

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3
Inquiry into Reparations for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales
Supplementary Questions

- 1. Is there still a committee within the Department of Aboriginal Affairs NSW that advises/assists with implementation of the NSW Government's response to the *Bringing them Home* report? If not, when was the committee disbanded and what were the reasons?**

Currently there is no Committee as described.

Historical information regarding the former Committee, when it was disbanded or the reasons, is not currently available.

Currently, the Senior Executive Committee on Aboriginal Reform, chaired by the Head of Aboriginal Affairs, is a point of coordination. The Committee has a role in coordination and oversight of *OCHRE* and reports annually to the Secretaries Board. The Committee also takes a broader remit to enable coordination of social, cultural and economic reforms that could impact on Aboriginal communities.

- 2. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs conducted consultation with communities in Lismore, Yass, Narooma, Dubbo, Broken Hill and Sydney in July and August 1998. Can you please provide the results of this consultation?**

Historical information about the consultations in 1998 is not available.

- 3. In 1997 and 1998, following the *Bringing them Home* report, a number of NSW Government agencies acknowledged and apologised to those affected by the policies of separation. What action since that time has been taken by NSW Government agencies in terms of providing acknowledgement and apology to members of the Stolen Generations?**

On 18 June 1997, the NSW Government became the first in the country to offer a formal apology to Aboriginal people for practices and policies that were responsible for the Stolen Generations. The NSW Parliament unanimously passed the Premier's resolution. The NSW Government also issued a Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People in November 1997, establishing the Government's commitment to equality and justice for Aboriginal people.

In recognition of their role in the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, the heads of key NSW Government agencies also apologised for past practices including NSW Police and other NSW Justice Agencies; NSW Department of Juvenile Justice; NSW Department of Community Services; NSW Health; and NSW Department of Ageing and Disability.

In September 2010, an amendment to the NSW Constitution formally recognised Aboriginal people as the first people in New South Wales. The Constitutional amendment acknowledges the Aboriginal people of New South Wales and the lasting contribution of Aboriginal people to the State and its identity.

The amendment introduced the following section into the *Constitution Act 1902* preamble:

1. *Parliament, on behalf of the People of New South Wales, acknowledges and honours the Aboriginal people as the State's first people and nations.*
2. *Parliament, on behalf of the People of New South Wales, recognises that Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians and occupants of the land in New South Wales:*
 - a) *have a spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters; and*
 - b) *have made and continue to make a unique and lasting contribution to the identity of the State.*
3. *Nothing in this section creates any legal right or liability, or gives rise to or affects any civil cause of action, or affects the interpretation of any Act or law in force in New South Wales.*

NSW Government agencies, including the Department of Family and Community Services, Aboriginal Affairs, and NSW Health recognise National Sorry Day on May 26 each year, to mark the anniversary of the *Bringing them Home* report.

4. **In 1997, the NSW Government launched a Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People. Can you please provide a copy of this document and explain how this commitment continues to be implemented?**

The *NSW Government Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People* (Statement of Commitment) provides a blueprint for the Government's activities in the key policy areas affecting Aboriginal people in New South Wales. The NSW Government continues to work with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations to build a genuine and sustainable partnership.

The NSW Government recognises the need to address past practices which have had an adverse impact on Aboriginal people, and many Government programs have been developed to respond to problems that uniquely affect Aboriginal people. The NSW Government submission to this Inquiry outlines policies, programs and arrangements that respond to the recommendations of the *Bringing them Home* report.

A copy of the Statement of Commitment is attached.

5. **In 1998, an interdepartmental working group was established by the NSW Council on the Cost of Government to provide ongoing performance review and improvement in relation to the *NSW Government Programs for Aboriginal People*. Does this working group still exist? What have been the outcomes of the working group?**

The NSW Council on the Cost of Government and the working group no longer exists.

In April 2013 the NSW Government introduced *OCHRE* (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment) in response to a Ministerial Taskforce which undertook extensive consultation with Aboriginal people across New South Wales. *OCHRE* signalled a re-setting of the Government's relationship with Aboriginal communities. *OCHRE* is the whole-of-government plan for Aboriginal affairs.

The delivery of *OCHRE*, the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs, is independently monitored and assessed by the NSW Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs).

6. **What role does the Department of Aboriginal Affairs play in ensuring government workers receive Aboriginal cultural awareness training?**

Aboriginal Affairs does not have a specific role in ensuring Aboriginal cultural awareness training of government workers is undertaken. Each agency is responsible for workforce planning and development.

Through *OCHRE*, the NSW Public Service Commission, in collaboration with Departments and agencies, is focusing on Aboriginal employment and career development to boost both the number of Aboriginal people in employment and their representation in decision-making roles.

As part of this work, the NSW Government's Aboriginal Employment Strategy includes concrete actions to strengthen cultural competence and understanding in the NSW public sector. The Public Service Commission recognises that genuine partnership with Aboriginal public sector employees is key to achieving positive employment outcomes, and consultation with Aboriginal people will be a priority in developing and implementing action items contained in this Strategy.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy has also been driven by the twin objectives of enabling the NSW public service to benefit from greater diversity, as well as opening up more opportunities for economic participation by Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014–17 is a four year strategic plan that focuses on attracting and retaining Aboriginal staff at all levels, as well as supporting career development and progression. The key goal of the Strategy is to achieve a target of 1.8% for all salary bands, and ensure that this target results in Aboriginal people in senior roles, and not concentrated at lower bands as has been the experience in the past.

Building on this, the Premier of NSW has made the doubling of the number of Aboriginal people in senior leadership roles in the government sector a priority for the next ten years (along with seeing women account for 50% of senior leadership roles). The Aboriginal Employment Strategy will be a key element in achieving this goal.

The Strategy is available online at: www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workplace-culture---diversity/equity---diversity/aboriginal-workforce/aboriginal-employment-strategy

Examples of frameworks and strategies for greater cultural competency

NSW Government agencies have in place a range of frameworks and policies designed to develop cultural competency and understanding of issues faced by Aboriginal people and communities in the public sector workforce.

For example, the NSW Health [*Aboriginal Cultural Training Framework: Respecting the Difference*](#) develops cultural competencies in delivering health services to Aboriginal people. To enable better relationships with Aboriginal people, training has been designed to provide all NSW Health staff with an insight into why many Aboriginal people do not comfortably engage with health care providers, and to identify and acknowledge the discrimination, access issues and inequalities experienced by Aboriginal people for many years.

In addition, the Justice Cluster is working to improve the delivery of Aboriginal cultural awareness training. This training will ensure that legal professionals are able to improve the way they work with Aboriginal clients and communities.

This includes programs such as:

- Corrective Service NSW (CSNSW) Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training (ACAT).
- Juvenile Justice's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Respect Framework.
- Cultural awareness training is a priority in the NSW Police Force's Aboriginal Strategic Direction (ASD) 2012-2017. The ASD includes Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices and a Statement of Aboriginal Reconciliation.

7. **Does the Records Access Taskforce still exist? If not, who has taken on the role of record preservation, tracing and assistance with reunion services?**

Record preservation is managed by NSW State Archives in conjunction with the Government Records Repository. Tracing and assistance with reunion services are managed by several non-government organisations including Link-Up NSW which specifically assists Aboriginal people who were separated from their families when they were children.

8. **Is the *Connecting Kin* resource still used? What other resources have been developed to assist in tracing records for people separated from their families?**

Connecting Kin is not used by the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) anymore; this work is now undertaken by several non-government organisations.

Find and Connect website

The national Find and Connect web resource has been established by the Commonwealth Government to provide information for people who were placed in out-of-home care in Australia and their families. The web resource contains historical information about past and present providers of out-of-home care, details of where records are held and how to access them, and links to resources for care leavers.

In addition FACS funds the following organisations to directly support people separated from their families in tracing their ancestral records:

- **Wattle Place – NSW Support Service for Forgotten Australians**
Wattle Place – the NSW Support Service for Forgotten Australians is operated by Relationships Australia. Wattle Place provides counselling and a range of other support for people who are over the age of 25 and were in care in New South Wales between the 1920s and 1990s. Wattle Place provides advice and support on accessing records about a person's time in out-of-home care.
- **Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN)**
CLAN is a national, not-for-profit advocacy organisation for mature-aged care leavers based in Bankstown, NSW. Support services provided by CLAN to its members and other mature aged care leavers who have experienced institutional care include the provision of information, advocacy, telephone support, referrals and assistance with file reading. Other services provided by CLAN include a bi-monthly newsletter, library, museum and a website.
- **Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation**
Link-Up NSW works with Aboriginal people who were separated from their families when they were children. Services provided by Link-Up NSW include family reunions and counselling.

- **Special Search Service**

The Special Search Service is run by The Salvation Army. This service is for people who are over the age of 18 years and were separated from their child or family by actions of the NSW Government.

9. What funding has been provided to Link-Up NSW since 1997?

\$13,161,769.73 funding has been provided to Link-Up NSW since 1997.

Average of \$586,925.50 per year under the former Government (1997/98 – 2010/11)

Average of \$988,962.54 per year under the current Government (2012/12 – 2015/16)

The information provided came from 2 sources –

- Funding from July 1997- June 2007 - FACS Grants Administration System (GAS);
- funding from July 2007-June 2016 - FACS Contracting On-line Management System (COMS)

10. How is the NSW Government working with Aboriginal communities to develop appropriate processes relating to Aboriginal identity?

Issues associated with Aboriginal identity are matters for Aboriginal communities not Government.

11. What support has the NSW Government provided to healing programs for Aboriginal people?

Through *OCHRE*, the NSW Government was the first in Australia to incorporate Healing into its Aboriginal affairs policy. This commitment recognises the continuing trauma and harm caused by the forced removal of Aboriginal people from their families and communities under past government policies. The New South Wales history of trauma and loss has manifested in disadvantage, depression, substance abuse and anti-social behaviour. *OCHRE* reflects the NSW Government commitment to work with Aboriginal communities to advance the dialogue about the trauma and loss experienced by Aboriginal people in New South Wales. It recognises that healing is key to overcoming inter-generational trauma and loss and changing outcomes for future generations.

Healing forums

The Healing Forum - Mapu Yaan Gurri, Mapu Marrunggirr - Healing Our Way - was jointly convened by Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation (the Healing Foundation) in July 2014. More than 200 delegates, representing 68 organisations participated in the Forum to advance the dialogue in New South Wales about trauma and healing and to develop an appropriate role for Government in healing.

The Mapu Yaan Gurri, Mapu Marrunggirr - Healing Our Way Forum Report was released on 5 March 2015. The Report covers the issues and discussion outcomes raised at the Forum.

Key findings of the Forum are that there is no quick fix; trauma has had an impact on Aboriginal people and cultures over many generations; and healing is personal, unique and nuanced and must be allowed to take its own shape over time.

Healing Our Way also highlighted the importance for Aboriginal people to be at the centre of discussions about redress. The NSW Government has committed to continue the dialogue with Aboriginal communities about how government can support healing.

Aboriginal Affairs and the Healing Foundation will work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to develop six regional healing forums in New South Wales during 2016-2017 to inform how government can work in ways to better support healing.

12. What mechanisms has the NSW Government established since 1998 to monitor the implementation of actions outlined in the NSW Government's response to the *Bringing them Home* report?

Each relevant NSW Government agency is responsible for ensuring the implementation of their own commitments within the Government's response to *Bringing them Home*.

In April 2013 the NSW Government introduced *OCHRE* in response to a Ministerial Taskforce which undertook extensive consultation with Aboriginal people across NSW. *OCHRE* signalled a re-setting of the NSW Government's relationship with Aboriginal communities.

OCHRE was developed in response to a strong desire expressed by Aboriginal communities and other key stakeholders for change and the need for Government to build a genuine and sustainable partnership with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations.

Aboriginal Affairs is the peak government body which provides governance to ensure the initiatives outlined in *OCHRE* are carried out across the state.

The delivery of *OCHRE* is independently monitored and assessed by the NSW Deputy Ombudsman (Aboriginal Programs).

13. Is there a Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs?

Aboriginal affairs are assessed at the Social Policy Cabinet Committee.

- 14. Is the CEO Group on Aboriginal Affairs still in place? If not, who ensures a whole of Government approach is being provided to the issues identified in the *Bringing them Home* report?**

The CEO Group on Aboriginal Affairs no longer exists. *OCHRE* is the whole-of-government plan for Aboriginal affairs. The Senior Executive Committee chaired by the General Manager of Aboriginal Affairs, is responsible for overseeing the delivery of *OCHRE* and monitoring progress. Each relevant NSW Government agency is responsible for ensuring the implementation of their own commitments within the Government's response to *Bringing them Home*.

- 15. What role does the Department of Aboriginal Affairs play in monitoring the NSW Government's initiatives and implementation of the recommendations in the *Bringing them Home* report?**

Aboriginal Affairs does not have a specific role to monitor the NSW Government's response to the *Bringing them Home* report.



NEW SOUTH WALES

A collection of seven decorated boomerangs standing upright on a wooden base. They feature intricate traditional Aboriginal patterns and designs in various colors including red, black, white, and green. The boomerangs are set against a background that is yellow at the top and dark green at the bottom.

THE **NSW**
GOVERNMENT
STATEMENT OF
COMMITMENT
TO **ABORIGINAL**
PEOPLE

NOVEMBER 1997




Nancy de Vries

the first Aboriginal person and non-Parliamentarian woman to address State Parliament when the Government officially apologised on behalf of the people of NSW to the Stolen Generation on June 18, 1997.

