it was proposed, and stated that it was committed to increasing the levels of Aboriginal employment in the public sector in South Australia . . . . In December 1972 the S.A. Government introduced a special training and employment program to help Aboriginals to obtain training to acquire employment in State Government Departments . . . . The subsequent initiatives taken by the Public Service Board to implement NESA led to meaningful results in stimulating employment opportunities for Aboriginals in the Public Service.<sup>173</sup>

### *Victoria*

385. The Equal Opportunities policy of the Victorian Public Service had a broad strategy:

. . . to oversight and monitor employment practices and policies and to identify policy restrictions on equality of opportunity in employment . . . [and] . . . to develop a program of action to improve the equality of employment opportunity.<sup>174</sup>

### *Queensland*

386. The Queensland Government did not:

. . . identify its Public Service employees by race, and Aborigines like all other ethnic groups, are afforded the same opportunities as everybody else to qualify and make application for entry to the Service by appointment at a basic level or to an advertised classified position. Special consideration is given to Aboriginals where Aboriginality has particular relevance, e.g. the Aboriginal Ranger Force for Relics Preservation and Protection programmes, as well as the inclusion of people of Aboriginal and Islander descent in the liaison and counselling fields in the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement.<sup>175</sup>

### *Northern Territory*

387. The Northern Territory Chief Minister, Mr Paul Everingham, announced on 30 April 1980:

. . . that the NT Government will aim to raise the level of employment of Aboriginals in the NT Public Service and Statutory Bodies to 10% by 1982, 15% by 1984 and 20% by 1990.<sup>176</sup>

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner began a survey in May 1981 to examine the ways and means by which the policy may be implemented.

388. The Committee commends States that have identified positions which would be best filled by Aboriginal people and that have adopted positive discrimination towards Aboriginals in the filling of these positions. In particular, the approach of the Northern Territory Government in setting targets to achieve a better proportional representation for Aboriginals in its Public Service employment is commended.



### *Local government initiatives*

389. During its visits to town camping communities the Committee had background discussions with local government councils. These discussions indicated that Aboriginals were generally not well represented in local government employment, particularly at the white collar level. No figures were available on Aboriginal employment in local government and the Committee's observations were impressions only.

390. The Committee believes that local government councils in town camping communities can do more to employ Aboriginals, perhaps with Commonwealth encouragement. There was a general lack of awareness by local government of Commonwealth schemes providing assistance in the employment of Aboriginals, like the NESA trainee scheme and the Special Works Program. This lack of awareness reflects the failure of the Commonwealth to fully inform local government of the programs of assistance that are available.

391. The Committee recommends that:

- the procedure of specifying Aboriginal labour and materials in Commonwealth contracts continue where appropriate;
- the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations survey the training needs of Aboriginal town campers and develop appropriate training courses under its Special Manpower Training Scheme;
- the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations develop a program to encourage local government authorities to employ Aboriginals and to make Local Government aware of existing programs.

### **Health**

392. Environmental improvements and greater Aboriginal involvement are obviously the most important strategies to be pursued in improving the health conditions of town campers. The Dept of Health referred to previous reports, including the Committee's Aboriginal Health Report, which:

... indicate that priority should be given to environmental improvement and to an increase in Aboriginal involvement in the design, development and delivery of health services.<sup>177</sup>

### *Environmental improvements*

393. The Committee has commended the Aboriginal Public Health Improvement Program. It is of major importance in improving the environmental health conditions of all Aboriginal people, including town campers. The program needs to be monitored to ensure that it is achieving its aims of providing essential services that suit the community environment and of improving health standards.

394. The Committee's recommendations for improved housing in town camping communities should significantly improve the health of town campers. The provision of adequate housing will be most effective in improving health conditions where it is supported by homemaker services providing health education and advice on hygiene in the home.

### *Aboriginal involvement*

395. The Committee welcomes the Government response to the recommendation in the Aboriginal Health Report to see a marked increase in the degree of Aboriginal involvement in the control, management, design, delivery and evaluation of health care programs affecting Aboriginal people. The response will only be useful though if it is

given full force and effect, and the Committee has noted in Chapter 5 that discussions have begun with State Governments to implement the policy. As noted in paragraph 172 the Victorian Government has been the first to have modified its State health program in a significant way to reflect the Government's objective.

396. The Committee understands that there are to be further discussions in the near future regarding the implementation of the May 1981 decision referred to in paragraph 169. The Committee hopes that at those discussions, other States will follow the lead set by Victoria and, to a lesser degree, South Australia in increasing Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of health care. The Committee believes discussions should continue with the States and the Northern Territory to see the Government's policy is implemented by the end of 1983.

397. As noted in paragraph 167 there are some town camp communities which are able to avail themselves of Aboriginal Medical Services. Most of the camps in the Northern Territory have access to such services. The Committee had informal discussions with Aboriginal Medical Services in Perth, Port Augusta, Melbourne, Townsville and Brisbane. In each of these places the Medical Services were involved with the town camps and staff made regular visits to the camps.

398. The Committee received considerable evidence from Aboriginal health organisations regarding the degree of Aboriginal involvement in the control and delivery of health care to the community and of their acceptance by town campers. This was confirmed in discussions with some town campers. The obvious dedication and sensitivity to Aboriginal needs was commendable.

399. The nature of the Aboriginal Medical Services means that the staff involved have a strong commitment to the welfare of Aboriginal people and they generally become involved in the wider problems of their clients. The Aboriginal Medical Services are often involved in counselling people who are having difficulties with government bureaucracies and institutions in relation to matters such as housing and pensions.

400. The Committee sees a role for the increased use of Aboriginal controlled medical services in town camps. This is in line with the generally agreed policy for increased Aboriginal involvement and control in health matters.

401. In some areas it may not be appropriate for a full scale Aboriginal controlled medical service to be established because of the numbers involved. A recent initiative in Victoria has been the establishment of basic health care units. Such an initiative is worthy of consideration in other States and the Northern Territory.

402. The Committee has earlier indicated that it intends to review the report by the previous Committee on Aboriginal alcohol (paragraph 267). It also proposed to review progress on the implementation of its report on Aboriginal health in the light of the Government Statement of May 1981.

403. The Committee believes that there should be greater Aboriginal involvement in the provision of health care to town camping communities and therefore recommends that:

- (a) discussions continue with all States and the Northern Territory to put in place the Government's policy of a marked increase in the degree of Aboriginal involvement in all stages of the provision of health care services by the end of 1983; and
- (b) in these discussions, special consideration be given to the plight of the town campers and to the benefits of having increased Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of health services to town campers in overcoming the health problems of the town campers.

## Education

404. The development of town camping communities and the improvement in the environmental conditions of camps which the Committee believes will result from the recommendations in this report will alleviate a number of the educational problems which affect town camping Aboriginals. These include the educational difficulties created by family mobility, poor physical conditions, poor health and poverty.

405. The comprehensive report which the Committee will present following its inquiry into Aboriginal education will be of benefit to all Aboriginal people including town campers. The issues which will be considered as part of that inquiry will deal with a number of the identified educational problems which face town campers. The Committee will be considering matters such as: the recruitment and training of Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants; greater Aboriginal parental involvement in school activities and running; the employment of Aboriginal home/school liaison officers in schools catering for Aboriginals; Aboriginal adult education programs; Aboriginal studies courses in schools and for non-Aboriginal teachers; and special support programs for Aboriginal people. This list is not exhaustive of issues that the Committee will consider.

406. While pointing to issues that will be considered later as part of its Aboriginal education inquiry, the Committee is conscious of the need to attack now, in a concerted fashion, the economic and social problems, including educational problems, of town camping communities. The strategies referred to above are commended to educational authorities considering the development of education programs affecting town campers.

407. The Committee believes that a particular identified area of concern in the education of town campers is the high level of prejudice existing against the Aboriginal community. This is a problem for all Aboriginals but, as pointed out earlier, it is possibly most severe in country towns where town campers live. It causes major educational problems for town camping children. According to the Commonwealth Department of Education:

Aboriginal parents generally see schools as hostile 'white' institutions with which they have little understanding. They are reluctant to become involved in parent activities at the school either because they feel totally alienated from the school and white society or they lack the assertiveness required to participate in such activities.<sup>178</sup>

408. This is an area which the Committee believes can be focussed on in concert with other strategies for the development of town camping communities. Community attitudes will be discussed in a wider context in the next chapter and the Committee will recommend that a public awareness campaign be devised to increase the wider community understanding of Aboriginal society. The Committee believes that the schools should be a major area of focus for the campaign.

### *Yipirinya School*

409. An attempt to overcome many of the educational problems facing town campers has been made in Alice Springs with the establishment of the Yipirinya School. The school is run by the Yipirinya School Council, an all Aboriginal body which reflects the views of the local Aboriginal community. Non-Aboriginal teachers are employed to advise the Council and to train the Aboriginal teacher aides who instruct the children. The education of the children takes place in the town camps, providing a familiar, non-hostile environment which the School Council believes is conducive to learning. Children are taught the basic skills of non-Aboriginal society to enable them to live in that

society but there is also emphasis on the teaching of Aboriginal cultural studies to affirm children's Aboriginal identity.

410. Yipirinya is a school that has developed as an initiative of the Alice Springs town camp communities. It appears to be meeting many of the expressed desires of those communities and overcoming some of the educational problems of the communities. The Committee believes that initiatives of this kind should be encouraged. The Committee notes that currently the Northern Territory Minister for Education has, for stated educational reasons, refused to register the school as an independent school. This decision is, at the time of the report, under legal challenge by the Yipirinya School Council. It may well be that effective funding by Commonwealth or relevant Northern Territory authorities would enable Yipirinya to meet the standards required by the Northern Territory government.

411. Such endeavours to provide an education that meets the expressed needs of the town camping communities deserves further attention by government. As part of its Aboriginal education inquiry, the Committee will consider the operation of Yipirinya school and other fringe schools in the context of part 5 (c) of the terms of reference which requires it to inquire into and report on 'The effectiveness of existing programs and special support schemes including . . . (c) independent Aboriginal Schools'.

#### **Law and order**

412. The Aboriginal Legal Aid Report recommended that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

- in the event of unsatisfactory progress being made by the States in the area of Aboriginal-police relations, recommend to the Commonwealth Government further steps that might be taken to improve Aboriginal-police relations through Commonwealth legislative provision.<sup>179</sup>

413. In its response, the Government expressed its concern that better understanding between Aboriginals and police officers be promoted and stated that the then Minister, Senator Baume:

. . . will be reviewing developments in Aboriginal-police relations, prior to initiating further discussions with the responsible State and Territory Ministers.<sup>180</sup>

414. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs advised that in response to other recommendations of the Aboriginal Legal Aid Report:

The Western Australian, South Australian and Northern Territory Governments have taken positive steps to recruit Aboriginal police aides and make police officers aware of Aboriginal problems. Formal Aboriginal-police liaison committees have been established in South Australia and Western Australia.<sup>181</sup>

The Committee commends these developments and believes that similar steps should be taken in other States.

415. It is noted that the ALRC is presently conducting an inquiry into Aboriginal Customary Law. One aspect of the inquiry is an investigation into the possible operation of community justice systems in Aboriginal communities. The Committee is aware of the difficulties of such systems operating in town camping communities where there is close contact with the non-Aboriginal community and where the operation of customary law is not as strong as in traditional communities. The concepts being developed by the Commission of a conciliation panel to resolve internal disputes and the operation of internal policing in discrete town camping communities should be fully investigated. Such concepts, if introduced, would recognise and reinforce existing structures

in town camps for resolving disputes and could have a significant impact in reducing the level of crime in the communities.

416. The Committee recommends that:

- **the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs take steps to encourage:**
  - (a) **the recruitment of more Aboriginal police and police aides; and**
  - (b) **the formation of Aboriginal-police liaison committees at both the State and local level, and particularly in centres with town camping communities.**
- **The Australian Law Reform Commission fully investigate the operation of community justice systems in town camping communities.**

### **Transport**

417. The lack of transport was identified as a problem for town camps in Chapter 4. A partial solution to the problem had been found in some communities with the provision of a community bus service by the local Aboriginal organisation. The Committee believes that other communities should investigate the possibilities of obtaining community transport.

418. The provision of transport would offer an opportunity for employment, not only in the camps but also within the town. The Aboriginal Development Commission is able, under its charter, to advance loans for business ventures and a taxi business would seem to provide an ideal opportunity. The operation of such a business venture was discussed during the Committee's visit to the Northern Territory and while it was acknowledged that the operation of the venture might not be the responsibility of an Aboriginal association, it could quite easily be operated by an individual.

419. The Committee recommends that:

- **the Aboriginal Development Commission investigate opportunities for Aboriginal-owned taxi operations; and**
- **where such investigations are favourable, the Aboriginal Development Commission take appropriate measures.**

### **Other**

420. Earlier the Committee identified a range of problems which reflect in the main the interaction of the two cultures. They were identified under a number of headings — motivation, social disruption and alcoholism. The question of alcohol was considered in the previous chapter.

