

# Electronic Journal of Sociology (2005)

ISSN: 1198 3655

## On the Contemporary Position of the Indigenous Peoples of Australia

Boni Robertson

Catherine M. Demosthenous

Hellene T. Demosthenous

David W. Soole

Gumurrii Centre, Griffith University, Australia

### **Abstract**

This paper highlights the contemporary disadvantaged position of Indigenous peoples of Australia.\* It discusses a number of data quality issues on Indigenous data, before examining Indigenous disadvantage across five key areas: (1) education; (2) employment; (3) housing and living conditions; (4) health and wellbeing; and (5) crime and justice. Given the call for all governments to implement a framework to overcome Indigenous disadvantage, we recommend that future research begin with an investigation of non-Indigenous attitudes towards, and knowledge of, the position of Indigenous peoples in Australia. This is essential towards developing an understanding of the general public's current perceptions of Indigenous peoples' position in Australia, particularly where the development of policies pertaining to

---

Indigenous peoples requires cooperative action and the support of the broader Australian population.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to pay their respects to the Elders for their advice, guidance and wisdom in the writing of this paper, particularly Aunty Jianna Richardson and Aunty Delmae Barton. Also, we would like to thank our students and colleagues at the Gumurrii Centre, Griffith University, for their continued support. Finally, we would like to acknowledge our families and communities for their inspiration and encouragement. Thank you all.

In recent times, the disadvantaged position of Indigenous Australians<sup>1</sup> has received increasing attention, both in social science research and on political and government agendas (DATSIPD, 1999; Healey, 2002; HRSCATSIA, 1997, 2001; CAR, 1994; Robertson & Demosthenous, 2004; SCRGSP, 2003). For instance, the 1991 *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (RCIADIC) identified an over-representation of Indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system, which they maintained was significantly impacted by social, economic and cultural disadvantage. Also, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report* (DATSIPD, 1999, p. xiii) found that '[Indigenous] people have suffered deep-seated and entrenched economic and social impoverishment' and continue to go through "sorry business", exacerbated by traumatic historic circumstances.

British colonisation from the late 1770s rapidly declined the Indigenous population.<sup>2</sup> Countless numbers of Indigenous peoples were massacred; many others were removed from their lands; while numerous children and youth were removed from their families to institutions.<sup>3</sup> As the kinship of Indigenous families and communities deteriorated, non-Indigenous Australians of British origin flourished.<sup>4</sup> The RCIADIC (1991, p. 5) put it this way, '[I]t is deceptive indeed to assume that colonial Australia ended with the coming of the twentieth century, or that successful British settlement meant the end of colonialistic relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people'.

Hence, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) (as cited in the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation) agree that there are a number of historical reasons that have contributed to Indigenous disadvantage, including: dispossession; exclusion from mainstream services up until the late 1960s; location in rural and remote areas; past

and intergenerational poverty; and demography (CAR, 1998).

In September 2000, under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR, 2000) revealed their ‘... deep concern that, despite the efforts and achievements of the State party, the [I]ndigenous populations of Australia continued to be at a comparative disadvantage in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights’. In December of that year, CAR presented a final report, *Australia's Challenge*, on issues relating to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples to parliament. The *Australia's Challenge* report made a number of recommendations; the first of which called for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to put into practice a national framework for governments to work to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. Four years later, the indicators of Indigenous disadvantage remain numerous and diverse.

Before documenting the disadvantage of the Indigenous population, a number of considerations must be addressed. Foremost are the numerous data quality issues regarding Indigenous statistics, resulting in ambiguity in interpretation (SCRGSP, 2003). For instance, the Indigenous population is expanding at a far greater rate than the total Australian population (ABS, 2003a; SCRGSP, 2003). In addition, there are substantial differences between Indigenous Australians and their non-Indigenous counterparts in regards to geographic location and age profile. In comparison to other Australians, significantly greater proportions of Indigenous peoples live in remote areas of the nation (ABS, 2001b; 2003a; SCRGSP, 2003), and overall the Indigenous population of Australia is comparatively much younger than the rest of the population (ABS, 2001a; SCRGSP, 2003). These marked differences testify to the heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples. However, the result may be ambiguous and inaccurate interpretations of data, unless stratified by geographic region or standardised to account for differences attributable to age (SCRGSP, 2003). These data quality issues result in underestimates of Indigenous disadvantage on a number of important indices, namely, (1) education; (2) employment; (3) housing and living conditions; (4) health and wellbeing; and (5) crime and justice.

