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Discussion Paper



**Geographic variations in the economic  
status of Aboriginal people:  
a preliminary investigation**

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## SERIES NOTE

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## **ABSTRACT**

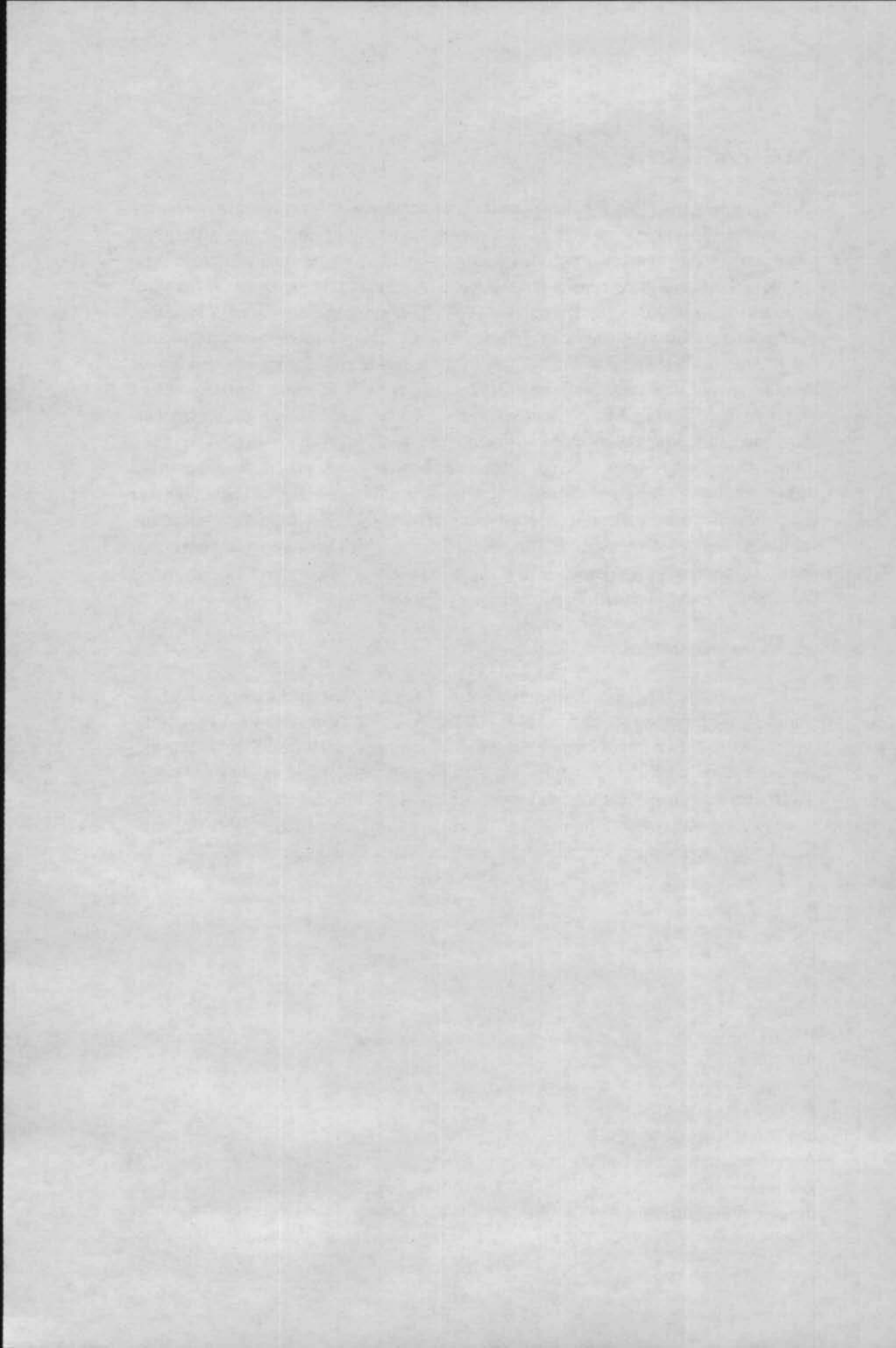
An exploratory analysis of the 1986 Census shows considerable heterogeneity in Aboriginal spatial distribution as well as in socio-economic status. While the majority of Aborigines reside in urban areas, a significant proportion, 34 per cent, still live in rural areas, in contrast to 14 per cent for non-Aboriginal Australians. The analysis of Aboriginal spatial settlement shows that Aborigines live as a 'minority population' in most localities. Comparisons of socio-economic indicators calculated at State levels showed that overall, Aborigines in the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Victoria enjoyed higher socio-economic status than in other States. On the other hand, Aborigines in the Northern Territory and Western Australia had lower status. Those in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia occupied an intermediate position. With respect to section-of-State, Aborigines resident in major urban centres were better off than those in other urban areas who were generally better off than their rural counterparts. In general, this analysis shows that Aboriginal economic status is positively linked to the economic status of non-Aborigines in the State and section-of-State in which they live. The conclusion raises a range of policy issues in the overall context of the Federal Government's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy.

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This paper considers geographic distributions of the Aboriginal population and associated variations in Aboriginal socio-economic status. The terms *Aborigines* or *Aboriginal people* are used throughout to include Torres Strait Islander people. Previous research has demonstrated that geographic location is an important factor influencing Aboriginal economic status (Altman and Nieuwenhuysen 1979; Fisk 1985). This preliminary investigation based on analysis of data from the 1986 Census's published reports, printouts, microfiches, and CD-Rom data sets examines whether this apparent correlation between location and economic status remains. The economic status of *Aborigines* relative to the non-Aboriginal population is also shown using comparative social indicators. The paper ends by outlining some policy implications of this analysis.

### **Age and sex structure**

Aboriginal demographic history shows that their numbers continued to decline after white settlement until probably the first half of this century 'through violence, social disruption and probably, most importantly, through imported diseases' (Santow et al 1988: 30; Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 1990: 3-4). The Aboriginal population comprises 1.5 per cent of the total Australian population according to the 1986 Census. It is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the number of *Aborigines* before or after white settlement, as Aboriginal people only began to be comprehensively counted in official Australian Censuses from 1971. There are indications that the Aboriginal population is growing at an annual population growth rate of 4.5 per cent, from 115,953 in 1971 to 227,645 in 1986. It is not known how much of this growth is due to increasing willingness to identify as Aboriginal, as Aboriginality in the Census is determined by self-identification, but whatever the degree of this influence Aboriginal population growth is evident, at least at the rate of about 2 per cent per annum (Gray and Smith 1983: 7).

The overall Aboriginal age-sex structure given in Table 1 shows a disproportionate number of children and youth relative to other Australians (see the first and last panels of Table 1). The percentage of the population under 30 years was 72 per cent for *Aborigines*, in marked contrast to 48 per cent for other Australians. The sex structure of the two populations shows both similarities and considerable differences. The sex structure was similar among children under the age of 15 years, with a sex ratio of 104-105 males per 100 females, as is normally expected. However, in the age ranges 15-59 years, *Aborigines* had a deficit of males compared to a rather balanced sex structure for other Australians (slight excess of males). At ages 60 years and over both populations show a deficit of males, especially other Australians, owing to higher male than female mortality at older ages. While differences in age structure between the two populations are due to high fertility and mortality of *Aborigines* relative to low rates for other Australians, the imbalanced sex structure of *Aborigines* at young and adult ages is due to greater sex differentials in mortality at these age groups among *Aborigines* compared to the rest of the population.