421. Any efforts to overcome these problems require the assertiveness and determination of the Aboriginal people to face the problems as well as an acknowledgement by the white community that the problems exist and are the responsibility of the nation. There can be no easy solution but an understanding that there are problems, plus a preparedness to accept that there will be shortcomings in the attempts to solve the problems, will be a start.

422. Efforts to educate the whole community to a better understanding of Aboriginal society are a first requirement. Recommendations for the development of a public awareness campaign to increase the understanding of Aboriginal society in the wider community are made in the next chapter.

423. Recommendations have also been made for the economic development of town camps which will give town campers greater independence and self-confidence as they approach the other problems which face their communities.

## Endnotes

127. Evidence, p. 1798.
128. Evidence, p. 197.
129. Evidence, p. 2058.
130. Evidence, p. 2058.
131. Evidence, pp. 2058-9.
132. Evidence, p. 2166.
133. Evidence, p. 2168.
134. *First Report from the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines. Aboriginal Land Rights and Sacred and Significant Sites, Part 1—Report and Minutes of Proceedings, N.S.W.*, 1980, p. 83.
135. Evidence, p. 1830.
136. Evidence, p. 3160.
137. Evidence, p. 916.
138. Evidence, p. 1071.
139. Evidence, p. 934.
140. Evidence, p. 935.
141. Evidence, p. 2520.
142. Evidence, p. 2521.
143. *Aboriginal Newsletter* No. 101, 12 March 1982, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, p. 2.
144. Evidence, p. 2226.
145. Evidence, p. 2137.
146. Evidence, p. 2137.
147. Evidence, p. 766.
148. Evidence, p. 2976.
149. Evidence, p. 2983.
150. Evidence, p. 2976.
151. Evidence, p. 2104.
152. Evidence, p. 2106.
153. Evidence, pp. 772-3.
154. Evidence, p. 1430.
155. Evidence, p. 3061.
156. Evidence, p. 778.
157. Evidence, p. 779.
158. Evidence, p. 270.
159. Evidence, p. 270.
160. Evidence, p. 2085.
161. Evidence, p. 1889.
162. Evidence, p. 264.
163. Evidence, p. 2077.
164. Evidence, p. 30.
165. Evidence, p. 2629.
166. Evidence, pp. 31-2.
167. Evidence, p. 32.
168. Evidence, p. 2061.
169. Evidence, p. 922.
170. Evidence, p. 926.
171. Evidence, pp. 1289-90.
172. Evidence, p. 1291.
173. Evidence, p. 1291.
174. Evidence, p. 1290.
175. Evidence, p. 1291.
176. Evidence, pp. 1291-2.
177. Evidence, p. 811.
178. Evidence, p. 737.
179. *Aboriginal Legal Aid Report*, Paragraph 273.
180. H.R. Deb. (26.3.81) 996.
181. Evidence, p. 20.

### Conclusion

424. In the previous chapters recommendations have been made to improve the economic and social life of town campers. The reasons why some Aboriginals have adopted the lifestyle of a town camper have been outlined. The purpose of this chapter is to consider ways in which certain of those push and pull factors can be reduced or eliminated.

425. That residents of Aboriginal communities in remote areas will still come to town for a variety of reasons has already been established. Some having come to town may then decide to stay. What it is hoped can be achieved is that the frequency of such visits can be reduced.

#### Access to Government services

426. People have to come to town to comply with certain government procedures if they are to receive benefits. This could be either to lodge applications for disadvantaged persons status under the health scheme or to resolve queries on income maintenance programs. This was acknowledged by DSS which said it was 'taking quite effective steps to make it easier for people to use the system, putting less pressure on them to come to our offices'.<sup>182</sup> One step which had been taken was the bulk payment of unemployment benefits to some communities. Another which had been taken in the Northern Territory was that unemployment benefits claims forms now had to be lodged at four weekly intervals and not fortnightly. The appointment of Aboriginal Liaison Officers who visit communities and are able to resolve some issues is a welcome initiative. However, there are only a limited number of such officers. The Committee believes that DSS should continue to investigate ways of delivering welfare benefits and services to remote Aboriginal communities at their place of residence.

427. An alternative to unemployment is the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) which were developed by DAA in response to Aboriginal criticism of the socially deleterious effects of unemployment benefits on Aboriginal recipients and communities. The object of CDEP was to provide an alternative to unemployment benefits by paying wages for work done by those who would otherwise be unemployed. The Government initially introduced the program in a limited number of small remote communities to observe its operation and effect. In 1980-81, the program was employing about 1300 Aboriginals at a cost of \$7.1m. A review of the program has been completed and proposals about its future will shortly be put to the Government.

428. A recent report to DSS, *A Certain Heritage*, prepared by Dr H.C. Coombs, Dr M.M. Brandl and Mr W.E. Snowdon pointed to serious criticisms of the CDEP program which had been expressed by Aboriginal people. Some of the criticisms of the program were no longer applicable as action had been taken to correct the defects to which they referred. The report recommended that CDEP, as the alternative to unemployment benefits, should similarly be established under an Act of Parliament. This would enable communities to plan more confidently the services and activities they wish to develop under CDEP, deal more effectively with fluctuating numbers and help correct other defects of the program. CDEP would then become 'a generally available option to Aboriginal communities', and the report believed that:

CDEP would be chosen as an alternative to unemployment benefits by many aboriginal communities and would contribute, especially in homeland settlements, to a more secure basis for the life style they desire.<sup>183</sup>

429. The Committee believes that the Government should investigate the feasibility of CDEP being established under an Act of Parliament which would provide it a degree of continuity. It could provide a form of employment for communities in homeland areas and help reduce the drift to the town.

430. The Committee recommends that:

- **the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs investigate the feasibility of establishing the Community Development Employment Projects program in home communities under an Act of Parliament.**

### **Conditions in Home Communities**

431. Conditions in some of the more deprived town camps are not very different from conditions in some home communities. Reference has been made to conditions in Cundeelee when compared with Kalgoorlie (para. 52). Professor Berndt referred to the possibility of a town camp being established in Jabiru:

I see the Jabiru situation as far as Aborigines are concerned as a fringe camp in the making, or a potential fringe camp.<sup>184</sup>

432. Mr C. Perkins of the Aboriginal Development Commission suggested that one of the reasons why people would move to Jabiru is the lack of facilities at Oenpelli. He suggested the development of Oenpelli since he did not consider it 'the apex of his ambitions as far as residential living is concerned'.<sup>185</sup> He went on to suggest that in some Aboriginal communities there was only one store for over 1000 people. This was in contrast to other communities of a similar size which would have a couple of shops, a garage and a hotel.

433. The development of economic enterprises such as a general store, a service station and a craft workshop would provide employment in home communities. The facilities in the home communities would add to the natural attraction that the people would have for the home community and would almost certainly reduce the movement of people to the town camps. The Aboriginal Development Commission is an organisation which could assist the local community in this regard. The Committee was conscious of the sense of pride and achievement the purchase of the hotel in Oodnadatta had given to that Aboriginal community. The Committee recommends that:

- **the Aboriginal Development Commission**
  - (a) **expand its activities in the establishment of business enterprises such as stores and service stations to provide, on location, services to remote Aboriginal communities;**
  - (b) **be provided with adequate funding to allow for these activities; and**
  - (c) **include details in its Annual Report of employment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff at both the construction and trading stages of the enterprises.**

### **Outstations**

434. The town camps have been regarded as a place of refuge where people can escape social tensions within a community. However, the town camps are not the only avenue of escape. Another avenue of escape was to outstations. An example of this was



given by Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services—Darwin—when it referred to the 'push' factors:

Social tensions that come from power struggles between different clan or tribal groups. At Milingimbi there was a population of around 900 persons in 1978-79. Now there are 450-500 persons owing to internal disruption with regard to operation of the Council. The move has been mainly to outstations and nearby communities but also some have gone to Darwin.<sup>186</sup>

435. One of the problems was the lack of support for outstations. The Aboriginal Development Commission advised that conferences were to be organised to discuss support for outstations as there was only limited support at present. According to the Aboriginal Development Commission:

The policy of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs on outstations is that those people have got to get established and then after a time—after two years or so—once they have proved that they want to stay there in the most atrocious of conditions . . . they are given \$10 000 for establishment costs.<sup>187</sup>

436. Outstations can play an important role as an alternative to the drift to the urban areas. In the report on Aboriginal Health, it was acknowledged that the move to outstations had led to an overall improvement in health:

There is very little statistical evidence on the effect that outstations have had on Aboriginal health. However, on the basis of observations and the views of Aboriginals themselves and health personnel, the move to outstations has not only increased the confidence and mental health of residents, but has led to a reduction in the consumption of alcohol and a decrease in certain diseases, particularly those of infancy and childhood.<sup>188</sup>

The Committee recommends that:

- **The Department of Aboriginal Affairs review the level of support given to outstations with a view to increasing the level of support to more positively reflect the benefits from such developments.**

### **Excisions from Pastoral Properties**

437. In 1971, the Report of the Committee of Review of the Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory (Gibb Report), suggested the encouragement of the continuance of small Aboriginal communities on cattle properties. The Gibb Report went on to suggest:

. . . that in appropriate areas land be obtained by excision, or by sub-lease from the pastoralists for Aboriginal communities for limited village, economic and recreational purposes to enable Aborigines to preserve traditional cultural ties and obligations and to provide the community with a measure of autonomy; such land naturally needs access to adequate water supplies, but in addition it should be of such an area and such a quality that some supplementary activities may be encouraged upon it, e.g., pig, poultry and fishing, gardening and artifact making, etc.<sup>189</sup>

438. Since then, twelve excision areas have been granted as Special Purpose Leases. Community development programs funded by Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments have been proceeding on these excisions. Another 31 applications have been made. DAA suggested that there were 63 communities comprising 3000 or more Aboriginal people living on 51 pastoral leases, who would benefit from the granting of excisions. What was not identified was the number of town campers who would benefit from such decisions. The ADC stressed the importance of the excision of such camp sites as well as sufficient land for a small killer herd. The ADC itself, however, did not have a role in such excisions unless finance was required.

439. Government can be restricted in the housing and facilities it provides to Aboriginal groups located on pastoral properties unless an excision has been obtained. Community development has taken place on some properties where agreement in principle for an excision has been given by the leaseholder although no firm arrangements have been agreed for an excision to be effected. On other properties where agreement in principle has not been reached, little community development has taken place.

440. The Committee considers that the granting of the excisions could mean that Aboriginal people would remain on the excisions rather than drift into town. However, the Committee is also concerned at the number of Aboriginal people who are not at present resident on pastoral properties but who might return to such properties if an excision was granted. In its first submission, the Northern Territory Government acknowledged 'that the establishment of communities on pastoral excisions, in line with the Gibb Committee Report (1971) will lead to a significant reduction in camp numbers in respect of centres south of and including Katherine'.<sup>190</sup> Leaving aside the question of land rights the Committee is of the view that the procedures for excision proposed by the Northern Territory Government will provide a useful basis for discussion and recommends that:

- procedures to allow former residents of pastoral properties now living in town camps to apply to have areas excised from those pastoral properties be developed.

### **Pastoral Properties**

441. Pastoral properties have been acquired by the Aboriginal Development Commission and its predecessor, the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission. The purchase of the properties has attracted some town campers back to the properties. An example of this was the purchase of Robinson River Station, which attracted some of the people who had been living around Boorooloola. The Western Australian Department of Community Welfare considered:

the development of Aboriginal pastoral enterprises has meant that there have been significant drifts of the population out of towns on to those properties.<sup>191</sup>

442. Substantial communities have been built up on some pastoral properties. One example was around Utopia Station where there were nearly 1000 Aboriginal people belonging to the various tribes. Another example was on Haasts Bluff which had been divided into four separate land holding communities. The ADC raised the question as to what would happen to these people if they were not able to live on the pastoral properties. The implication was that they would move to the town camps.

443. The Aboriginal Development Commission referred to a survey which it hoped to undertake on the effect of the purchase of pastoral properties on Aboriginal communities. The Committee could see value in such a survey, and its assistance to the ADC in establishing appropriate guidelines to ensure the beneficial effects of ADC policy.

444. The communities located on pastoral properties will need to be provided with essential services, housing and educational and medical facilities. The provision of these services will be the responsibility of Government.

### **Community Attitudes**

445. The development of successful strategies to overcome the problems of town campers will have to take account of the views of the non-Aboriginal community. It has been noted that 'attitudinal discrimination is deep and widespread in Australia'<sup>192</sup> and surveys have indicated that unfavourable attitudes are more likely to be found in

country towns where town campers live. The effect this discrimination can have in limiting the development of town camping communities has been referred to earlier.