## **Indigenous Peoples of Australia**

At 30 June 2001 the estimated Indigenous population<sup>5</sup> was 458,520, which represented 2.4 per cent of the total Australian population (ABS, 2003a). Almost 90 per cent of these individuals identified as Aboriginal, 6 per cent as Torres Strait Islander, and a further 4 per cent as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Over 50 per cent of the Indigenous population reported living in New South Wales (29%) and Queensland (27%), with considerably high proportions of Indigenous peoples also

living in Western Australia (14%) and the Northern Territory (13%) (ABS, 2001c; 2003a; SCRGSP, 2003). More than a quarter (29%) of the Northern Territory population identifies as Indigenous, noticeably higher than other jurisdictions whose populations comprise no more than 4 per cent Indigenous peoples.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, considerable differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations exist with respect to general age profiles and geographic locations of residence (ABS, 2001a; 2001b; 2003a; SCRGSP, 2003). The Indigenous population is comparatively younger than the non-Indigenous population, exhibiting significantly lower median ages, highlighted by the disproportionately high number of persons under the age of 20 and disproportionately low number of peoples over the age of 75. In respects to geographic distribution, Indigenous peoples, like their non-Indigenous counterparts, predominately reside in major cities, but at strikingly disproportionate rates (30% & 67% respectively). Furthermore, significantly greater numbers of Indigenous, compared to non-Indigenous, peoples live in areas classified as remote or very remote (30% & 2% respectively).

It is by far outside of the scope of this paper to present and discuss the numerous causes of past and present Indigenous disadvantage.<sup>6</sup> However, the key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage will be presented to highlight the contemporary position of the Indigenous peoples of Australia, to reiterate: (1) education; (2) employment; (3) housing and living conditions; (4) health and wellbeing; and (5) crime and justice. These factors are discussed below.

## **Indigenous Disadvantage**

### **Education**

Attaining an adequate education can greatly improve the employment prospects of an individual, resulting in increased levels of income and consequently improving associated factors such as health and living conditions (ABS, 2002a; Demosthenous, Bouhours & Demosthenous, 2002; SCRGSP, 2003). While the rate of Indigenous participation has steadily increased in recent years, retention and attainment issues continue to plague Indigenous students at a greater rate than their non-Indigenous counterparts (ABS, 2002a; Demosthenous & Demosthenous, 2004). From year 9 to 12, Indigenous student retention rates are below the retention levels of non-Indigenous students. Indeed, in 2002 Indigenous student retention from year 11 to 12 was half the rate of the non-Indigenous student population (approximately 39% & 78%, respectively) (SCRGSP, 2003). Furthermore, Indigenous year 12 completion rates are significantly lower than those of their non-

Indigenous counterparts (18% & 41%, respectively) (ABS, 2001b). Student retention, obviously, is fundamentally related to the associated problem of poor educational attainment in the Indigenous population.

Given the poor retention and completion rates of Indigenous secondary students outlined above, one might reasonably expect poorer rates of participation in vocational education and training (VET), and higher education. The proportion of Indigenous persons is less than 1.2% of the total student population at universities throughout Australia (ABS, 2002c). Indigenous participation in VET is typically slightly higher than non-Indigenous rates<sup>7</sup> (ABS, 2002a; SCRGSP, 2003). However, participation rates, while important, are not as precise an indicator of educational achievement as attainment levels. Indigenous post-secondary attainment<sup>8</sup> is significantly lower than levels experienced by the non-Indigenous population. Indeed, in 2001 the rate of post-secondary attainment was 33.5% for the non-Indigenous population, compared to just 12.5% for the Indigenous population (SCRGSP, 2003). This disproportion is exacerbated for Indigenous peoples of more remote and rural geographic locations. Thus, while Indigenous participation in education is increasing, poor retention and attainment rates contribute to an atmosphere of Indigenous disadvantage.