THE
NSW
GOVERNMENT
STATEMENT
OF
COMMITMENT
TO
ABORIGINAL
PEOPLE
NOVEMBER 1997



Bob Carr
Premier, NSW



Andrew Refshauge
Deputy Premier

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Introduction

This Statement of Commitment sets out the New South Wales Government's determination to lead Australia towards justice and equality for Aboriginal people.

On 14 November 1996, the Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, became the first head of an Australian government to respond to the call from the Governor General, Sir William Deane, for all Parliaments to reaffirm their commitment to reconciliation. The Premier's resolution was passed unanimously.

The NSW Premier was also the first state leader to offer a formal apology to the Aboriginal people for the stolen generations. On 18 June 1997, the Parliament endorsed this action, passing a unanimous resolution apologising unreservedly for the separation of Aboriginal children from their families.

In his speech to Parliament, the Premier said:

"The apology this Parliament extends today is an act of recognition and acceptance, the recognition of deep wrongs, mistaken policies and misguided attitudes and the acceptance of responsibility where it belongs. It brings an end to the denial of truth and history which has always been the great barrier against reconciliation."

In his speech, the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Collins, commented:

"Today the Opposition joins in this apology, this recognition of past injustice to all who suffered at the hands of this policy based on ignorance and paternalism."

In another significant and bipartisan step towards reconciliation, Members of Parliament met on 27 June 1997 with the elected representatives of the Aboriginal people in an historic forum in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

The gathering, which began with a traditional ceremony performed by Aboriginal people, formally acknowledged the Parliament's apology. A similar meeting will be held annually in the NSW Parliament to further reconciliation through the exchange of views between the State's elected representatives and Aboriginal leaders.

With each of these events the NSW Parliament, on behalf of the people, has begun the process of genuine recognition of the truth of Australia's history. The dispossession of Aboriginal people began in Sydney with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788; their disadvantage continues today. It was only five years ago, when the High Court's Mabo decision overturned the doctrine of terra nullius – empty land – that the Aboriginal people's existence as our continent's original inhabitants was recognised in law.

As the Premier said in his speech to Parliament in November 1996: "If there is to be reconciliation with justice, there must be an acknowledgment of a great wrong."

Australians must accept the entirety of the nation's history and the reality that the Australian story is many stories. We can look upon the great achievements of the Australian people with immense pride; we can also acknowledge and accept the suffering inflicted on and endured by Aboriginal people. These co-exist as themes in our history.

Aboriginality is an important strand of Australia's national character and a fundamental part of our heritage. All Australians can feel pride in the survival of Aboriginal people against the odds, in their rich cultural and religious life and in their profound relationship to the land. Our shared history has made Aboriginality an integral part of Australia's identity.

Our destinies are intertwined.

At the threshold of a new century, four years before we celebrate the centenary of Australia's Federation, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians have a great opportunity to work in partnership to shape a just and harmonious future.

In 1901 Aboriginal people were excluded from one of the most important events of Australia's history: Federation. Aboriginal people were not eligible to vote and received no acknowledgment in the Constitution. Today, Australia is once again in the midst of a period of change and renewal. Aboriginal Australians must be true partners in the task of nation building.

In their fight for equality and recognition, Australia's indigenous people have continually sought to participate in the shaping of Government policies that affect them.

Aboriginal people have led the debates which have dramatically altered their position in Australian society, including that which preceded the 1967 constitutional referendum which endorsed the citizenship rights of Aboriginal people.

The NSW Government recognises Aboriginal people's leadership and honours their resilience. In the face of earlier policies that sought to eliminate them, not only have Aboriginal people survived, they have emerged as a strong and vibrant community enriching the life of the whole nation.

The Government recognises the desire of Aboriginal people to enjoy the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as all Australians and, at the same time, recognises their unique position as Australia's indigenous people.

With this Statement, the NSW Government accepts the challenge to build a partnership based on justice, equality and respect.

It builds on the many landmark inquiries and decisions in Aboriginal affairs in recent years. These include: the 1967 referendum, the NSW *Land Rights Act*, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the establishment of the reconciliation process, the Council of Australian Governments' *National Commitment to Improved Services*, the High Court's *Mabo* decision and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*.

While recognising the resilience and achievement of Aboriginal Australians, the Government acknowledges the extent of disadvantage across all social and economic indicators.

Unemployment among Aboriginal people is at 46 per cent compared to eight per cent for the general population.

Aboriginal people have twice the proportion of low birth weight babies, three times the level of inadequate housing and less than half the level of post-secondary qualifications.

Life expectancy for Aboriginal men is 54 years compared to 73 for non-Aboriginal men. For Aboriginal women, it is 65 years compared to 79 for other Australian women.

Although they represent less than two per cent of the population, Aboriginal people make up 32 per cent of youth in custody and 14 per cent of adults in custody.

The Government is committed to working with Aboriginal people to redress this disadvantage.

This Statement of Commitment does not perpetuate the welfare mentality that has reduced the effectiveness of many Government programs in the past and hindered Aboriginal people's aspirations for self determination. Rather, it contains important and workable social justice initiatives based on a

foundation of true partnership with Aboriginal people.

The Government's commitment to partnership is demonstrated by the creation of an Aboriginal Reference Group which has formal links to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. This is the first and only advisory group of its type in Australia and has given Aboriginal people a voice in Government.

In addition to the Reference Group, the Government is developing formal partnership arrangements with Aboriginal people in each of the critical policy areas, including health, education and the criminal justice system.

The Government also recognises the need to appoint more Aboriginal people to senior positions within the public sector, in Government departments and on boards, committees and advisory councils.

The only viable solution to the complex and inter-related problems experienced in the Aboriginal community is for Government agencies to adopt an integrated approach.

The best school cannot educate a sick child. The health of Aboriginal children cannot be improved while they live in inadequate housing. A family without a job cannot hope to improve its standard of living.

The Premier's support for advancing the interests of Aboriginal people has been reflected in an agreement by the chief executive officers of all New South Wales Government agencies to renew their commitment to reconciliation and take tangible steps towards this goal.

The Government's partnership approach requires all departments and agencies to work with Aboriginal communities to ensure their programs, policies and services are relevant and accessible to Aboriginal people. The Government recognises the right of

Aboriginal people to negotiate and participate in decisions that affect them.

Reconciliation will not be achieved through Government action alone. Ultimately, it is in the hands of the people, especially the generations who will form the Australia of the 21st century. There are many signs that Australians do believe in the value and importance of reconciliation. While Australia may only be a short way along this path, as the Premier said in Parliament in November 1996, there are "a thousand points of light" across New South Wales.

This Statement of Commitment provides a foundation for moving forward. Aboriginal people have played an important role in its drafting and will continue to be involved in its implementation and evaluation.

There are still Aboriginal communities in New South Wales which do not have access to basic services and infrastructure; where water and sewerage services are deficient and in some cases non-existent; where families are living in inadequate, overcrowded housing and where children do not have access to recreational facilities.

The Government is committed to addressing the infrastructure needs of Aboriginal communities. By building on the lessons of the Environmental Health Infrastructure Project and consulting with Aboriginal people, the Government will develop solutions to infrastructure needs.

Infrastructure, however, cannot be viewed in isolation; the sustainability and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities depend on an approach which acknowledges the importance of land and culture and the necessity of economic and social independence.

This Statement of Commitment sets out the Government's activities in the key policy areas affecting Aboriginal people.

The Government:

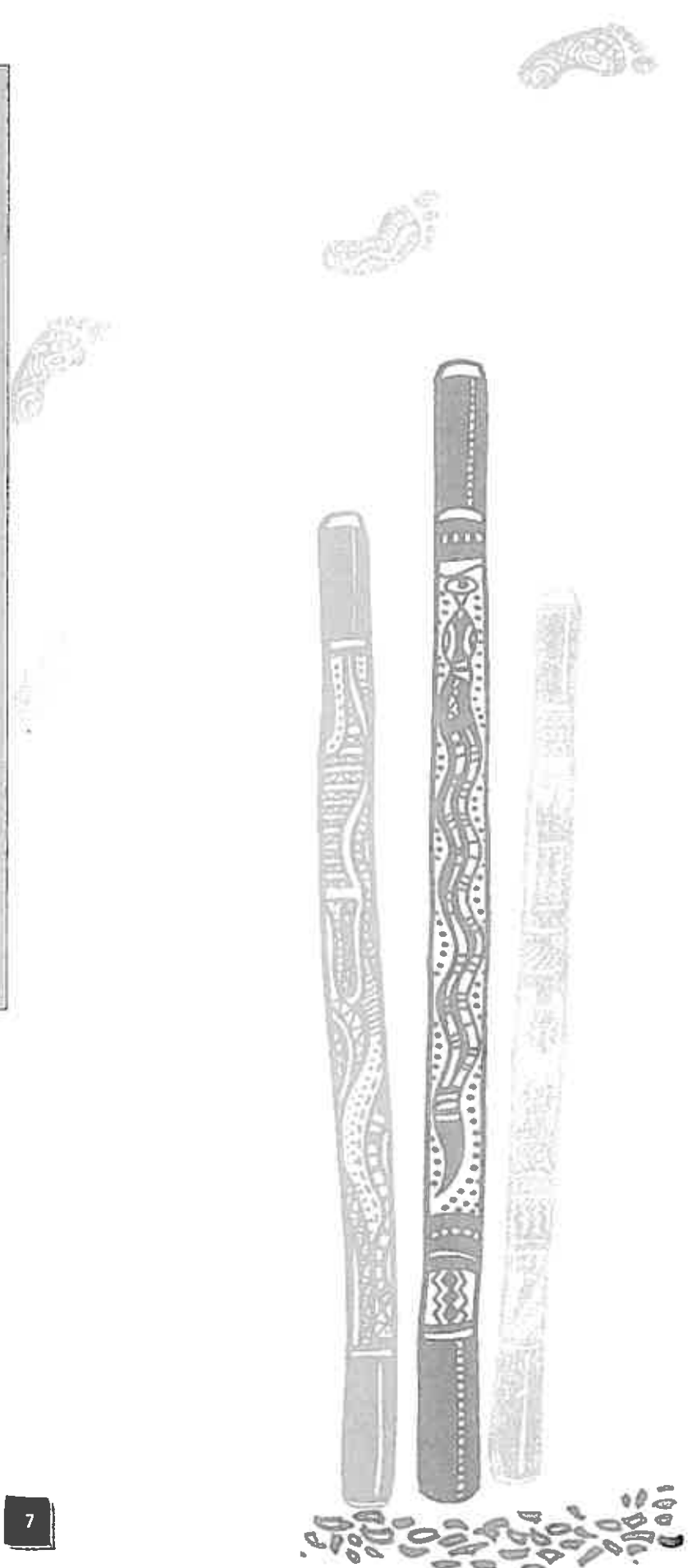
- respects Aboriginal people's relationship to the land, acknowledging its spiritual, economic and cultural importance, and continues to advocate for a fair and just solution to the issues raised by the *Wik* decision. The first successful claim under native title legislation was in New South Wales, with the Dunghutti people at Crescent Head;
- acknowledges the importance of Aboriginal cultural heritage and is working towards a better system for the management and protection of this heritage;
- recognises that economic independence is a critical step on the path to self determination and supports the development and expansion of Aboriginal private enterprise;
- accepts that improving the educational success of Aboriginal students is fundamental to creating a better future for the Aboriginal community and recognises the value of ensuring all students learn about Australia's Aboriginal heritage;
- recognises the poor housing conditions experienced by many Aboriginal families and seeks to address the backlog of housing needs and improve links between housing and other services;
- acknowledges the continuing over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system and gives renewed priority to reducing the number of Aboriginal people in custody;
- recognises the poor health status of Aboriginal people and has formed a formal partnership agreement which recognises that Aboriginal health is not limited to the physical wellbeing of the individual but relates to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community;
- acknowledges the social pressures on Aboriginal communities and is working towards better services for Aboriginal children and families and a greater level of trust between the Government and Aboriginal communities;
- acknowledges the impact of the stolen generations and is consulting Aboriginal people and organisations about the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Inquiry;
- recognises the richness and diversity of Aboriginal music, dance, theatre and visual arts and is increasing support for Aboriginal artistic and cultural endeavours.

This Statement of Commitment is an expression of goodwill. It is also a set of concrete actions the Government will take in partnership with Aboriginal people. The history of Aboriginal people's dispossession has been acknowledged and accepted. We now have a blueprint for the future, a plan for a better society. This is a living document; its goals will be reviewed and updated; its objectives, carefully monitored.

This Statement is not an end in itself but a blueprint for action, a foundation for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians to work together towards the vision of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation which was endorsed by the NSW Parliament last year: "A united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all."

The Government's commitment to the reconciliation process

The Government's commitment to the reconciliation process is demonstrated by its support for the NSW State Reconciliation Committee, formally launched by the Governor on 7 June 1997. Four senior Government officials are members of this Committee, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary for Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Colin Markham MP. In recognition of the Reconciliation Committee's vital work raising community awareness and promoting the process of reconciliation, the Government has funded an executive officer position for a period of twelve months to provide support for the Committee. All Chief Executive Officers of all State agencies and departments recently endorsed a formal motion supporting the principles of reconciliation and the vision statement of the Reconciliation Committee. Over the next six months all CEOs will report to the Premier on progress across the public sector in advancing reconciliation.



The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families is a defining moment in the reconciliation process. The Commission heard the stories of more than 535 Aboriginal people who were affected by Government policies resulting in the separation of Aboriginal families and chronicled in its report how the impact of these policies reverberates today.

