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**Funding allocations to Aboriginal  
people: the Western Australia case**

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## SERIES NOTE

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- to investigate issues relating to Aboriginal employment and unemployment;
- to identify and analyse the factors affecting Aboriginal participation in the labour force; and
- to assist in the development of government strategies aimed at raising the level of Aboriginal participation in the labour force and at the stimulation of Aboriginal economic development.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to identify the sources of special funding in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia and how these allocations are spent. First, an assessment is made of the funds allocated by each level of government, Commonwealth, State and local; second, the funds allocated to programs and services with a social intent are compared with those allocated with an economic intent; and third, funds directed to remote regions are compared with those going to urban regions of Western Australia.

Funding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Western Australia is complicated by several factors. These include the nature of fiscal relations between the Commonwealth and the State; Commonwealth national policies operating alongside policies formulated by the State Government; services and programs provided by special Aboriginal government agencies as well as by mainstream agencies; special funding provided to overcome the 'disadvantaged' status of Aborigines; and some public funds going directly to Aboriginal organisations rather than to government bodies.

This analysis is constrained by the absence of current procedures that would facilitate the identification of expenditure by each level of government specifically on Aboriginal people. Comparisons between Commonwealth, State and local government funding are limited because there is no agreement on respective funding responsibilities. This paper concludes that whether data on funding are to be utilised to improve inter-governmental accountability or as an aid to allocating funds to specific policy areas, procedures should be put in place to clarify the responsibilities of each level of government and, following this, a comprehensive system needs to be established to allow an accurate measurement and identification of the resources expended on Aboriginal people.

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## Foreword

In 1990, Dr Will Sanders and myself were commissioned to write a chapter for the volume *Social Welfare for Indigenous Peoples* (J. Dixon and R. Scheurell eds, Routledge, London, 1992). An early version of this chapter was published as CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 1. In undertaking this research Sanders and I found that there were very limited data available on expenditure on Aboriginal people by States and Territories; consequently our research focussed on Commonwealth expenditure on Aboriginal programs. When Bill Arthur joined CAEPR in October 1990, the issue of Federal/State relations in Aboriginal affairs was identified as a key area for his attention. A little later the Special Premiers' Conference that met in Brisbane on 30-31 October issued a communique 'Towards a Closer Partnership' which called, in part, for greater coordination in the delivery of programs and services by all three levels of government to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. In 1991, ATSIC chaired (and supplied a secretariat for) a Working Party that examined the divisions between different levels of government in Aboriginal affairs financial relations and functional responsibilities.

Despite this broader political and bureaucratic focus on the issue of Federal/State relations in Aboriginal affairs, I encouraged Mr Arthur to pursue his research in this area, and to begin with an initial case study of Western Australia where he had undertaken considerable field-based research and where he had worked in the State bureaucracy. The findings reported here have been based on two weeks research in Perth, considerable correspondence with various Commonwealth and State agencies in Western Australia, as well as discussions with, among others, the Commonwealth Grants Commission and the ATSIC-based Commonwealth/State Relations Secretariat. However, it must be emphasised that all the data presented in this paper have been provided by Commonwealth and State agencies and almost all have come from published annual reports.

The focus in this paper on Western Australia is not intended to single this State out for special attention. And while this preliminary research does identify some interesting issues, the findings of Mr Arthur's research will need to be compared and contrasted with data for other States and Territories to be of wider policy relevance. CAEPR intends to undertake such further research in the future.

Jon Altman  
Series Editor  
November 1991

This paper examines government funding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Western Australia during 1990-1991.<sup>1</sup> Following (Fisk 1985), the data have been arranged to examine the funding for Aboriginal programs and services from three perspectives. First, the data differentiate between Commonwealth, State, and local government funding. Second, the data are arranged to indicate the funding allocated to social versus economic functional areas. Third, the proportion of funds designated for the remote and the non-remote parts of the State are quantified.

Others have noted the complicated and intricate nature of Aboriginal affairs funding (see Altman and Sanders 1991a; Fisk 1985: 65; National Health Strategy Working Party 1989: 33). These funding arrangements make it difficult to obtain comprehensive data from any of the three levels of government and as a result the data presented here are of variable quality. No reliable figures were available on the extent to which Aboriginal people access mainstream programs and services and so total expenditure cannot be calculated.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, therefore, only funding designated for services and programs specifically for Aborigines is considered. The data were obtained from the annual reports of government agencies, the records of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and from individual staff, as cited below.

The paper begins by presenting some socioeconomic indicators for Aborigines in Western Australia. Next, available data on government funding are presented. In conclusion, a number of policy-relevant issues are raised.

## Western Australia

Table 1 shows that 37,800 or 16.6 per cent of Australia's Aborigines were enumerated in Western Australia in the 1986 Census making it the State with the third highest Aboriginal population after Queensland (61,200) and New South Wales (59,000). Aborigines in Western Australia account for 2.7 per cent of the population, making it the State with the second highest proportion of Aborigines to non-Aborigines, coming between the Northern Territory (22 per cent) and Queensland (2.4 per cent). By these counts alone, Western Australia is a significant State in the context of Aboriginal affairs policy.<sup>3</sup>

With a land area of approximately 2,525,000 million square kms Western Australia is the largest Australian State, though with only 1.4 million residents it is sparsely populated. Furthermore, neither the population nor the resources and development are evenly distributed across the State. Population, manufacturing industries and public infrastructure are

**Table 1. Aborigines in each State/Territory, as a proportion of total State/Territory population and national Aboriginal population.**

State	Aboriginal population	Per cent of State population	Per cent of national Aboriginal population
Queensland	61,200	2.4	26.8
New South Wales	59,000	1.1	25.9
Western Australia	37,800	2.7	16.6
Northern Territory	34,700	22.0	15.2
South Australia	14,300	1.1	6.2
Victoria	12,600	0.3	5.5
Tasmania	6,700	1.5	2.9
Australian Capital Territory	1,200	0.5	0.5

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1986 Census.

concentrated in the southwestern corner. Elsewhere, primary industries predominate (farming, pastoralism, fishing, and mining), and population centres are small and far apart. These features combine to present logistical difficulties and limitations regarding economic development and the provision of services and have led some researchers and government agencies to consider Western Australia as made up of two broad socioeconomic zones classified as remote and non-remote (Commonwealth Grants Commission 1988; Taylor 1991a). The non-remote region comprises the southwest corner and the remote comprises the remainder of the State. Whereas only 9 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population live in the remote zone, 53 per cent of the Aboriginal population reside there. Similarly, the majority of the incorporated Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal pastoral leases, outstations, and excisions from non-Aboriginal pastoral leases are located in the remote zone, as are all of the 52 communities participating in the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) scheme. (Under the CDEP scheme, members of Aboriginal communities agree to forego their right to individual Jobsearch and Newstart allowances which are instead paid in a lump sum, with an operational and administrative component, to their community council or other incorporated body which then offers work to members for a wage not less than their original social security entitlement.)