## Employment

Inadequate education, as stated, has been shown to be a precursor to unemployment or employment in low-level industry sectors (Healey, 2002). The proportion of the Indigenous population living in rural or remote areas, where employment opportunities are relatively sparse, also serve to escalate Indigenous unemployment levels (Healey, 2002). In 2001, Indigenous unemployment was almost three times the rate of non-Indigenous unemployment (20.0% & 7.2%, respectively), with unemployment rates higher for Indigenous males than for Indigenous females (ABS, 2001b; SCRGSP, 2003). Similar to the non-Indigenous population, the highest rates of unemployment were recorded for individuals between 15 and 24 years of age. However, Indigenous persons aged 75 years and older were unemployed at a rate almost five times greater than their age-equivalent non-Indigenous counterparts (20.4% & 4.3%, respectively) (SCRGSP, 2003).

Indigenous participation in Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) significantly reduces the proportion of Indigenous persons classified as unemployed. According to the SCRGSP (2003, p. 11.10), '[t]he CDEP scheme provides employment and training opportunities to Indigenous peoples in a range of activities that benefit themselves and their communities'. The SCRGSP (2003, p. 11.10) adds, '[t]he scheme is designed to provide meaningful employment and training, and enhance economic and social development opportunities for

Indigenous peoples as well as enabling Indigenous communities to manage their own affairs and to gain economic and social equity'. Indeed, almost 18,000 Indigenous persons (approximately one sixth of the total Indigenous persons employed) were involved in CDEP in 2001, with significantly higher rates of participation in more remote geographic locations (ABS, 2001b; SCRGSP, 2003).<sup>9</sup> However, one needs to bear in mind that persons *employed* in CDEP are in fact *unemployed* or, to put it crudely, working for the dole; which subsequently distorts the real rate of Indigenous unemployment.

While participation in the workforce is important in improving the socio-economic status of an individual, '[t]he type of employment that peoples are engaged in may also have an impact on their wellbeing, in terms of how well they are remunerated and the level of job satisfaction involved' (SCRGSP, 2003, p.11.6). Indigenous persons, in comparison to non-Indigenous persons, are significantly less likely to be employed as professionals (11% & 18%, respectively), or as managers or administrators (3% & 9%, respectively) (ABS, 2001b; SCRGSP, 2003). The predominate occupation type of employed Indigenous persons is in labouring or some similar form of work (24% of total employed Indigenous persons, compared to 8% of total non-Indigenous employed persons). The proportion of Indigenous persons employed as labourers increases with remoteness of geographic location (11% in major cities & 47% in very remote areas) (ABS, 2001b). Thus, Indigenous persons are unemployed at a rate far exceeding that of non-Indigenous persons, and when employed, are so in predominately lower-level occupations.

## Housing & Living Conditions

As stated previously, educational attainment and adequate employment increases the socio-economic position of an individual. Similarly, poor educational attainment and unemployment, as experienced by many Indigenous persons, decreases the socio-economic position of an individual (DATSIPD, 1999). Consequently, it is not surprising that the Indigenous population live in typically poorer conditions than the total Australian population. Undoubtedly, '[t]he economic wellbeing of peoples is largely determined by their income' (SCRGSP, 2003, p. 3.25). In 2001, the mean household income for Indigenous persons was almost two-thirds that of their non-Indigenous counterparts; \$364 per week and \$585 per week, respectively. Similar to numerous other reported statistics, the mean household income of Indigenous persons declines significantly congruent with geographic remoteness (ABS, 2001b; SCRGSP, 2003).