446. The Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services in Darwin referred to the need for strategies that might assist:

- (a) To promote the development of an 'informed public view' towards fringe camps that seeks to understand the requirements of transient urban Aboriginals.
- (b) The need to reduce the current polarisation of views held by different sections of the community may be achieved by more informed and rational discussion of these issues by the media and for relevant materials or information to be made available to the public.<sup>193</sup>

447. The Committee considers that the promotion of the better understanding of town campers in the non-Aboriginal community is of tremendous importance and that programs need to be developed to overcome the adverse image held in the non-Aboriginal community.

448. In its submission, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs stated that it:

. . . is currently preparing a proposal for a public awareness campaign to overcome this adverse image of Aboriginals. In the meantime, the Department is proposing to commission two smaller-scale research projects during 1981-82:

- (i) First to obtain a measurement of change on particular aspects of attitudes about Aboriginals over time, it is intended to include in general public opinion polls a small number of questions about Aboriginals to be repeated for a number of years;
- (ii) Secondly, a detailed research study into community attitudes towards Aboriginals and the reasons for those attitudes, to be conducted in a representative sample of Australian communities. This study should be undertaken by a research organisation with experience in relating attitude research to public information programs.<sup>194</sup>

449. The Department later admitted that 'the submission was in error or was jumping the gun a bit . . . [as] . . . the first step is seen as doing the survey work and having a look at the attitudes, and on the basis of that any public awareness program . . . will be developed'.<sup>195</sup> The Department also acknowledged that their initial submission was misleading. According to Mr J.P.M. Long, Deputy Secretary of the Department 'that initial comment was misleading; it indicated that things were further progressed than they were'<sup>196</sup> and later 'I have said that that was a misleading statement last year'.<sup>197</sup> Mr Long went on to apologise for the impression given regarding progress of the campaign.

450. The first survey constituted the commissioning of a Gallup poll to ask a question testing general attitudes to Federal Government programs for Aboriginals. This does not seem to achieve the Department's aim for the first survey of measuring 'change on particular aspects of attitudes about Aboriginals over time'. In regard to the second survey, the Department stated that:

A communications psychologist has been commissioned to undertake a survey which will explore people's attitudes to Aboriginals in some depth. The survey will be conducted in New South Wales by in depth questioning of some 200 people in both city and country locations.

From this study we hope to obtain a lead as to the components of attitude which might be susceptible to change and to explore these in a more extensive survey.<sup>198</sup>

So the second survey will lead on to yet another survey which would then form the basis of recommended proposals to the Government for a public awareness program.

451. The Department suggested that the Committee might be able to involve itself in assessing the nature of this communications problem:

Our intention in inviting the Standing Committee to consider relations between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in fringe dwelling situations was to seek to establish through evidence given to the Committee the nature of the communications problem. Hopefully we thought the Standing Committee might care to examine this in its investigations in country areas and attempt to assess a situation which we believe has a marked effect on non-Aboriginal attitudes to Aboriginals, and in turn on Aboriginal development.<sup>199</sup>

452. The Committee is also concerned at some conflicts in the evidence given to it. DAA referred to the inclusion of questions in a Gallup Poll which was to have been the first research project. In later material submitted to the Committee on 29 June 1982, DAA provided extracts from an August 1981 Gallup Poll. This Poll took place on the first two weekends of September 1981. This was around the time when DAA first appeared before the Committee (8 September 1981). If the public awareness campaign was of importance to the development of strategies in relation to the town campers, the Committee would have expected reference to the survey during the evidence on 8 September. In fact, at that hearing on 8 September questions in relation to the public awareness campaign were taken on notice. No reference was made to the public opinion poll in the material submitted in November 1981. It was not until June 1982 that the Gallup Poll was brought to the attention of the Committee. According to the material provided in November 1981, 'The first project will involve commissioning a public opinion organisation to include in its regular polls questions on Aboriginals'.<sup>200</sup> It is noted earlier that there was only one question on Aboriginals in the September 1981 public opinions poll.

453. The Committee is concerned about the importance attached to the public awareness program. At the hearing on 30 June 1982 the Committee was advised that DAA had not sought finance for a public awareness program in the 1982-83 budget. In response to a question, Mr Long advised 'No, we do not have the finance. That will be something we will seek when we know exactly what we want to do'.<sup>201</sup>

454. It is the Committee's view, on the evidence, that it has been misled by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The sequence of events, as they appear in the transcript are set out in Appendix VII. The Appendix includes the letter from the Chairman of the Committee to the Minister expressing the Committee's concern. In his reply of 23 September 1982, the Minister attached a statement on the public awareness program of his Department which claimed the appropriation for 1982-83 of \$296 000 included the first phase of the strategy. No details were provided of how much was to be set aside for phase 1. The Committee notes an intrusion of a phrase 'Information Program'. At no time was the Committee referring to other than the Public Awareness Campaign raised by DAA in September 1981. There was nothing in the Minister's letter to change the Committee's view that it had been misled. The importance the Committee has placed on this Public Awareness Campaign is illustrated by the prominence the topic has received in the body of the report, and in the foreword of the report where it is stated that:

An important strategy then is that of a public awareness campaign to give the non-Aboriginal community a better understanding of Aboriginals. Such a campaign is of tremendous importance since an unsympathetic community can delay and frustrate efforts to improve the lot of one of the most deprived sections of the Australian community.<sup>202</sup>

455. The Committee supports the introduction of a public awareness campaign and believes that, given the importance of changing non-Aboriginal attitudes, DAA should pursue the matter more vigorously. The campaign should include school-based education as a particular area of focus, with films, seminars and discussions led by Aboriginal people and possibly visits to Aboriginal communities being features of the campaign. In the wider community, a media campaign could be considered. The Office of

the Commissioner of Community Relations should be consulted about the campaign because of its background in community education in the area of race relations. The Office's Report, *A Tale of Two Towns*, on community education programs conducted in Rockhampton and Kempsey is commended as one approach to the development of a public awareness program, particularly in country towns.

456. The Committee recommends that:

- the Department of Aboriginal Affairs

- (a) actively pursue its proposal for a public awareness campaign to improve understanding of Aboriginal people and society in the wider community; and

- (b) makes school-based education a particular focus of the campaign.

The Committee would hope that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs would actively pursue its proposal and that the senior departmental officers would have specific responsibility for the program.

457. The Committee considers the campaign to be important in changing the non-Aboriginal perception of Aboriginal people. However, many of the problems will not be overcome by the media campaign. They require positive action at all levels of government and, in particular, increased funding for the Aboriginal Development Commission and Aboriginal Hostels Limited.

PHILIP RUDDOCK  
Chairman

October 1982

### Endnotes

182. Evidence, p. 1926.
183. *A Certain Heritage — Programs for and by Aboriginal Families in Australia*, Coombs H.C., Brandl M.M., and W.E. Snowdon, Department of Social Security, 1981, p. 265.
184. Evidence, p. 1780.
185. Evidence, pp. 2073-4.
186. Evidence, p. 339.
187. Evidence, p. 2090.
188. Aboriginal Health Report, paragraph 157.
189. *The Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory. Report of the Committee of Review*, December 1971, (PP No. 62, 1972) p. 49.
190. Evidence, p. 119.
191. Evidence, p. 922.
192. Evidence, p. 2021.
193. Evidence, p. 343.
194. Evidence, p. 19.
195. Evidence, p. 2913.
196. Evidence, p. 2807.
197. Evidence, p. 2807.
198. Evidence, p. 2871.
199. Evidence, p. 2809.
200. Evidence, p. 1289.
201. Evidence, p. 2812.
202. Foreword to the report.

**Dissent by Mr I. M. D. Cameron, M.P.,  
The Hon. R. J. Groom, M.P., Mr G. E. J. Tambling, M.P.  
and Mr C. W. Tuckey, M.P. on Issues Relating to Aboriginal  
Health**

Paragraphs 160-176 (inclusive) and 395-402 (inclusive) deal with the Committee's consideration of issues relating to Aboriginal health. Recommendations are outlined in paragraph 403. We do not fully concur with the conclusions or their limitations. They rely almost exclusively on arguments and assumptions surrounding the priority and importance of Aboriginal involvement in the delivery of health care through the agency of independent Aboriginal medical services funded by the Commonwealth.

Whilst it is generally accepted that Aboriginal medical services do provide basic health care with dedicated and sensitive staff we seriously question that satisfactory improvements in health standards are being achieved, or that adequate trained professional medical and para-medical resources are available, where such agencies exist. The Aboriginal medical services are in effect providing clinics which would normally be recognised as the role of the general medical practitioner. It may well be timely to alter the financial accountability of these organisations from direct grant funding to a 'fee-for-service' basis — paid by the patient, medical insurance, or Commonwealth reimbursement for pensioners and disadvantaged persons as appropriate to each circumstance.

State and Northern Territory Health Departments do provide some duplicated and complementary services in primary health care, as well as the full range of hospital and specialist services. We disagree with the main report statements that 'little has been achieved' (para 171) and 'the structure of the organisations . . . can and do place undue restrictions . . .' (para 176) in State health systems. These are oversimplifications of the cultural problems and not health issues.

A close study needs to be made of the statistical comparisons for patients treated; professional and non-medical staff resources; and cost efficiencies of Government provided health care, Aboriginal medical services, and general practitioner services to Aboriginal town camps and their related home communities.

The most important issue to be addressed is the provision of the best possible preventative and curative health care and treatment for all sectors of the community. We do not accept that Aboriginal medical services independent from State health departments will necessarily overcome the specific problems of Aboriginals. It is patronising to imply that Aboriginals ought not be as free as any other Australian to choose the best available medical attention without any test of ethnic affiliation. Certainly there are cross-cultural and communication issues to be resolved but we do not believe that any inherent compromises in professional and community health standards can be accommodated. The welfare, housing and counselling functions considered in paragraph 399 of the report are, in our opinion, more properly the responsibility of other agencies.

There is a tendency to gloss over the considerable financial and other resources needed to implement all special Aboriginal health needs. There are concurrent responsibilities between the Commonwealth and the States/and Northern Territory. The States/Northern Territory must make functional provision for equal standards of services to all citizens —and the Commonwealth has responsibility to support State/Northern Territory programmes with the additional finance, planning and co-ordination where

specific disadvantages exist for Aborigines. The relationships and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and the States/Northern Territory are clearly noted in the following statements:

Hon. G. H. Bryant, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 22/8/73:

'The Australian Government does not seek the transfer from the States of particular responsibilities in the fields of health, housing, education and other functional areas, which in its view should preferably be carried out by the appropriate Australian or State Departments having responsibility in these areas . . . .'

Rt Hon. J. M. Fraser, Prime Minister, 23/3/79:

' . . . the Government reiterated its general approach of securing for Aborigines access to Government services equal to that accorded other Australian citizens, together with additional services appropriate to their state of extreme disadvantage. Consequently, Commonwealth Departments are now required to ensure that priority of need applies to Aborigines, as it does to other citizens, in programs administered by these Departments. The Commonwealth, in supporting State programs, does so on the basis that the States adopt the same approach.'

Our recommendations (as distinct from those in paragraph 403) are:

- (a) **The Commonwealth Departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Health review the level of support given to State/Northern Territory Governments and Aboriginal medical services with a view to ensuring the provision of sufficient funding and policy co-ordination of special health programmes for disadvantaged Aborigines. The review should carefully consider the advantages of introducing fee-for-service charges in Aboriginal medical services in lieu of direct grant funding.**
- (b) **The Commonwealth Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs and Health, in association with State/Northern Territory Ministers for Health, continue to make provision for involvement of Aborigines in the delivery of health care.**
- (c) **Commonwealth, State and Northern Territory Governments and educational institutions be urged to provide training and scholarships for Aborigines in medical, and para-medical, fields of study.**

Mr I. M. D. CAMERON, M.P.

Hon. R. J. GROOM, M.P.

Mr G. E. J. TAMBLING, M.P.

Mr C. W. TUCKEY, M.P.

October 1982

## Dissent by Mr C. W. Tuckey, M.P.

I consider there is a need for a review of the funding of programs in Aboriginal affairs.

Details of the Commonwealth outlay on Aboriginal affairs is set out below:

	1981-82	1982-83 (proposed)
	\$000	\$000
Housing	76 614	86 200
Health	23 464	27 095
Education	46 191	52 860
Economic Services	72 594	60 981
Legal Aid	6 507	7 750
Other	22 867	25 782
<b>Total</b>	<b>248 237</b>	<b>260 668</b>

In the education inquiry it was suggested that the cost of administering the \$25m distributed under the Aboriginal grants schemes is approximately \$4.9m of which \$2.8m was for salary costs. (Education transcript p. 2545)

Reference to Ministerial documents, Government Expenditure on Aboriginal programs in Western Australia 82/83, page 21, shows expenditure of \$20.873m in 1982/83. Reference to breakdown of these programs provided by the Minister showed wages consumed approximately \$14.2m.