**Table 1. Comparison of Aboriginal age-sex structure with other Australians: 1986 Census.**

Aboriginal population: total				
Age groups	Males	Females	Total	Sex ratio
00-14	41.0	38.5	39.8	104
15-29	31.7	32.1	31.9	97
30-39	11.8	12.6	12.1	92
40-59	11.6	12.3	12.0	92
60 & over	3.9	4.5	4.2	84
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	98
Aboriginal population: major urban				
Age groups	Males	Females	Total	Sex ratio
00-14	40.5	36.4	38.4	104
15-29	34.5	34.4	34.5	94
30-39	12.3	13.8	13.1	84
40-59	10.1	11.7	10.9	80
60 & over	2.6	3.7	3.1	65
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	93
Aboriginal population: other rural				
Age groups	Males	Females	Total	Sex ratio
00-14	37.9	38.5	38.2	107
15-29	30.3	29.5	29.9	111
30-39	12.4	12.3	12.4	110
40-59	13.9	13.9	13.9	108
60 & over	5.5	5.8	5.6	102
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	108
Non-Aboriginal population				
Age groups	Males	Females	Total	Sex ratio
00-14	23.7	22.4	23.0	105
15-29	25.3	24.5	24.9	102
30-39	16.0	15.7	15.9	101
40-59	21.5	20.5	21.0	104
60 & over	13.5	16.9	15.2	79
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	99

The analysis of Aboriginal population distribution by location follows the classifications and definitions of geographic areas used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), although it might have been more useful to use the classification used by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (now Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission or ATSIC): that is, cities, small non-Aboriginal towns, Aboriginal towns, and outstations (Fisk 1985: 8-9). The ABS uses four categories of section-of-State: major urban, other urban, rural locality, and other rural/rural balance. Major urban are all centres with a population of 100,000 and over. Other urban are centres with a population of 1,000 to 99,999. Rural localities are population clusters of 200 to 999 persons and other rural is the remainder of the State/Territory. Other geographic areas used in the analysis are Legal Local Government Area (LLGA) and Statistical Local Area (SLA). LLGA is a spatial unit which represents the geographical area of responsibility of an incorporated local government authority. Except for the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, and the large northern parts of South Australia, all areas of Australia are covered by LLGAs (ABS 1987a: 1). SLAs cover incorporated and unincorporated areas, and thus cover the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. The term 'State' is used here to simplify and includes the two territories, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

There are age and sex differentials among Aborigines by place of residence, and these are demonstrated by the data for the two extremes: Aborigines living in major urban areas and remote rural localities (other rural). Despite a broadly similar age structure, major urban areas had relatively more young people aged 15-29 years, while remote localities had more older people over the age of 40 years. The proportion of males aged 60 years and over in remote areas was 2.1 times more than their counterparts in major urban areas. The corresponding figure for females was 1.6 times. The most marked difference between the two populations is in sex structure. The remote communities had a considerable surplus of males at all ages, while the major urban areas show an opposite excess of females starting at ages 15 years and over. These observed differences in age-sex structure can be interpreted as a result of female predominance in rural-urban migration or more male return-migration, or both. Gray (1989) notes that the migration of young single adults to the cities is often counter-balanced by counter-moves by somewhat older adults with their children to the country. His data also give some indication that the prevalence of out-migration from cities was more common for males than for females, possibly due to seasonal employment in rural areas.

The overall Aboriginal sex ratios by place of residence were: 93 males per 100 females in major urban areas, 96 in other urban centres, and 104 in rural localities. The corresponding figures for other Australians were 97, 99 and 111 respectively. The Aboriginal sex structure also shows considerable variations between States and within States by section-of-State with an urban-rural pattern similar to those already discussed. The exceptions occurred in Tasmania which had a balanced urban sex ratio, and the Northern Territory which had a deficit of males in both urban and rural areas. The causes for the Aboriginal sex imbalances are not clear. According to Gale and Wundersitz (1982: 24-38) the



Aboriginal male shortage in Adelaide occurred because the city offers greater opportunities for females than males, especially in relation to marriage and housing (about half of married females had non-Aboriginal partners), and this encouraged more females to migrate to Adelaide on a permanent basis.

### Urban-rural residence

The 1986 Census which enumerated 227,645 Aborigines showed that the majority of Aborigines lived in urban areas; 24 per cent in major urban areas, another 42 per cent in other urban areas, and 34 per cent in rural areas (see Table 2). In contrast, non-Aboriginal Australians were more urbanised; 64 per cent lived in major urban centres, 22 per cent in other urban areas, and only 14 per cent in rural areas. There were, however, substantial State variations in Aboriginal urban residence. At one extreme is the Northern Territory where the majority of the Aboriginal population is rural and there is no major urban centre. Next to the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia had significant rural Aboriginal populations, about 35 per cent in each. At the other extreme are Victoria and New South Wales where the majority of the Aboriginal population was urban. The major urban component of Aboriginal population, excluding the Australian Capital Territory, was largest in Victoria (48 per cent), South Australia (40 per cent), and New South Wales (36 per cent).

**Table 2. Percentage distribution of State Aboriginal population within sections-of-State: 1986 Census.**

State	Major urban	Other urban	Rural localities	Other rural	Total
NSW	36	47	5	12	100
VIC	48	41	2	9	100
QLD	18	47	18	17	100
SA	40	32	9	19	100
WA	24	42	12	22	100
TAS	20	52	8	20	100
NT	-	31	38	31	100
ACT	86	-	-	14	100
Australia	24	42	15	19	100

The data in Table 3 present the relative distribution of Aboriginal population enumerated in each category of residence according to State of residence. For example, urban resident Aborigines (see columns 2 and 3 of Table 3) mainly live in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, while rural residents largely live in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. The largest number of major urban

resident Aborigines lived in New South Wales (39 per cent). A substantial proportion of Aborigines also lived in the major urban centres of Queensland and Western Australia. Victoria and South Australia each accounted for 10 per cent of major urban Aboriginal population, while the share of Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory was small. In terms of other urban Aborigines, about 60 per cent lived in Queensland and New South Wales, with each State accounting for about 30 per cent. Among rural people, the Northern Territory ranked first as home for Aborigines resident in rural localities, followed by Queensland; the Northern Territory and Queensland each had 25 per cent of all other rural residents.

**Table 3. Percentage distribution of section-of-State resident Aborigines according to State of residence: 1986 Census.**

State	Major urban	Other urban	Rural localities	Other rural	Total
NSW	39	29	9	17	26
VIC	11	5	1	3	5
QLD	20	30	32	25	27
SA	10	5	4	7	6
WA	16	16	14	20	17
TAS	2	4	1	3	3
NT	-	11	39	25	15
ACT	2	-	-	0	1
Australia					
Per cent	100	100	100	100	100
Population	55,537	95,879	34,054	42,175	227,645

### Variations in Aboriginal population distribution

Although Aborigines only accounted for 1.5 per cent of the Australian population, the absolute and relative size of the Aboriginal population varies considerably by States, rural-urban residence, and localities. This section analyses the geographic variations in the share of total population that was Aboriginal by examining their distribution by States, section-of-States and small areas. From this population distribution analysis, local areas of significant Aboriginal population concentration are identified.

#### Variations by State and section-of-State

The distribution of Aboriginal and total population, and the percentage of total population that was Aboriginal is classified by State and section-of-State in Table 4. The results show interesting similarities and differences in the pattern of geographic distribution of

Aborigines. The major urban areas had relatively few Aboriginal people, less than 1 per cent of their total population. The share of major urban area Aborigines was higher in Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia (about 1 per cent).

In general, Aborigines comprise a higher proportion of the population of rural areas than any other section-of-State, but there are significant differences between States. In one group, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, Aboriginal people represented a higher proportion of the 'other urban' population than the rural or 'major urban' population.

In these States, the share of other urban Aborigines varied from 0.7 per cent in Victoria to 2.5 per cent in New South Wales. In another group, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, and Queensland, where the share of the Aboriginal population was high relative to other States, there were more Aborigines in rural than in urban areas. It is worth noting that the Aboriginal component of rural areas was highest in the Northern Territory (more than half of the Territory's rural population) in contrast to the next highest figures of 6 per cent in Western Australia and 4 per cent in Queensland. In Tasmania, the other urban and rural areas had an equal share of Aborigines, each of 1.7 per cent.