A host of factors contribute to lower reported income levels and serve to intensify the poor living conditions experienced by many Indigenous peoples, including overcrowding, significantly higher rates of renting as

opposed to purchasing or owning one's home, and disproportional rates of sole-parent families (SCRGSP, 2003). Indeed, compared to non-Indigenous households, Indigenous households tend to be somewhat larger (2.6 & 3.5 persons per household, respectively) (ABS, 2001b). In 2001, Indigenous households<sup>10</sup> were over five times as likely to be classified as overcrowded than non-Indigenous households (18.9% & 3.4%, respectively) (SCRGSP, 2003). In addition, the most common status of household tenure for Indigenous persons was occupying a rented dwelling (63.5%, compared to 26.6% of non-Indigenous persons). Furthermore, when compared to non-Indigenous peoples, significantly fewer Indigenous peoples are purchasing a home (19.4% & 27.0%, respectively) or fully own their home (12.6% & 40.4%, respectively). Again, these findings are intensified by geographic remoteness (ABS, 2001b; SCRGSP, 2003).

An additional point pertinent to the health status of the Indigenous population is their ability to access clean water and functional sewerage, particularly for those in rural and remote areas. Undoubtedly, '[a]ccess to clean water and functional sewerage is essential to good health' (SCRGSP, 2003, p. 10.7). Indeed, it has been reported that the availability of such fundamental resources is disturbingly inadequate in many Indigenous communities, and may facilitate an explanation for the poor health status of many Indigenous peoples (SCRGSP, 2003).

## Health & Wellbeing

According to the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision's (SCRGSP's) report on the key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage, '[t]he survival of infants in their first year of life is commonly viewed as an indicator of the general health and wellbeing of a population' (SCRGSP, 2003, p. 5.6). It is therefore an appropriate starting point for any discussion outlining the poor health of Indigenous Australians compared to the total population. In the period between 1999 and 2001, the rate of Indigenous infant death was more than two and a half times greater than the total infant mortality rate of Australia (12.7 per 1, 000 live births & 4.8 per 1, 000 live births, respectively). Congruent with increased rates of infant mortality, a greater proportion of Indigenous infants are born at a low birthweight<sup>11</sup> compared to that of the total population. During the period 1998 to 2000, the rate of Indigenous infants born at low birthweight was twice the rate of non-Indigenous infants (11.9% & 6% respectively). Implications of this fact include heightened susceptibility to health complications in the early stages of life and greater rates of diseases into adulthood.

The health of the Indigenous population is comparatively poorer than that of their non-Indigenous counterparts. Indeed, the 'health disadvantage of Indigenous peoples is marked. It begins early in life and

continues throughout their life cycle' (HRSCATSIA, 2001, p. 15). The most common illnesses and diseases affecting the Indigenous population include: cardiovascular disease, asthma, diabetes, and deficiencies associated with vision/eyesight and hearing (ABS, 2001a; 2002a; 2003a; DATSIPD, 1999; SCRGSP, 2003). Cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease (rheumatic and ischaemic), stroke, and hypertension, are responsible for more deaths in the Indigenous population than any other cause, and affect Indigenous peoples at a far greater rate than non-Indigenous peoples (ABS, 2001a; 2002a). Thirty per cent of all Indigenous deaths were accounted for by cardiovascular disease in the period between 1998 and 2001 (ABS, 2002a). Furthermore, the prevalence of cardiovascular disease has been shown to increase significantly with age (ABS, 2001a).

Asthma and diabetes are also more prevalent among the Indigenous population than the non-Indigenous population. According to the 2001 National Health Survey, more Indigenous Australians, in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians, reported suffering from asthma (17% & 12%, respectively) and diabetes (11% & 3%, respectively) (ABS, 2001a). Similar to cardiovascular diseases, the prevalence of diabetes increases significantly with age. Furthermore, Indigenous individuals living in remote or very remote areas experience greater rates of diabetes than those in non-remote areas (16% & 9% respectively) (ABS, 2001a). Numerous risk factors contribute to the disadvantaged health experienced by Indigenous Australians. Health risk factors include tobacco and alcohol consumption, as well as issues concerning diet, exercise and obesity. External risk factors, such as suicide and self-harm, and violence and assault, may also have a negative impact on the health of Indigenous Australians (ABS, 2001a; 2002a; 2003a; SCRGSP, 2003). The disproportional rates of the Indigenous population who reside in rural and remote areas however only serves to exacerbate the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous peoples even further.