I sincerely doubt that this wages figure could be traced to direct benefits to Aboriginal persons, excluding of course those who received the wages. This is best demonstrated by the witness in Brisbane who indicated he had to discontinue his charitable operations at a soup kitchen as his personal financial return was only \$190 per week approximately.

I am also concerned that the allocation of the funds among the competing interest groups may not be in the best interests, or in line with the wishes, of the recipients. While there is some input at the local level, the actual funding involves the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs, Education, Health and Social Security as well as the Aboriginal Development Commission, Aboriginal Hostels Limited and the Institute for Aboriginal Studies.

Expenditure for Aboriginal Assistance must be re-organised so that a substantially larger proportion can be used for the benefit of the actually disadvantaged. If I remember correctly, in one centre the Commonwealth assistance was close to \$500 000 p.a. For this amount, I noticed Aboriginals still living in primitive circumstances, a large number of government vehicles and some poorly utilised agricultural land run by advisors who did not appear to understand basic marketing strategy for a crop if it was produced. The principal apparent benefit to local Aboriginals in most cases is a free bus trip, often to and from the hotel.

The problem is all the more obvious in the situation of fringe dwellers. The prime requirement whatever the circumstances, is accommodation. The salary of one of the better known of the new Aboriginal bureaucracy could build two homes per annum.

I must therefore repeat my assertion, demonstrated through the inquiry and supported by many witnesses, that there must be an immediate restructuring of all specific Aboriginal funding to a weighted per capita general purpose grant system with expenditure priorities being made by a local democratically-elected group, operating under suitable legislation and employing a suitably qualified and experienced executive officer preferably a member of the Institute of Municipal Administration.



I also dissent from the recommendation which refers to excisions from pastoral properties. In this area, in particular, I feel that no evidence was sought from those experienced in the field of property management such as pastoral leaseholders. While I acknowledge the benefits of such a proposal, I think that this proposal is complicated by the generally fragile environment of inland Australia. Excision of sufficient land area to sustain a medium size static community in food would probably remove the viability of some pastoral properties.

The move to such areas could create seasonal and short-term employment prospects for Aborigines and provide a convenient labour pool for nearby pastoralists. A return to traditional Aboriginal methods of food gathering would make permanent settlement impossible. Such communities would therefore have to rely heavily on welfare services and would have substantial idle time. Social security payments should nevertheless cater for the opportunity to take part-time work.

The areas concerned are also remote from normal urban services. Pastoralists generally maintain order within the boundaries of their leases by strict control on who enters and who stays. Such a right would not exist over excised land.

I therefore suggest that the recommendation in para. 440 be rewritten as follows:

- (a) **procedures to allow former residents of pastoral properties now living in town camps to apply to have areas excised from those pastoral properties be developed, however such excisions should only be considered where there are, or will be, sufficient facilities on the property to cater for the increased number; and**
- (b) **that the procedures:**
  - (i) **take account of the commercial viability of the property concerned;**
  - (ii) **include guarantees from relevant authorities as to development of the excision; and**
  - (iii) **provide for permanent community services, in particular the maintenance of law and order.**

Mr C. W. TUCKEY, M.P.

October 1982

## **Dissent by Mr I. M. D. Cameron, M.P.**

Although I have only been appointed to the Aboriginal Affairs Committee since 8 September 1982 and have not been involved in the Committee's inquiry, I have lived and worked with Aborigines all my life and would like to dissent from any suggestions that fringe camps continue and be upgraded. I dissent from the general thrust in this report as I consider that it will continue the process of dividing the Australian community. While I am prepared to acknowledge that much needs to be done to improve the position of the Aboriginal people, I also consider that there are other groups in Australia who are also in need of assistance.

I am totally opposed to the proposal relating to excision from pastoral properties. (No. 32, para. 440) Such proposals will create an enclave and disrupt the pastoral properties' ability to run an efficient station. Help should be given to the present land owner if Aborigines are to be better housed. All the proposal suggests is moving the town camp environment back to the station. Once freehold title is granted the station owner will have no control. School and health, water and food and any other aid will have to be re-established again. As there will be no more work on the station than there is now, Aborigines should be far better off in the future to be assimilated into the town environment where the future for most Aborigines lies.

I am also opposed to increased support for outstations (No. 31, para. 436).

The outstation or reserve is an absolute farce in the Northern Territory. Docker River and other Aboriginal land holdings aren't even expected to feed themselves. Any Aboriginal settlement must feed itself. Curtain Springs station is killing 18 head of cattle per week employing five white butchers and flying meat at tax-payers expense to feed these people with huge land holdings. If Aborigines own their own land then they feed themselves or the dole is withdrawn and they are forced to live off the land if that is what they want.

Mr I. M. D. CAMERON, M.P.

October 1982

## Witnesses

### Aboriginal Development Commission

BOURKE, Mr C.	General Manager, Aboriginal Development Commission, Canberra, A.C.T.
KOLLER, Mr W. A.	Assistant Manager, Housing, Aboriginal Development Commission, Canberra, A.C.T.
OBERDORF, Mr A. J.	Branch Manager, Special Projects and Secretariat Branch, Aboriginal Development Commission, Canberra, A.C.T.
PERKINS, Mr C. N.	Chairman, Aboriginal Development Commission, Canberra, A.C.T.
SMITH, Mr K. L.	Acting Assistant Manager, Land and Enterprises Branch, Aboriginal Development Commission, Canberra, A.C.T.

### Aboriginal Development Foundation

VALADIAN, Mr B.	Executive Officer, Aboriginal Development Foundation, Darwin, N.T.
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### Aboriginal Hostels Limited

COPLEY, Mr V. G.	Executive Officer, Aboriginal Hostels Limited, Canberra, A.C.T.
HANSON, Mr B. P.	Projects Manager, Aboriginal Hostels Limited, Canberra, A.C.T.
HUDDLESTON, Mr R. E.	Senior Research Officer, Aboriginal Hostels Limited, Canberra, A.C.T.
PERKINS, Mr N. G.	General Manager, Aboriginal Hostels Limited, Canberra, A.C.T.

### Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc.

RATNESER, Mr K.	Director, Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc., Adelaide, S.A.
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### Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority

ELLIS, Mr R. W.	Director, Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, Darwin, N.T.
RITCHIE, Mr D. J.	Anthropologist-Field Officer, Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, Darwin, N.T.

### **Commissioner for Community Relations**

GRASSBY, Hon. A. J.	Commissioner for Community Relations, Canberra, A.C.T.
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### **Corporation of the City of Darwin**

BLACK, Mr C.A.	Lord Mayor, Corporation of the City of Darwin, Darwin, N.T.
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### **Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited**

MURRAY, Mr J. S.	Chief Administration Officer, Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited, Dandenong, Vic.
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SKELLY, Ms H. J.	Family Aide Co-ordinator, Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited, Dandenong, Vic.
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### **Department of Aboriginal Affairs**

BARCLAY, Mr W. T.	Senior Assistant Director Queensland Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Brisbane, Qld.
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BEARD, Mr E. G.	Acting Area Officer (Country Area) Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Melbourne, Vic.
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BLACKNEY, Mr P. G.	Acting Director, Welfare and Special Groups Section, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T.
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BROWNBILL, Mr G. M.	First Assistant Secretary, Development Division, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T.
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CASEY, Mr M.	Assistant Director, Northern Territory Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Darwin, N.T.
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COOKE, Mr J. A.	Executive Officer, South Australian Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Adelaide, S.A.
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FRAMPTON, Mr D.	Assistant Director, Field Operations, Eastern Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, N.S.W.
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FRAZIER, Mr W. D.	Assistant Director, Field Operations, Western Australian Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Perth, W.A.
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HANSEN, Mr G. E. P.	Acting Assistant Secretary, General Branch, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T.
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HUEY, Mr R.	Assistant Secretary, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T.
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KIDNEY, Mr D. G.	Acting Assistant Director, Regional Office (Victoria-Tasmania), Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Melbourne, Vic.
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LEUNG, Mr J.	Assistant Director, South Australian Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Adelaide, S.A.
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LONG, Mr J. P. M.	Deputy Secretary, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, A.C.T.
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MARTIN, Mr K. C.	Regional Director, Eastern Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, N.S.W.
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MORIARTY, Mr J.	Regional Director, South Australian Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Adelaide, S.A.
NEECH, Mr W. T.	Senior Project Officer, Welfare Services, Western Australian Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Perth, W.A.
NORGARD, Mrs A.	Senior Project Officer, Ministerial Section, Western Australian Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Perth, W.A.
O'NEILL, Mr P.J.	Acting Regional Director, Northern Territory Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Darwin, N.T.
O'ROURKE, Mr D.J.	Regional Director, Queensland Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Brisbane, Qld.
O'ROURKE, Mr M.J.	Senior Research Officer, Eastern Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, N.S.W.
PATERSON, Mr B.H.	Acting Area Officer, Queensland Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Brisbane, Qld.
RICHARDSON, Mr L.J.	Area Officer, Northern Territory Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Darwin, N.T.
ROLFE, Mr R.K.	Executive Officer, Queensland Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Brisbane, Qld.
VAUGHAN, Mr P.	Assistant Director, Planning and Projects, Eastern Region, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, N.S.W.

#### **Department of Education**

BELTZ, Mr C.L.	First Assistant Secretary, Special Programs Division, Department of Education, Canberra, A.C.T.
MAYS, Ms. A.	Principal Aboriginal Education Adviser, Aboriginal Education Branch, Department of Education, Canberra, A.C.T.
MOSS, Mr R.K.	Director, Aboriginal Grants and Project Section, Department of Education, Canberra, A.C.T.
SUTTON, Mr E.C.	Aboriginal Education Program Development Officer, Department of Education, N.S.W. State Office, Sydney, N.S.W.

#### **Department of Employment and Industrial Relations**

GIBSON, Mr T.M.	Acting Principal Executive Officer, Aboriginal Employment and Training Branch, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, Melbourne, Vic.
HODGETTS, Mr B.J.	Manager, Aboriginal Employment and Training Branch, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, Melbourne, Vic.
MASON, Mr P.L.	Acting General Manager, CES Programs, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, Melbourne, Vic.
ROSE, Mr N.G.D.	Acting Assistant Director Aboriginal Employment and Training Branch, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, Sydney, N.S.W.

STEELE, Mr K.T.

Principal Executive Officer, Aboriginal Employment and Training Branch, Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, Melbourne, Vic.

### **Department of Health**

LANGSFORD, Dr W.A.

First Assistant Director-General (Public Health), Department of Health, Canberra, A.C.T.

WALTON, Mr R.G.

Assistant Director-General, Aboriginal Health Branch, Department of Health, Canberra, A.C.T.

WILSON, Mr W.T.

Senior Project Officer, Aboriginal Health Branch, Department of Health, Canberra, A.C.T.

### **Department of Housing and Construction**

ROGER, Mr M.B.

Director, Housing Policy, Department of Housing and Construction, Canberra, A.C.T.

THOMAS, Mr R.H.

Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Housing and Construction, Canberra, A.C.T.

WYLIE, Mr K.V.

Project Manager, Aboriginal Housing, Western Australia, Department of Housing and Construction, Canberra, A.C.T.

### **Department of Social Security**

BOURKE, Mrs. E.A.

Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Unit, Department of Social Security, Canberra, A.C.T.

O'CONNOR, Mr J.T.

Acting Director-General, Department of Social Security, Canberra, A.C.T.

### **Inter Church Committee on Aboriginal Affairs**

BRADLEY, Mrs M.

Project Supervisor, Inter Church Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Perth. W.A.

COUCHE, Mr W.S.

Chairman, Inter Church Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Perth. W.A.

LARNER, Mr K.J.

Community Worker, Inter Church Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Perth. W.A.

STRINGER, Rev. R.G.

Secretary, Inter Church Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Perth. W.A.

### **Law Reform Commission**

CRAWFORD, Dr J.R.

Commissioner, Law Reform Commission, Sydney, N.S.W.

HENNESSY, Mr P.K.

Senior Law Reform Officer, Law Reform Commission, Sydney, N.S.W.

KIRBY, The Hon. Mr Justice M.D.

Chairman, Law Reform Commission, Sydney, N.S.W.

### **National Aboriginal Education Committee**

BUDBY, Mr J.R.

Chairman, National Aboriginal Education Committee, Canberra, A.C.T.

### **New South Wales Government**

BARNES, Mr R.H.	Divisional Manager, Regional Management, Housing Commission of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
BARTELS, Mr B.P.	Manager, Estates, Housing Commission of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
CARR, Mr J.J.	Divisional Manager, Corporate Services, Housing Commission of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
GOH, Dr T.	Senior Medical Officer, Aboriginal Health Unit, Health Commission of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
ISAACS, Mr J.M.	Assistant Secretary, Commonwealth State Liaison, New South Wales, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, N.S.W.