At the State level (see the total for each State in Table 4), the relative size of the Aboriginal population was small, though Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory show higher relative sizes by comparison with the national figure. The Northern Territory is an exception as it is the only State or Territory with more than one-fifth of its total population being Aboriginal. Examination by sections-of-State shows that in addition to the Northern Territory, the other urban and rural areas of Western Australia and the rural component of the Australian Capital Territory (7.8 per cent) also had relatively significant Aboriginal components of the population.

### **Variations by locality**

Analysis of the distribution at State and section-of-State levels hides much of the variability in Aboriginal settlement. This point is more evident when smaller geographical areas are considered, as in Table 5 which shows the distribution of Legal Local Government Areas (LLGAs) by State and the per cent of their total population that was Aboriginal. As most of the rural population in the Northern Territory lives in unincorporated areas, Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) instead of LLGAs are used. A number of salient features emerge from an examination of Table 5. In general, Aborigines live as a 'minority population' in most localities: 57 per cent of all LLGAs had Aboriginal components of population of less than 1 per cent, and of the total LLGAs, 87 per cent had Aboriginal components of under 5 per cent. Only in 105 out of a total of 823 LLGAs, did Aborigines comprise 5 per cent or more of the population. In contrast more than 75 per cent of all SLAs in the Northern Territory had 5 per cent or more Aborigines.

**Table 4. Aboriginal and total population, and per cent Aboriginal, by State and section-of-State: 1986 Census.**

New South Wales			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	21,416	3,658,459	0.6
Other urban	27,352	1,088,754	2.5
Rural	10,243	654,668	1.6
Total	59,011	5,401,881	1.1
Victoria			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	5,968	2,771,317	0.2
Other urban	5,224	743,360	0.7
Rural	1,401	504,801	0.3
Total	12,611	4,019,478	0.3
Queensland			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	11,091	1,210,147	0.9
Other urban	28,788	840,395	3.4
Rural	21,389	545,773	3.9
Total	61,268	2,587,315	2.4
South Australia			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	5,696	917,000	0.6
Other urban	4,580	221,037	2.1
Rural	4,015	207,909	1.9
Total	14,291	1,345,945	1.1
Western Australia			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	8,949	895,710	1.0
Other urban	15,775	296,657	5.3
Rural	13,065	214,562	6.1
Total	37,789	1,406,929	2.7

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Table 4. Continued

Tasmania			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	1,351	127,106	1.1
Other urban	3,460	197,751	1.7
Rural	1,905	111,496	1.7
Total	6,716	436,353	1.5
Northern Territory			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Other urban	10,700	110,059	9.7
Rural	24,039	43,789	54.9
Total	34,739	154,848	22.4
Australian Capital Territory			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	1,048	247,194	0.4
Rural	172	2,213	7.8
Total	1,220	249,407	0.5
Australia			
Section-of-State	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Major urban	55,537	9,817,933	0.6
Other urban	95,879	3,499,012	2.7
Rural	76,229	2,285,211	3.3
Total	227,645	15,602,156	1.5

The regional distribution of LLGAs by per cent of Aboriginal population shows some variation. While the majority of LLGAs in Victoria and South Australia, and about half in New South Wales were located at the lowest end of the distribution of per cent Aboriginal, the majority of Northern Territory SLAs were located at the upper end of the distribution. In between the two extremes were Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania where the modal distribution was 1.0-4.9 per cent, with Queensland and Western Australia having many LLGAs with 5 per cent or more Aborigines. While Tasmania and South Australia had a few LLGAs with a population 5 per cent or more Aboriginal, Victoria had none.

The 76 LLGAs/SLAs with 10 per cent or more Aborigines as per cent of the total population can be considered as having significant Aboriginal populations compared to their relative size of 1.5 per cent at the national level. These significant Aboriginal populations are only relative, as in absolute terms, some small localities with a few Aborigines may show significant relative sizes. As it is of interest to identify localities of relative Aboriginal population concentration, the Aboriginal and total population, and per cent Aboriginal in each of these localities by State are presented in Appendix 1.

It could be of interest to explore what factors have contributed to the concentration of Aborigines in these localities: say, historical or current Government policy influences such as settlement restrictions or granting of land rights, Aboriginal cultural attachments to the land, or economic factors. These factors are not explored here, but as these are mainly remote localities, the reason cannot be economic. Analysis of the 1986 ABS index of economic resources by Census Collection Districts (CDs) has shown that Aboriginal economic status is lower where Aborigines form a large or major share of the total population of an area (Gray and Tesfaghiorghis 1990: 25-7). Subsequent analysis of socio-economic status by section-of-State showed that rural localities had lower status. Altman (1990: 48) argues that remoteness and associated locational disadvantage is a main cause of economic underdevelopment.

**Table 5. Number of Legal Local Government Areas (LLGAs) by State and per cent Aboriginal population: 1986 Census.**

State	Aborigines as per cent of total population in LLGAs				Total number of LLGAs <sup>1</sup>
	under 1%	1.0 - 4.9%	5.0 - 9.9%	10% +	
NSW	81	65	14	6	166
VIC	198	13	-	-	211
QLD	40	59	17	19	135
SA	95	22	4	3	124
WA	43	58	16	23	140
TAS	14	30	2	1	47
Sub-total	471	247	53	52	823
NT	2	11	17	24	54
Australia	473	258	70	76	877

Note: 1. The cell numbers refer to the number of LLGAs in a given State and given interval of percentage of Aborigines, except for the Northern Territory where the number refers to Statistical Local Areas (SLAs).

The 76 localities of relative Aboriginal population concentration are distributed as follows: six LLGAs in New South Wales, 19 in Queensland, three in South Australia, 23 in Western Australia, one in Tasmania, and 24 SLAs in the Northern Territory. In some 34 of these localities, the Aboriginal component forms a substantial or a majority population. These were:

New South Wales: Central Darling (27 per cent) and Brewarrina (45 per cent);

Queensland: Aurukun (78 per cent), Boulia (29 per cent), Burke (72 per cent), Carpentaria (57 per cent), Cloncurry (25 per cent), Cook (40 per cent), Croydon (28 per cent), Diamantina (32 per cent), Mornington (89 per cent), and Torres (81 per cent);

Western Australia: Broome (41 per cent), Derby-West Kimberley (45 per cent), Halls Creek (76 per cent), Meekathara (31 per cent), Menzies (31 per cent), Mullewa (26 per cent), Wiluna (84 per cent), and Wyndham-East Kimberley (33 per cent);

Northern Territory: Alligator Balance (60 per cent), Bathurst/Melville (92 per cent), Daly (59 per cent), East Arnhem Balance (91 per cent), Elsey Balance (35 per cent), Groote Eylandt (41 per cent), Gulf (72 per cent), Palmerston Balance (37 per cent), Petermann (35 per cent), Sandover Balance (70 per cent), Tableland (46 per cent), Tanami (84 per cent), Tennant Creek Balance (60 per cent), and Victoria (63 per cent).

The high Aboriginal population concentration in these localities demonstrates that the geographic distribution of the Aboriginal population is highly variable. Settlement is also highly localised within a State: for example, high concentrations occur in some of the northern parts of South Australia, in the northern, far-north and north-west of Queensland, in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Central statistical divisions of Western Australia, and in the upper Top End of the Northern Territory, especially East Arnhem, and in the central Northern Territory, especially the region surrounding Alice Springs (ABS 1988: 6-8; ABS 1989a: 4; ABS 1989b: 4-5; ABS 1990: 12).

One question that arises from the foregoing is whether the spatial distribution of Aboriginal population is influenced by the population size of localities. This is examined in relation to the distribution of Aborigines within the LLGAs of New South Wales, a State where a quarter of the enumerated Aboriginal population lives. The data in Table 6 reveal that the relative size of Aboriginal population is inversely related to the population size of the LLGA in which they live. In the 48 LLGAs with under 5,000 population, the per cent of total population that was Aboriginal was 4.1 per cent; this figure declined to 2.3 per cent for LLGAs with population between 10,000 and 20,000, and progressively dropped to 0.6 per cent in LLGAs with 100,000 or more population. Thus the data for New South Wales suggest that Aborigines are a more important component of smaller, rather than larger, localities.