Following the report's release, the Premier led a debate in the Legislative Assembly on 18 June 1997 in which the New South Wales Parliament became the first Parliament to apologise for the Government's past acts in removing children from their families. This followed the Premier's personal apology in November 1996.

Before commencing the debate, Mr Carr invited Ms Nancy de Vries, a member of the stolen generations, to address the New South Wales Parliament. Ms de Vries became the first Aboriginal woman to address the NSW Parliament as she told her story of being taken away from her mother at 14 months when her 'journey as a lonely, homeless, unloved child began'.

In his speech the Premier recognised that these policies and actions 'inflicted and continue to inflict grief and suffering upon Aboriginal families and communities' and committed the Government to examine the recommendations of the report with care.

The Premier also announced a package of measures as the first stage in the New South Wales Government response to the Inquiry. These included establishing a one year moratorium on the destruction of records relevant to the separation of Aboriginal families, a grant of \$100,000 to Link-Up for counselling and reunion services and the establishment of a working group chaired by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to develop a Strategy for improved access to relevant records in New South Wales.

The Government is currently consulting Aboriginal people and organisations about the report.



Premier Bob Carr with the Danooch Dancers at a Parliamentary Reception, following the unanimous motion in support of Reconciliation on November 14, 1996.

Improving infrastructure services

Improving infrastructure services

Aboriginal communities in New South Wales experience significantly lower living standards than those experienced by non-Aboriginal communities.¹ This is

The best chance the Government has of supporting healthy Aboriginal-controlled organisations, working with them to deliver services, and listening to what communities have to say.

Dr. Andrew Refshauge, Deputy Premier,
Minister for Health and
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,
Legislative Assembly, 18 June 1997.

due to a range of factors such as a lack of clarity between governments about responsibility for services, and the lack of planning associated with providing services to Aboriginal communities. Some Aboriginal people are still living

in communities which have inadequate housing, unreliable water supplies and a poor sewerage system.

A top priority for the Government is to redress the years of neglect of Aboriginal communities where basic services and infrastructure are either absent or in disrepair. The Government is committed to addressing infrastructure in Aboriginal communities. An example of this commitment is the Environmental Health Infrastructure Project. The Government will use the success of this project, and draw upon lessons learnt through it, to consult with peak Aboriginal representative groups in order to develop appropriate methods to meet infrastructure needs.

Extending the Environmental Health Infrastructure project

Three communities, Muli Muli, Dareton and Wilcannia are now receiving major capital project investment in housing, water, sewerage, roads and health under the Environmental Health Infrastructure Project. These

are ground breaking initiatives which bring together, for the first time, all key government agencies and the Aboriginal communities and Land Councils under a common structure and with pooled funds, to work together to ensure that Aboriginal communities receive the necessary infrastructure. Consistent with the Government's goal to assist Aboriginal communities and regions to become self-sufficient and sustainable, the initiative has a strong emphasis on training local Aboriginal people in management and trade skills. The next stage of the program involves Goodooga, Walgett and Bourke.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs will report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs by June 1998 about progress in the Environmental Health Infrastructure project and on ways to improve the provision of essential services to Aboriginal communities.

Health cannot be driven into a community on the back of a truck... the process of designing, building and maintaining a healthy living environment is fundamentally dependent on our choices, our practices and the control of our lives. Support, advice, resources, encouragement and assistance from governments and the broader community is required and welcome. But ultimately it is down to us, if the hard yards are to be sustained over time. The right to self-determination is the foundation stone. It is justified in both principle and practicality.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social
Justice Commissioner, Fourth Annual Report,
1996, p12

¹The Department of Land and Water Conservation estimates that of the approximately 10,000 Aboriginal people living in communities remote from country towns as many as 7,000 people in approximately 200 communities are without country town water supply and sewerage facilities.



The Government's commitment to improving housing outcomes

A new Aboriginal Housing Agency

The New South Wales Government's commitment to fostering an effective partnership with Aboriginal people and improved basic services is demonstrated by its intention to establish a new Aboriginal Housing Agency, subject to negotiation with the Commonwealth about its willingness to pool all housing funds in this agency. This initiative was strongly supported in extensive consultations with the Aboriginal community undertaken by the Aboriginal Housing Development Committee in 1996.

The creation of the agency will result in major improvements in housing services for Aboriginal people. A single State agency with an Aboriginal board will administer housing programs in New South Wales. Aboriginal housing organisations will receive greater support and training and will be more accountable for the quality of their services. An Aboriginal Housing Agency will bring a new focus on meeting the significant housing needs in the Aboriginal community.

The New South Wales Government has embarked on negotiations with the Commonwealth Government for a Bilateral Agreement on Aboriginal Housing. With the support of ATSIC, New South Wales hopes the Agreement will bring together Aboriginal housing and housing related infrastructure programs under the Aboriginal Housing Agency and eliminate duplication and overlap between programs and administrators. Under this proposal, ATSIC will remain a key influence in setting strategic directions for Aboriginal housing.

Trialing innovative housing programs

The Government is committed to working with Aboriginal people to develop innovative and practical solutions to improve housing outcomes.

The Aboriginal Housing Development Committee will work together with the Aboriginal Environmental Health Infrastructure Forum on two pilot projects to test an upgrading and maintenance strategy for community based housing, which focuses on the health, safety and functioning of houses. If successful, the methodology may be applied more broadly and in conjunction with other initiatives. The Minister for Housing will report on these pilot programs to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and whether they should be extended at the end of 1998.

A number of demonstration projects will commence in 1998/99 to trial a new way of meeting communities' housing needs. This trial will identify, in selected communities, ways to improve housing outcomes. Central to the trial will be the involvement of skilled local trades people for repair and maintenance and the involvement of and the provision of training to local housing organisations. The Minister for Housing will report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs the progress of these demonstration projects at the end of 1998.

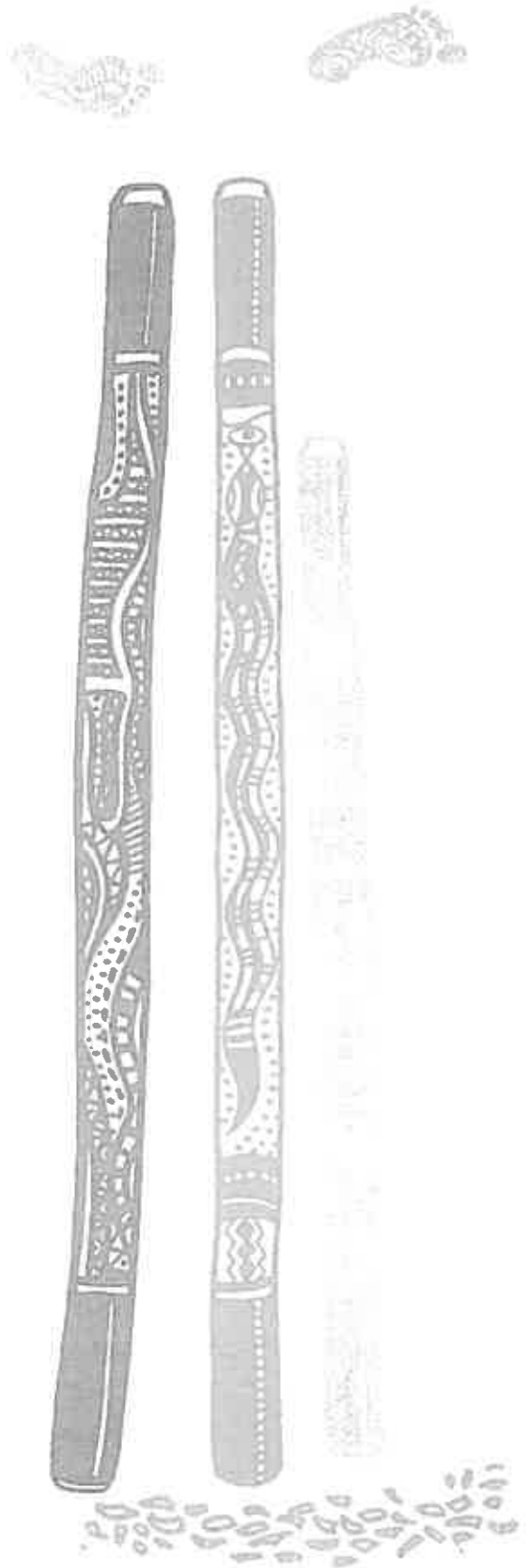
At the same time, the Government will continue to emphasise that mainstream housing must be allocated equitably, with Aboriginal people continuing to have access on the basis of need to Department of Housing and Community Housing dwellings. The Department of Housing will review mainstream housing procedures to ensure cultural issues are considered when housing is being allocated to Aboriginal people and to improve monitoring of Aboriginal people's access to mainstream services.

In addition, the allocation of funding under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement for Aboriginal Housing in New South Wales has increased from \$18 million in 1993/94 to \$30 million in 1997/98.

The Government, in consultation with the Aboriginal Housing Development Committee, is developing an innovative tenure option for Aboriginal people which would achieve benefits similar to home ownership, while at the same time ensuring that the housing is retained for the long term benefit of the community.

Working with Local Government

Local governments and shires also deliver key infrastructure services to Aboriginal communities. The Department of Local Government is working in partnership with the Local Government and Shires Association of New South Wales to implement the National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and develop local agreements between councils and Aboriginal communities about infrastructure needs and maintenance, as well as the provision of other council services. The ten councils involved are Armidale, Brewarrina, Greater Taree, Narromine, Blacktown, Cowra, Guyra, Bourke, Eurobodalla and Kempsey. The first agreement is anticipated to be signed by 30 June 1998, and the Minister for Local Government will report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs on these programs as appropriate.



The Government's commitment to improving health outcomes

Aboriginal people continue to face reduced opportunities because of their poor health status. This is shown by an infant mortality rate three times higher than that for other Australians, and a lower life expectancy for both Aboriginal men and women. Aboriginal people suffer from high rates of diabetes, circulatory diseases, ear diseases, eye diseases, cancer and physical injuries. Mental health is also an area of concern.

Specific strategies are needed to deal with these medical problems. At the same time, mainstream services must become more responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, including those who are older or have a disability. The Government is committed to ensuring that all departments are held accountable for ensuring equity of access by Aboriginal people to mainstream programs.

The Aboriginal Health Partnership

The NSW Aboriginal Health Resource Cooperative (AHRC) was established following the Brereton Report (NSW Aboriginal Task Force on Aboriginal Health 1992/3) which recognised that Aboriginal community control is crucial to achieving a better standard of health care for Aboriginal people.

In June 1995 the AHRC signed a Partnership Agreement with the NSW Health Department. A revised agreement was signed by the Minister for Health and the Chief Executive Officer of the AHRC in January 1997.

The Partnership's guiding principles are: 'Aboriginal self-determination, a partnership of approach and intersectoral collaboration'. The agreement recognises the AHRC and the NSW Government as partners in the task of improving Aboriginal health, and that the role of the Partnership is to enhance and support Aboriginal community control in health service delivery.

The primary function of the Partnership is to provide the NSW Minister for Health with an agreed position with regard to Aboriginal health policy, strategic planning and broad resource allocation issues.


The Partnership Agreement recognises that health is not limited to the physical well being of the individual, but relates to the social, emotional and cultural well being of the whole Aboriginal community.

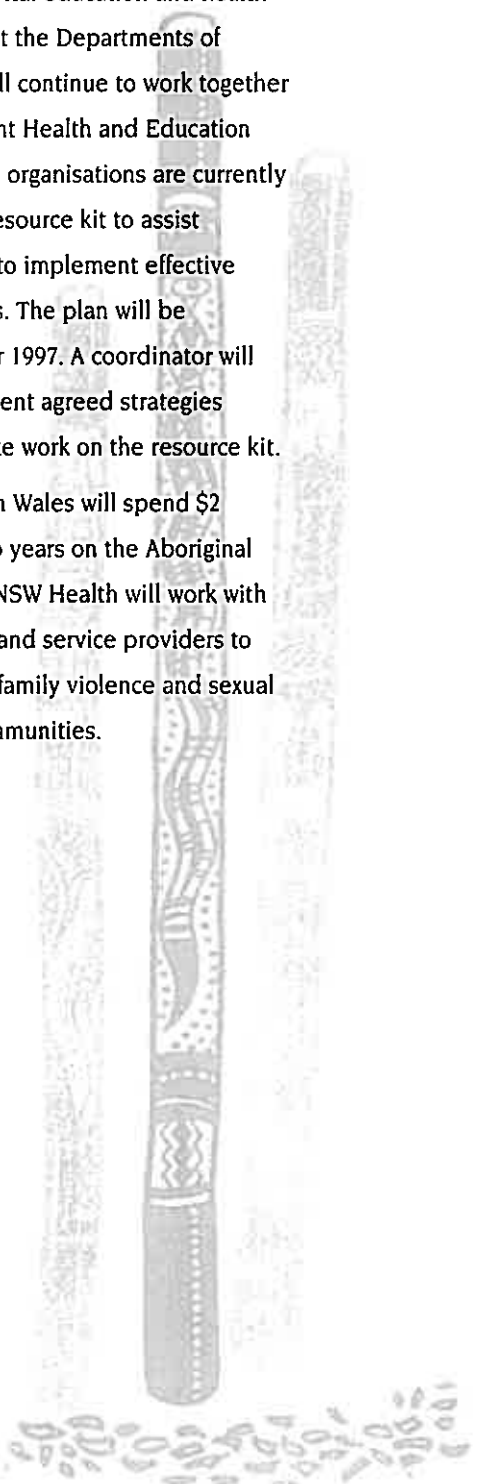
The Partnership provides the framework under which the Government is moving to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people. The Partnership recognises the importance of Aboriginal community involvement in the provision of health services and the need for the mainstream health system to be equitable and accessible to Aboriginal people. To be effective, Aboriginal health services must be the subject of meaningful consultation with Aboriginal communities.