Life expectancy of a population also provides valuable information concerning the overall health and welfare of that population. Life expectancy is affected by numerous factors including rates of disease, health risk factors, restricted access to health services, health complications resulting from poor living conditions, and welfare concerns, such as increased exposure to violence or individuals of low socio-economic status (DATSIPD, 1999; SCRGSP, 2003). The life expectancy of Indigenous persons is disturbingly lower than that of non-Indigenous persons. Compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, significantly lower life expectancies are reported for both Indigenous males (77.0 years & 56.3 years, respectively) and Indigenous females (82.4 years & 62.8 years, respectively).



## Crime & Justice

While Indigenous Australians comprise only 2.4% of the total population of Australia, slightly over twenty percent (20.5%) of all individuals in correctional facilities in Australia identify as Indigenous (ABS, 2003b). Despite the 'conventional criminological wisdom that Australia does not have a serious crime problem', which has been challenged by Weatherburn (2002, p.127), the rate of Indigenous imprisonment has risen steadily from 15.2% in 1993 to its current state (ABS, 2003b). The jurisdictions with the most marked Indigenous overrepresentation are the Northern Territory (78.3% of the total prison population), Western Australia (35.1% of the total prison population), Queensland (22.7% of the total prison population), and New South Wales (17.6% of the total prison population). A similar situation is reported regarding juvenile detention. In 2002 'Indigenous juveniles were 18.9 times more likely than non-Indigenous juveniles to be detained in a juvenile justice centre' (Bareja & Charlton, 2003). Thus, Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system is prevalent for both juvenile and adult offenders.

Despite the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) there has been no improvement in the number of Indigenous custodial deaths. In fact, an increase in the number of Indigenous deaths in police or prison custody is observed, from 10 deaths in 1990 to 19 deaths in 2001 (peaking at 21 deaths in 1995) (Collins, 2002). Of the 19 Indigenous deaths in custody in 2001, 14 occurred in prison custody while the other five deaths occurred in police custody (Collins, 2002). The highest numbers<sup>12</sup> of Indigenous deaths in custody were recorded in Western Australia (six deaths), New South Wales (five deaths), and South Australia (four deaths). Queensland and the Northern Territory each recorded two Indigenous deaths in custody, while Victoria recorded no Indigenous deaths (Collins, 2002). The main causes of Indigenous deaths in custody include the result of self-inflicted injuries (eight deaths), natural causes (six deaths), accidents (three deaths), and justifiable homicide (two deaths) (Collins, 2002)<sup>13</sup>.

## Concluding Comments

This paper has highlighted the disadvantaged position of Indigenous peoples of Australia. Prior to discussing Indigenous disadvantage, we acknowledged a number of data quality issues. We argued that the Indigenous population is expanding at a far greater rate than the total Australian population and that studies need to be stratified by geographic region and standardised to account for differences attributable to age in order to reduce ambiguous and inaccurate data interpretations. While acknowledging the heterogeneity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we discussed their disadvantage under the

umbrella term Indigenous.

Across all five key areas of Indigenous disadvantage: (1) education; (2) employment; (3) housing and living conditions; (4) health and wellbeing; and (5) crime and justice, we found that when compared with non-Indigenous peoples: Indigenous students have poorer retention and attainment rates; Indigenous peoples have higher levels of unemployment, and occupy predominately lower-level positions;

Indigenous peoples live in poorer conditions and experience overcrowding, have significantly higher rates of renting as opposed to purchasing or owning one's home, and comprise a disproportionately higher rate of sole-parent families; Indigenous peoples are more susceptible to health problems in the early stages of life and experience greater rates of diseases in their adult years; and

Indigenous juveniles and adults are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Further, there has been no improvement in the number of Indigenous deaths in custody.

It is somewhat disconcerting that the *Australia's Challenge* report concluded that 'despite overwhelming evidence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the most disadvantaged Australians, almost half the Australian people believe that they are not disadvantaged' (CAR, 2000, p. 17). We argue that it is important to know whether non-Indigenous persons believe that Indigenous peoples are disadvantaged in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians, and, if so, whether they attribute the causes of Indigenous disadvantage to a history of continued oppression, Indigenous peoples themselves or government; or a combination.