**Table 6. Distribution of Aboriginal people by population size of LLGAs: NSW, 1986 Census.**

Population size	No. of LLGAs	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent of LLGAs
under 5,000	48	6,718	163,245	4.1
5,000-9,999	28	7,459	192,757	3.9
10,000-19,999	25	8,253	353,019	2.3
20,000-49,999	37	15,752	1,228,854	1.3
50,000-99,999	12	6,215	857,517	0.7
100,000 +	16	13,389	2,196,142	0.6
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>166</b>	<b>57,786</b>	<b>4,991,534</b>	<b>1.2</b>

Note: 1. Total population figure slightly lower than those given in Table 4, because of the exclusion of the 'not stated' category.

The other question that arises from the preceding discussions is what absolute, as distinct from relative, size of Aboriginal population live in the legally incorporated and unincorporated local areas of Australia? The data in Table 7 clearly show that the Aboriginal population living in these areas is small. Close to two-thirds of all LLGAs had less than 100 Aborigines living in them. There were only 52 LLGAs or SLAs out of a total of 877 with 1,000 or more Aborigines living in them, mainly in Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales, and the Northern Territory.

### **Languages use by location**

The 1986 Census collected information on languages other than English spoken at home and proficiency of English for persons aged five years and over. At the national level, 18 per cent of Aborigines spoke Aboriginal languages at home. This is similar to the finding of a 1977 survey by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs where just over 20 per cent of those surveyed stated that English was not their main language (Fisk 1985: 2). There were, however, considerable regional variations. The percentage of Aborigines who spoke Aboriginal languages ranged from a low of under 1 per cent in Tasmania, 1 per cent in New South Wales, 2 per cent in Victoria, and 3 per cent in the Australian Capital Territory, to as high as 9 per cent in Queensland, 21 per cent in South Australia, 24 per cent in Western Australia and 68 per cent in the Northern Territory.

Information on English proficiency is useful not only as an indication of maintenance of Aboriginal cultural identity, but also to understand the degree to which English proficiency influences education, employment, and income status.



**Table 7. Number of LLGAs by number of resident Aboriginal people, by State: 1986 Census.**

	Aboriginal population in LLGA				Total no. of LLGAs
	under 100	100-499	500-999	1000 +	
NSW	67	61	27	11	166
VIC	171	38	2	-	211
QLD	67	37	15	16	135
SA	99	19	5	1	124
WA	82	37	8	13	140
TAS	29	16	2	-	47
Sub-total	515	208	59	41	823
NT (SLAs)	15	22	6	11	54
Australia	530	230	65	52	877

Proficiency in English at home among Aboriginal people aged five years and over by State and section-of-State is shown in Table 8. At the national level, the percentage of Aborigines who do not speak English at all was negligible (1 per cent), and those who do not speak English at all, plus those who do not speak it well, was also small, being 6 per cent. Thus most Aborigines speak English only or speak English well with other Aboriginal languages; those who speak English only accounted for 77 per cent of all Aborigines.

There were, however, considerable variations in English proficiency between States and section-of-State. Whereas almost all Aborigines in Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory speak English only, a substantial proportion of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland either speak English with Aboriginal languages, or could not speak English or speak it well. In Queensland, regional variation in the proficiency of English is evident. While 95 per cent of all Aborigines in South and Central Queensland speak English only, this figure was reduced to 87 per cent in North Queensland, and to 64 per cent in Far-North Queensland. In Far-North Queensland about one-third of the people, mainly Torres Strait Islanders, spoke English with Aboriginal languages (ABS 1989b: 10). The lack of English proficiency is most evident in the rural areas of the Northern Territory, where between a quarter and a third of all Aborigines could not speak English well or not at all. The corresponding figure for South Australia was 21 per cent. English proficiency is low in remote rural Aboriginal communities. For instance, the 1.4 per cent Aborigines who could not speak English at all in Western Australia live in the remote divisions of the State; and

**Table 8. Aboriginal proficiency in English by State and section-of-State: 1986 Census<sup>1</sup>.**

State	Speaks English				
	only	& other languages	not well	not at all	not stated
New South Wales	96.5	1.9	0.3	0.0	1.3
Victoria	94.0	3.5	0.5	0.2	1.8
Queensland	83.6	13.9		0.3	2.1
Western Australia	72.7	22.9	-	1.4	-
Tasmania	98.4	0.8	0.1	-	0.7
South Australia					
Major urban	88.2	8.4	0.9	0.2	1.3
Other urban	81.3	15.7	0.8	0.1	2.1
Non-urban	44.7	25.2	13.8	6.9	9.3
Total	73.6	15.5	4.5	2.1	4.3
Northern Territory					
Other urban	64.9	25.6	4.9	0.5	4.2
Rural localities	4.3	56.5	25.0	7.0	7.2
Other rural	13.6	52.8	23.8	4.3	5.5
Total	26.0	45.7	18.4	4.2	5.7
Australian Capital Territory					
Major urban	93.9	4.7	0.2	-	1.2
Other rural	97.3	2.7	-	-	-
Total	94.3	4.5	0.2	-	1.0
Australia					
Major urban	93.6	4.0	0.5	0.1	1.8
Other urban	87.3	9.0	1.4	0.2	2.1
Rural localities	45.5	32.7	13.6	3.7	4.5
Other rural	56.3	26.3	11.3	2.4	3.7
Total	76.8	14.6	4.9	1.1	2.6

Note: 1. Only available by section-of-State for South Australia, Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, and Australia.

of the 7,420 Western Australian Aborigines who also spoke Aboriginal languages, most lived in the northern and eastern parts of the State (ABS 1989a: 5-6). It is also worth noting the tendency in all States for English usage to decline on a gradient running from major urban areas down to other rural localities.

### Socio-economic indicators

Does the spatial distribution and relative size of Aboriginal population, and its English proficiency have an influence on Aboriginal socio-economic status? Seven indicators are used to examine variations by State and section-of-State. These indicators include population (population distribution in per cent), per cent Aborigines, per cent proficient in English, per cent qualified, per cent employed, median individual income, and per cent of all households with annual income under \$15,000. As the first two variables have already been examined above, the definitions of the remaining variables are as follows:

*Per cent proficient in English:* those who speak English only, plus those who speak English very well or well with Aboriginal languages;

*Per cent qualified:* proportion of population aged 15 years and over with certificate or higher educational qualifications;

*Per cent employed:* percentage of total population aged 15-64 years that was employed;

*Median individual income:* annual incomes of individuals aged 15 years and over whereby the median is the point where 50 per cent of all individuals earned below that income and the other 50 per cent earned above that income;

*Per cent of households with income under \$15,000:* per cent of total households that earned annual incomes of \$15,000 or less.

In discussing income from Census data, however, some caveats must be noted. The Census requires a definition of income as gross income before any deductions from all sources usually received each week from persons aged 15 years and over. Actual individual gross incomes were not recorded, instead census respondents were asked to choose from precoded income brackets. Hence, it is not possible to accurately identify at what point of the income interval an individual's income actually fell. Even more problematic are the wide income intervals used in the ABS published tables which make the calculation of median and mean incomes difficult; especially as the assumption of even income distribution within the interval is not valid. As Aboriginal incomes tend to concentrate toward the lower end of income brackets, the wider income-class intervals used by ABS in the published tables has an upward bias on Aboriginal income. This is particularly so with the individual data by section-of-State where the median class for all States, except the Australian Capital Territory, fell in the bracket \$4001-9000. For instance, median income for all Aborigines calculated on the basis of this interval was

\$7,130, while the preferred estimate based on a smaller median class of \$6001-9000 was \$6,210. The median individual incomes by State and section-of-State are adjusted downwards on the basis of the published smaller income intervals available at national and State levels.

