



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 16

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ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

The Federal Government will launch a campaign to have aboriginal children living in distinctive aboriginal communities given their primary education in aboriginal languages.

The Government will also supplement education for aboriginal children with the teaching of traditional aboriginal arts, crafts and skills mostly by aborigines themselves.

The Government will assist in the training of teachers and teacher aides - some of them aborigines - in help with the introduction of language teaching in primary schools.

Planning of the projects is already taking place within the Office of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, announced the moves today after consultations with the nominated Minister for Education, Mr. K.E. Beazley, and Dr. H.C. Coombs.

Mr. Whitlam said the Government felt a need for greater respect for aboriginal languages and culture. The tribal cultures should be preserved, not crushed, he said.

Mr. Whitlam said in introducing the programs the Government was implementing conventions of both the I.L.O. and U.N.E.S.C.O. which encouraged the teaching of indigenous people in their own languages.

In primary schools in aboriginal communities English will be taught as a second language.

Among the traditional and cultural skills which will be taught aboriginal children will be art, carving, music, dancing, tracking, traditional religion and mythology.

When the program is fully implemented it will affect most aboriginal children in the Northern Territory and will be extended to tribal areas of northern Queensland, the Kimberleys in Western Australia and northern South Australia.

CANBERRA. A.C.T.