There is no comprehensive land rights legislation in Western Australia, although the State will grant many communities land under 99 year lease arrangements. In 1986, to compensate for the failure of both the State and Commonwealth Governments to introduce Aboriginal land rights legislation, the Aboriginal Communities Development Program (ACDP)

was set up as a joint Commonwealth/State initiative (ATSIC 1990b: 21). This program consists of a contribution of \$10 million dollars per year for five years from each of the two governments, a total of \$100 million. As there is no land rights legislation, little Aboriginal income is derived from royalties.<sup>4</sup> One outcome of this is that, unlike the Northern Territory, Aboriginal organisations such as land councils and Aboriginal local resource agencies, are not assured of secure funding. Although these organisations receive support from ATSIC, most are barely recognised by the State Government.

The ACDP is administered by the State's Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority (AAPA) which is also charged with overseeing, co-ordinating and planning Aboriginal affairs in the State and liaising with all Federal and State agencies including ATSIC (though no formal arrangements for this exist). The AAPA's budget is primarily made up of the ACDP and its ability to influence other agencies appears to be limited. The AAPA operates with a State-level Aboriginal Co-ordinating Committee and an Aboriginal Lands Trust (AAPA 1989), but how these structures will integrate with ATSIC regional councils remains unclear. The ability of the AAPA to operate across the State and to mesh effectively with the ATSIC regional council jurisdictions established by the ATSIC legislation may be severely limited by the fact that it only has one office which is located in Perth.

### **Funding by different levels of government**

As already noted, under Australian federalism there are no ready means to quantify expenditure on particular disadvantaged groups by different levels of government. A preliminary attempt is made here to undertake this exercise.

Table 2 shows that the State Government allocates a total of \$36 million to Aboriginal programs and services, the Commonwealth Government allocates \$202 million and local government designates no special funds. Of the total allocation of \$238 million, the Commonwealth contributes 85 per cent. However, a comparison of State and the Commonwealth funding has limited application unless there has been agreement on what the respective responsibilities for funding are, and these have not yet been clarified (Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission 1988: 9). For instance, the amounts in Tables 2 and 3 include Commonwealth allocations under the CDEP scheme (\$45.12 million), the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (\$15.8 million), and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) education and training allocations (\$41.5 million). Assuming that it is not expected that the State would take over these responsibilities, a question then is, for which of the special allocations to Aborigines presently funded by the Commonwealth,

**Table 2. Summary of State, Commonwealth and local government special allocations to Aboriginal programs and services in Western Australia, 1990-91 (\$ million).**

Level of government	Category and size of allocation (\$ million)						
	Social	Total (%)	Economic	Total (%)	Total	\$/capita	Total (%)
Commonwealth	105	44	97	41	202	5,343	85
State	22	9	14	6	36	952	15
Local	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	127	53	111	47	238	6,295	100

Source: Tables 4 to 7.

should the Western Australian State and local governments be made responsible?

A recurring argument regarding the division of funding responsibilities is that State and local governments do not allocate sufficient funds to provide the same level of basic services to Aborigines as to non-Aborigines (ATSIC 1990a, 1990b; Equal Opportunity Commission 1990; Rumley and Rumley 1988). Comments here invariably refer to services (power, water, sewerage, public housing, garbage collection, road maintenance, street lighting) to Aboriginal communities which are located in rural and remote regions, and which, in the case of non-Aboriginal communities, are the responsibility of either the State or local governments. However, in Australia services vary in quality depending on geographic location and on the lobbying powers and skills of local groups to argue for resources (Humphreys 1988; Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission 1988: 25, 26) and so it is difficult to determine what the basic level of services should be at any one place (Davis et al. 1988: 187).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, in Western Australia there seems to have been little concentrated effort to make this assessment.<sup>6</sup>

In calculating both its General Revenue and Special Purpose Grants to States and local governments the Commonwealth Grants Commission takes into account 'disability factors' based on population distribution and the additional costs of delivering services to remote Aboriginal communities (ATSIC 1990a; Commonwealth Grants Commission 1988; Government of Western Australia 1986). Similarly, in distributing assistance to local governments, the Western Australian Local Government Grants Commission takes account of the apparent disadvantaged position of the State's various local authorities. Thus, the State and some local governments may receive untied grants from the

**Table 3. Commonwealth and State Government functional priorities, 1990-91 (\$ million).**

Functions	Level of government	
	Commonwealth	State
Economic		
education	36.66	4.92
labour and employment	15.29	8.66
CDEP scheme	45.12	-
Sub-total	97.07	13.58
Social		
health	10.00	11.7
social security and welfare	26.15	0.19
culture	2.84	1.27
housing and community services	61.52	4.27
law, order and public safety	3.50	4.50
others	1.00	-
Sub-total	105.01	21.90
Total	202.08	35.48

Source: Tables 4 to 7.

Commonwealth on the basis of certain disability factors, including the difficulty of providing services to remote Aboriginal communities. However, under the present federal system there is no mechanism to ensure, or require, that funds are spent in the areas for which they are allocated and monies which may be allocated on the basis of the extra cost of providing a service may not eventually be allocated to that end.<sup>7</sup>

Other factors affect the supply of basic services to rural and remote communities in Western Australia. In some instances, facilities are owned by incorporated Aboriginal communities who may also have control of some land under 99 year leases. In such cases State authorities are unwilling to commit resources to providing facilities that would pass from State ownership. Also, under normal conditions, the supply of basic services by the State or local government are contingent upon the payment of service fees. Although no reliable data are available, there is some indication that communities do not pay fully for either State or local government services and in fact the inability of communities to generate revenue to pay for services is openly acknowledged (ATSIC 1990a: 12; Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission 1988: 15, 20).

Invariably the reason put forward for a community's inability to generate revenue is that residents are unemployed (Human Rights and Equal

Opportunities Commission 1988). This raises questions about the level of welfare payments, and suggests that any group of unemployed citizens, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, will be unable to pay fully for their public services. It may be that services are more expensive in some areas and that in those areas welfare payments are insufficient to pay for them. Reliable data on incomes and expenditure are required to clarify this point. Smith (1991) notes that such data are not currently available for Aboriginal people and makes some recommendations to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to rectify this situation.

It should be pointed out, however, that non-Aborigines outside the mainstream, such as those on small holdings or in communal groups, are also obliged to make concessions to their 'way of life' and/or to pay a premium for services. In the case of a small group of Aborigines living in a remote area, it may be that they and the government will only be able to afford a certain low level of services, a point raised by Blanchard (1987) with respect to providing services to outstations. On the other hand, it should be possible for the three levels of government to come to an agreement with ATSIC Commissioners and regional councils, for a minimum standard level of services based on population, location and income.