### **Northern Territory Government**

COBURN, Mr W.J.	Director, Community Government Division, Department of Community Development, Darwin, N.T.
LOVEGROVE, Mr T.C.	Deputy Director-General, Chief Minister's Department, Darwin, N.T.
PINNEY, Mr J.M.	Director, Southern Division, Department of Lands, Darwin, N.T.

### **Parliamentary Labor Party of the Northern Territory**

COLLINS, Mr R.L., M.L.A.	Leader, Parliamentary Labor Party, Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, Darwin, N.T.
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### **Private Citizens**

BECK, Dr E.J.	37 Wellington Street, Richmond, Vic.
BELL, Dr D.	18 Macarthur Avenue, O'Connor, A.C.T.
BRANDL, Dr M.M.	188 Dryandra Street, O'Connor, A.C.T.
HARRIS, Mr T., M.L.A.	Member for Port Darwin, Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, Darwin, N.T.
HEPPELL, Dr M.	6 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Vic.
LEA, Dr J.P.	Senior Lecturer, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Sydney, Sydney, N.S.W.
PENNY, Dr H.H.	16 Stanley Street, Leabrook, S.A.
RENKIN, Mr P.F.B.	7 Elwood Street, Surrey Hills, Vic.
SANSOM, Professor B.L.	23 Ballard Street, Nedlands, W.A.
SINBANDHIT, Mr P.	Graduate Student, Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Sydney, Sydney, N.S.W.
WATTS, Emeritus Professor B.H.	6 Robbins Street, Corinda, Qld.

### **South Australian Government**

COKER, Mr J.	Superintendent, Aboriginal and Isolated Education, South Australian Education Department, Adelaide, S.A.
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CRICHTON, Mr J.L.	Manager, Housing Services, South Australian Housing Trust, Adelaide, S.A.
NAYDA, Mr L.	Secretary, Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Adelaide, S.A.
PACKER, Dr A.D.	Senior Medical Officer, Aboriginal Health Organisation of South Australia, Norwood, S.A.
POWELL, Mr B.J.	Director, Aboriginal Health Organisation of South Australia, Norwood, S.A.
SAMPSON, Ms E.	Senior Tenancy Officer, Aboriginal Housing, South Australian Housing Trust, Adelaide, S.A.
TEMME, Mr C.A.	Housing Services Officer, Aboriginal Housing, South Australian Housing Trust, Adelaide, S.A.
THOMAS, Mr R.J.	Senior Community Worker, Department for Community Welfare, Adelaide, S.A.
WARNER, Sgt F.	Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer, South Australian Police Department, Adelaide, S.A.
WEIR, Mr S.J.	Administrative-Project Officer, Intergovernment Relations Branch, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Adelaide, S.A.
WESTOVER, Mr D.A.	Principal Education Officer, Department of Further Education, Adelaide, S.A.

#### **South Australian Woma Committee**

RIDGEWAY, Mrs B.	Executive Officer, South Australian Woma Committee, Adelaide, S.A.
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#### **Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre**

BROWN, Miss K.E.	Administrative Secretary, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Hobart, Tas.
EVERETT, Mr K.J.	Member, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Hobart, Tas.
LANGFORD, Ms R.F.	State Secretary, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Hobart, Tas.

#### **Tasmanian Government**

UNDERWOOD, Mr K.L.	Executive Officer, Multicultural Affairs Section, Attorney-General's Department, Hobart, Tas.
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#### **Uniting Church in Australia (Northern Synod)**

AMERY, Mr H.C.	Relieving and Research Person, Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services, Uniting Church in Australia, Darwin, N.T.
BLACKETT, Mr J.M.	Community Worker (Alice Springs), Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services, Uniting Church in Australia, Darwin, N.T.
CLARK, Mr A.C.	Community Worker (Tennant Creek), Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services, Uniting Church in Australia, Darwin, N.T.
UDY, Rev. R.S.	Associate Secretary, Uniting Church in Australia, Darwin, N.T.



## **Uranium Social Impact Steering Committee**

**BERNDT, Professor R.**

Deputy Chairman, Uranium Social Impact Steering Committee, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, A.C.T.

**TATZ, Professor C.M.**

Chairman, Uranium Social Impact Steering Committee, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, A.C.T.

**von STURMER, Dr J.R.**

Project Director, Uranium Social Impact Steering Committee, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, A.C.T.

## **Victorian Government**

**BLOW, Mr R.A.**

Aboriginal Adviser and Secretary, State Interdepartmental Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Department of the Premier, Melbourne, Vic.

**BRYANT, Ms J.J.**

Consultant to the Victorian Government, Department of the Premier, Melbourne, Vic.

**CAHIR, Mr A.V.**

Assistant General Manager, Ministry of Housing, and Chairman, State Interdepartmental Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Department of the Premier, Melbourne, Vic.

**COGHILL, Dr K.A., M.P.**

Parliamentary Secretary of the Victorian Cabinet and assisting the Premier in Aboriginal Affairs, Melbourne, Vic.

**FIREBRACE, Ms S.L.**

Co-ordinator, Department of Community Welfare Services, Melbourne, Vic.

## **Western Australian Government**

**HEPBURN, Mr M.S.**

Social Work Supervisor, Department of Community Welfare, Perth, W.A.

## APPENDIX II

### **Persons and Organisations who made Submissions to the Inquiry but did not appear at Public Hearings:**

Aboriginal Resource Centre (Carnarvon)  
Aboriginal Treaty Support Group  
Miss M. S. Bain O.B.E.  
Mr P. S. Bembrick  
Born Free Club (Brisbane)  
Ms M. Braddock  
Mr R. Bropho  
Central Gippsland Aboriginal Advancement Co-operative Ltd  
Child Protection Panel (Northern Country Region)  
Mr J. Corrie  
Cullacabardee Village  
Cullacabardee Women's Group  
Dr D. W. Drakakis-Smith  
Dr A-K. Eckermann  
Flinders Island Community Association  
Ms P. A. Gardiner  
Dr T. Gavranic  
Kalano Community Association  
The Hon. J. L. S. MacFarlane, MLA  
Moree Plains Shire Council  
Mount Isa Welfare Council  
Northern Territory Country Liberal Party  
Northern Territory Country Liberal Party (North Darwin Branch)  
Nyoongah Community Inc.  
Port Augusta Council  
Quaker Service Council Australia  
Sister W. M. Raymond  
Mr G. Robin  
Ms A. H. Ross  
Mrs Z. Smithson  
Mr R. F. Streten  
Tingha Aboriginal Corporation  
Townsville City Council  
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service  
Sister J. Winch  
Yipirinya School Council  
Dr E. A. Young

## **Inquiry Into Fringe-dwelling Aboriginal Communities Exhibits**

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- 1 **Western Australian State Government**  
*Aboriginal Communities Act 1979. Western Australia Act No. 8 of 1979.*
- 2 **South Australian State Government**  
Document entitled 'Aboriginal Health Organisation Constitution'.
- 3 **Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Qld Region)**  
Document entitled 'Organisation Structure — Queensland N.A.C. — D.A.A. — Other Departments'.
- 4 **Professor B.H. Watts**  
Document entitled 'Aboriginal Futures: Review of Research and Developments and Related Policies in the Education of Aborigines'.
- 5 **Australian Law Reform Commission**  
Document entitled 'Discussion Paper No.17 of November 1980'.
- 6 **New South Wales State Government**  
First Report from the Select Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines.
- 7 **New South Wales State Government**  
Second Report from the Select Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly upon Aborigines.
- 8 **Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Eastern Region)**
- 9
- 10 Tables headed 'Attachments B, C, and E'.
- 11 **Aboriginal Hostels Limited**  
Aboriginal Hostels Limited Annual Report 1981.
- 12 **Aboriginal Hostels Limited**  
Aboriginal Hostels Limited — History — Objectives — Activities.
- 13 **Aboriginal Hostels Limited**  
Covering letter to 'The Survey of Aboriginal Accommodation Needs 1980'.
- 14 **Northern Territory Government**  
Map of the Northern Territory of Australia.
- 15 **Dr E. J. Beck**  
Paper entitled, 'The Enigma of Aboriginal Health'.
- 16 **Dr M. Heppell**  
Submission by the Aboriginal Housing Panel to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Environment and the transcript of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Environment, dated 23 May 1975.
- 17 **Dr M. Heppell**  
Book entitled *Black out in Alice: A history of the establishment and development of town camps in Alice Springs* by M. Heppell and J. Wigley, Development Studies Centre Monograph No. 26, ANU, 1981.

- 18 **Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited**  
Attachments to the submission from the Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited.
- 19 **Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited**  
Documents tabled by Mr J. S. Murray, Administration Officer, Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Society Limited.
- 20 **Department of Social Security**  
Document entitled 'A Certain Heritage —Programs for and by Aboriginal Families in Australia', dated December 1981.

#### APPENDIX IV

### **Inspections and Informal Discussions were held in the following Places on the Dates indicated:**

Perth—3 November 1981  
Kalgoorlie—4 November 1981  
Oodnadatta—8 December 1981  
Port Augusta—8 December 1981  
Coober Pedy—9 December 1981  
Ceduna—9 December 1981  
Townsville—2 February 1982  
Mount Isa—3 February 1982  
Brisbane—4 February 1982  
Sydney (Western Suburbs)—2 March 1982  
Tingha—3 March 1982  
Moree—3 March 1982  
Sydney (Prince Henry Hospital)—4 March 1982  
Alice Springs—29 March 1982  
Tennant Creek—30 March 1982  
Katherine—30 March 1982  
Jabiru—31 March 1982  
Darwin—31 March 1982  
Trefoil Island—14 April 1982  
Lake Tyers—11 May 1982  
Melbourne—12 May 1982  
Carnarvon—15 June 1982  
Roebourne—16 June 1982  
Kununurra—17 June 1982

## Town Camp Communities

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Identified by</i>
<b>South Australia</b>			
Half Way Camp	Ceduna	30-40	ADC & DAA
The Flat	Coober Pedy	30-200	ADC & DAA
Davenport Res.	Port Augusta	50-275	ADC & DAA
Oodnadatta	Oodnadatta	25-90	ADC & DAA
<b>Victoria</b>			
Lake Tyers	Gippsland	120-190	Victorian Government
Framlingham	Western Districts	40	Victorian Government
Parkies/Fitzroy	Melbourne	30-40	Victorian Government
<b>Queensland</b>			
Boulia Reserve	Boulia	24	DAA & ADC
One Mile	Nth Stradbroke Island	26-27	DAA & ADC
Camooweal Reserve	Camooweal	100	DAA & ADC
Chillagoe Reserve	Chillagoe	80	DAA & ADC
Cooktown Reserve	Cooktown	25-50	DAA & ADC
Djarra—West End Reserve	Djarra	9	DAA & ADC
Georgetown Reserve	Georgetown	10	DAA & ADC
Herberton Reserve	Herberton	15-60	DAA & ADC
Kuranda	Kuranda	250-420	DAA & ADC
Laura Reserve	Laura	12-60	DAA & ADC
Far Beach	Mackay	47	DAA & ADC
Mossman Reserve	Mossman	40-500	DAA & ADC
Mt Garnett Reserve	Mt Garnett	45-60	DAA & ADC
Orana Park Reserve	Mt Isa	50-58	DAA & ADC
Yallambee Reserve	Mt Isa	135-150	DAA & ADC
Happy Valley	Townsville	10-15	DAA & ADC
Bridge Dwellers	Townsville	50	DAA & ADC
Murray—Upper	Tully	50-118	DAA & ADC
Bessie Point	Yarrabah	100	ADC
Birdsville Compound	Birdsville	12	ADC
Cairns	Cairns	100	ADC
Coen Reserve	Coen	50	ADC
Mareeba	Mareeba	800	ADC
Palm Island (Part of)	Palm Island	800	ADC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Identified by</i>
Ravenshoe	Ravenshoe	40	ADC
Fitzroy River	Rockhampton	15-20	ADC
The Gorge	Mossman	130	DAA
Normanton Reserve	Normanton	80	DAA
Pioneer River	Mackay	18	DAA
Kennedy	Cardwell	140	DAA
Charters Towers	Charters Towers	100	DAA
Musgrave Park	Brisbane	40-60	DAA