Key health programs and policies

A number of key health programs and strategies are being developed and implemented through the Partnership.

- **Improving performance standards** NSW Health is working with Aboriginal community controlled medical services, the Commonwealth, and other States to set performance indicators by the end of 1997 to measure whether governments are successfully improving Aboriginal people's health. NSW Health in partnership with the AHRC and local communities is developing goals and targets in areas such as immunisation rates, infant mortality, incidence of respiratory disease, and risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

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- **An Aboriginal mental health strategy** An Aboriginal mental health strategy, developed with the Aboriginal Health Partnership, was released in October 1997. This strategy will focus on providing services which take into account special historical, cultural, spiritual, and social factors which determine the health of Aboriginal people. This strategy requires the appointment of Aboriginal health workers in each mental health team throughout the State and the assurance that any Aboriginal person who comes into contact with the mental health system will be supported by an Aboriginal health worker. Comprehensive training on the effect of the separation of families on Aboriginal mental health is an important part of this policy.
 - **The Aboriginal Health Information strategy** The Government is committed to ensuring that mainstream health services are accessible and appropriate for Aboriginal people. However, Government has little information on Aboriginal people's use of hospital and medical services and has therefore developed an Aboriginal Health Information Strategy in partnership with the Aboriginal Health Resource Cooperative, to work on six information collection projects over the next two years to highlight which services Aboriginal people use and where improvements can be made. The first report will be published by June 1998.

- **Dealing with hearing problems** Middle ear disease and associated hearing loss is a critical problem facing Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal children experience middle ear disease which can lead to hearing health problems and prevent Aboriginal children from achieving their full potential in education and employment. The Government recognises that this is a vital education and health issue and will ensure that the Departments of Education and Health will continue to work together on this issue. Government Health and Education agencies and community organisations are currently developing a plan and resource kit to assist Aboriginal communities to implement effective local ear health solutions. The plan will be completed by December 1997. A coordinator will be appointed to implement agreed strategies during 1998 and complete work on the resource kit.
 - **Family health** New South Wales will spend \$2 million over the next two years on the Aboriginal Family Health Strategy. NSW Health will work with Aboriginal communities and service providers to reduce the incidence of family violence and sexual assault in Aboriginal communities.
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The Government's commitment to improving family and community support services

Improving the services provided by the Department of Community Services

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring services provided by the Department of Community Services are tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal people and communities. The Government recognises the need to increase the level of trust and understanding between the Department and Aboriginal communities.

An important step to achieve this goal is the creation by the end of 1997 of a specialised Aboriginal Policy Group within the Director-General's Unit of the Department of Community Services. This will be followed by the release, by June 1998, of a new Aboriginal Policy Framework. The Policy Framework will underpin all the Department's work in providing services and support to Aboriginal people, and will build on the consultation undertaken with Aboriginal people and communities arising from the discussion paper, *A New Generation of Services for Aboriginal People*.

In addition to these strategies, the Department of Community Services has begun to strengthen the number of Aboriginal field officer positions and has developed a cross-cultural training curriculum which will be available to all staff.

INTENSIVE FAMILY BASED SERVICES – CASINO TRIAL

The Intensive Family Based Service provides intensive, home based support for families who are in crisis and have a child at risk of placement away from the immediate family or when a child who has been in out-of-home care returns home.

The program focuses on helping parents acquire the skills necessary to create a safe home environment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caseworkers are available 24 hours a day and intervention is individually designed to meet the needs of each family.

Training professionals working with Aboriginal families and communities

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* recommended that all professionals who work with Aboriginal children, families and communities receive in-service training about the history and effect of forcible removal. The Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs will seek advice from the Aboriginal Reference Group on a rolling program of Aboriginal cultural awareness training for all Government employees who are in regular contact with Aboriginal clients. Major departments, such as the Departments of Health and School Education for example, have strategies in place but the Government will examine the feasibility of extending this training.

Improving child protection and adoption practices

The Government is committed to ensuring that child protection practices are culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal people. Currently, Aboriginal children continue to be separated from their parents more than other children. This remains a significant concern to the Government, which is developing strategies to ensure that where intervention becomes necessary, Aboriginal children are placed in their communities within their kinship groups wherever possible.

The Government has undertaken wide-ranging consultation with Aboriginal people about child protection and adoption practices. Amendments to the *Children (Care and Protection) Act 1987* are being considered which will make sure the legislation is sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal communities.

In July 1997 the NSW Law Reform Commission released its Review of the *Adoption of Children Act 1965* and its Research Report evaluating the application of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. This Principle requires that where Aboriginal children are to be placed in substitute care, they should be placed within their own culture and community where possible, such as the child's extended family or local Aboriginal community. The Report proposes amendments to the adoption legislation to ensure it reflects the needs to Aboriginal people and adheres to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. The Government is considering the recommendations of these two reports and will respond by 1998.

The Department of Community Services will continue to work closely with Aboriginal families and communities to help ensure that Aboriginal children and young people in voluntary and court ordered out-of-home care arrangements are placed within their extended family and communities. The Government's commitment in this area is demonstrated by the gradual increase in the number of Aboriginal children placed in out-of-home care arrangements with Aboriginal carers. On 30 June 1997, 83 per cent of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care placements were placed with Aboriginal carers, an increase of 6 per cent over 30 June 1992 when (including those in residential facilities) 77 per cent of Aboriginal children were placed with Aboriginal carers.

Reforming child care arrangements

The Government sees value in reforming the current complicated arrangements in the funding of Aboriginal child care and preschools. There may be an opportunity to 'pool' Commonwealth and State funds in this area, consistent with the principles of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Commitment


to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders and following the example of pooled funding currently being negotiated in housing. The Minister for Community Services will consult with Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and the Aboriginal Reference Group and report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs about options for reform in this area by December 1998.

The Government will also continue to strive to find ways to recognise Aboriginal community values and experience in important areas such as child care, by adopting a flexible approach to the application of standards and by providing training opportunities. The Government recognises that those people in Aboriginal communities who provide the most suitable and appropriate child care may not have the required qualifications under the child care service regulations. The Minister for Community Services may grant exemptions to this requirement to people with suitable experience in child care, especially in rural or remote areas where access to training is limited. New South Wales also funds 38 child care centres in areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are most likely to need child care. The Minister for Community Services will report on trends in this area by December 1998.

The Department of Sport and Recreation is assisting the Wananbiri Preschool to upgrade its existing child care facilities. The Minister for Community Services will investigate whether Murrawina Preschool at Redfern can be located to better premises. Noting the lack of intergovernmental coordination to date on this issue, the Minister will report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs on the feasibility of a joint Commonwealth-State plan to revitalise and relocate Murrawina to a better site by August 1998.



Improving ageing and disability services



The Government's commitment to access and equity for older Aboriginal people and those Aboriginal people with a disability was reaffirmed in the Ageing and Disability Department's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Access and Equity Strategy*, launched in July 1997. The strategy recognises the need for ageing and disability policies and programs to acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to ensure that programs are culturally appropriate, effective, efficient and accountable.

The key objectives of the strategy are:

- to eliminate barriers of access to disability and ageing services;
- to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, eligible for community programs, receive a fair share of these resources;
- to provide information in a culturally appropriate manner;
- to ensure that ageing and disability community programs and services are flexible in service delivery and are culturally appropriate;
- to foster participation by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in all levels of planning, policy development and evaluation of services; and
- to be accountable for improved performance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander equity.

The Government has consulted Aboriginal communities throughout NSW to ensure planning for disability services reflects the concerns and needs of Aboriginal people.

The Ageing and Disability Department will release a consultation report and issues paper by June 1998, discussing options for how Health and Community Care services could be better tailored to meet the

needs of Aboriginal people. This will draw upon the extensive consultation the Department has conducted with Aboriginal people and communities including frail, older Aboriginal people, people with a disability, their carers, Aboriginal service providers and advice from the New South Wales Aboriginal HACC Forum, which will produce a report on future options for the management of services to Aboriginal people under the HACC program by February 1998.

The Government is considering the report by Ted Smeaton commissioned by the Ageing and Disability Department from the Disability Services Aboriginal Corporation: *Family Dreamings – Support Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with Disabilities*.

Creating opportunities for young people

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in New South Wales is a young population with very few older members in contrast to the non-Aboriginal population. On 30 June 1994 only 12 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were aged over 45 years and 40 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were under the age of 15.

Aboriginal young people, like all young Australians, are trying to find a place and an identity in society and struggling to see their hopes reflected in the aspirations of the wider Australian community. It is the Government's responsibility to provide opportunities for young Aboriginal people to have their say about the shape of services that affect them.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs will work with the Aboriginal Reference Group and the Office of Children and Young People to develop an Aboriginal Youth Strategy by December 1998. The first stage will involve holding a series of youth advisory forums to make sure that Aboriginal young people living in

urban and rural areas can have their say.

An important issue for Aboriginal young people is equitable access to drug and alcohol services. The Minister for Health will report by December 1998 to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs on whether young Aboriginal people need their own drug and alcohol rehabilitation service, possibly located in Redfern.

Youth community programs, such as the successful basketball competition in the inner Sydney area, are important in providing recreational opportunities for young people and will be used wherever possible. This model is now being trialed at Nowra, Wagga Wagga, Cabramatta/Villawood and Bathurst. The Department of Sport and Recreation will investigate by January 1998 whether further programs could build on this model.

In addition, the Government has implemented specific programs to help young Aboriginal people with sporting talent to reach their full potential and the Department of Sport and Recreation is developing a Far West Academy of Sport in Cobar, based at Cobar High School.

Sporting mentors help improve the health of young people, encouraging positive activities and community spirit. The Department of Sport and Recreation has established a role model program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, where a well known Aboriginal athlete makes a presentation followed by a 'come and try' activity. Strategies to increase the physical activity of various groups, including Aboriginal people, are being developed through the Premier's Physical Activity Task Force. A strategic plan for the promotion of physical activity is proposed to be released by December 1997.

Recognising the important role of Aboriginal women

The Government recognises the important role Aboriginal women play in their communities, as leaders, in supporting and caring for their families and as counsellors. It acknowledges how Aboriginal women have been affected by the past policies of separation. The Government is committed to ensuring there are opportunities for women to have a real say about the future of their communities.

Two new Aboriginal representatives will be appointed to the Premier's Council for Women by December 1997. This will help ensure Aboriginal women's interests continue to be considered by the highest levels of Government.

The Department for Women and the Department for Aboriginal Affairs will work together with the Aboriginal Reference Group and the Premier's Council for Women to develop strategies to assist and support Aboriginal women, who are often the cornerstone of the Aboriginal family and community. This will include recognising the vital role played by Aboriginal women elders within their communities and identifying ways to support women's networks. The Department for Women and the Department for Aboriginal Affairs will report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs on these strategies by June 1998.

Under the 1997/98 Women's Grants Program, the Department for Women has provided grants totalling \$215,000 to promote reconciliation and to assist Aboriginal women in a range of areas. These grants include \$17,000 to the Ngorabul Elders Aboriginal Corporation at Glenn Innes for a regional women's summit on culture and language and \$65,000 for a series of health workshops for Aboriginal women to be held by Walgett Medical Service.

The Government's commitment to improving education and training outcomes for Aboriginal students

The Government is working in partnership with Aboriginal communities through the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) Inc to ensure education and training provides pathways to lifelong learning and employment opportunities. The Government recognises the AECG as the peak group for negotiation with Aboriginal people on these issues.

The NSW Charter for Equity in Education and Training, underpins the Government's approach to education and training. The NSW Department of School Education Aboriginal Education Policy clearly articulates the Government's commitment to social justice and equity and to the principles of partnership and self-determination.

The public schools of New South Wales have a key responsibility to improve the educational success of Aboriginal students. In particular, the Government will concentrate on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of Aboriginal students (particularly early in their school life) and on creating a supportive learning environment.

Essential to the provision of high quality education are committed staff, principals and teachers, and other educationalists, who understand Aboriginal Australia. Also vital is the support of the community in the education process. Aboriginal teachers and para-professionals provide positive role models for Aboriginal students and should be employed wherever possible.

The Government is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal students experience education and training that is free from prejudice and racism and provides them with the skills and knowledge they need to participate fully in Australian society. Aboriginal students have a right to expect an education which acknowledges and respects their

unique cultural identity. At the same time, all students should be educated about Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary issues.

It is part of the core business of this government to provide a variety of pathways for Aboriginal people for further vocational education and training to enhance their opportunities for employment. The Government will support genuine employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in all sectors of the community and economy.

Aboriginal Education Policy

The NSW Department of School Education Aboriginal Education Policy was launched by the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs in February 1996. The policy aims to promote the educational achievement of Aboriginal students while educating all students about Aboriginal Australia. It has been developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.

The policy statement sets out a comprehensive set of outcomes to guide all Department of School Education (DSE) staff, students and their communities in achieving the overall goals for Aboriginal education. To ensure the successful implementation of the policy, schools are required to report annually on progress made towards achieving these goals.