This discussion of the funding and provision of basic services assumes the same socioeconomic status for Aborigines and non-Aborigines. However, the Commonwealth's original rationale in the 1970s for allocating funds specifically for Aborigines was that they were a special group with a 'disadvantaged' status (Fisk 1985: 65; Department of Aboriginal Affairs 1979) and to an extent this is still the rationale for many Commonwealth allocations (ATSIC 1990a; Tickner 1991). The Commonwealth classifies these funds as 'supplementary'; the purpose is to help achieve basic equality for Aborigines, but the idea is that the funds should eventually become the responsibility of the States (ATSIC 1990a: 2). The Commonwealth is increasingly recognising that the States view these funds as a substitute for their own funding responsibilities rather than as a supplement, and hence make little effort to take them over (ATSIC 1990a; Altman and Sanders 1991a). A difficulty with this situation is that the 'disadvantaged' status of Aborigines has never been ultimately defined and agreed upon by the Commonwealth and the States with respect to basic services, so it is not clear what this status represents or what levels of services are necessary to remove it and create equality. Furthermore, it is unclear what proportion of Commonwealth monies are presently directed toward removing the disadvantage and should therefore be the responsibility of the State or local governments.

It is also suggested that one purpose of some special Commonwealth allocations is to make services 'culturally' appropriate to Aborigines so that they can access them more fully (Fisk 1985: 68; Tickner 1991: 16).

However, the definition of a culturally appropriate service is unclear, and it is also unclear which of the Commonwealth allocations are directed at such programs, and which of these could ultimately be taken over by the State.

### **Aboriginal and mainstream departments in Western Australia**

The discussion so far has focused on the division of funding responsibilities between the three levels of government. Another division occurs between specialised Aboriginal affairs agencies and mainstream departments. The Commonwealth specialist agency is ATSIC and the Western Australia State Aboriginal agency is the AAPA. Many of the ambiguities regarding responsibility for funding between the levels of government also arise between these agencies and various other Commonwealth and State departments.

ATSIC's aim is to have State Governments, their departments and Commonwealth departments take greater responsibility for allocations for Aborigines (ATSIC 1990a: 2).<sup>8</sup> Apportioning departmental responsibility is complicated by the fact that both ATSIC and the AAPA have the facility to pass funds directly to Aborigines and their organisations without going through State or Commonwealth departments. For instance, in 1989-90 ATSIC's total national expenditure was \$537 million (ATSIC 1991: 143) and of this \$373 million (or 70 per cent) was in the form of direct grants to Aborigines and their organisations. These direct grants covered a wide variety of functions from land ownership, broadcasting and communications, to the CDEP scheme (ATSIC 1991: Appendix 13). Again in terms of responsibility, it is not clear which of these types of allocation are intended to be taken over by either Commonwealth or State mainstream departments.

The AAPA strives to have State mainstream departments take on greater funding responsibilities for Aborigines, and to have them set up culturally appropriate programs. There are no comprehensive data on their level of success, but it is notable that some State departments have put in place special Aboriginal programs using allocations from State consolidated revenue. Examples (see Tables 6 and 7) include the Ministry of Education (\$4 million); the Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority (\$2 million) the Ministry of Health (\$9 million); the Police Department (\$2.5 million); and the Main Roads Department (\$1.03 million).

As noted earlier, the Western Australian and Commonwealth Governments have set up the ACDP as a joint program with each contributing \$10 million per annum over five years. Both levels of government have distributed their contribution to State agencies, such as the State Electricity Commission of Western Australia and the Water

Authority of Western Australia, as well as directly to Aboriginal organisations. The final year of this program is officially 1990-91 and it is unclear what proportion of the funding will now be taken up by Commonwealth or State departments.

Responsibility for funding public services is the subject of continual discussion between the Commonwealth and the States. In the area of Aboriginal affairs the difficulties in clarifying responsibility are increased by the addition of special Aboriginal agencies; special kinds of monies (those for overcoming disadvantage or for making programs culturally appropriate); special avenues by which public monies can reach Aborigines (direct grants to Aboriginal organisations); and in some cases the apparent waiving of conditions for user-pays services. This is not to say that these features should not exist, only that they make it difficult to designate responsibility. Before the division of responsibility for funding between any level of government or any agency could be determined, those items which are particular to Aboriginal affairs should be clarified and systems set up to identify allocations.

### **Funding by functions**

Allocation of funds in Western Australia can also be analysed on the basis of functions. Following Fisk (1985), the allocations by individual departments are arranged into two broad categories, social and economic, and these are shown in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 for both the Commonwealth and Western Australian State Governments. Fisk (1985: 65) points out that these classifications may be useful for policy analysis but that they are not official classifications, and to a degree depend on subjective assessment of whether the general intent of funding is social or economic. Arranging the data in this way is not to deny the fact that social and economic functions are interrelated. As in Fisk's analysis, the social category is defined here to include such functions as housing, social security, welfare, health and law and order. The economic category includes all funds associated with economic development and the labour market, such as employment programs, education and training, business development, and land purchase.

Table 2 indicates that \$127 million is directed to social and \$111 million to economic functions; that is, the social stream receives 54 per cent and the economic stream receives 46 per cent of the total special allocation to Aboriginal affairs. The allocations suggest a slight difference in priorities between the State and Commonwealth Governments: the State allotted \$14 million or 38 per cent of its total allocation of \$36 million for economic purposes, while the Commonwealth allotted \$97 million or 48 per cent of its special funds to economic purposes.

**Table 4. Commonwealth Government allocation to economic functions in Western Australia, 1990-1991 (\$ million).**

Department	Program	Allocations
Education		
DEET	TAP <sup>a</sup>	7.19
DEET	AEISPB <sup>b</sup>	6.80
DEET	other <sup>c</sup>	10.10
DEET	ABSTUDY	18.68
Labour and employment <sup>d</sup>		
DEET	TAP/AEEDU <sup>e</sup>	4.87
ATSIC	AEDP/CDEP	45.12
ATSIC	other	10.26
ANPWS <sup>f</sup>		0.16
Total		97.07

- a. Training for Aborigines Program.  
 b. Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program.  
 c. Allocations to independent schools, higher education, tutoring support etc.  
 d. Includes all business and enterprise allocations.  
 e. Aboriginal Employment and Education Development Unit.  
 f. Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Sources: Information from Commonwealth departments and from departmental annual reports.

