

EDITORIAL

When I evaluated the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme in 1975, I found that Aboriginal staff were employed at only 12 out of almost 200 secondary schools. (*Access to Education - an Evaluation of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme*, pp.169-70).

Today, in many parts of Australia, we do find Aboriginal staff in schools, and it seems likely that numbers will increase further in the near future.

Firstly, there is a handful of Aboriginals who are fully qualified teachers. A number of Colleges of Advanced Education have recently given special admission to Aboriginal people who are currently pursuing Teacher Education courses. Through careful selection and support for such students on courses, Australian schools should thus be assured of increasing numbers of fully qualified Aboriginal teachers.

Secondly, State education departments have recognized the vital role that Aboriginal people may play in the school setting through their appointment as teacher aides. Whereas teacher aides from the majority culture normally play fairly restricted roles in the school, Aboriginal teacher aides, as para-professionals, have at least two major contributions to make:

1. They serve as a source of security and as role models for Aboriginal children.
2. They act as a liaison between the home and the school, helping the two important groups in the child's life (parents and teachers) to understand each other and, hopefully, to work co-operatively together.

The extent to which these contributions are realized, is a function partly of the personality and abilities of the teacher aides, and also, partly of the insights of the school staff and their readiness to capitalize upon the unique contributions the aides may make.

My very best wishes to you all.

B & Lott