Other problems include the following. First, is the high non-response rate characteristic of Aboriginal incomes; about 20 per cent of all households and 13 per cent of all individuals did not answer the income question. In general, the non-response rate was lower in major urban followed by other urban, and higher in rural areas, especially in rural localities. Persons and households with income not stated were excluded from the calculation of income variables here. Second, given poor English proficiency, there is a possibility that Aborigines did not understand the question or do not know their incomes in weekly or annual terms. Third, is the definitional problem of determining the difference between individual and household income, on the one hand, and defining precisely what constitutes a household for income purposes in a society where reciprocity is so important, on the other hand. The fourth general problem, is that Census questions are not verified in any way. A final issue that may understate incomes of rural respondents is the measurement problem linked to the inappropriateness of the income question for non-cash income. Subsistence income from hunting, fishing and gathering can be significant, especially in rural and other rural localities (Fisk 1985; Altman 1988).

Socio-economic indicators by State and section-of-State are set out in Table 9. Before examining these, some comparative data on the relative standing of the Aboriginal population as a whole compared to the non-Aboriginal population may be instructive. The percentage of persons with educational qualifications was 6 per cent for Aborigines and 26 per cent for non-Aboriginal Australians. The percentage of employed non-Aboriginal Australians was nearly twice that of Aborigines, 63 per cent compared to 33 per cent. Median Aboriginal individual income was about two-thirds that of non-Aboriginal people, \$6,210 compared to \$9,660. The percentage of households with annual incomes of \$15,000 or less was 38 for Aborigines and 33 per cent for non-Aboriginal Australians. The Aboriginal population has a high childhood dependency burden as well as large household size. The share of total population that was under 15 years was 40 per cent for Aborigines and 23 per cent for non-Aboriginal Australians. The average household size was 4.4 for Aborigines and 2.8 for non-Aborigines. Of all these indicators, the gap between the two populations is smallest for household income under \$15,000 per annum. This is probably due in part to the large number (20 per cent) of Aboriginal respondents who did not answer this question in the Census compared to non-Aborigines (11 per cent). It is also due to the larger average Aboriginal household size which tend to raise total household income. However, incomes greater than \$15,000 could mask variations. For example, median household income for households receiving above \$15,000 was \$30,330 for non-Aborigines, but only \$26,340 for Aborigines; and the percentage of households who earned \$40,000 or more was 18 per cent for Aborigines and 28 per cent for non-Aborigines.



An examination of Table 9 reveals many salient features. Overall, Aborigines in the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Victoria enjoyed higher socio-economic status than in other States, as measured by per cent of qualified persons, per cent employed, and median annual individual income. On the other hand, Aborigines in the Northern Territory and Western Australia had lower status. Those in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia occupied an intermediate position. Excluding the exceptionally high income of the Australian Capital Territory, income differentials between the other States were also large. Aboriginal median individual income in the Northern Territory and Western Australia fell short of those in Tasmania and Victoria by about 22 per cent. These patterns of State differentials in Aboriginal incomes had remained similar to those found in the 1976 and 1981 Censuses (Fisk 1985: 57-59). The per cent of households with annual gross incomes of \$15,000 or less did not show a pattern consistent with the other socio-economic indicators, due mainly to the high non-response rate and other problems discussed above. It did, however, show that a large number of Aboriginal households, ranging between 30 and 50 per cent of all households, earned such low incomes. The percentage of households whose members earned income of \$15,000 or less was lowest in the Australian Capital Territory and other urban areas in the Northern Territory, 19 and 27 per cent, respectively.

With respect to section-of-State, Aborigines resident in major urban and other urban areas were generally better off than their rural counterparts, and those in major urban areas were better off than those in other urban areas. This is the same conclusion as that reached by Altman and Nieuwenhuysen (1979) and Fisk (1985). Fisk (1985: 58-63) found that Aboriginal incomes declined from the highest level in cities to lower levels in large towns and small non-Aboriginal towns, to lowest levels in Aboriginal townships and settlements. He also found that differences in Aboriginal incomes between capital cities were similar to their State differences. Aboriginal incomes were highest in Canberra, Melbourne and Hobart, in descending order of importance, and lowest in Perth, Brisbane, and Adelaide (Fisk 1985: 59). Sydney occupied an intermediate position. He also showed higher and rising incomes at outstations and other small groups where hunting and gathering or animal husbandry provide a supply of subsistence foods. The data in Table 9 show Aboriginal socio-economic status was particularly high in Canberra, in the major urban centres of Victoria and Tasmania followed by New South Wales and Queensland. Of the other urban residents, those in Tasmania, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Queensland fared best. Among the rural residents, those in Tasmania, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory still fared better; and those worst off, especially in individual income, were in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Aborigines in rural areas in South Australia and Queensland, though worse off in educational qualifications compared to all States except the Northern Territory and Western Australia, appeared to be better off in employment and income than those in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Conversely, the rural Aboriginal residents of New South Wales, though possessing relatively high educational qualifications, did not show comparable income and employment status. The rural areas of South Australia had particularly high employment rates comparable only to the rural areas in Tasmania, and higher than the rates for major and other urban areas in all States except for the Australian Capital Territory.

Table 9. Socio-economic indicators by State and section-of-State: 1986 Census.

Section-of-State	Pop. %	Aboriginal %	English proficient %	Qualified %	Employed %	Median individual income (\$)	Household income <\$15,000 (%)
NSW							
Major urban	36	0.6	-	11.6	42.8	7077	35.2
Other urban	47	2.5	-	7.0	26.9	6022	43.5
Rural local.	5	1.6	-	5.4	33.1	5739	44.1
Other rural	12		-	6.6	24.7	5680	48.3
Total	100	1.1	98.4	8.6	32.4	6310	40.5
VIC							
Major urban	48	0.2	-	12.7	49.5	8056	31.1
Other urban	41	0.7	-	8.5	39.1	7341	39.6
Rural local.	2	0.3	-	10.2	33.8	6393	53.6
Other rural	9		-	12.8	43.0	6858	46.6
Total	100	0.3	97.5	11.0	44.6	7620	36.0
QLD							
Major urban	18	0.9	-	9.2	39.1	7191	38.0
Other urban	47	3.4	-	5.6	32.9	6962	35.6
Rural local.	18	3.9	-	1.8	30.8	6709	32.5
Other rural	17		-	4.1	36.7	6471	43.3
Total	100	2.4	97.5	5.3	34.3	6270	36.9
SA							
Major urban	40	0.6	96.6	10.2	34.0	6436	41.7
Other urban	32	2.1	97.0	5.1	28.8	6260	41.8
Rural local.	9	1.9	69.9	2.3	51.0	6091	46.1
Other rural	19			3.6	35.4	6271	38.1
Total	100	1.1	89.1	6.6	34.2	6270	41.6
WA							
Major urban	24	1.0		8.8	27.6	6026	38.9
Other urban	42	5.3		4.3	25.6	5834	33.3
Rural local.	12	6.1		2.1	27.3	5894	36.5
Other rural	22			2.2	30.6	5624	50.1
Total	100	2.7	95.6	3.9	27.5	5830	38.8
TAS							
Major urban	20	1.1		13.0	48.4	7418	36.1
Other urban	52	1.7		12.5	47.3	7548	35.2
Rural local.	8	1.7		10.2	53.8	7634	36.4
Other rural	20			10.7	52.2	7638	38.6
Total	100	1.5	99.2	11.9	49.1	7540	36.1

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Table 9. Continued

Section-of-State	Pop. %	Aboriginal %	English proficient %	Qualified %	Employed %	Median individual income (\$)	Household income <\$15,000 (%)
NT							
Other urban	31	9.7	90.5	6.1	35.0	7093	27.2
Rural local.	38	54.9	60.8	1.1	21.5	5556	31.9
Other rural	31		66.4	1.1	22.1	5603	46.1
Total	100	22.4	71.7	2.7	26.0	5920	34.4
ACT							
Major urban	86	0.4	98.6	17.1	64.2	13215	18.6
Other rural	14	7.8	100.0	7.3	32.0	6965	40.7
Total	100	0.5	98.8	15.2	59.3	12340	19.4
Australia							
Major urban	24	0.6	97.6	10.8	40.1	6754	36.0
Other urban	42	2.7	96.3	6.2	30.9	6241	37.3
Rural local.	15	3.3	78.2	2.1	27.3	5859	35.6
Other rural	19		82.6	3.8	30.3	5791	45.7
Total	100	1.5	91.4	6.3	32.6	6210	38.1

What could explain these considerable geographic differences in socio-economic status? One approach is to examine if spatial distribution, relative size, and English language proficiency has any effect on social indicators. If lack of English proficiency is considered first, it does not appear to be associated with low socio-economic status. In Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia almost all Aborigines were proficient in English. However, an association is apparent in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, particularly among rural Aborigines. In both, lower rural socio-economic status seems to be related to lower proficiency in English. However, this apparent association may be fallacious as formal employment opportunities are often unavailable at these localities, irrespective of language proficiency. It may also be argued that lack of English proficiency constrains employment migration, as education and language proficiency are important in such moves.