This Commonwealth distribution is slightly different from that noted by Fisk (1985: 71, 76) in his analysis where, using the 1981 Commonwealth allocations, he found that of a total estimated national allocation of \$250.2 million, 41 per cent was allocated to the economic stream. The change in emphasis suggested by the Western Australian data is fairly insignificant given the introduction of the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) in the intervening period. The AEDP was launched during 1986-87 and reflected a major recommendation of the Miller Report (1985) with its primary focus on economic issues. The intent of the AEDP was to increase Aboriginal employment and income to levels commensurate with non-Aborigines by the year 2000.<sup>9</sup> In particular, the CDEP scheme was expanded with estimates that it would account for approximately 30 per cent of the AEDP's first five year budget of \$1.6 billion (Australian Government 1988). In the early 1980s national expenditure on the CDEP scheme was in the order of \$7 million per annum (Altman and Sanders 1991b: 16), and by 1991 this had increased to \$194 million (Tickner 1991: 16). Allocations to the scheme in Western Australia increased from \$7.75 million in 1985-86 to \$45.12 million in 1990 (ATSIC 1990a).

**Table 5. Commonwealth Government allocation to social functions in Western Australia, 1990-1991 (\$ million).**

Department	Program	Allocations
Health		
ATSIC	medical <sup>a</sup>	10.00
Social security and welfare		
Health Housing and Community Services	various	24.00
Department of Administrative Services	various	2.15
Culture		
DASETT <sup>b</sup>		1.16
ATSIC		1.68
Housing and community services		
Health, Housing and Community Services	CSHA <sup>c</sup>	15.80
ATSIC <sup>d</sup>		45.72
Law order and public safety		
ATSIC	various	3.50
Other social-related activities and departments		
Department of Social Security		
Australian Broadcasting Corporation		
Department of Transport and Communication		
Electoral Commission		
Department of Primary Industry and Energy		
Australian Bureau of Statistics		
Department of the Attorney General		1.00
Total		105.01

a. Includes allocations to Aboriginal Medical Services.

b. Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories.

c. Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement.

d. Housing loans from ATSIC are not shown here and amounted to \$3.59 million. Included are allocations to State Electricity Commission and State Water Authority and Rental Assistance Program (RAP).

Sources: Information from Commonwealth departments and from departmental annual reports.

Although this scheme is a part of the AEDP, it is not entirely clear if its primary intent is economic or social (Fisk 1985: 69; Altman and Sanders 1991c). Seventy-five per cent of the CDEP scheme allocation substitutes social security entitlements from the Department of Social Security (DSS) and so does not represent an increase in government funding per se; an increase in the funds allocated to the CDEP scheme represents a proportional reduction in the DSS allocations. Because DSS allocations would show up in the social stream, the data for Western Australia shown here overstate the apparent change in emphasis to the economic stream.

**Table 6. Western Australia: State Government allocations to social functions, 1990-1991 (\$ million).**

Department	Program	Allocations
Health		
Alcohol and Drug Authority	various	2.08
Ministry of Health	various	9.62
Social security and welfare		
Department for Community Services	various	0.19
Housing and community services		
State Electricity Commission	ACDP/power <sup>a</sup>	1.72
Water Authority	ACDP/water	1.52
Main Roads Department	roads	1.03
AAPA <sup>b</sup> and Homeswest	ACDP/housing	no data
AAPA <sup>b</sup>	ACDP/community management	no data
Culture and recreation		
Western Australian Museum	site protection	1.00
Aboriginal Arts Committee of the Australia Council	art	0.27
Law, order and public safety		
Police Department	various	2.50
AAPA <sup>b</sup> and Department of Corrections	ACDP/prison visitor scheme	2.00
Total		21.90

a. Aboriginal Community Development Program.

b. Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority.

Sources: Information from State and Commonwealth departments and from departmental annual reports.

If the CDEP scheme was not classified as economic but social, it would make a significant difference to the emphasis, reducing the economic stream to \$66 million and increasing the social stream to \$172 million. The economic stream would then account for only 28 per cent of the total allocations. Therefore, using allocations to such schemes as an indicator of government policy requires great care.

Also, shifting monies from the DSS to the CDEP scheme, which is administered by ATSIC, changes their function (social to economic) as well as their type (mainstream to special Aboriginal). When monies are in the DSS budget they are part of those funds which are the automatic right of all citizens. When these monies are notionally shifted into the CDEP scheme they become specific allocations for Aborigines. In reality only around 25 per cent of CDEP scheme monies represent special allocations to Aborigines, this being the additional payments to assist with the

**Table 7. Western Australia: State Government allocations to economic functions, 1990-1991, (\$ million).**

Department	Program	Allocations
Education		
Ministry of Education	Aboriginal education	4.78
Technical and Further Education		0.14
Labour and employment		
Dept. of Employment and Training		0.83
Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority	ACDP/land <sup>a</sup>	6.00
	ACDP/business	0.66
Aboriginal Lands Trust	ACDP/land	0.79
Department of Agriculture	Pastoral developmt	0.18
Department of Conservation and Land Management	Land management	0.20
Total		13.58

a. Aboriginal Community Development Program.

Sources: Information from State and Commonwealth departments and from departmental annual reports.

administration and implementation of the scheme. Thus, one could argue that the amount shown in Table 4 against the CDEP scheme should only be \$11.2 million, the 25 per cent additional payment. The total monies allocated specifically to Aborigines would then be reduced from \$238 million to \$204 million, a reduction of 14 per cent.

A feature of allocations within the Commonwealth's economic stream is that the majority are administered by just two agencies (Table 4). DEET is the Commonwealth department with responsibility for the Training for Aborigines Program (TAP) under the AEDP. Table 4 shows that DEET administers \$41.53 million (43 per cent), ATSIC administers the other \$55.5 million (57 per cent) of the economic allocations, and of that \$45.12 million are payments under the CDEP scheme. This raises the question of why DEET, the agency with expertise in employment and education matters, does not control all of the funds allocated to economic and employment-related functions.

Possible reasons which could be given for this include that (a) the CDEP scheme was first initiated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (the forerunner of ATSIC) in the late 1970s and (b) that the CDEP scheme has a community focus, and ATSIC is the agency which best understands the social dynamic of Aboriginal communities. However, as DEET also administers community sector training programs, as well as training programs which augment the CDEP scheme, this is a contestable issue. It would seem sensible to have all economic-related programs inside one

agency. Whether this should be the agency with cultural expertise or economic and labour market expertise is open to debate. Alternatively, the AEDP could be split between the two agencies, with ATSIC dealing with community-related employment and development functions, and DEET dealing with mainstream labour market functions.

Of the State's contribution to economic oriented monies in Table 2, a major allocation (\$6.79 million) is to land and land management as part of the joint State/Commonwealth ACDP (Table 6). The purpose of the program is to '... aid the physical, social and economic development of Aboriginal communities upon their own lands' (Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority 1989: 11). The precise allocation of these monies is hard to determine as the AAPA's annual reports for the period (the latest published AAPA report available is for 1988-89) are rather ambiguous. However, it is estimated that the State's contribution to the economic stream represents 6 per cent of the total (Table 2). There is an argument for considering land as a social rather than an economic resource in some instances (Young 1987) and, if this was the case, the economic stream would be further reduced. Data are not available to determine if the State monies were directed to purchase land for social or economic purposes. Table 2 indicates that local governments have no special services or programs for Aborigines with either a social or economic intent.