Broadly, the goals of the policy are to ensure that:

- school curriculum, teaching and assessment programs are challenging and culturally appropriate;
- schools provide supportive learning environments;
- Aboriginal communities and the Department of School Education become partners in the whole education process; and

- Department of School Education staff and students have knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal Australia.

A number of specific programs, such as literacy initiatives, have been developed as a result of this policy, some of which are set out in this statement.

School programs and strategies

- **Implementing the Aboriginal Education policy** All school principals, staff representatives and school communities will be trained in the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Policy. Over the next four years more than 2,220 public schools will participate in a comprehensive training program. By 2000 all schools will understand their responsibilities under the policy and be required to report annually about their achievements. This report will form the basis of an annual report to the Minister and part of the DSE annual report to Parliament.

- **Creating a learning environment which is responsive to Aboriginal student needs**
The Government is introducing comprehensive monitoring and accountability requirements for schools on their achievements in Aboriginal education. This includes reporting on the achievements of Aboriginal students through the basic skills test, reporting on the implementation of the Aboriginal programs and strategies, and collecting data about parental and student satisfaction.

- **Increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers and para-professionals** The Government is seeking to attract, employ and retain more Aboriginal teachers and will employ up to 30 new Aboriginal classroom teachers during the 1997 and 1998 school years. The Government currently employs 277 Aboriginal teachers.


In 1998, the Government will employ at least an additional 70 Aboriginal Education Assistants to work in schools and with local Aboriginal communities. The Government currently employs 225 Aboriginal Education Assistants.

The Government employs a number of non-teaching staff who provide additional teaching support, assistance in the development of curriculum resources, and links with the community. The Government is reviewing, in consultation with the AECG and local Aboriginal communities, the roles of Aboriginal Education Assistants, Aboriginal community liaison officers and education officers, Aboriginal community support, to ensure that the needs of Aboriginal students are met. The review will be completed by 30 June 1998.

- **Improving literacy and numeracy standards** The 82 Aboriginal Early Childhood Services in New South Wales have learning programs tailored to meet Aboriginal children's needs by focusing on language and literacy programs. Most of these services are community based and many have Aboriginal parent and community management. In areas where there are no Aboriginal preschools, a number of primary schools are introducing a pilot program to help students take part in literacy programs. There are currently eight Department of School Education preschools serving Aboriginal communities, with a further preschool to be opened next year.

Special help, such as HSC after hours coaching, is being given to Aboriginal students who may be experiencing learning difficulties in traditional school environments. In 1997 and 1998, 45 schools will participate in this program.

In 1996, the Aboriginal Early Language Development Program helped 825 Aboriginal students in 23 schools





with English language skills. Through these programs, Aboriginal Education Resource teachers and Aboriginal Education Assistants help Aboriginal students develop effective language, literacy and numeracy skills in the early years of schooling.

The Reading Recovery program provides one-on-one teaching help to students in Year 1 experiencing reading difficulties. While the program is available to students of all backgrounds, 43.6 per cent of Year 1 Aboriginal students participated in these programs, where available, during 1996.

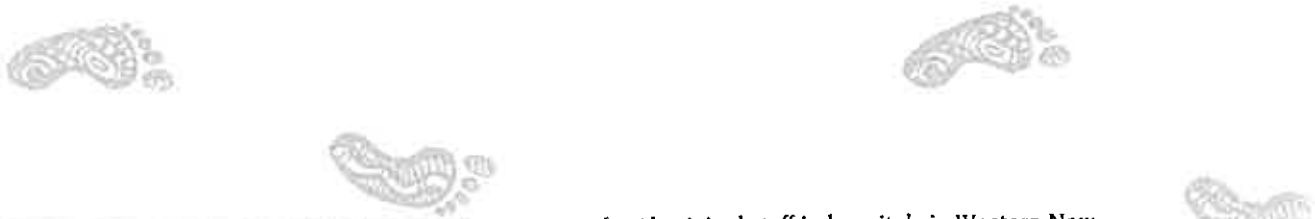
Special grants of up to \$15,000 (\$2.6 million in 1997) are being provided to schools with more than 10 Aboriginal students. These grants are used to fund literacy and numeracy and other programs designed to assist Aboriginal students.

- **Children with learning disorders** The Minister for Education will report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs by December 1998 on the adequacy of diagnostic services for Aboriginal children to ensure that every feasible effort is made to help Aboriginal children with difficult behaviour or learning disorders to stay at school.
- **Improving knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal Australia through curriculum reform** New South Wales school curricula now include substantial mandatory components of education about Aboriginal Australia. These will be made more prominent in the new mandatory Australian history and Australian geography syllabuses in years 7 to 10 and in the new K-6 English through the Aboriginal literature component. In addition, more in-depth learning opportunities are provided in the Aboriginal Studies Syllabus (Years 7 to 10) and the 2 unit Aboriginal Studies (Years 11 to 12) course.



The Board of Studies is currently working to incorporate a significant Aboriginal perspective within the new K-6 Human Society and its Environment syllabus, due for publication in 1999.

- **Supporting Aboriginal languages** Language is an important component of cultural heritage and identity. Schools are working to maintain, renew and revive Aboriginal languages across New South Wales. The importance of learning Aboriginal languages is recognised as a vital part of Aboriginal students' educational experience. The NSW Board of Studies Indigenous Language Framework K-10 will guide the establishment and implementation of Indigenous language programs in schools. The aim of this framework is to maintain and revive Indigenous languages. Sixteen public schools in country areas teach Aboriginal languages to approximately 300 students, 90 per cent of whom are Aboriginal. The Premier recently allocated \$20,000 for the New South Wales Elders Aboriginal Languages Conference in recognition of the vital role that Aboriginal Elders play in the maintenance of Aboriginal Languages in schools.



KOORI YOUTH PROGRAM

The New South Wales Government recognises that it is important to provide specialised education and training support to young people at all stages of their education.

The pilot Koori Youth Program assists young people aged 12-24 who are at risk of leaving school early or who are unemployed. It provides education, training and support to young Aboriginal people, and aims to increase self esteem and cultural identification. Increasing cultural identification and pride of young Aboriginal people will assist them through school and further education, training and employment. Funding is provided to community organisations for projects designed to meet the specific needs of young Aboriginal people in their local area.

Making sure post-school education and training provides pathways to lifelong learning and opportunities

- **Respect: A vocational education and training strategy for Indigenous people in New South Wales.** The NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training is developing a statewide strategy for Vocational Education and Training for Aboriginal people in New South Wales, and is consulting with Aboriginal people and communities about the draft, *Respect: A Vocational Education and Training Strategy for Indigenous People in New South Wales*. The strategy will establish monitoring and reporting standards, encourage community involvement in vocational education and training and inform training providers about resources and best practice. The strategy will be completed by March 1998.
- **Training opportunities.** The Government is exploring creative ways to provide training opportunities for Aboriginal people in a variety of jobs. For example, a program to be managed by Right Management Services of Dubbo will create 50 new training places


for Aboriginal staff in hospitals in Western New South Wales. A project officer with TEAME, the national industry training company for traineeships in the arts and cultural industries, has been funded to recruit and support Aboriginal trainees in those professional areas.

- **Joint Secondary Schools VET program in Years 9 to 12** The Government is encouraging Aboriginal students to participate in the Joint Secondary Schools VET program in Years 9 to 12 so as to increase their exposure to job-related education. For example, Joint Secondary Schools VET courses are run part-time through the Eora Campus of Sydney Institute of Technology in video production techniques, music studies, print making, Aboriginal art and health with a view to enrolment in full time Arts and Music courses.

ABORIGINAL STUDENT CAREER TOUR

This pilot program provides 40 Aboriginal students from the Mount Druitt area with intensive case management support and a range of training and work experience offered through the public and private sectors, community and local government, a model career case management system and a three day field trip on chosen career chances. In addition, workplaces in New South Wales have an opportunity to become more aware of the potential and diversity of young Aboriginal people.

The success of this project is demonstrated by the fact that it will be now offered throughout Australia by the Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs. The New South Wales project was sponsored by the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Network.



- **Tailored courses in TAFE** TAFE NSW has developed a highly successful suite of specifically tailored courses which now includes the TAFE Diploma in Aboriginal Studies. It is designed to respond to the needs of Aboriginal people who wish to undertake Aboriginal studies but are unable or do not wish to leave their regional communities. The Diploma is a two year qualification with a general education and a vocational component.

- **Aboriginal Women in TAFE** The TAFE Women's Policy and Planning Advisory Committee will work with the Department for Women and the Department for Aboriginal Affairs to determine whether outreach and distance education courses are meeting the needs of Aboriginal women. This will include investigating the desirability of training in home maintenance. As well, management training for the many women who are administrators and volunteers with community organisations such as Aboriginal housing cooperatives will be a priority. Following consultation with the Department for Women, TAFE will report on the outcome of these negotiations to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs by December 1998.

- **Aboriginal Teaching and Learning Training Package** In order to encourage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander TAFE teachers, training is provided through the Aboriginal Teaching and Learning Training Package. This is a fully accredited TAFE course and provides progress into tertiary level programs. It helps orientate new Aboriginal teachers, tutors and community educators to TAFE, and is also useful for experienced teachers to update their skills, knowledge and cross-cultural awareness.

- **TAFE Student numbers and teachers** In 1997, there were 12,087 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in TAFE NSW representing 3.9 per cent of total enrolments. In 1996, TAFE NSW employed a total of 273 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, of which 73 were teachers.



The Government's commitment to empowering Aboriginal people and communities to achieve economic self-sufficiency

Supporting Aboriginal enterprises

The endeavours of Aboriginal people to achieve economic independence and create community wealth will be assisted by programs provided by the New South Wales Government. The Government recognises that economic development is an important step on the path to self-determination.

Improving long-term employment opportunities for Aboriginal people depends on establishing sustainable jobs. The private sector and especially the small business community have a strong role to play by making a sustained and determined commitment to improving the employment and economic development opportunities available to Aboriginal people.

- **Accessible business advice** The Government will promote the establishment and expansion of Aboriginal private enterprises by providing accessible and relevant business advice. This will be made a specific goal of State and Regional Development (SARD) in 1997/98. SARD is also implementing a range of new strategies in 1997/98 such as introducing a mentoring program for Aboriginal business people; providing targeted assistance to Aboriginal owned businesses seeking to expand or commence exports; providing a small number of merit-based scholarships to Aboriginal people to undertake the small business management course at Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative College; and making more effective service delivery to Aboriginal business people a key priority in the regional network.
- **Training in business** Following the success of the *Training for Indigenous People in Small Business – Rural and Isolated Communities* course in 1996, TAFE now offers a certificate. Thirty-two students are currently enrolled in this course in Bourke, Brewarrina,

Walgett and New England. This course will help Aboriginal groups or individuals wishing to start their own business or enterprise.

SYDNEY ABORIGINAL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE (SABEC)

Establishing successful small businesses requires good information. The Sydney Aboriginal Business Enterprise Centre responds to the demand by Aboriginal people for this service.

The Centre is located in Randwick and has been partially funded by the Department of State and Regional Development. In 1995/96 alone, the Centre received 716 inquiries from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking information about operating a small business. Of these, 650 were from Aboriginal people intending to start a new business, and during the year 328 businesses were directly assisted leading to additional employment generation of about 80 jobs. The Centre is now fully self-sufficient and does not want further financial assistance.

- **The fisheries industry** Beginning with regional workshops starting in early 1998, an Indigenous Fisheries Strategy will be developed over the next two years in consultation with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. NSW Fisheries is investigating the feasibility of developing aquaculture opportunities for Aboriginal people by assessing suitable sites, community training needs, finance and Departmental resources as well as conducting ongoing talks with interested Aboriginal communities. This Strategy will be used to develop policy for the Department of Fisheries as well as contribute to the development of a national strategy.
- To improve basic services to Aboriginal clients of NSW Fisheries, the Department recognises the need for research into traditional practices and knowledge.

Following a valuable survey into Aboriginal fishing practices in coastal communities, consideration is now being given to gathering traditional ecological knowledge for the purpose of fisheries research (with proper attention paid to intellectual property issues).

- **Tourism strategies** The Government will continue to assist Aboriginal businesses and enterprises endeavouring to find a place in the lucrative tourism market. The Government has already taken a number of steps in this area. For example, Tourism New South Wales published the guide *Aboriginal Tourism: Product Development Principles* and developed a database of Aboriginal tourism operators. A survey of Aboriginal operators has been conducted to get a better understanding of the quantity and nature of Aboriginal products. Tourism New South Wales convenes an Indigenous Tourism Forum which brings together representatives from Government, industry and the community to further the development of Indigenous tourism in New South Wales.

The Forum will identify networking and business development opportunities for Aboriginal tourism operators and will be consulted in the review and update of the Tourism New South Wales Masterplan in 1997/98.

Working with business, all levels of Government and Aboriginal communities to create training and employment opportunities

The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employment rates is significant, particularly in rural areas.² While employment programs are the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, the New South Wales Government is committed to playing a key role in working with Aboriginal community


organisations and other Governments, both State and Federal, to put in place pathways to employment as well as genuine job opportunities.

The State's vocational education and training system is ensuring that training is available in the skills and knowledge needed by Aboriginal communities in vital areas such as services for health, housing and infrastructure. Government departments recognise that where providing services to Aboriginal communities is part of their core business, employment and training opportunities must be provided.