### **New South Wales**

Baryulgil Square	Baryulgil	100-101	ADC & DAA
North Camp	Bourke	3-5	ADC & DAA
Reserve	Bourke	65-70	ADC & DAA
Water Resources Com- mission	Dareton	43-50	ADC & DAA
Merrincee	Dareton	9-15	ADC & DAA
Reserve	Goodooga	35-75	ADC & DAA
Gunnedah Hill	Coonabarabran	40	ADC & DAA
Burnt Bridge	Kempsey	94-130	ADC & DAA
3 Mile Camp	Lightning Ridge	10-12	ADC & DAA
Reserve	Menindee	10-50	ADC & DAA
Garden Sheds	Nowra South	12-31	ADC & DAA
Quambone Reserve	Quambone	30-33	ADC & DAA
Namoi Reserve	Walgett	110-200	ADC & DAA
Nanima Reserve	Wellington	15-154	ADC & DAA
Mallee	Wilcannia	75-140	ADC & DAA
Brewarrina West (Police Paddock and Tip Road)	Brewarrina	15-178	ADC & DAA
West Gulargambone (Gulargambone Reserve)	Gulargambone	10-13	ADC & DAA
Bellbrook Reserve (Nulla Nulla Creek, Kempsey)	Bellbrook	30-90	ADC & DAA
Erambie Reserve	Cowra	150	DAA
Barwon 4	Brewarrina	72	DAA
Enngonia Reserve	Enngonia	79	DAA
Goodooga Camp	Goodooga	14	DAA
Town Common	Wellington	10	DAA
South East Gulargambone	Gulargambone	80	DAA
Mission Reserve	Condobolin	30	DAA
3 Way Reserve	Griffith	45	DAA
Cummeragunga	Cummeragunga	160	DAA
Gingie Reserve	Walgett	105	DAA
Dewhurst St.	Walgett	22	DAA
Helin Top Camp	Moree	600	DAA
Pilliga Reserve	Pilliga	31	DAA
Caroona Reserve	Quirindi	245	DAA
Walcha Reserve	Walcha	63	DAA
Pimbaacla	Wee Waa	90	DAA
Belwood Reserve	Nambucca Heads	78	DAA
Cabbage Tree Island	Wardell	177	DAA
Coffs Harbour/Sawtell	Coffs Harbour	103	DAA
Box Ridge Reserve	Coraki	98	DAA
Gundurimba Reserve	Lismore	39	DAA

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Identified by</i>
Hillcrest Reserve	Maclean	50	DAA
Tabulam	Tabulam	193	DAA
Pippie Beach Reserve	Yamba	34	DAA
Bowraville Reserve	Bowraville	68	DAA
Woodenbong (Muli Muli Reserve)	Woodenbong	109	DAA
Toomelah	Boggabilla	450	DAA
Ashford Reserve	Ashford	90	DAA
South Guyra	Guyra	23	DAA
North Guyra	Guyra	45	DAA
Stanley Village	Moree	600	DAA
Green Hills	Kempsey	290	DAA
South West Rocks	South West Rocks	40	DAA
Karuah Reserve	Karuah Reserve	80	DAA
Cabrita-Forster	Cabrita-Forster	80	DAA
Purfleet (Taree)	Purfleet (Taree)	330	DAA
Murry's Flat	Bega	24	DAA
Brown's Flat	Nowra	45	DAA
Mission Reserve	Wilcannia	90	DAA
Balranald	Balranald	12	DAA
Mission (Namitjira Ave Reserve)	Dareton	110	DAA
Kiah Reserve	Eden	15	ADC
Gol Gol	Mildura	15	ADC
Council	Taree	60	ADC
Neilpo Stn	Wentworth	10	ADC

### Western Australia

Ann St. Reserve	Broome	260	40	ADC
Kennedy's Hill	Broome			ADC
Meatworks	Broome			ADC & DAA
Morgan's Camp	Broome			ADC & DAA
One Mile Reserve	Broome			ADC & DAA
Boor St. Reserve	Carnarvon	30-121	21	ADC & DAA
Reserve	Derby	80		ADC & DAA
Reserve	Halls Creek	225		ADC & DAA
Kalgoorlie Camps	Kalgoorlie	50-100		ADC & DAA
Reserve	Kununurra	100-141		ADC & DAA
Lake	Kununurra	30	21	ADC & DAA
Lilly Creek	Kununurra	30		ADC & DAA
Kurnangli	Fitzroy Crossing	18		ADC & DAA
Laverton Camp	Laverton	60-81	21	ADC & DAA
Leonora	Leonora	12-40		ADC & DAA
Brockman Camp	Marble Bar	50-53		ADC & DAA
Reserve	Meekatharra	16-100		ADC & DAA
Reserve	Mullewa	6-400		ADC & DAA
Woolshed	Roeibourne	35-66	21	ADC & DAA
Skippers Camp	Wiluna	60-100		ADC & DAA
Reserve	Wyndham	50-70		ADC & DAA
Guda Guda	Wyndham	29		ADC & DAA
East Metropolitan (Lockridge North)	Perth	77-600		ADC & DAA



<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Identified by</i>
Tjalkawarra (12 Mile Reserve)	Pt Hedland	104-150	ADC & DAA
Coolgardie	Coolgardie	15	ADC
Central Metropolitan	Perth	50	ADC
North Metropolitan	Perth	86	ADC
South Metropolitan	Perth	1000	ADC
South Western Metropolitan (Medina)	Perth	500	ADC
Kadjina River Camp	Kadjina River	28	DAA
Reserve	Marble Bar	17	DAA
Reserve	Onslow	250	DAA
3 Mile	Pt Hedland	130	DAA
9 Mile	Pt Hedland	15	DAA
Irrangadgi	Nullangine	55	DAA
Nicholson Stn	Halls Creek	41	DAA
Blueberry Hill	Halls Creek	21	DAA

### **Northern Territory**

15 Mile (16 Mile)	Darwin	28-30	ADC & DAA
Rock Hole	Katherine	30-40	ADC & DAA
Myalli Brumby	Katherine	166-200	ADC & DAA
Meatworks	Katherine	16-21	ADC & DAA
Binjari	Katherine	60-80	ADC & DAA
Katherine Gorge	Katherine	12-23	ADC & DAA
Golders Camp (East Side)	Alice Springs	15-40	ADC & DAA
Railway Dam	Darwin	40	ADC
Knuckey's Lagoon	Darwin	40	ADC
Kulaluk	Darwin	60	ADC
Transient Camps (15)	Darwin	200	ADC
Railway Hill	Darwin	8	DAA
Palmerston Park	Darwin	10	DAA
Kalano Farm	Katherine	45	ADC
Transient Camps (2)	Katherine	36	ADC
— Katherine Dump			
— High Level Top Camp			
Elliott	Elliott	180-300	ADC & DAA
Anthony's Lagoon	Anthony's Lagoon	115	DAA
Areyonga (Karnte)	Alice Springs	80	DAA
Anthelk Ewlpaye	Alice Springs	210	ADC
Anthepe	Alice Springs	45	ADC
Aper-Alwerrkngge	Alice Springs	10	ADC
Bazzo's Farm	Alice Springs	7	ADC
Ewyenper-Atwatye	Alice Springs	150	ADC
Ilparpa	Alice Springs	35	ADC
Ilyperenye	Alice Springs	75	ADC
Inilunga	Alice Springs	88	ADC
Knugatnurra	Alice Springs	30	ADC
Llibili Tja Tja	Alice Springs	35	ADC
Mpwetyerre	Alice Springs	70	ADC
Mt Nancy	Alice Springs	55	ADC
Ootnarungatcha	Alice Springs	93	ADC
Yarrenty Arltere	Alice Springs	75	ADC
Kunoth Camp	Alice Springs	15	ADC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Identified by</i>
Leo's Camp	Alice Springs	12	ADC
Transient Camps (9) including Under New Bridge, Charles Creek, Creek Bed opp Mbutjarra (identified by DAA)	Alice Springs	100–150	ADC & DAA
Paddys Camp* (Brown Street)	Tennant Creek	13–18	ADC & DAA
Blueberry Hill	Tennant Creek	12	300 ADC & DAA
Mulga	Tennant Creek	92	
Village	Tennant Creek	35	
Karguru (Epenarra Group)	Tennant Creek	60–65	ADC & DAA
Brunette Downs Group	Tennant Creek	22	ADC
Bunnys Camp	Tennant Creek	26	DAA
Bush Camp	Tennant Creek	52	DAA
Stanley St*	Tennant Creek	10	DAA

\* The Brown Street and Stanley Street Camps no longer exist (Evidence, p. 3281).

## Local Government Authorities with Town Camps within Municipal Boundaries

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Local Authority</i>
<b>South Australia</b>		
Half Way Camp	Ceduna	Murat Bay District Council
The Flat	Cooper Pedy	Cooper Pedy Progress and Miners Association
Davenport Res.	Port Augusta	Port Augusta City Council
Oodnadatta	Oodnadatta	Outback Areas Community Development Trust
<b>Victoria</b>		
Lake Tyers	Gippsland	Tambo Shire Council
Framlingham	Western Districts	Warrnambool Shire Council
Parkies/Fitzroy	Melbourne	Fitzroy City Council
<b>Queensland</b>		
Boulia Reserve	Boulia	Boulia Shire Council
One Mile	Nth Stradbroke Island	Redland Shire Council
Camooeweal Reserve	Camooeweal	Mt Isa City Council
Chillagoe Reserve	Chillagoe	Mareeba Shire Council
Cooktown Reserve	Cooktown	Cook Shire Council
Djarra-West End Reserve	Djarra	Cloncurry Shire Council
Georgetown Reserve	Georgetown	Etheridge Shire Council
Herberton Reserve	Herberton	Herberton Shire Council
Kuranda	Kuranda	Mareeba Shire Council
Laura Reserve	Laura	Cook Shire Council
Far Beach	Mackay	Mackay City Council
Mossman Reserve	Mossman	Douglas Shire Council
Mt Garnett Reserve	Mt Garnett	Herberton Shire Council
Orana Park Reserve	Mt Isa	Mt Isa City Council
Yallambee Reserve	Mt Isa	Mt Isa City Council
Happy Valley	Townsville	Townsville City Council
Bridge Dwellers	Townsville	Townsville City Council
Murray-Upper	Tully	Cardwell Shire Council
Bessie Point	Yarrabah	Mulgrave Shire Council
Birdsville Compound	Birdsville	Diamantina Shire Council
Cairns	Cairns	Cairns City Council
Coen Reserve	Coen	Cook Shire Council
Mareeba	Mareeba	Mareeba Shire Council

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Local Authority</i>
Palm Island (Part of)	Palm Island	Townsville City Council
Ravenshoe	Ravenshoe	Herberton Shire Council
Fitzroy River	Rockhampton	Fitzroy Shire Council
The Gorge	Mossman	Douglas Shire Council
Normanton Reserve	Normanton	Carpentaria Shire Council
Pioneer River	Mackay	Pioneer Shire Council
Kennedy	Cardwell	Cardwell Shire Council
Charters Towers	Charters Towers	Charters Towers City Council
Musgrave Park	Brisbane	Brisbane City Council

### **New South Wales**

Baryulgil Square	Baryulgil	Copmanhurst Shire Council
North Camp	Bourke	Bourke Shire Council
Reserve	Bourke	Bourke Shire Council
Water Resources Com- mission	Dareton	Wentworth Shire Council
Merrinee	Dareton	Wentworth Shire Council
Reserve	Goodooga	Brewarrina Shire Council
Gunnedah Hill	Coonabarabran	Coonabarabran Shire Council
Burnt Bridge	Kempsey	Kempsey Shire Council
3 Mile Camp	Lightning Ridge	Walgett Shire Council
Reserve	Menindee	Central Darling Shire Council
Garden Sheds	Nowra South	Shoalhaven Shire Council
Quambone Reserve	Quambone	Coonamble Shire Council
Namoi Reserve	Walgett	Walgett Shire Council
Nanima Reserve	Wellington	Wellington Shire Council
Mallee	Wilcannia	Central Darling Shire Council
Brewarrina West (Police Paddock and Tip Road)	Brewarrina	Brewarrina Shire Council
West Gulargambone (Gulargambone Reserve)	Gulargambone	Coonamble Shire Council
Bellbrook Reserve	Bellbrook	Kempsey Shire Council
Erambie Reserve	Cowra	Cowra Shire Council
Barwon 4	Brewarrina	Brewarrina Shire Council
Enngonia Reserve	Enngonia	Bourke Shire Council
Goodooga Camp	Goodooga	Brewarrina Shire Council
Town Common	Wellington	Wellington Shire Council
South East Gulargam- bone	Gulargambone	Coonamble Shire Council
Mission Reserve	Condobolin	Lachlan Shire Council
3 Ways Reserve	Griffith	Wade Shire Council
Cummeragunga	Cummeragunga	Murray Shire Council
Gingie Reserve	Walgett	Walgett Shire Council
Dewhurst St.	Walgett	Walgett Shire Council
Helin Top Camp	Moree	Moree Plains Shire Council
Pilliga Reserve	Pilliga	Narrabri Shire Council
Caroona Reserve	Quirindi	Quirindi Shire Council
Walcha Reserve	Walcha	Walcha Shire Council
Pimbaacla	Wee Waa	Narrabri Shire Council
Bellwood Reserve	Nambucca Heads	Nambucca Shire Council
Cabbage Tree Island	Wardell	Ballina Shire Council