### **Spatial distribution of funds**

In suggesting an analysis of government expenditures on Aborigines which would reflect the population distribution, the units considered by Fisk were the Aboriginal residential categories of: cities, large towns, small towns, Aboriginal towns, and outstations (Fisk 1985: 9, 77). However, due to lack of data, Fisk was limited to noting the distribution of Commonwealth special allocations to each State for 1981. Data to determine allocations to the various Aboriginal residential categories are still not available from either the Commonwealth or State Governments, not least because the two levels of government do not yet agree on what may constitute certain residential units such as 'communities' (ATSIC, Western Australian State Office, pers. comm.). Although a spatial analysis is relevant to any socioeconomic activity involving the allocation of public funds, it is less clear what would be an appropriate unit of analysis (Morrill 1974).

There would appear to be an argument for collecting and analysing data on the basis of ATSIC regions. There are 13 ATSIC regions totally inside Western Australia, and two which cross the South Australia and Northern Territory borders. Each region has an elected council with the statutory responsibility for preparing regional plans and prioritising expenditure in its region. At the present time, the ATSIC regional councils are only

involved in prioritising the Commonwealth monies allocated to the non-national programs in their areas, and primarily only those which are under the control of ATSIC. So councils have limited influence over what State or local governments, or Commonwealth departments such as DEET or Health, Housing and Community Services, may or may not spend in their regions. Also, the boundaries of the ATSIC regions do not coincide with local government areas nor the administrative boundaries used by Western Australian State Government departments, all of which are quite different. The result is that there is no one set of geographic jurisdictions, used by either Commonwealth, State, local governments, nor by ATSIC, for administrative purposes.

Although data based on ATSIC regions would be valuable for regional planning purposes, analysis at another level may also inform wider policy decisions. The Australian population is concentrated along coastal belts in the southwest and the east, such that the country can be considered as consisting of two general zones: one which is the urbanised coastal fringe, and the other which is variously classified as sparsely settled (Australian Bureau of Statistics n.d., quoted in Faulkner and French 1983), the 'sparselands' (Holmes 1988), or as 'remote' (Commonwealth Grants Commission 1988; Humphreys 1988; Taylor 1991b; Faulkner and French 1983). Although it warns that defining a remote region will involve a measure of subjectivity, the Commonwealth Grants Commission suggests that the States and Territories which have remote zones are Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory, New South Wales and Queensland. As noted earlier the majority of Western Australia is remote and the remote zone is particularly pertinent when considering the allocation of resources to Aborigines, with 53 per cent of the Aboriginal population living there.

Furthermore, there is a correlation between the remote zone and particular Aboriginal residential patterns. For instance, the remote zone contains the majority of Aboriginal 'communities' (community councils usually perform some modified version of local government functions), outstations, pastoral leases, and excisions from non-Aboriginal pastoral leases. In 1990 the remote zone contained all 52 CDEP scheme communities in Western Australia (ATSIC 1990c). It is more likely that Aborigines living in the remote zone would allocate some resources to culturally-relevant events such as ceremonies, and be involved in subsistence activities, and that these would be considered as legitimate forms of employment (Australian Government 1987a). The difference between the needs of Aborigines living in remote and urban areas is articulated in ATSIC's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (ATSIC 1990d), though ATSIC does not make a clear distinction between needs of Aborigines in small residential groupings within these broad geographic categories. In general economic terms, the remote zone is synonymous with low levels

of manufacturing and few value-added activities (Education and Lands and Surveys Departments of Western Australia 1979; Tesfaghiorghis 1991b), with seasonal employment and with a high level of non-Aboriginal transience (Taylor 1989). It can be argued, therefore, that allocations to Aborigines in remote areas will be constrained and conditioned by different factors to those allocations made to Aborigines in the urban areas.

This difference is implicit in the Commonwealth's AEDP which is broken into two main components. One is based on strategies applicable to those urbanised areas where there is a mainstream labour market (Australian Government 1987b), and the other on strategies, including the CDEP scheme, for more remote areas where the mainstream labour market is poorly formed and is unlikely to expand to any great extent (Altman 1990; Australian Government 1987c).<sup>10</sup>

A similar division of resources is suggested in the ATSIC allocations to Aboriginal organisations and communities. The total ATSIC allocation to Western Australia is an estimated \$104.25 million, and of this \$88.85 or 85 per cent is allocated to the remote region (Table 8). The ATSIC allocations to economic and social functions in each zone are not too dissimilar, but a remote/urban division is implicit in other resource allocations. For instance, with respect to its housing programs, ATSIC directs all of the \$8.55 million of its Rental Assistance Program to the remote region of Western Australia, along with one third of the \$15.8 million allocated within the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement (ATSIC 1990b: 32). Housing loans amounting to \$3.59 million are not included here, though it is pertinent that an estimated \$2.88 million or 80 per cent of these are taken up by Aborigines in urban areas.

However, the figures in Table 8 relate only to ATSIC's special allocations. Other departmental allocations are more difficult to apportion this way. DEET's allocation to the TAP in Western Australia is \$11.8 million which it distributes across three administrative areas, central, north and south. From the numbers and location of clients it can be estimated that the remote region comprises 100 per cent of the north, 14 per cent of the central, and none of the southern area. Translating these population figures into dollars suggests \$4.6 million or 39 per cent of the TAP allocation goes to the remote region. So, unlike the ATSIC allocations, those through DEET appear to focus rather more on the urban zone. This difference may occur because ATSIC has responsibility for CDEP scheme projects which are in the remote region while DEET is allocating resources towards strategies for the mainstream labour market which predominates in the urban areas. The difference may warrant a closer look at DEET's allocations to specific sub-programs in each zone. Such an investigation should consider the differences in the social and economic

**Table 8. ATSIC locational priorities in Western Australia, 1990-91 (\$ million).<sup>a</sup>**

Zone	ATSIC Allocations		Total
	Economic	Social	
Remote	48.55	40.30	88.85
Urban	6.64	8.76	15.40

a. Predominantly funds delivered through ATsIC excluding those administered by DEET or other mainstream departments. Excludes \$3.59 million housing loans. Excludes \$12.38 million administered by the ATsIC State office for State-wide functions, but does include the housing funds allocated under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (\$15.8 million), one third of which is allocated to the remote region.

environments in each zone and the implications of these differences for the design of labour market programs.