- **Supporting innovative joint initiatives** The New South Wales Government will support innovative, co-operative public, private and community sector initiatives, through appropriate apprentice management and training, minimising red tape and bureaucratic hurdles, and coordinating public and private sector efforts. The Government welcomes proposals for joint efforts in this area. For example, the Department of Housing has assisted the Maclean community to participate in a Lend Lease – Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) apprenticeship scheme.
- **Olympic strategies** The Government is committed to ensuring Aboriginal people are able to fully participate in the employment and business opportunities afforded by the Olympics.

The Olympic Coordination Authority is working to promote the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Olympic projects, and has recently employed an Aboriginal Strategy Manager to assist in this area. The Minister for the Olympics will report to the Cabinet Committee by December 1998 on these and other strategies to provide training and work

²The Australian Aboriginal unemployment rate is currently approximately 38% compared to the overall Australian rate of around 8–9%. In New South Wales, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people is at 45.6%. Aboriginal women are slightly more likely to be unemployed than Aboriginal men. In New South Wales unemployment is also a particular problem for Aboriginal people outside Sydney.



opportunities to Aboriginal people within OCA's construction and development projects.

The Olympic Village builder, Mirvac Lend Lease Consortium, is considering the adoption of a Housing Skills Development Project which will introduce high quality intensive training, centred on commercially based housing construction and using apprentices from local Aboriginal communities.

Increasing Aboriginal employment opportunities in Government

Within the New South Wales Public Service, the Government is working to provide permanent employment opportunities for Aboriginal people to ensure that the workforce is representative of the wider community and to assist in ensuring that public sector services and programs are developed with the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people firmly in mind.

- **2 per cent Aboriginal employment** The Government is committed to improving the prospects and possibilities of employment for Aboriginal people in the New South Wales public sector and has reaffirmed its commitment to a goal of at least 2 per cent Aboriginal employment in the NSW public sector. In 1996, Aboriginal people represented 1.6 per cent of total staff of the NSW public sector. To increase this representation and to advance the distribution of Aboriginal people at key salary levels, the Government will be releasing a strategy for consultation by December 1997. The framework integrates the major themes of Aboriginal reconciliation and has the following objectives:
 - to ensure Aboriginal people's diverse skills, knowledge and experience are acknowledged by public sector agencies as integral to core business;
 - to provide employment opportunities which match

Aboriginal people's needs and aspirations to public sector outcomes; and

- to establish partnerships to maximise the employment of Aboriginal people throughout all sectors.
- **Agency strategies** Departments are finding new ways of improving Aboriginal employment in the public sector, and some of these initiatives are described below.
- Aboriginal people currently represent eight per cent of the staff of the Department of Juvenile Justice. A significant achievement in this portfolio has been the employment of 10 Aboriginal program development officers to work with Aboriginal communities on program development and delivery. These positions have been integral in establishing successful community-based initiatives aimed at reducing the incarceration rate of young Aboriginal people in regional areas.
- The Department of School Education employs 670 Aboriginal people throughout the State and in all aspects of its operation. Specifically, the Department currently employs 277 Aboriginal teachers, 21 non-school based Aboriginal teaching service staff, 301 Aboriginal people in school administrative and support positions and 71 Aboriginal public service staff. In addition, 30 four-year Aboriginal secondary teacher education scholarships have been offered, and a highly successful Aboriginal Mentor Program has been established to provide Aboriginal staff with career guidance.
- NSW Health has developed an Aboriginal Employment Strategy to address the recruitment of Aboriginal staff and the professional development of Aboriginal health education officers. To improve access to health services by Aboriginal people,

NSW Health has allocated seeding funds for the employment of 37 Aboriginal hospital liaison officers at hospitals which service significant Aboriginal communities across New South Wales.

- NSW Fisheries employs two Aboriginal liaison officers to consult with Aboriginal communities in the Jervis Bay and Solitary Island Marine Parks. Preliminary work on development of an employment strategy for the Department has commenced and will include cross-cultural training for staff.
- **The Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Strategy**
The Department of Training and Education Co-ordination has established a funding strategy to assist Public Sector agencies to employ Aboriginal people, dedicated to the memory of Elsa Dixon who made a significant contribution to Aboriginal employment. The Government has committed \$750,000 to the strategy.

ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION

The Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) has implemented a substantial Aboriginal Employment Program which, since 1994, has placed 25 Aboriginal people in permanent and trainee positions within DLWC.

Employing Aboriginal people in the Department of Land and Water Conservation is an effective means of improving both the quality of consultation with Aboriginal people and the provision of services to Aboriginal communities. For example in the recent negotiations concerning the management of Willandra Lakes World Heritage area, which has significant Aboriginal heritage values, two Aboriginal DLWC officers, one whose mother is a Paakantyi elder and the other whose mother is a Mutthimutthi elder, were instrumental in negotiating plans of management for individual properties between leaseholders, Aboriginal people and the DLWC.

• **Promoting opportunities in Government work**

The Division of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing will host an Aboriginal tradesperson conference in 1998. The purpose of the conference will be to provide information for Aboriginal people about employment opportunities within the Housing portfolio and to establish a register of Aboriginal tradespeople.

The Government will assist Aboriginal communities participating in the Community Development Employment Program and Aboriginal business enterprises to become competitors for contracts available within the Department of Housing for repairs, maintenance and upgrade work.

TRAINING ON THE JOB – THE NSW ABORIGINAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

Wherever possible services are being provided to communities through Government funded projects, the opportunity being taken to provide on the job training. Accelerated Apprenticeships for 25 Aboriginal people in Dareton and 8 people in Muli Muli are providing on the job skills in construction, plumbing and landscaping so the communities there can build their own housing.

The Government's commitment to a more responsive justice system

The continued over-representation of Aboriginal people in New South Wales prisons and the disproportionate contact Aboriginal people have with the legal system is unacceptable to both Aboriginal people and the wider community.

The Government's renewed commitment to dealing with this pressing problem is reflected in the new and more rigorous reporting procedures adopted for the 1995/96 Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. This will not only ensure the public is informed about whether agencies are fully and expeditiously implementing recommendations, but will also encourage agencies to be proactive and develop their own initiatives. Overseeing the Government action in this area is one of the main responsibilities of the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs.

The Government encourages Aboriginal involvement in the formulation of policies and programs within the law and justice areas. Aboriginal people, including Land Councils, community groups and detainees, are encouraged to work with the police, corrective services and juvenile justice authorities to ensure the law and justice system is responsive to their needs. Each of these agencies is increasing Aboriginal staff numbers and providing cross-cultural training. This is helping to eliminate racism and build effective relationships.

Preventative measures are central to the Government's approach to law and justice policy for Aboriginal people. Significant steps have already been taken to tackle the causes of crime in local communities. Factors which can influence the nature and extent of crime in our communities are wide ranging and include employment, schooling and health, each of which is addressed in this statement.


The Government will help and support Aboriginal communities in their endeavours to ensure their young people have chances for the future. Sport and recreation programs are important elements in reducing juvenile contact with the justice system and can help instil a valuable sense of self esteem and community purpose.

The New South Wales Government will work with Aboriginal organisations to implement non-custodial and post-release programs for Aboriginal people. Strategies are being developed as alternatives to custodial punishment, such as bail hostels, community youth conferencing mechanisms and alternative sentencing options such as Attendance Centre Orders.

For Aboriginal women, the high incidence of domestic violence and the need for adequate legal representation continue to be major issues of concern. Aboriginal women also bear the brunt of the high incarceration rate when their brothers, fathers, sons and husbands are gaoled.

Reducing the incarceration rate

- **National Summit on Deaths in Custody** The Government has developed a number of strategies focusing on reducing the incarceration rate of Aboriginal people. These are set out in detail in the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The Government is now working to fulfil the commitment given at the National Summit on Deaths in Custody on 4 July 1997 to produce a strategic plan for the coordination of Commonwealth, State and local services.
- **Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee** An important part of the Government's strategy is to ensure



Aboriginal people are able to effectively put their views on justice issues to Government. Accordingly, the Government is currently consulting on a proposal to restructure its Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee to be a more representative body, able to undertake more extensive consultation and have a greater input into legislative initiatives and other matters which affect Aboriginal people. The proposed changes will see six community representatives from each New South Wales ATSIC region added to the New South Wales Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee.

- **Reforming law and procedure** Notwithstanding the 1993 changes to the Summary Offences Act, Aboriginal people continue to make up a large percentage of those charged with offensive language. The Government is currently examining whether the offensive language provision could be changed.

The New South Wales Law Reform Commission will report by December 1997 on the impact of existing sentencing laws on Aboriginal people. Australia's first Aboriginal judge, His Honour Justice Bob Bellar, is working with the Law Reform Commission on this reference. The Attorney General will ensure that full consultation with Aboriginal people is undertaken when the report is released.



The Vulnerable Witnesses Taskforce established by the Attorney General's Department is currently looking at issues associated with the giving of evidence by persons who may be disadvantaged or vulnerable within the court system. One of the issues that the Taskforce will be considering is whether cultural differences place Aboriginal witnesses at a disadvantage in the giving of evidence and, if so, how such disadvantages might be remedied. An Aboriginal person is a member of the Taskforce and a Discussion

Paper is to be released in the first half of 1998.

- **Home and periodic detention** In order to reduce the high incarceration rate, new periodic detention centres are being opened in Bathurst, Tamworth and Broken Hill. Existing centres at Emu Plains, Tomago and Grafton have been redeveloped to accommodate female detainees. The Home Detention Program will be expanded statewide in a form that is accessible and culturally appropriate to Aboriginal offenders and communities. Expansion of Home Detention beyond the Wollongong – Sydney – Newcastle areas is projected to commence in March 1998.
- **Legal representation and assistance** The New South Wales Government will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth for the need to maintain support for viable Aboriginal legal services.

Aboriginal Court Liaison Officers (ACLOs) provide support and advice on a day-to-day basis for Aboriginal people in their dealings in the Local Court, and organise community days to increase Aboriginal communities' knowledge of and familiarity with court procedure. Aboriginal Court Liaison Officers are currently employed at local courts at Nowra, Blacktown, Dubbo and Lismore.

To help ensure that Aboriginal defendants receive high quality legal representation in difficult cases, the New South Wales Government is negotiating with ATSIC for funding to enable the appointment of an additional public defender. In return, the NSW Public Defender's Office will provide representation to clients of Aboriginal legal services to the equivalent value of the cost of employing one full-time public defender. All of the State's public defenders will be made available to the Aboriginal legal services for this purpose.



This arrangement will allow Aboriginal clients to deal primarily with a lawyer from an Aboriginal legal service with whom they feel comfortable and also to receive assistance from highly experienced counsel. An added benefit of this arrangement is that public defenders will be able to provide valuable legal instruction to staff of Aboriginal legal services. In return, the staff of the Aboriginal legal services will be able to advise public defenders on ways to provide their services in a culturally appropriate manner. In addition, the Government is examining the desirability of locating additional public defenders in areas of most need such as country NSW and Western Sydney. This will assist in providing Aboriginal legal services in these areas with direct access to counsel.

ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S LEGAL RESOURCE CENTRE, STANMORE

The New South Wales Government has provided funding for the establishment of the first Aboriginal women's legal service in Australia. Launched in May 1997, the Centre is independently managed by Aboriginal women.

One of the main purposes of the Centre is to assist Aboriginal women who have been victims of violence and/or sexual assault. The Centre also offers free legal advice, referrals and information in relation to family law matters. In addition, it offers community legal education activities, culturally appropriate resources and information, provides information and assistance to others working with Aboriginal women and children, and acts as a drop-in centre. These services are offered through a 1800 free call number which is available to anyone around the State.

In the coming months the Centre's services will be expanded and will include professional training for people working with Aboriginal women and children, workshop and personal sessions in rural and remote areas, lobbying for legal reform and media contact to facilitate accurate reporting of issues relating to Aboriginal women and children.

The Police Service building better relations with Aboriginal people

The Police Service recognises that it is important to continue to focus on improving its relationship with Aboriginal people and communities.

The Police Service is reviewing and identifying best practice examples of police working well with communities. Reports from this project will be released by April 1998 and will provide an incentive for police Local Area Commands to learn from and implement best practice procedures.

The New South Wales Police Service Aboriginal Policy and Strategic Plan sets out strategies for police in building stronger, productive relations with Aboriginal communities. The focus of policing strategies will be on negotiating with local communities to identify problems and to develop joint solutions. The implementation of this plan will be independently monitored by Dr Chris Cunneen, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Faculty of Law, University of Sydney. Monitoring will commence in December 1997 and the final report is expected by the end of 1998.

In order to ensure independent scrutiny of police actions, the Government established an Aboriginal Complaints Unit in the Ombudsman's Office in September 1996. The Unit has improved the access of Aboriginal people to the complaints system and will improve the responsiveness of the Police Service to the concerns of Aboriginal communities. The Unit will also play an important role in overseeing the success of New South Wales Police Service strategies to improve its performance in dealing with Aboriginal people.



A Police Officer with members of the Redfern Aboriginal community.

Making custodial practices responsive to the needs of Aboriginal detainees

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring Aboriginal people in custody have family and community support and that opportunities are given to assist those in custody to develop skills which will help them break the reoffending cycle.

- **Maintaining links with the community** Maintaining family and kinship ties is vital in helping break the reoffending cycle. The Government recognises its obligation to help maintain these ties by allowing Aboriginal detainees to travel to funerals and special events, and in upgrading visiting facilities for families and friends.
- **Access to complaint mechanisms** An Aboriginal Official Visitor has been appointed to Yasmar Detention Centre. This Official Visitor provides advice and support to all Aboriginal detainees across the juvenile justice system and allows offenders to make complaints. In the adult correctional system, Aboriginal Official Visitors have been appointed at Grafton, Broken Hill, Mulawa, Goulburn, Parklea, Bathurst, Kirconnell and Lithgow and recruitment action is under way for positions at the Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre and Cessnock.