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Local Authority</i>
Coffs Harbour/Sawtell	Coffs Harbour	Coffs Harbour Shire Council
Box Ridge Reserve	Coraki	Lismore Shire Council
Gundurimba Reserve	Lismore	Lismore Shire Council
Hillcrest Reserve	Maclean	Maclean Shire Council
Tabulam	Tabulam	Tenterfield Shire Council
Pippie Beach Reserve	Yamba	Maclean Shire Council
Bowraville Reserve	Bowraville	Nambucca Shire Council
Woodenbong (Muli Muli Reserve)	Woodenbong	Kyogle Shire Council
Toomelah	Boggabilla	Moree Plains Shire Council
Ashford Reserve	Ashford	Inverell Shire Council
South Guyra	Guyra	Guyra Shire Council
North Guyra	Guyra	Guyra Shire Council
Stanley Village	Moree	Moree Plains Shire Council
Green Hills	Kempsey	Kempsey Shire Council
South West Rocks	South West Rocks	Kempsey Shire Council
Karuah Reserve	Karuah Reserve	Port Stephens Shire Council
Cabrita-Forster	Cabrita-Forster	Great Lakes Shire Council
Purfleet (Taree)	Purfleet (Taree)	Greater Taree Shire Council
Murry's Flat	Bega	Bega Valley Shire Council
Browns Flat	Nowra	Shoalhaven Shire Council
Mission Reserve	Wilcannia	Central Darling Shire Council
Balranald	Balranald	Balranald Shire Council
Mission (Namtjira Ave Reserve)	Dareton	Wentworth Shire Council
Kiah Reserve	Eden	Bega Valley Shire Council
Gol Gol	Mildura	Wentworth Shire Council
Council	Taree	Greater Taree Shire Council
Neilpo Stn	Wentworth	Wentworth Shire Council

### **Western Australia**

Ann St Reserve	Broome	Broome Shire Council
Kennedy's Hill	Broome	Broome Shire Council
Meatworks	Broome	Broome Shire Council
Morgan's Camp	Broome	Broome Shire Council
One Mile Reserve	Broome	Broome Shire Council
Boor St	Carnarvon	Carnarvon Shire Council
Reserve	Derby	Derby-West Kimberley Shire Council
Reserve	Halls Creek	Halls Creek Shire Council
Kalgoorlie Camps	Kalgoorlie	Boulder Shire Council
Reserve	Kununurra	Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire Council
Lake	Kununurra	Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire Council
Lilly Creek	Kununurra	Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire Council
Kurnangli	Fitzroy Crossing	Derby-West Kimberley Shire Council
Laverton Camp	Laverton	Laverton Shire Council
Leonora	Leonora	Leonora Shire Council
Brockman Camp	Marble Bar	East Pilbara Shire Council
Reserve	Meekatharra	Meekatharra Shire Council
Reserve	Mullewa	Mullewa Shire Council
Woolshed	Roebourne	Roebourne Shire Council

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Local Authority</i>
Skippers Camp Reserve	Wiluna Wyndham	Wiluna Shire Council Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire Council
Guda Guda	Wyndham	Wyndham-East Kimberley Shire Council
East Metropolitan (Lockridge North)	Perth	Swan Shire Council
Tjalkawarra (12 Mile Reserve)	Port Hedland	Port Hedland Shire Council
Coolgardie	Coolgardie	Coolgardie Shire Council
Central Metropolitan	Perth	Perth City Council
North Metropolitan	Perth	
South-eastern Metropolitan (Medina)	Perth	Cockburn City Council
South Western Metropolitan	Perth (Pinjarra)	Murray Shire Council
Kadjina River Camp Reserve	Kadjina River	Derby-West Kimberley Shire Council
Reserve	Marble Bar	East Pilbara Shire Council
3 Mile	Onslow	West Pilbara Shire Council
9 Mile	Port Hedland	Port Hedland Shire Council
Irrangadgi	Port Hedland	Port Hedland Shire Council
Nicholson Stn	Nullagine	Port Hedland Shire Council
Blueberry Hill	Halls Creek	Halls Creek Shire Council
	Halls Creek	Halls Creek Shire Council
<b>Northern Territory</b>		
15 Mile (16 Mile)	Darwin	Palmerston Town Development Authority
Rock Hole	Katherine	Katherine Town Council
Myalli Brumby	Katherine	Katherine Town Council
Meatworks	Katherine	Katherine Town Council
Binjari	Katherine	Outside Katherine Town Boundary
Katherine Gorge	Katherine	Outside Katherine Town Boundary
Golders Camp (East Side)	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Railway Dam	Darwin	Darwin City Council
Knuckeyes Lagoon	Darwin	Darwin City Council
Kulaluk	Darwin	Darwin City Council
Transient Camps (15)	Darwin	Darwin City Council
Railway Hill	Darwin	Darwin City Council
Palmerston Park	Darwin	Darwin City Council
Kalano Farm	Katherine	Katherine Town Council
Transient Camps (2)	Katherine	Katherine Town Council
—Katherine Dump		
—High Level Top Camp		
Elliott	Elliott	Elliott-Newcastle Waters Progress and Housing Association
Anthonys Lagoon	Anthonys Lagoon	Elliott-Newcastle Waters Progress and Housing Association
Areyonga (Karnte)	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Anthelk Ewlpaye	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Anthepe	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Local Authority</i>
Aper-Alwerrkne	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Bazzo's Farm	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Ewyenper-Atwatye	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Ilparpa	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Ilyperenye	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Inilunga	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Knugatnurra	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Llibili Tja Tja	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Mpwetyerre	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Mt Nancy	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Ootnarungatcha	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Yarrently Arltere	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Kunoth Camp	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Leo's Camp	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Transient Camps (9) including Under New Bridge, Charles Creek, Creek Bed opp Mbutjarra	Alice Springs	Alice Springs Town Council
Paddy's Camp* (Brown Street)	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council
Blueberry Hill	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council
Mulga (incl. Bunny's Camp)	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council
Village	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council
Karguru (Epenarra Group)	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council
Brunette Downs Group	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council
Bunny's Camp	Tennant Creek	(Part of Mulga Special Purpose Lease)
Bush Camp	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council
Stanley St*	Tennant Creek	Tennant Creek Town Council

\* The Brown Street and Stanley Street Camps no longer exist (Evidence, p. 3281).

## Public Awareness Campaign

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs in its submission to the Committee in August 1981, stated that:

The Department is currently preparing a proposal for a public awareness campaign to overcome this adverse image of Aborigines. In the meantime, the Department is proposing to commission two smaller-scale research projects during 1981-82:

- (i) First to obtain a measurement of change on particular aspects of attitudes about Aborigines over time, it is intended to include in general public opinion polls a small number of questions about Aborigines to be repeated for a number of years;
- (ii) Secondly, a detailed research study into community attitudes towards Aborigines and the reasons for those attitudes, to be conducted in a representative sample of Australian communities. This study should be undertaken by a research organisation with experience in relating attitude research to public information programs.

(Evidence, p. 19)

At the first public hearing with DAA on 8 September 1981, the Department was questioned about the campaign. The questions and the Departmental responses were:

Mr SCOTT—I would like to ask a question on the points made in your report, in particular, that on page 16, that the Department is preparing a proposal for a public awareness campaign to overcome this adverse image to which you refer. How far advanced are you? When do you expect the proposal to be completed? What is the basis on which you are proceeding? What medium is envisaged? What outside resources would you intend to use? It seems to me that many of the questions we are asking would come out in that project. The guidelines or the basis or the working papers would be extremely helpful to this Committee.

Mr BROWNBILL—I regret to say that the points made here relate to the activities of a division other than the one for which I take responsibility; and although I am generally aware of the nature of this, I would rather, if I may, answer Mr Scott's points on notice. I know that the Department would be very happy to provide to this Committee whatever data can be acquired or brought forward. It is a matter of concern to the Department that society generally holds a poor opinion of Aboriginal people; it is believed in our Department that that is the result of stereotypes and prejudices that perhaps are not understood even by the people who hold them. We would be very concerned to see this enterprise effective. I would have thought, irrespective of what particular inquiry your Committee is making, that these data would be of some help to you, and I will undertake to see that everything possible is put before you.

Mr TAMBLING—What consultants will you be engaging as part of that public awareness campaign? And what degree of consultation in developing the campaign is going on with various Aboriginal agencies and organisations? How is that being put together?

Mr BROWNBILL—May we take those questions on notice?

(Evidence, pp. 710-711)

Additional information was provided by DAA on 12 November 1981 in response to questions taken on notice at the public hearing. The response to the questions on the public awareness campaign proposal was:

A statement on the public awareness campaign being prepared by the Department (pp. 710-711)



The Department's work on attitude research arose from a concern about the attitudes of the general Australian community towards Aborigines and the way those attitudes can influence Aboriginal self-perception. The Department is developing, for consideration by Government, proposals for programs that might make these community attitudes more positive towards Aborigines. Specifically, the Department is seeking to:

- (a) identify problem areas;
- (b) define objectives; and
- (c) indicate what might constitute a public awareness program.

The development of such a program must take into account information about attitudes, how these attitudes are formed, and which particular sections of the community might need to provide a focus for any campaign.

The two research projects being commissioned this financial year are the first steps towards providing some up to date data on white attitudes towards Aborigines, their change over time and their cause.

The first project will involve commissioning a public opinion organisation to include in its regular polls set questions on Aborigines to measure both the nature of non-Aboriginal attitudes and changes that may occur as a reaction to particular events.

The second project will be concerned with in-depth interviews to provide qualitative material on attitudes in selected communities. Proposals from research organisations are at present being sought. Detailed surveys will be undertaken in a metropolitan area and one or more country locations, with both a high and a low Aboriginal population. Discussions with research organisations will determine the research method and the areas to be covered.

The research projects are concerned with the general non-Aboriginal Australian community and are not confined solely to its attitudes and perceptions of fringe dwellers. Our intention in inviting the Standing Committee to consider relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in fringe dwelling situations was to seek to establish through evidence given to the Committee the nature of the communications problem. Hopefully we thought the Standing Committee might care to examine this in its investigations in country areas and attempt to assess a situation which we believe has a marked effect on non-Aboriginal attitudes to Aborigines, and in turn on Aboriginal development.

(Evidence, pp. 1288-89)

On 29 June 1982 DAA provided further information on the community surveys that were being, and would be, conducted in preparing proposals for a public awareness campaign:

#### Community Survey (p. 19)

In August 1981 a Gallup poll was commissioned which took place on the first two weekends in September 1981. The question asked was:

'Do you think the Federal Government in Canberra is doing enough for Aborigines?'

Answers were to be sorted into the following categories:

'too much, enough, not enough, don't know'.

The Australia wide results obtained are set out below:

Too Much 18%

Enough 25%

Not Enough 50%

Don't Know 7%

Details of the survey can be provided to the Committee.

A communications psychologist has been commissioned to undertake a survey which will explore people's attitudes to Aborigines in some depth. The survey will be conducted in New South Wales by in depth questioning of some 200 people in both city and country locations.

From the study we hope to obtain a lead as to the components of attitude which might be susceptible to change and to explore these in a more extensive survey.

The research will assist the Department in recommending proposals to the Government for a public awareness program in respect of Aborigines.

(Evidence, p. 3179)

At the public hearing on 30 June 1982, DAA was questioned about the community surveys:

CHAIRMAN—In the questions we put to you we asked you about a community survey and you have given us some information. You indicated that there was an opinion poll taken, I assume for the Department. We would like to have the results of that survey as you suggested you might provide them. I assume that it would at least be broken up on a State by State basis. It does not really give me an indication of the size of the sample.

Mr LONG—There is information available on the Gallup polls that have been taken previously. The details of that I think we got hold of.

CHAIRMAN—I see. So the Gallup poll was commissioned by you.

Mr LONG—No, but what we were doing is a survey sample thing.

CHAIRMAN—The Gallup polls were commissioned and took place in the first two weekends of September 1981.

Mr HUEY—It may infer that we commissioned it, but in fact we did not.

Mr LONG—But we have got the results. We could make those available to the Committee.

CHAIRMAN—That poll which was taken in September is being put before your communications psychologist but you are really not very far down the track on that matter, it would appear from this statement.

Mr LONG—That is right.

(Evidence, pp. 2798-99)

The Department was further questioned about the community surveys and the development of a public awareness campaign:

Mr SCOTT—I would like to come back to the point that you raised in relation to the community survey. You say that the Department did not in fact commission the survey. Can you tell us whose survey it was?

Mr LONG—I think it probably should be a Gallup poll. I am not certain of that, but we will provide the details of it.

Mr SCOTT—Further down you refer to the public awareness program. I raised this matter with Mr Brownbill in September of last year and he said that the Department is currently preparing a proposal for a public awareness campaign to overcome this adverse image of Aborigines. I asked for details of that campaign. You are probably aware of the matters that I raised, but it seemed to me that if you had the information on the problems you would be embarking on a campaign to overcome those problems. I gathered from the answers that I received in September of last year that the Department had a survey, a public awareness campaign, under way. This reply that we have in the letter of the 29th states in the last paragraph that the research will assist the Department in recommending proposals to the Government for a public awareness program in respect of Aborigines. Is this matter suddenly now getting attention? It certainly was inferred in the submission of September last year that there was a proposal being prepared.