A geographic division can be observed within the Commonwealth and State allocations of the joint ACDP. As noted earlier, it has not been possible to obtain details of ACDP expenditure from the State's AAPA and a confidential report prepared by the State in 1990-91 on services to communities was not made available for this research. However, of the State's \$10 million contribution to the ACDP in 1989-90, \$6 million was allocated to land and \$3.24 million to community infrastructure (Tables 6 and 7) and as communities and Aboriginal-held land are predominantly in remote regions this suggests a remote emphasis. Again, the Commonwealth notes the major aim of the ACDP '... was to accelerate completion of excisions from pastoral stations, handover of Town and Aboriginal reserves ... and to provide infrastructure and services to Aboriginal communities' (ATSIC 1990b: 9), all principally remote zone functions. And, over the life of the ACDP, both the Commonwealth and the State have allocated funds to the State's water and power departments for use specifically in the remote region of Western Australia.

From a government perspective, it is expensive to provide services to remote regions (Fisk 1985: 11; Humphreys 1988; Holmes 1988). Remoteness is recognised as a 'disability factor' by the Commonwealth Grants Commission and those States which have remote regions use the remoteness factor to argue for additional assistance from the Commonwealth. For example, in its 1986 submission to the *CGC Review of the Distribution of General Revenue Grants 1986-1988*, the Western Australian Government points out that:

Remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia form a significant proportion of the population living in the non-urban areas and that therefore

the CGC should recognise ... the higher cost disabilities incurred in providing health, education and welfare services to remote Aboriginal communities by giving greater weight to the Aboriginal population living in remote communities in the calculation of the social composition disability (Government of Western Australia 1986: 11.1, 11.2, 11.7).

However, although the State Government may argue for additional Commonwealth assistance on the basis of its remote Aboriginal population, it may not allocate these funds to specific Aboriginal functions nor indeed, under the present arrangements between the States and the Commonwealth, is it required to do so (Commonwealth Grants Commission 1990: 3).

Whatever else, an analysis based on this division, albeit considering only the ATSIC funding (Table 8), shows a significant emphasis on the remote region. Eighty-five percent of ATSIC funding goes to this region though only 53 per cent of the Aboriginal population reside there; in other words 1.6 times the funding is allocated to the remote region than would be the case if the distribution was reckoned purely on a per capita basis. Alternatively, it can be argued that urban residents have greater and easier access to mainstream services (Taylor 1991a) and generally enjoy a higher level of basic services than those in the remote regions, and that even less of the funding provided by ATSIC, which is intended as a supplement (Altman and Sanders 1991a) should go to urban areas. The high proportion of funding to remote regions may be a broad indication of the needs which exist there and of the extra cost of providing special services.

## Conclusion

Despite the fact that this analysis has dealt with special allocations rather than expenditures, certain policy-relevant points can be made. First, the fact that data on funding are not readily available says a great deal about Commonwealth, State and local government responsibilities in Aboriginal affairs. Given the extremely low economic status of Aborigines demonstrated by statistical social indicators (Teschfaghiorghis and Altman 1991) and the high profile of Aboriginal affairs in the welfare and human rights arena (see, for example, Australian Council of Churches 1981; Equal Opportunities Commission 1990; Tickner 1991) it is surprising that all levels of government do not have data on their expenditure in this area. Cynics may conclude that the data are not available because governments are not making special efforts to improve the situation. Alternatively, it could be argued that the appropriate efforts are being made, but that these are not revealed in the special allocations to Aboriginal programs because they are unidentified in mainstream service provision to Aboriginal clients. The question remains about the appropriateness of mainstream services to Aborigines and the degree to

which Aboriginal people are able to access such services. No data exist to test these two policy options. Indeed, a lack of clarity is one of the dominant features of funding in the Aboriginal affairs policy arena. It is unclear who should pay for what, why, and in what way. If responsibilities are not well defined it follows that different agencies, irrespective of level of government, have limited incentive to keep accurate records. Indeed, it may be advantageous to governments under the present Australian federal system not to keep accurate data on expenditure levels.

Arranged on a crude State/Commonwealth/local government basis, Table 2 shows that the Commonwealth's contribution to special funding in Western Australia is 5.6 times that of the State, and that local government contributes nothing. However, these data include Commonwealth monies which should not be regarded as specific Aboriginal allocations, such as those under the CDEP scheme, 75 per cent of which are a notional transfer from the DSS. Therefore, until it is made clearer what monies are to be classified as specifically for Aborigines, and which of these are the responsibility of various governments, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions about current responsibilities.

Analysing funding according to primary function shows that funds are divided almost equally between the social and economic streams. Although any comparison with Fisk's (1985) analysis must be tentative, because only data for Commonwealth allocations at a national level were available for his research, the proportion of economic-oriented allocations appears to have increased only slightly despite the major policy thrust of the Miller Report (1985) recommending a shift from welfare to economic funding, and the subsequent introduction of the AEDP. Fisk (1985: 117) suggested that spending on social functions could be justified when the general economy was depressed (as at the present time). However, economic development has a long lead-time and investments in human and other capital do not take effect immediately. Therefore, an alternative argument to Fisk's could be that the economic emphasis proposed by Miller should be maintained in the present economic climate so that Aboriginal people, like other citizens, are in a position to take advantage of opportunities as the macroeconomic situation improves.

The geographical analysis of the distribution of funding shows that the distinction between remote and urban zones is reflected by the considerable special allocations to the remote regions by some agencies. It is difficult to locate any specific allocations earmarked for urban Aborigines, though in Western Australia these people comprise 47 per cent of the Aboriginal population. The distribution of allocations may be largely the result of the focus given to land, community infrastructure, basic services and the CDEP scheme, and the fact that these functions and activities occur predominantly in the remote zone. This paper makes both

a quantitative and qualitative distinction between the remote and urban regions. The issues and their solutions, such as those associated with service delivery and social and economic change, are unlikely to be the same in these two regions and this difference should be reflected in the notions of disadvantage and associated special funding. Clarification of what 'disadvantage' actually means in both remote and urban regions would help ensure that resources are allocated in proportions that are relevant to particular circumstances in each region.

The current Hawke Labor Government has placed the need for a 'new' federalism on the political agenda. While details of a revised federal system are currently very uncertain and await agreement between the Commonwealth and the States, indications are that the States might have greater control over fiscal matters. Such a change could make the issue of responsibility and funding in Aboriginal affairs even more problematic than at present, a possibility which is already raising concerns amongst some Aboriginal spokespersons (*West Australian*, 26 October 1991). It can be argued that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive system to collect data to accurately reflect the current financial situation, thus allowing a more efficient and effective allocation of public resources.