- **Innovative skills programs** Providing the opportunity for better health and education of offenders is a high priority for the Government. Funding is currently provided to the Koompahtoo program, an alcohol and drug program that offers offenders the opportunity to obtain skills in the carpentry and building trades. Support is also being given to the Ngaimpe program at Gosford to provide long term residential drug and alcohol programs in conjunction with short term, skills based programs. Pre- and post-release programs operate to assist Aboriginal detainees find employment on release, and alternative probation and parole programs are being introduced.

The Aboriginal Cultural Link Program at Broken Hill was launched by the Minister in October 1997. One component of the Program is a mobile camp that allows minimum security Aboriginal detainees to work on culturally significant projects in the Mootwingee and Kinchega National Parks, under the supervision of Aboriginal officers and National Parks and Wildlife staff. Three 'Jarrah' women's cultural camps have been held at Lake Glenbawn close to significant locations of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The camps allow women detainees to discuss issues such as children, adolescence, health, the operation of Land Councils, and discuss with elders the role of women.

- **Second Chance program** The Department of Corrective Services' Second Chance program will target young adult first-time detainees in the West and North-West of the State for diversion from the prison environment. The Program will operate on a rural property, near sites of Aboriginal cultural significance. Young offenders will develop farm management and land regeneration skills.

Community consultation is under way regarding a number of possible properties for purchase.

BATHURST CREATIVE WORK CENTRE

The Government has commenced construction of a Creative Work Centre for Aboriginal detainees at Bathurst Correctional Centre at a total cost of \$600,000. The Centre is due for completion by December 1997.

Aboriginal detainees will undertake creative and technical work – such as painting, photography, woodwork and theatre – while also learning valuable vocational skills in marketing and business management. Literacy and numeracy skills will be taught within a non-classroom environment and a culturally sensitive framework. The Centre will also run cultural awareness programs for all detainees and members of the local community. Elders and members of the local Aboriginal community have been closely involved with the Centre's design and will continue to play a central role in the Centre's programs.

Developing innovative strategies to help young people and young offenders

A key focus of the Government is to implement innovative strategies to help ensure that young people do not come into contact with the criminal justice system and that wherever possible young offenders are provided with opportunities to serve community based sentences.

- **Night Patrols** The Government will assist four communities to set up night patrols. These patrols of senior Aboriginal community members will assist in reducing the number of 'incidents' in public places involving Aboriginal young people by encouraging them to use youth centres, sobering-up shelters or return to their homes.

- **Youth conferencing** The Government will spend a total of \$6.6 million over three years (commencing 1997/8) on the Youth Justice Conferencing scheme. While not specific to Aboriginal people, the scheme under the Young Offenders Act will provide particular benefits to young Aboriginal offenders. It overhauls the State's system of dealing with juvenile offenders by providing strong alternatives to the court system. The Scheme provides a hierarchy of four different levels of intervention, beginning with police warnings and cautions and graduating to Youth Justice Conferencing. Attendance at court is a last resort. In designing the scheme, careful attention has been paid to the problems experienced in other jurisdictions with similar models to make sure that it is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal juvenile offenders. The success of the scheme will be carefully monitored and the Ministers for Juvenile Justice and Police will provide a report on the application of the Young Offenders Act to Aboriginal young people to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs on a six monthly basis. The Act will be subject to a comprehensive review three years after commencement.

- **Ending Offending program** Alternatives to incarceration are offered to young people through the Ending Offending program. The 12 to 18 week program provides participants with the opportunity to learn skills to assist them to deal with issues such as unemployment and drug use.



SAFEHAVEN ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Aboriginal juveniles are often denied bail if they are homeless or lack access to suitable care. The aim of the Safehaven Alternative Placement Program is to recruit, train and support carers within Aboriginal communities to provide Aboriginal juveniles with a safe and caring environment when they are unable to remain in or return to their own families.

The program has been piloted in Wagga Wagga and is now being extended across the State. It is anticipated that the Safehaven Program will not only increase the availability of bail for young offenders, but will, by allowing the young person to remain close to the family home, improve the prospect of their successful reintegration into the community and reconciliation with the family.

JA-BIAH AND NARDOOLA

Nardoola, based at Pallamallawa outside Moree, commenced in November 1996 and Ja-biah, located near Blacktown, commenced in February 1997. Ja-biah is solely a bail facility for Aboriginal juveniles who are at risk of being refused bail because of homelessness or lack of suitable accommodation. Both programs provide an alternative to custody and a structured and supportive environment in which offenders may complete Community Service Orders.

The programs provide 24 hours a day, 7 days a week residential care for up to 6 to 8 Aboriginal young people. As well as culturally appropriate accommodation for Aboriginal young people, Nardoola provides counselling, health, educational and vocational, recreational and living skills programs.

Both bail hostel programs are operated and managed by community organisations. The Department has provided extensive training of and assistance to the staff and further training will be provided on the advice of the management committees.



KOORI JUSTICE PROGRAM

The Koori Justice Program is run by South Sydney Youth Services and is funded by the Attorney-General's Department Juvenile Crime Prevention Grants Program. The Grants Program, now in its second year, provides funding to communities to implement crime prevention programs of their own design.

The Koori Justice Program is designed for Aboriginal young people who come from troubled homes or who have experienced a death within the family. These children often tend to have a criminal record or be in a high risk crime category.

This program recognises that Aboriginal families do not get appropriate support and counselling for grief and loss and that, when available, the counselling services are often not sufficiently sensitive to Aboriginal culture and history. The project combines the skills of professional counsellors with the experience of Aboriginal people who are able to empathise with the loss suffered by the children.



The Government's commitment to protecting the consumer and industrial rights of Aboriginal people

Provisions aimed at eliminating discrimination in the workplace, including discrimination faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, underpin industrial relations reform in New South Wales. The *Industrial Relations Act 1996* includes provisions aimed at eliminating discrimination in the workplace and requires the Industrial Relations Commission to take account of the principles of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* in performing its work. Other provisions ensure that awards and agreements regulating employment do not discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Importantly, the Commission may be assisted in this work by the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board who has various rights of intervention in Commission hearings enshrined in the new Act.

To improve industrial information available to Aboriginal women, particularly in rural areas, the Department of Industrial Relations and the Department for Women are funding projects conducted by the New South Wales Working Women's Centre to raise awareness of Aboriginal women about their rights.

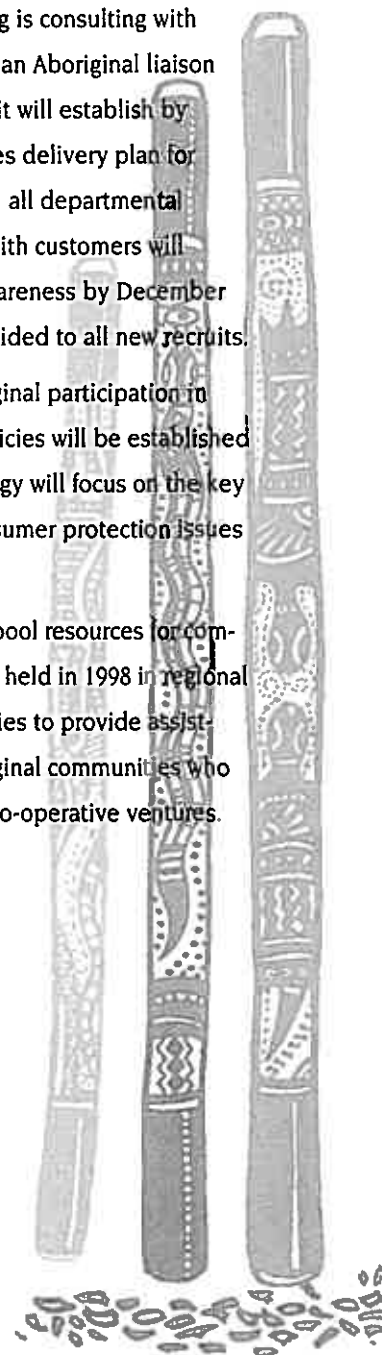
Consumer issues are important as some Aboriginal people may be unaware of, and therefore unable to exercise, their rights. For example, some Aboriginal people, especially in rural or remote areas may be unaware of their rights and obligations, such as housing and tenants' rights and responsibilities, and the availability of redress mechanisms such as the Residency Tenancy Tribunal and Consumer Claims Tribunal.

Aboriginal Tenants Advisory Services in Lismore, Dubbo, Sydney and Bateman's Bay provide important assistance to Aboriginal people and this has been recognised by funding for three additional staff for these services being made available from July 1997. The Minister for Fair Trading will request a report from the Aboriginal Tenants and Advisory Services by May 1998 on any policy and legislative changes that might be needed to respond to the particular needs of Aboriginal renters and housing providers.

The Department of Fair Trading is consulting with Aboriginal communities about an Aboriginal liaison and education program which it will establish by March 1998, including a services delivery plan for Aboriginal people. In addition, all departmental staff who have direct contact with customers will be trained in cross-cultural awareness by December 1998. This training will be provided to all new recruits.

A strategy to encourage Aboriginal participation in departmental services and policies will be established by December 1997. This strategy will focus on the key areas of tenancy, utilities, consumer protection issues and consumer advocacy.

Co-operatives are one way to pool resources for community use. Workshops will be held in 1998 in regional and rural Aboriginal communities to provide assistance and information to Aboriginal communities who may wish to set up or extend co-operative ventures.



The Government's commitment to promoting and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage

The Government is committed to the protection and support of Aboriginal cultural heritage, both as an affirmation of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and to promote a richer cultural inheritance for all Australians.

Cultural heritage sites

Many areas in New South Wales contain sites or areas of particular cultural significance to the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land. In some cases, avenues may exist for Aboriginal people to initiate claims to land containing cultural sites under the New South Wales *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* or native title legislation.

In all cases, it is important to ensure that wherever possible, significant sites are protected and that Aboriginal people are involved in their management. The Government is cooperating with the Commonwealth to help develop a system for the national accreditation of State systems protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage. As part of this process the Government will review legislative and institutional arrangements for Aboriginal heritage protection to identify opportunities to increase Aboriginal control and management of Aboriginal heritage and consult with Aboriginal people and the broader community about the impact and implications of the proposed national standards. This will include examining the question of access for Aboriginal people to sites of significance.

The greatest misconception held by White Australia is that Aboriginal culture is a museum piece, a remnant of a world long gone. This romantic picture pays little justice to our instinct for survival and our ability to interact with the contemporary world.

Wesley Enoch, Murrumbidgee playwright

The Government will consider the proposal of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Working Group which outlines a suggested mechanism for the management of Aboriginal culture and heritage and facilitates Aboriginal ownership, protection and management of Aboriginal cultural property.

The Heritage Council has an ongoing role in conserving and promoting Aboriginal heritage. In December 1996, the Government amended the Heritage Act to broaden the membership of the Heritage Council to ensure there is an Aboriginal member who is knowledgeable in Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is currently the government agency with primary statutory responsibility for the protection and conservation of the State's Aboriginal heritage. The NPWS has increased employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within the NPWS, and is promoting wider community understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal relationships to the land and the environment. It has recently agreed to a set of Aboriginal heritage management principles which guide the management of its Aboriginal heritage responsibilities.

Repatriation of cultural items

Over the years, many cultural items of significance to Aboriginal people and Aboriginal skeletal remains have been removed from their traditional custodians or from burial grounds. As part of the reconciliation process, the Government will work towards returning these items to the Aboriginal owners.

The Australian Museum is working with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council to repatriate significant Aboriginal cultural heritage and human remains to Aboriginal

communities. It also undertakes a range of other activities in consultation with Aboriginal communities such as the Aboriginal Outreach program which assists Aboriginal community groups to establish and maintain cultural centres and keeping places; an extensive loans program of artefacts to Aboriginal communities; and the distribution of culturally important information to Aboriginal communities through the development of catalogues.

Recording histories

The Department of Land and Water Conservation will release by the end of 1997 a map of New South Wales which will illustrate Aboriginal language groups and overlay ATSIC boundaries, Aboriginal Land Council boundaries and the Department of Land and Water Conservation areas.

The State Library is consulting with Aboriginal organisations and will report by December 1997 on the development of an Aboriginal oral history strategy dealing with the experiences of those Aboriginal people separated from their Aboriginal families. This will help ensure that important histories and experiences are not lost forever, and forms part of the Government's response to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families.

The State's collecting institutions are working to ensure that the parts of their collections of particular interest to Aboriginal people are easily accessible. For example, the State Library has recently published a research guide for Aboriginal family and local history resources. INFOKOORI, an index of information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, issues and events is now available on the internet through the State Library of NSW's website (www.sl.nsw.gov.au/koori). The Government has allocated \$103,000 over two years (1996-97 and 1997-98) to the Archives Authority of NSW to preserve the correspondence files of the former Aboriginal Welfare Board on microfilm. The Archives Authority of NSW will publish by the end of 1997 *A Guide to NSW State Archives relating to Aboriginal People*.



The Government's commitment to supporting the work of Aboriginal artists

Aboriginal art and cultures have enriched our whole society. The vibrancy of Aboriginal cultures in New South Wales is reflected in the growing pride of many communities in their culture and the achievements of Aboriginal musicians, dancers, painters, and actors. Fundamental to the cultures and spirituality of Aboriginal Australia are bonds to the people's country through links to the land, waterways and the sea. The Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal artists and performers, and to fostering an understanding of Aboriginal cultures throughout the wider community.