The influence of the urban-rural distribution seems to have more influence on socio-economic status. Those States with a high share of urban population, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, have higher socio-economic status. The exception is New South Wales, with 83 per cent of its Aboriginal population living in urban areas and accommodating one-third of all urban Aborigines, which did not fare well; in fact, it occupied an intermediate position. At another extreme, are the States with the lowest urbanised Aboriginal population (65-72 per cent of their total population urbanised)

**Table 10. Comparisons of selected indicators between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population by State : 1986 Census.**

Non-Aboriginal population					
State	Percentage employed	Percentage unemployed	Participation rate	Median individual income (\$)	Income ratio State/Australian
NSW	61.7	6.8	68.5	9,650	99.9
VIC	63.9	4.8	68.7	10,210	105.7
QLD	60.7	7.4	68.1	8,780	90.9
SA	63.1	6.6	69.7	8,820	91.3
WA	63.9	6.3	70.2	9,720	100.6
TAS	61.0	6.7	67.7	8,650	89.5
NT	68.4	5.7	74.1	15,270	158.1
ACT	72.4	3.5	75.9	15,470	160.1
Australia	62.6	6.2	68.8	9,660	100.0

Aboriginal population					
State	Percentage employed <sup>1</sup>	Percentage unemployed <sup>2</sup>	Participation rate <sup>3</sup>	Median individual income <sup>4</sup>	Income ratio Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal <sup>5</sup>
NSW	32.4	21.7	54.1	6,310	65.4
VIC	44.6	14.1	58.7	7,620	74.6
QLD	34.3	17.7	52.0	6,270	71.4
SA	34.2	18.1	52.3	6,270	71.1
WA	27.5	17.5	45.0	5,830	60.0
TAS	49.1	13.2	62.3	7,540	87.2
NT	26.0	14.0	40.0	5,920	38.8
ACT	59.3	9.9	69.2	12,340	79.8
Australia	32.6	17.8	50.4	6,210	64.3

**Notes:**

- 1 Percentage employed is defined as the ratio of employed persons aged 15-64 years to the total population aged 15-64 years, times 100.
- 2 Percentage unemployed is defined as the ratio of unemployed persons aged 15-64 years to the total population aged 15-64 years, times 100.
- 3 Participation rate is labour force participation rate defined as the ratio of the number of employed and unemployed persons aged 15-64 years to the total population aged 15-64 years, times 100.
- 4 Income ratio State/Australia is the ratio of non-Aboriginal State individual incomes to Australia expressed as a percentage.
- 5 Income ratio Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal is the ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal median income expressed as a percentage.



showing lower socio-economic status. These are Western Australia, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland. The exception is Tasmania, which show similar level of urbanisation to these States, but had higher Aboriginal socio-economic status. The contradictory influence of the degree of urbanisation in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania raises more questions. Has this anything to do with the relative size of Aboriginal population in these States? The Aboriginal population in Tasmania and Victoria are the smallest in both relative and absolute terms in relation to the total population of their State, while New South Wales had a relatively large Aboriginal population in absolute terms. In the cases of Tasmania and Victoria, their small number may have contributed to greater integration into the formal labour market, resulting in higher economic status. The differences in Aboriginal socio-economic status between States may be linked to the variable history of incorporation of different States into the mainstream Australian society and economy.

The economic status of Aborigines also seems to be related to the economic status of the non-Aboriginal population of the State in which they live. The data in Table 10 show that the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria, which are identified as the areas of higher Aboriginal economic status, also have higher employment and lower unemployment levels than any other State. There are, however, two exceptions to this generalisation. The high non-Aboriginal incomes and employment in the Northern Territory (comparable only to the Australian Capital Territory) are not evident in corresponding high economic status for Aboriginal Territorians. In contrast, Tasmania with only average indicators for non-Aborigines is one of the States (along with the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria) where Aborigines had more equity (see the last column of Table 10). At first glance, the New South Wales situation looks inconsistent as higher urbanisation, English proficiency and higher educational qualifications do not contribute to higher employment and income. However, Table 10 shows that overall employment levels are lower than the Australian average in New South Wales; while the percentage of Aborigines aged 15-64 years that was unemployed was highest. Western Australia resembles Victoria in its level of employment, but it had a higher unemployment rate than Victoria. Queensland had a particularly high unemployment rate among the non-Aboriginal population.

Labour force participation rate is an interesting variable in Table 10. It shows considerable difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations: higher participation for non-Aboriginal population and low participation for Aborigines. While labour force participation rates for non-Aborigines vary little between States (between 68 and 70 per cent, except for the higher levels of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory), considerable variation is apparent among Aborigines, from a low of 40 to 45 per cent in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, to as high as 62 per cent in Tasmania. This is partly due to cultural differences in the concepts of employment and unemployment, income, and economic activity (Altman 1988). These concepts are developed and are appropriate for the market economy, but do not take into account the subsistence economy of many rural Aborigines. Thus, the lower labour force participation

rates for the Northern Territory and Western Australia, where almost half of all rural Aborigines live, could be due to the inappropriateness of this indicator for those engaged in subsistence activities. Hence, comparisons of economic indicators would be more relevant in States where Aborigines are more integrated into the mainstream economy and where subsistence options are limited.

As regards the relation between different socio-economic variables, educational attainment seems to be positively associated with employment and income. Barring some exceptions, higher employment also tends to lead to higher individual incomes. Excepting the anomaly of New South Wales, it is tempting to generalise that an urban context, higher State employment opportunities and better Aboriginal educational qualifications lead to higher economic status. As these apparent interpretations are based on the observed effects of each variable, some of the observed effects of a variable are also due to the effects of other variables. Because of the interdependence of the variables, the effects of other variables need to be controlled to establish the separate and joint effects of the variables and to assess the statistical significance of the relationships. Further multivariate analysis will need to be undertaken to arrive at a more meaningful and statistically rigorous understanding of the determinants of Aboriginal economic status.

### **Conclusion and policy issues**

The Commonwealth Government launched the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) in 1987, reflecting its long-term commitment to improve the economic and employment situation of Aboriginal people, irrespective of where they live. The stated goals of the AEDP are to achieve Aboriginal employment and income equity, equity in participation and achievements in primary, secondary and tertiary education and a concomitant reduction of Aboriginal welfare dependency to a level commensurate with that of other Australians (Commonwealth of Australia 1987: 2-4).

The data analysed here suggest a range of policy issues. The first is the implications of the structure of the Aboriginal population. The very youthful Aboriginal age structure implies heavy childhood burden for families, and a large future supply of youth labour. This population structure will place enormous pressures on the AEDP's income and employment equity objectives. An ever-increasing number of youth will enter a labour market which is already characterised by low demand for Aboriginal labour. Aboriginal incomes will continue to remain below non-Aboriginal income levels unless the contribution to total income from employment is substantially increased. There are no concrete indications to date that Aboriginal employment is increasing at the rapid rate needed to significantly alter the status quo.