Mr LONG—Yes, the submission was in error or was jumping the gun a bit and the truth is as indicated in the note you now have that the first step is seen as doing the survey work and having a look at attitudes, and on the basis of that any public awareness program beyond what we are doing routinely anyway will be developed. But our public information people want to have the survey work done first to get some better idea of what people think and then consider what may be done about what people think.

Mr SCOTT—I am going to have to pursue it because I feel we were misled by the Department in September of last year.

Mr LONG—That initial comment was misleading; it indicated that things were further progressed than they were.

Mr SCOTT—I hope some bums will be kicked over that because I believe that what we are trying to achieve, and it is the Department's responsibility to try to achieve, is a better understanding of the Aboriginals' problems in the community. A public awareness campaign is terribly important and we have been misled since last September on this matter. Even now, nothing has happened. It seems to me that in the last minute someone has prepared this reply to the community survey and you have propped up some figures here on a Gallup poll conducted in August of last year. I think public awareness is a very important issue. I do not think the Department has taken it seriously and we have been misled.

Mr LONG—I have said that that was a misleading statement last year. It was made by somebody who was not close to the particular operation and it does not indicate, as a result of that having been said, that we have then turned around to start things off. What is being done now, was being done then but rather than say a public awareness campaign was under way, it was said that we were preparing for it by commissioning surveys and studies. It was done under a research program. We have put the proposition out to tender and asked various people to make us offers. These have been looked at in the intervening period and we have now engaged one particular consultant to do the job. But that has been developing over the past 12 months or so.

Mr SCOTT—When would the Department have become aware of this Committee being misled by the reply from Mr Brownbill of 8 September last year? When I asked a question, he undertook to take it on board, on notice.

Mr HUEY—Supplementary information was given, I think in November 1981, to the Committee on that. It went into the matter in a little more detail, as I recall.

Mr LONG—It was when he returned to the Department and talked to our public information branch.

Mr SCOTT—So by November we would have said that we had been misled in September?

Mr LONG—I do not know.

CHAIRMAN—No, that phrase is on pages 1288 and 1289 of 'Hansard'. Have you seen it?

Mr SCOTT—I saw one reply. I do not know whether that is the one.

CHAIRMAN—He told us about the commission as a whole, in-depth interviews, and then he put the matter off by saying: 'Hopefully we thought the Standing Committee might care to examine this in its investigation'.

Mr SCOTT—So we have completed a circle, have we?

Mr LONG—The origins of this look at attitudes lie back in the development of the Department's research program for 1981-82 which was in the early part of 1981 or late 1980. It has been in the pipeline for a while. We brought it forward into the financial year ending today's research program and, once being assured that we had some money for it, went out to look for people who would do the job for us. I apologise for the fact that Mr Brownbill gave the impression that things were further advanced than they were.

Mr SCOTT—I think the thing has been compounded by the reply in December. Apart from clarifying the situation it has continued to mislead us.

Mr LONG—I think it sets out the two-stage program that we set about.

Mr SCOTT—It did not pick up September 1981 and, as the Chairman points out, suggests that we might have a look at it.

Mr HUEY—Surely it comes down to the exact words he used in September 1981.

Mr SCOTT—If I could just go a bit further. I am not indulging in a witch-hunt. I raised the question of September because I thought that this is a marvellous way to start to look at the problems as they are perceived in the community and to tackle the problems of certain antagonism in the community towards grants given to Aboriginals. We have run into the problem in Tasmania; we have run into it in almost all of the local councils so it is a serious problem. I think that the Department should give this problem a high degree of priority to

find out what the community attitude is and then seek to have it better understood. I raised the question about whether this would be done by films, by paid advertisements or by what method of education were we then going to pursue to enlighten the public of the problems that Aboriginal people have. I take the matter very seriously. I would like to think that the Department would give that real priority. It certainly has not had that, according to the information that has come before us.

Mr LONG — Two points were made in the original submission. One is that the Department is currently preparing a proposal for a public awareness campaign to overcome the adverse image of Aboriginals which has been discussed in the preceding half a dozen paragraphs or so. That was a reference, I believe, to proposals for the general public information program which was then being developed to put before the Government. That has come back to the Department and will be handled differently.

The second statement was that in the meantime the Department is proposing to commission two smaller scale research projects during 1981-82. The first one has got off the ground. The second one will be the second stage which will be done later. It was thought, as I have said, that this research should be done before we went too far in developing a public information program intended, at this stage, to change attitudes. I think a lot of us are rather sceptical about how you can deliberately change people's attitudes.

Mr SCOTT — If we are conveying to the public the serious health problems of Aboriginals who have kiddies with trachoma, and this is portrayed by community advertisements, then the community will be much more sympathetic and understand why additional government moneys have to be spent on Aboriginals. You were saying that you were going to attack this differently. Can you explain that? You said that the Government had come back and said that it had agreed to it but that you were going to attack it differently.

Mr LONG — That is the total information program. The Department and all departments were developing information programs which were going forward and being looked at in a co-ordinated way by government.

Mr SCOTT — Have you had any public awareness programs?

Mr LONG — Yes. All the information programs of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs can be regarded as public awareness programs. We produce booklets, newsletters and so on which provide information about Aboriginals. For example, last year we produced a new booklet about the condition of Aboriginals in Australia and about government programs to help Aboriginals in Australia. That was done in the last quarter of last year. That was, I suppose, the most ambitious part of our public awareness program and our most expensive exercise last year. We are continually engaged in this sort of work producing, as you say, information about the health of Aboriginals and so on. We produce background papers on that and distribute them to interested people.

Mr SCOTT — Is a public awareness campaign intended to overcome the adverse image of Aboriginals? Are you saying that that is now going to be handled differently? If so, can you give us any information on the way that you intend to pursue it, other than what we have here?

Mr LONG — The plan is to get a survey done to find out more about how people think, about attitudes. We plan to continue that through the two stages indicated and, on the basis of that, to consider what kind of information program might be most effective in improving attitudes and overcoming the adverse image.

Mr SCOTT — Do you have the finance for that now? Do you have a timescale for that particular public awareness program?

Mr LONG — No, we do not have the finance. That will be something we will seek when we know exactly what we want to do.

Mr SCOTT — So you have not even made an application for it?

Mr LONG — No.

CHAIRMAN — Do you have some further information you want to give us? The matter will be the subject of some comment, no doubt initiated by my colleague.

(Evidence, pp. 2806-12)

On 22 September 1982 the Chairman wrote to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Ian Wilson M.P., asking for further information on the public awareness campaign proposal as the Committee felt 'it had been misled on the development of the proposal'.

22 September 1982

My dear Minister,

Your Department undertook at a public hearing on 30 June 1982, to provide a statement to the Committee on a proposal for a public awareness campaign being developed by your Department.

The Committee is anxious to receive the statement as it considers it has been misled on the development of the proposal. The Department's original submission, dated August 1981, stated that it 'is currently preparing a proposal for a public awareness campaign to overcome this adverse image of Aborigines'. This was confirmed in additional information supplied by your Department in November 1981 where it was stated 'The Department is developing, for consideration by Government, proposals for programs that might make these community attitudes more positive towards Aborigines.'

However, at the public hearing on 30 June 1982, Mr Long said that 'That initial comment was misleading; it indicated that things were further progressed than they were.' Mr Long said that a public awareness campaign was not yet included in the Department's forward program.

The Committee views the proposal for a public awareness campaign as one of tremendous importance in overcoming the often adverse image of Aborigines held by the general community and the campaign will be a matter for substantial comment in the report on the fringe-dwelling Aboriginal communities inquiry that the Committee will consider at a meeting on Friday, 24 September.

Yours sincerely,

PHILIP RUDDOCK

*Chairman*

The Hon. I.B.C. Wilson, M.P.  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra, A.C.T.

The Minister replied on 23 September 1982 stating:

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
Minister Assisting the Minister  
for Social Security  
Canberra, A.C.T 2600  
23 September 1982

Dear Mr Ruddock

I am replying to your letter of 22 September seeking further information on a proposal for a public awareness campaign being developed by my Department.

I am concerned that your Committee should consider that it has been misled on the development of the proposal. There appears to have been some misunderstanding between the Committee and officers who appeared before it. This may be due in part to the fact that the officers did not have a detailed acquaintance with the proposal for a public awareness campaign and how it was being developed. They were specialist policy officers in the area of fringe dwellers. This was indicated to the Committee at the time.

Separately, the Department has provided the Committee with further information in relation to matters raised by it. In response to your letter to me, which addressed the specific

question of the development of the public awareness campaign, my Department has prepared the attached statement.

I think one of the difficulties has been the time span necessary to develop proposals in an area as complex as attitudes towards Aborigines and how these attitudes might be changed. It was first necessary to undertake research which is lacking in this field. At the same time, the Department has continued to develop its general information program, taking into account the long-term objective of promoting cross cultural understanding between Aborigines and non-Aborigines.

Should it so wish, and to assist the Committee, I would be only too pleased to make available the officers involved in the detailed preparation and implementation of the information program. Like the members of the Committee, I attach considerable importance to the development of general community understanding of the Aboriginal situation. I therefore await with interest the report of the Committee on this particular aspect and of the fringe dwelling situation in general.

Yours sincerely

IAN WILSON

Mr Philip Ruddock, M.P.  
Chairman  
House of Representatives Standing  
Committee on Aboriginal Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600

The attached statement relating to a public awareness program in relation to Aborigines was as follows:

#### A PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM IN RELATION TO ABORIGINES

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has a continuing information program with the following objectives (approved from time to time by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs):

- to improve the situation of Aboriginal Australians by:
    - building community understanding of and support for Government programs affecting Aborigines;
    - providing relevant information to Aborigines in support of development programs;
  - to promote cross cultural understanding and co-operation as a basic underpinning of Aboriginal development.
2. To maintain essential balance in the program, given the need to communicate with different audiences, the Department has been working towards the development of a strategy, over a longer time frame than the annual program, subject to Government decisions in the context of the annual budget. The appropriation for 1982-83 of \$296 000 provides for the first phase of the strategy.
  3. Elements of the strategy would involve:
    - (a) To ensure that in an environment of continuing and developing interest in the situation of Aborigines, the nature of Government programs and the situation of Aborigines are fairly presented and understood, through the provision of factual information.
    - (b) To undertake pilot community relations and attitude change programs, based on the results of research into attitudes.
    - (c) To consolidate the two approaches with the objective of creating an environment for a better appreciation of the contemporary situation of Aborigines and their special place in Australian society, with emphasis in those localities where the interaction of Aborigines and non-Aborigines tends to produce tension, inhibits Aboriginal development and does not give due recognition to positive Aboriginal achievement.
  4. As part of the development of the community awareness program, the Department has commissioned research at two levels:

- (a) continuing public opinion surveys of the attitudes generally of the Australian public towards Aboriginal development; and
  - (b) in-depth analysis in an interview situation of attitudes.
5. The objectives of the research, the first part of which has been completed, are:
- (a) to define the attitudes of the general Australian community towards Aboriginals;
  - (b) to identify the reasons for the formation of those attitudes; and
  - (c) to identify opportunities and methods for achieving changes in those attitudes.
6. This research has been developed against a background of the close connection which appears to exist between attitudes towards Aboriginals, the stereotypes held of them, the perception by Aboriginals of themselves, and race relations generally, with a consequential impact on Aboriginal development. Follow up research will determine target audiences and the most effective media for communicating with these groups.
7. A firm of communications psychologists, Creative Dialogue Pty. Ltd., has completed an in-depth study of Australians' attitudes towards Aboriginals. In addition, two public opinion polls have been completed.
8. Pending detailed analysis of the results of these surveys, and their implication for a community awareness program which will influence and shape future strategies, the Department in 1982-83 has started what might be seen as a lead up to any specific attitude change campaign. The program has been divided into two parts:
- (a) the continuation of basic information activities at the same level as 1981-82 to disseminate information to keep Aboriginals and the wider community informed of current policies and programs in Aboriginal Affairs; and
  - (b) special projects related to particular issues which provide a focal point for the provision of more detailed information concerning the situation of Aboriginal Australians. In this context, discussions have begun with Film Australia on the production of a film on Aboriginals.
9. The in-depth attitude survey was conducted in two country towns and two areas within a major city. In this way, it should be possible to define the generality of attitudes towards Aboriginals and their intensity in particular situations. This, in the view of the Department, has direct relevance to fringe dwelling situations.
10. The results of the two public opinion studies have already been made available separately to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. Officers are available to discuss with the Committee preliminary findings of the in-depth attitudes study.

Department of Aboriginal Affairs  
23 September 1982

