

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS

ABORIGINAL STUDIES

ANNUAL REPORT 1979

The high level of interest in Aboriginal studies continues throughout the country. In 1977, fourteen out of eighteen universities listed some forty-nine course units dealing with Aborigines. This year, eighteen out of nineteen universities have listed one hundred and seventy-two course units with substantial references to Aborigines. In addition, the number of CAEs offering units in Aboriginal studies, or those which have substantial reference to Aborigines, has risen from thirty-two in 1977 to forty-eight in 1979 (see Barlow, 1979).

Although the student numbers taking Aboriginal studies courses at the ANU appear to have dropped this year - see Table 1 -, actual involvement in courses has remained at almost exactly the same level, and students taking courses concerned entirely with Aborigines numbered 262.

Students enrolled in Aboriginal studies courses came largely from the Arts Faculty, but this year there have also been students from Forestry and Geology. This reflects more than personal interest. Now Aborigines own 20 % of the Northern Territory: all five major mine developments and most forestry projects are on Aboriginal land. Understanding Aboriginal society has become of wide practical importance. Although no survey has been made, it is also clear that an increasing number of students whose home is in the Northern Territory are taking the courses.

It is gratifying to learn that a number of students who have graduated from these courses are now working for Aboriginal organisations in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and that a substantial number of the students are employed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

1980 will see the introduction of a new semester course; Linguistics A16, which will be less specialised than the year-long A12 and should appeal particularly to students planning to teach in outback Australia.

Somewhat unexpectedly, academically oriented Aboriginal studies courses suddenly have a practical relevance.

Nicolas Peterson
Convener

Encl.

Reference: Barlow, A. 1979 Aboriginal studies: Courses and units at Australian universities, colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology. Canberra, AIAS.

TABLE 1

Student numbers (those sitting) in Aboriginal Studies courses - 1977-1979:

	1977	1978	1979
History 2/3N	30	32	18
Anthropology B5	70	94	72
Anthropology B17*	40	62	69
Prehistory B4	38	64	38
Linguistics A12	13	N/0**	11
	<u>191***</u>	<u>252</u>	<u>208</u>
	===	===	===

* Formerly Sociology B17

** Not offered

*** Alternatively 204, since Linguistics A12 is a year-long unit.