



The Minister for Youth and Community Services, Mr Healey, addressing the conference of teachers in Aboriginal Schools

Aboriginal Education

(by Mr R. O. Healey, Minister for Youth and Community Services)

(The following article is an extract from an address delivered by the Minister at a conference of teachers in Aboriginal schools. The conference was held at Macquarie University in January.)

Too frequently in the past Aborigines have said—not without some justification—that decisions about their education have been made without reference to them.

We are here this week to discuss Aboriginal education and the role of the teacher in that process, to reassess and rethink our educational attitudes in respect of Aboriginal people and their needs. But let us not fall into the fallacy of believing that education can be isolated from other problems confronting the Aboriginal community. It is only one spoke—albeit a critical one—in the wheel of advancement. All the educational reforms in the world will not move that wheel unless they are

accompanied by appropriate policies for health, housing and employment.

Through their effect on the physical and intellectual development of the student, malnutrition and ill-health can thwart the best efforts of educators. A hungry child cannot be a good student. The prospect of discrimination and limited employment opportunities, can sap ambition and motivation. Without a future, study seems pointless. Inadequate or overcrowded housing can make homework and study all but impossible.

Housing, Employment, Health

That is why this year we will be building 230 modern homes for Aboriginal families; about twice