The 1997 Festival of the Dreaming celebrated the culture of Aboriginal people of Australia and Indigenous peoples in the world. It demonstrated the Government's commitment to including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the lead up to and celebration of the year 2000 Olympic Games.

COLLECTING AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

The State's collecting and scientific institutions are promoting a better understanding of Aboriginal beliefs, knowledge and art through their exhibition programs.

The Sydney Observatory is holding an exhibition *By the light of the Southern Stars*, in late 1997 which will include an emphasis on Aboriginal astronomical views and beliefs. The Powerhouse Museum is also presenting an exhibition, *Ngaramang Bayumi*, about indigenous music and dance.

The Art Gallery of NSW is promoting the Yribana gallery through school education kits and is expanding displays of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture. The new Indigenous Australian Exhibition and Gallery at the Australian Museum was developed after extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities and aims to improve understanding of the history and contemporary lives of Aboriginal people. A travelling exhibition about Indigenous Australians will tour throughout New South Wales from 1998 over the next five years.

Exhibitions and public programs on colonial and contemporary Sydney held by the Museum of Sydney, include objects, images and new media focusing on Aboriginal culture and history. The State Library exhibition, *Yarrabah: the people of the early years*, will complete its tour of 20 public libraries throughout New South Wales in December 1997.

- **The Wharf Refurbishment** As part of its commitment to promote artistic endeavour, new premises for the Bangarra Dance Theatre at Wharf 4/5 Walsh Bay were handed over by the Government on 1 July 1997. The facility provides a 290-seat performance space, rehearsal area and office space. The facility is part of a \$3.1 million refurbishment of the Wharf, which will also provide space for Niki Nali Sound. In July 1997, the National Aboriginal and Islanders Skills Development Association moved into new premises at the Rocks, provided by the Ministry for the Arts.



- **Supporting artists** The Indigenous Arts Reference Group was established in 1996 to promote effective relations between non-Aboriginal artists, Aboriginal artists and the Government. The Government has funded an Aboriginal arts officer position based at the Community Arts Association of New South Wales to assist regional communities, Aboriginal art workers and artists.

The Government has also established, in conjunction with the Sydney City Council, a Biennial Indigenous Arts Fellowship which provides assistance to an Aboriginal artist in developing his or her career. An Indigenous Arts Fund has been established to provide small 'quick response' grants. Under the 1997/98 Cultural Grants Program, the Premier has recently approved grants totalling \$586,509 to be provided to 26 organisations for Indigenous arts projects.



The Government's commitment to respecting Aboriginal people's relationship with their country

Land provides a focus for Aboriginal communities and aids the renewal of social identity. For many it is of immense spiritual importance. It is a source of pride and unity. It is the basis from which communities can grow and become independent and strong. The Government respects and acknowledges Aboriginal people's relationship to their 'country': to the land, the sea and the rivers.

Land in the State of New South Wales was traditionally owned and occupied by Aborigines; Land is of spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance to Aborigines. It is fitting to acknowledge the importance which land has for Aborigines and the need of Aborigines for land. It is accepted that as a result of past Government decisions the amount of land set aside for Aborigines has been progressively reduced without compensation.

Preamble to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (New South Wales).

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act

Since 1983 the New South Wales *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* has provided a way for Aboriginal people to become land owners. The Act provides for compensatory land rights, over vacant crown land, regardless of whether or not there is any traditional association with the land. The Act remains ground-breaking legislation and has, through the establishment of Land Councils, provided Aboriginal people in New South Wales with an important representative body.

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council consists of 13 regionally elected representatives and draws from 115 local Aboriginal Land Councils around New South Wales. The Land Councils are a vital grass roots representative structure for Aboriginal people.

The Government will commence a limited review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* by December 1997 to ensure Land Councils operate effectively and efficiently to meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people. The review will consider the recommendations of a review conducted by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and will be conducted in partnership with the Land Councils. The Aboriginal community will be consulted on proposals for reform. This review is not designed to fundamentally change the Land Council system but will focus on updating the Act to ensure it is relevant and workable.

The Government will continue to move quickly to resolve the outstanding land claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*. Since the Government came to office, 1088 claims have been determined, with 630, or 58 per cent, of these claims granted in respect of 7958 hectares of Crown land, valued at approximately \$83.5 million. In total, 1499 claims have been granted under the Act, at a value of approximately \$226.6 million.

National Parks and negotiations with Aboriginal people and communities

The *National Parks (Aboriginal Ownership) Act 1996* provides for the transfer of ownership of certain national parks and nature reserves to Aboriginal people. The parks will be managed in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act by a Board of Management which includes the Aboriginal owners.

The areas which will be involved in the initial handback are Jervis Bay, Mungo and Mootwingee National Parks, the Mootwingee and Mount Grenfell Historic Sites, and Cottonade and Mount Yarowycck Nature Reserve. Negotiations have already commenced with the Mutawintji Land Council concerning the transfer of Mootwingee National Park.

The people whose descendants are now known as Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders were the inhabitants of Australia before European settlement. They have been progressively dispossessed of their lands. This dispossession occurred largely without compensation...

Preamble to the Native Title Act 1993
(Commonwealth)

Native title

The recognition of native title in the Mabo case was an important turning point for reconciliation overturning the previously accepted legal doctrine of terra nullius. The New South Wales Government has continued to acknowledge the right of Aboriginal people to lodge native title claims. It is notable that the first successful settled native title claim was in New South Wales at Crescent Head.

The High Court's decisions in the *Wik* case, which recognised that native title could continue to exist on pastoral leases, led to widespread concern about native title. Because of the national implications of the decision the Government undertook consultations with those most affected by the decisions: Aboriginal people, pastoralists and the mining industry.

The New South Wales Government has been active in its negotiations with the Commonwealth in seeking a just and fair resolution to the issues raised in *Wik* and has resolutely opposed any legislation which would have the effect of achieving wholesale legislative extinguishment of native title.

The Commonwealth Government, in response to the *Wik* decision, has now introduced its Native Title

Amendment Bill into the Commonwealth Parliament. While the provisions would allow for local and area agreements and therefore greater scope for the settling of co-operative arrangements such as that at Crescent Head, the Government has objected to aspects of the Commonwealth's proposal such as the proposed sunset clause.

The Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs will seek the advice of the Aboriginal Reference Group on ways to ensure a more balanced and factual public discussion of the issues surrounding *Wik* and *Mabo*.

The New South Wales Government is concerned that native title should be a positive development in the story of the Australian nation and not an opportunity for the promulgation of racial hatred and fear.

The Government will continue to resolve native title claims to achieve fair and equitable outcomes for all parties. The first native title determination under the *Native Title Act*, at Crescent Head, demonstrates the Government's commitment in this area. The New South Wales Government will make every effort to ensure the current negotiations with the Commonwealth on its legislative response to the High Court judgment in the *Wik* case will achieve justice and equity for all concerned. The New South Wales Government continues to support the introduction of provisions to the Commonwealth *Native Title Act* which would permit the making of local and regional agreements.

The Government will continue to negotiate in good faith with native title parties where mining titles are proposed to be granted or renewed over land which is potentially subject to native title. The Department of Mineral Resources will publish its negotiation protocol concerning these circumstances by March 1998.

CRESCENT HEAD LAND CLAIM

The rights of the Dunghutti people to land at Crescent Head were recognised with the successful settlement of their land claim, formally agreed on 7 April 1997. Ms Mary-Lou Buck, leader of the Dunghutti people, said on the day the success of the claim was announced: 'How pleased and proud our ancestors would be on this day when a white government has fully recognised the meaning of land to Aboriginal people'.

This Agreement demonstrates what can be achieved when the Government of New South Wales, Local Government and Aboriginal communities negotiate in good faith, with good will.



The historic agreement

between the State and Dunghutti people which recognised Crown land in Crescent Head as a native title right.



The Government's commitment to partnership

The Government is committed to working with representative and peak Aboriginal organisations as a way to build effective partnerships based on mutual respect and trust.

The Aboriginal Reference Group

This Government's commitment in this area is demonstrated by the establishment in June 1997 of the Aboriginal Reference Group to provide a permanent forum for advice between Government and Aboriginal people on major issues involving them. This is the first group of its kind in Australia. Membership of the Reference Group is drawn from Aboriginal individuals with expertise in particular areas. Mr Sol Bellair, New South Wales Community Relations Coordinator with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and former Deputy Chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, is the Chair of the Reference Group.



The Aboriginal Reference Group at its initial meeting on June 10, 1997.

Other members are:

Mr Lloyd McDermott	Ms Linda Burney
Mr John Delaney	Ms Millie Ingram
Mr Tom Slockee	Ms Sandra Bailey

Under its terms of reference the ARG can co-opt experts and community representatives as necessary to assist on specific issues.

Key Strategies

- **Aboriginal representation on boards** This Government is taking steps to ensure there is fair representation of Aboriginal people on mainstream Government boards and advisory groups and will also pursue equal representation of Aboriginal women on Aboriginal Boards and committees, to improve their participation in decision making.
- **Annual forum of elected representatives** The Government will host an annual forum involving members of the New South Wales Parliament and the elected representatives of the Aboriginal community, to promote the process of reconciliation in New South Wales.
- **Local Government** Aboriginal people should also have the opportunity to make an effective contribution to local government, especially in those areas where there is a high Aboriginal population.

The Department of Local Government has established an Aboriginal Network as a way of fostering Aboriginal involvement in the services provided by local governments – about half the network members are women. It also provides a forum for Aboriginal councillors and Aboriginal community council employees to meet and discuss priorities with a range of elected and appointed Government figures. The network will celebrate its 10 year anniversary in March 1998.

Local Government Aboriginal Advisory and Consultative Committees have been established as a way of encouraging communication between councils and Aboriginal communities. Committees have been established in a wide range of rural and city based councils. These committees recognise the need to increase Aboriginal people's awareness about local government.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ABORIGINAL MENTORING PROGRAM

In New South Wales there are 1807 elected councillors representing 177 local councils. Of these, only 12 are Aboriginal, including a Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Four of the councillors are women.

The Mentoring Program launched by the Department of Local Government in February 1997 will provide an opportunity for Aboriginal community members to gain a greater insight into local government and to encourage more people to run for office at the next elections in 1999. This innovative program is the first of its kind in Australia.

The project was trialed in Kyogle and the program is currently being reviewed. Maclean Shire Council recently launched the program with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. It is expected that the Mentoring Program will be adopted by other councils in New South Wales in preparation for the next elections.



The Government's commitment to setting standards and measuring improvements

...that this House ... calls on all Australian Governments to accept ongoing national commitment to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and aspirations and to work towards benchmarks by which to measure the performance of all Governments in honouring their commitments...

Excerpt, Resolution on Reconciliation of the Legislative Assembly of the New South Wales Parliament, 14 November 1996

This Government is committed to achieving measurably better outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities through the strategies and new directions set out in this statement. However, it should be recognised that all three spheres of Government, State, Federal and Local, have important and often interdependent responsibilities. In addition, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Aboriginal Land Councils in New South Wales also have key roles.

The 1992 National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments, provides the basis for improved coordination of the delivery of programs to Aboriginal people and improved outcomes. The Government will continue to pursue the implementation of this commitment to achieve clear agreement about respective roles and responsibilities and better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

At a State level, the Government is demonstrating its commitment to acquiring a clear picture of the provision and use of services by Aboriginal people through a survey by the Council of the Cost of Government on programs and expenditure profiles in New South Wales.

In addition, the Government is moving towards developing better measures for key areas such as health, as a means to set goals and assess the success of policies and programs designed to assist Aboriginal people.

The Government has demonstrated its commitment to incorporating the concerns of Aboriginal people and communities at all levels of Government policy and administration through three key mechanisms: the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Reference Group and the Chief Executive Officers Group on Aboriginal Affairs.

The Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs will provide leadership by overseeing the development and implementation of the Government's priorities, particularly in those areas where an across-Government perspective is important, such as justice and infrastructure. It plays an important role in ensuring that the budgetary process is linked to the achievement of the priorities in the statement.

The Government will also be assisted in the implementation of the key initiatives by the **Aboriginal Reference Group**, which is the primary source of community advice on these issues.

The Chief Executive Officers Group on Aboriginal Affairs, which is jointly chaired by the Director General, The Cabinet Office, and the Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, will support coordinated approaches to solving problems of service delivery and ensure that the focus remains on improving outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Key strategies

- **Reporting** Ministers will be required to report to the Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal Affairs on the implementation of the strategies set out in this document on a six monthly basis. This will be coordinated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In their first report Ministers will provide an indication of the intended outcomes from the strategies and will in each six monthly report, provide evidence of progress to date against those outcomes.

- **1997 Reconciliation benchmarking conference**
The Government will closely consider the outcomes and recommendations of the November 1997 Aboriginal Reconciliation benchmarking conference.

- **Council on the Cost of Government Audit** The Council on the Cost of Government has undertaken an audit of Aboriginal programs and services, which will comprehensively map where and how funding directed at assisting Aboriginal people is spent. This report will be considered by the CEOs Group on Aboriginal Affairs by March 1998.

- **Expenditure** Expenditure on Aboriginal programs will continue to be separately identified in the Social Justice Budget Statement.



Dr Andrew Refshauge MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, **Sol Belfair**, Chair, Aboriginal Reference Group, and **Col Markham MP**, Parliamentary Secretary for Aboriginal Affairs at the launch of the Aboriginal Reference Group.