### Notes

1. In accordance with normal convention, the terms Aboriginal and Aborigines in this paper will be taken to refer to both the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander populations.
2. Exceptions to this were public rented housing where Aborigines accessed 17 per cent of normal housing stock (Homeswest official pers. comm.); government schools where they occupied 4.5 per cent of the primary and 3.5 per cent of the secondary places (Ministry of Education 1990: 18), and prisons where they made up 35 per cent of the inmates (Commonwealth of Australia 1991: 197).
3. For a comparison of Aboriginal socioeconomic indicators derived from the 1986 ABS census by level of State and by level of ATSI regions, see Tesfaghiorghis (1991a, 1991b).
4. Exceptions to this include royalties collected from mining on Aboriginal reserves, but this amount is nominal. Also under a special agreement, local Aboriginal people receive annual payments under a Good Neighbour Program from the Argyle diamond mine in the East Kimberley (see Coombs et al. 1989).
5. Davis et al. (1988: 187) point out that issues such as the difference between a basic and a luxury and definitions of a 'poverty line' are contingent and cannot be given as absolutes.
6. Exceptions here are the Main Roads Department which has estimated that they would require \$47 million to provide roads of an acceptable standard to remote communities. The Ministry of Education have also costed an Aboriginal education plan.

7. This applies only to untied, or general revenue, grants. Tied, or specific purpose, payments can only be used for the purpose for which they were originally allocated.
8. Altman and Sanders (1991a) have argued that it may have been successful in this latter regard as, since 1970, Commonwealth mainstream agencies have increased their proportion of the Commonwealth's allocations for Aborigines. On the other hand, such a trend may make the rationale for ATSIC's existence more ambiguous (Sanders 1991).
9. See the volume edited by Altman (1991) for an interdisciplinary critique of this policy objective.
10. The CDEP scheme has been expanded into some urban areas. However, as at 1990, only 22 (or 12 per cent) of the total 166 CDEP scheme projects were located in urban areas, 18 of those in New South Wales, the State with the greatest urbanisation of Aborigines.