Economic status measured with social indicators is almost invariably a function of location, being higher in urban areas and lower in rural areas. Aborigines in the Australian Capital Territory have the highest income, primarily due to migration to work in

the bureaucracy, especially in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (now ATSIC) and associated institutions (Fisk 1985: 57). As urban Aborigines have generally higher status than their rural counterparts, one could suggest greater urban status of the Aboriginal population, or greater Aboriginal migration to the Australian Capital Territory. But this may not be a viable policy option given Aboriginal attachment to certain areas. If the rural-urban inequities in Aboriginal economic opportunities are not redressed by AEDP programs, then one possible consequence could be increased pressure for an 'active employment strategy'. This is a strategy where educated and trained rural Aborigines have to move to places of active employment, requiring migration to metropolitan and major urban areas. This may be an economically rational policy, it will not be socially and culturally acceptable for many Aboriginal people residing in rural areas. If successful education and training programs in the AEDP lead to improvement in educational indicators, it is possible that in remote regions Aborigines may need to migrate for employment. Irrespective of government program expenditures, unemployment in remote rural areas will stay high because of the absence of a significant mainstream economy. If remote Aborigines are to benefit from the educational and training programs, then the AEDP has to develop effective employment strategies for remote communities.

In general, this analysis shows that Aboriginal economic status is linked to the economic status of non-Aborigines in the State and section-of-State in which they live, that is the higher the socio-economic status of the non-Aboriginal population of a State the higher is Aboriginal economic status. The relative socio-economic standing of States in terms of either higher economic activity or higher political and administrative functions or both, as well as the degree of integration of Aboriginal people into the formal labour market may explain the observed link between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal status by States. There is, however, a lack of correlation between general and Aboriginal economic status in some situations like the Northern Territory and Tasmania. The Northern Territory is interesting, as this lack of correlation is partly a reflection of the locational division of the economy; most non-Aborigines live in urban areas and most Aborigines in rural areas. Political economy considerations are also important: the Northern Territory Government commitment to developmentalism and high Commonwealth subvention of the Northern Territory means that mining, tourism and public service employees are relatively well-off. In general Aborigines do not fall into these categories. Tasmania is a relatively poor State, but Aborigines are relatively well-off. It seems that Aborigines in Tasmania are largely incorporated into the mainstream economy. It is far from clear why Aborigines in some States have especially low economic status. For example, to explain the relatively low economic status of Aborigines in New South Wales will require further research with an economic policy focus.

The apparently low economic status of Aborigines in Western Australia as well as the Northern Territory is partly due to the eurocentricity of the social indicators used which assume that Aborigines aspire to the same economic goals as other Australians. However it is widely recognised that material aspirations are informed by value systems. The



validity of social indicators for particular areas where traditionality is strong has already been raised. The examples of parts of Western Australia and the Northern Territory where Aboriginal people continue to undertake economically significant hunting and gathering activities are a case in point.

As a policy objective, Aboriginalisation in the public sector could result in higher economic status, as in the Australian Capital Territory. Aboriginalisation of the public sector is possible through government policy, but is more difficult to achieve in the private sector which contributes 72 per cent of total employment in Australia. In the 1986 Census Aborigines comprised only 1 per cent of total public sector employment, a figure not commensurate with their share of the total population of 1.5 per cent. But can Aboriginalisation be achieved for all sections of the Aboriginal population? The wide geographic variations in Aboriginal economic status raises the issue of horizontal equity in program expenditure by State, section-of-State, and regions within a State. Inter-State differences can be appreciated if the Aboriginal median income by State is expressed as a ratio of the overall median Aboriginal Australian income. If the overall median is set at 100, State incomes vary from 94 in Western Australia, 95 in the Northern Territory, about 100 in South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales, 121 in Tasmania, 123 in Victoria, and to 199 in the Australian Capital Territory. These Aboriginal State income variations are considerably larger than those for non-Aborigines. These State differences mask even more marked differences between Aborigines at lower levels of geographic disaggregation and rural-urban residence. Government program expenditure should be equitably distributed on the basis of need. However, significant inter- and intra-State differences imply a need for flexibility in policy and perhaps, more contentiously, for the introduction of income testing. It is currently unclear if State Governments' policies have a differential impact on Aboriginal economic status, but the potential role of State programs and their coordination with Federal Government programs needs further investigation. Furthermore, inter-State and section-of-State differences highlight the need for more attention to relatively disadvantaged areas in AEDP strategies.

Finally, do the social indicators used here provide the right signal to the policy makers? Apart from the questionable quality of Aboriginal data, the influence of the poor performance of particular regions within a State will have a dampening effect on overall State social indicators. This is particularly so in States where there is marked regional inequality in the economic status of Aborigines. If social indicators are to be used to assess program performance, then data analysis will need to be further disaggregated beyond the State and section-of-State level undertaken here. One possibility that will be explored in a forthcoming discussion paper is to focus on economic status disaggregated to the sixty ATSIC regional council areas. The key policy issue that will then require investigation is to what extent program expenditure and outcomes are correlated to economic status.



**Appendix 1. Localities with at least 10 per cent Aboriginal population by State:  
1986 Census.**

New South Wales

Locality	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Bourke	918	4,189	21.9
Brewarrina	1,049	2,337	44.9
Central Darling	837	3,132	26.7
Coonamble	621	5,701	10.9
Moree Plains	2,412	16,644	14.5
Walgett	1,446	7,311	19.8

Queensland

Locality	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Aurukun	750	957	78.4
Balonne	515	4,934	10.4
Boulia	163	563	29.0
Burke	960	1,340	71.6
Charters Towers	526	7,997	56.6
Cloncurry	790	3,117	25.3
Cook	1,799	4,471	40.2
Croydon	83	299	27.8
Diamantina	82	260	31.5
Douglas	848	6,346	13.4
Duaringa	1,072	10,291	10.4
Eidsvold	270	1,193	22.6
Herberton	457	4,340	10.5
Mornington	794	888	89.4
Mount Isa	2,511	23,578	10.6
Murgon	1,071	4,345	23.6
Paroo	488	2,636	18.5
Torres	5,457	6,780	80.5
Weipa	285	2,478	11.5

South Australia

Locality	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Cooper Pedy	240	1,868	12.8
Hawker	61	486	12.6
Murat Bay	534	3,824	14.0

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### Appendix 1. Continued.

#### Western Australia

Locality	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Brookton	141	1,055	13.4
Broome	2,495	6,043	41.3
Carnarvon	1,305	7,146	18.3
Cue	89	531	16.8
Derby-West Kimberley	2,955	6,608	44.7
East Pilbara	1,380	9,129	15.1
Gnowangerup	215	2,120	10.1
Halls Creek	2,108	2,765	76.2
Laverton	255	1,309	19.5
Leonora	301	2,176	13.8
Meekatharra	430	1,371	31.4
Menzies	93	296	31.4
Mount Magnet	118	1,129	10.5
Mullewa	366	1,410	26.0
Murchison	30	131	22.9
Pingelly	181	1,317	13.7
Port Hedland	1,479	12,818	11.5
Tambellup	142	823	17.3
Tammin	84	534	15.7
Upper Gascoyne	25	241	10.4
Wiluna	1,457	1,745	83.5
Wyndham-East Kimberley	1,910	5,828	32.8
Yalgoo	60	267	22.5

#### Tasmania

Locality	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Flinders	111	1,034	10.7

Continued over page.

**Appendix 1. Continued.**

Northern Territory			
Locality	Aboriginal population	Total population	Per cent Aboriginal
Alice Springs (town)	3,428	22,759	15.1
Alligator-balance	2,551	4,245	60.1
Bathurst/Melville	1,651	1,805	91.5
Daly	1,480	2,495	59.3
Ludmilla	361	1,842	19.6
Malak	329	3,726	8.8
Millner	358	2,474	14.5
Tiwi	386	2,950	13.0
East Arnhem-balance	4,155	4,583	90.7
Elsley-balance	1,321	3,742	35.3
Groote Eylandt	929	2,287	40.6
Gulf	1,214	1,694	71.7
Katherine (town)	871	5,690	15.3
Outer Darwin	178	1,099	16.2
Gray	213	2,099	10.1
Moulden	205	1,819	11.3
Palmerston-balance	29	78	37.2
Petermann	797	2,278	35.0
Sandover-balance	1,795	2,558	70.2
Tableland	526	1,156	45.5
Tanami	3,964	4,704	84.3
Tennant Creek (town)	691	3,503	19.7
Tennant Creek -balance	1,041	1,736	60.0
Vernon	945	8,169	11.6
Victoria	1,708	2,704	63.2

Source: ABS CD-Rom data set. Figures exclude persons with origin-not-stated.

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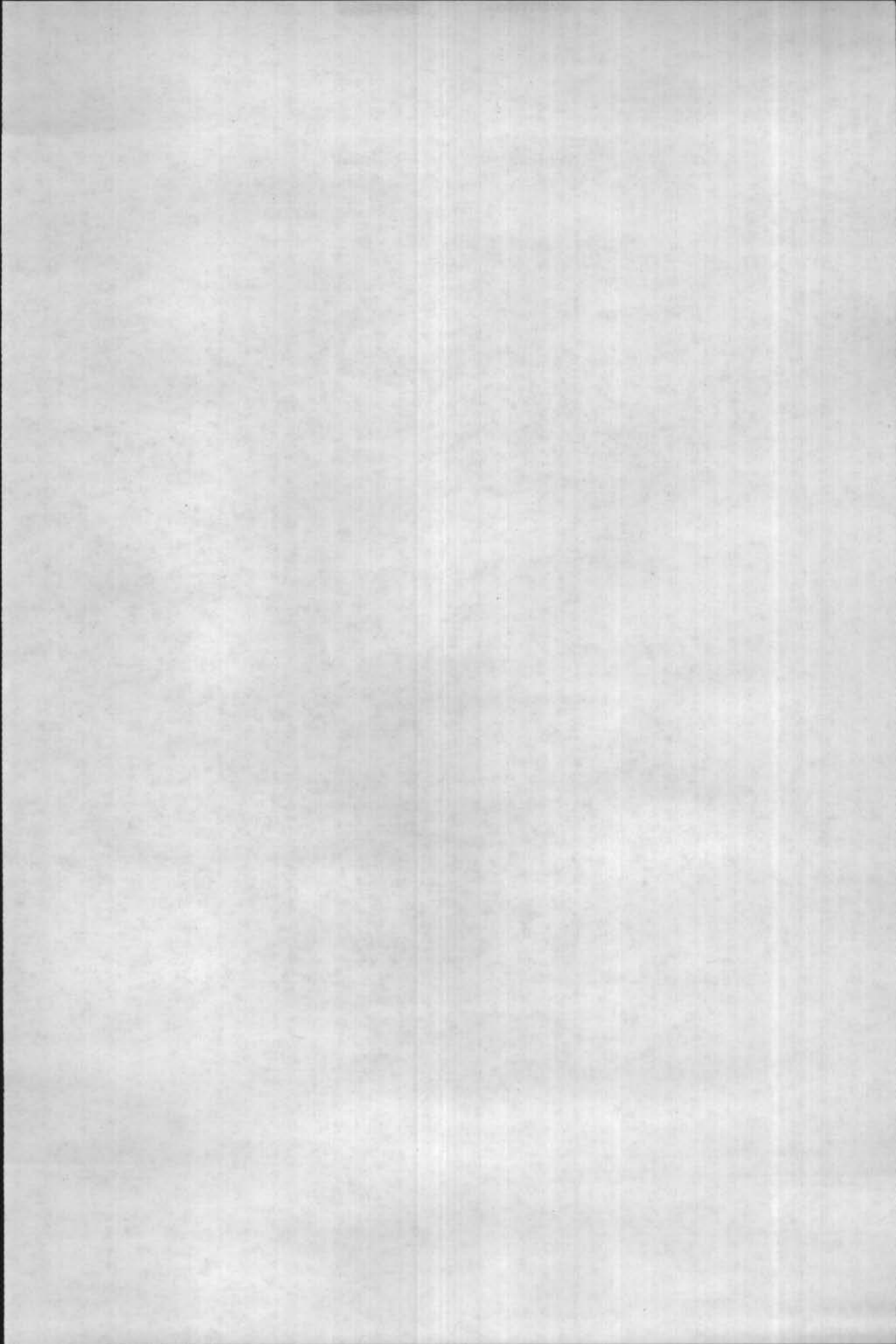


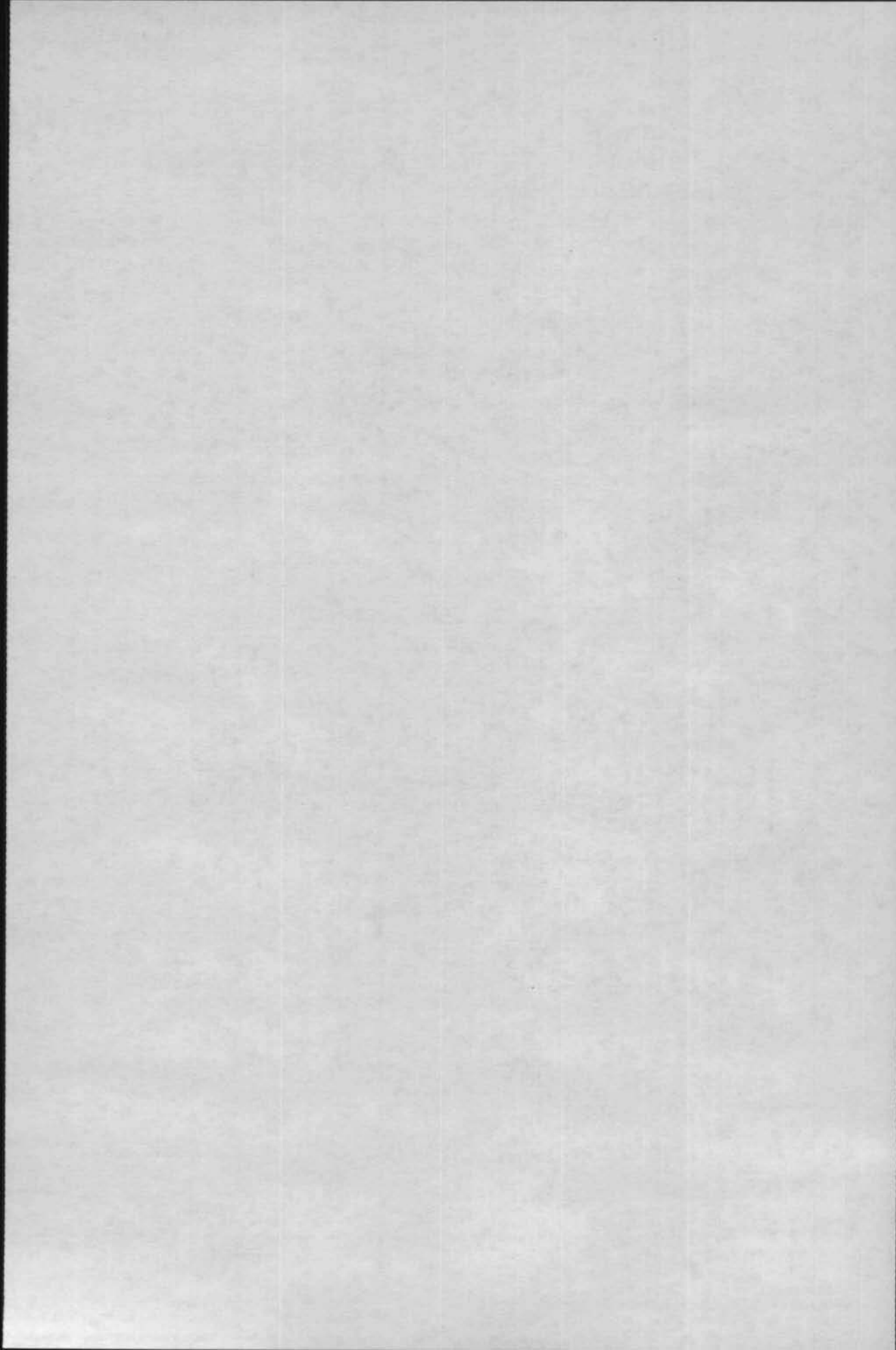
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