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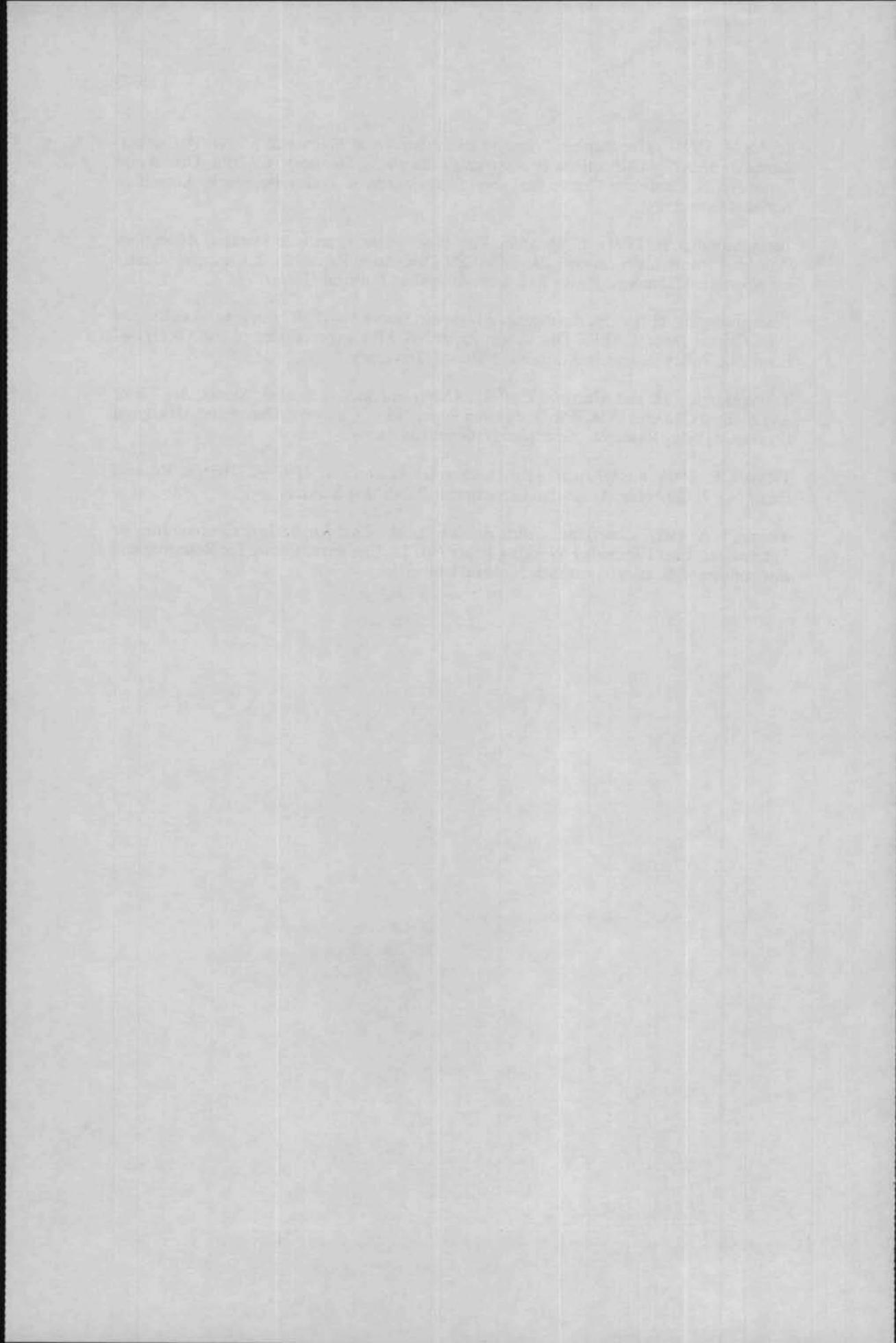
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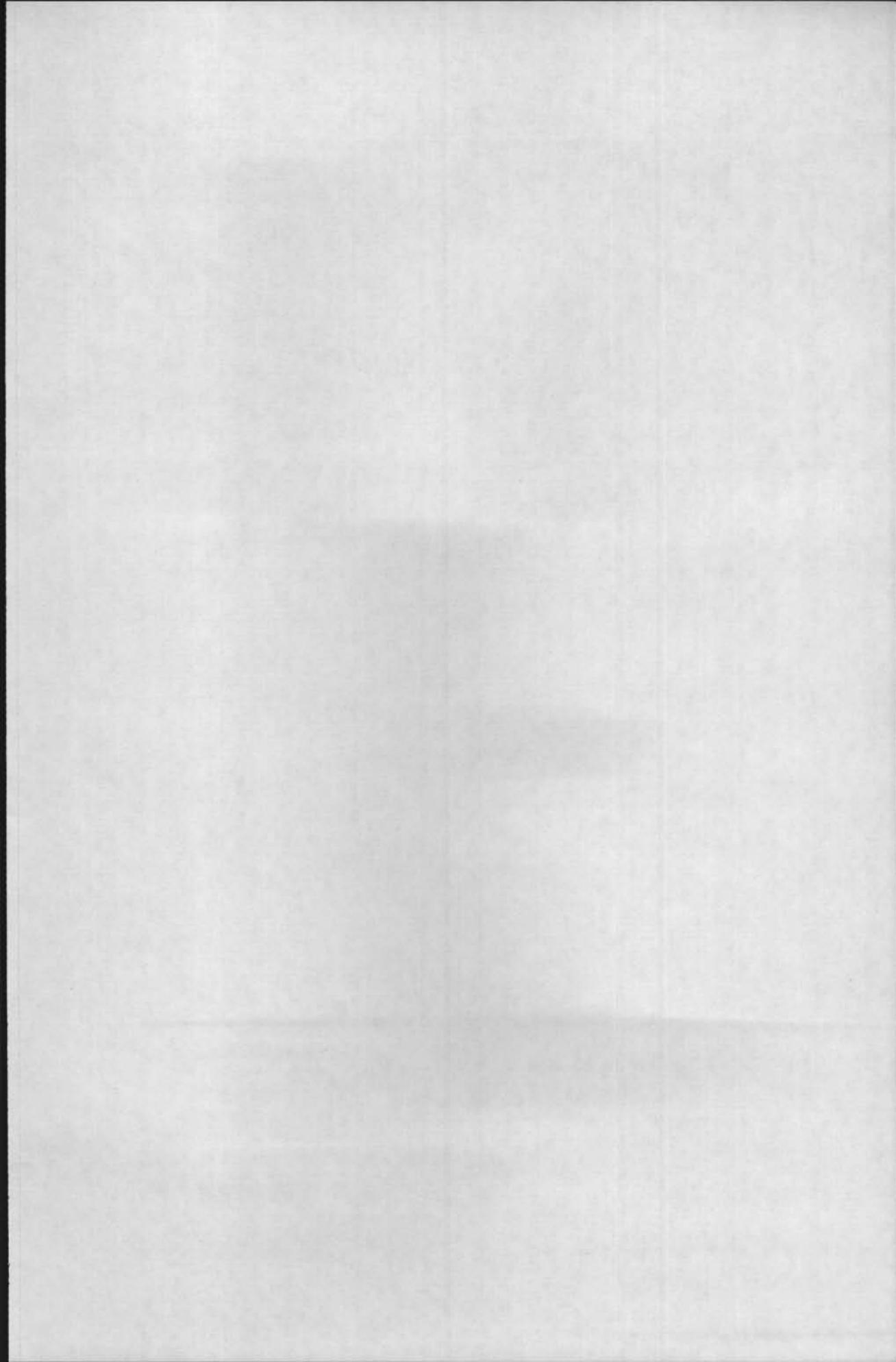
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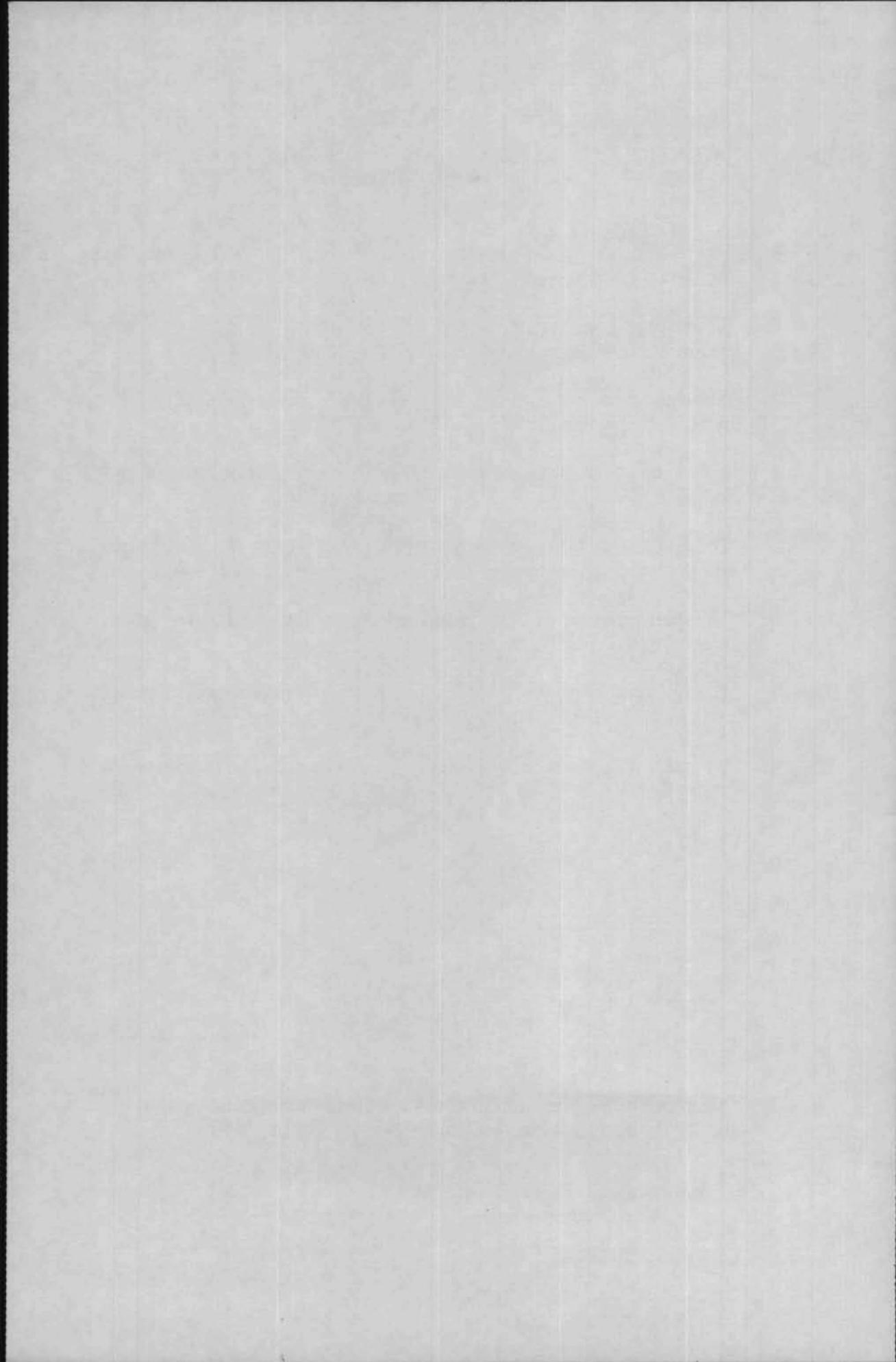
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