In concluding, we recommend that future research survey non-Indigenous knowledge of, and attitudes towards, Indigenous peoples in Australia. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the general public's current perceptions of Indigenous peoples' position in Australia. This is necessary to create understanding of Indigenous disadvantage, and essential to overcoming that disadvantage. While a climate of understanding would promote the fostering of cooperative action, it goes without saying that it is important to know what it is that non-Indigenous people are thinking about Indigenous disadvantage, particularly when developing policies relating to Indigenous peoples that are dependent upon the support of the general public.

## References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2001a). *National Health Survey: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Results, Australia*. (Cat. no. 4715.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2001b). *Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. (Cat. no. 4713.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2001c). *Population Distribution, Indigenous Australians*. (Cat. no. 4705.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2002a). *Australian Social Trends 2002: Health – Mortality and Morbidity: Mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2002b). *Causes of Death, Australia 2001*. (Cat. no. 3303.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2002c). *Australian Social Trends 2002: Education - Participation in Education: Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003a). *Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. (Cat. no. 4704.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003b). *Prisoners in Australia*. (Cat. no. 4517.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Baker, D. G., 1983, *Race, Ethnicity and Power*. London: Routledge & Kegan.
- Bareja, M., & Charlton, K. (2003). Statistics on Juvenile Detention in Australia: 1981-2002. *Technical and Background Paper Series, 5*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Collins, L. (2002). Deaths in Custody in Australia: 2001 National Deaths in Custody Program (NDICP) Annual Report. *Research and Public Policy Series, 42*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR): *Concluding Observations: Australia 01/09/2000*, UN Doc: E/C.12/1/add.50, 1 September 2000, paragraph 15.
- Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR). (1994). *Addressing Disadvantage: A Greater Awareness of the Causes of Indigenous Australian's Disadvantage*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

- Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. (CAR). (2000), *Overcoming Disadvantage*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Demosthenous, C. M. & Demosthenous, H. T. (2004), 'Some preliminary findings on Indigenous Student and non-Indigenous tutor interaction within a university setting', *Educating: Weaving Research into Practice*, vol. 4, pp.1-10.
- Demosthenous, H. T., Bouhours, T., & Demosthenous, C. M. (2002). Socioeconomic status and youth aggression in Australia, *Youth Studies Australia*, 21(4).
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development. (DATSIPD). (1999). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence*. Queensland: Queensland Government.
- Evans, R., Saunders, K. & Cronin, K. (1975). *Exclusion Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, Sydney, Australia and New Zealand Book Company.
- Healey, J. (2002). Aboriginal disadvantage. *Issues in Society Series*, 175. Rozelle: The Spiney Press.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HRSCATSIA). (1997). *Torres Strait Islanders: A new deal: A report on greater autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HRSCATSIA). (2001). *We can do it! The needs of urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Canberra: CanPrint Communications.
- Prenzler T. 2004. Stakeholder Perspectives on Police Complaints and Discipline: Towards a Civilian Control Model, *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 85-113(29).
- Robertson, B. & Demosthenous, C. M. (2004), *Over-Representation of Young Aboriginal Females Reported Missing to Police: Which Way for Prevention and Service*, NSW Attorney General's Department, NSW.
- Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC): National Report*. (1991) Canberra. Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) (2003). *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*. Canberra: Productivity Division.
- Weatherburn, D. (2002). Law and Order Blues, *The Australian and New*

*Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 127-144(18).

## NOTES

---

<sup>1</sup> The term Indigenous Australians refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Note that the authors do not wish to diminish the distinctiveness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Consequently, our work explores Aboriginal Australians only.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, B. & Demosthenous, C. M. (2004), *Over-representation of Young Aboriginal Females Reported Missing to Police: Which Way for Prevention and Service*, NSW Attorney General's Department, NSW.

<sup>3</sup> Baker, D. G., 1983, *Race, Ethnicity and Power*. London: Routledge & Kegan.

<sup>4</sup> Evans, R., Saunders, K. & Cronin, K., 1975, *Exclusion Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, Sydney, Australia and New Zealand Book Company.

<sup>5</sup> The estimated population parameter is an adjusted figure that attempts to account for instances where Indigenous status is not stated. This parameter is higher than the population parameter based on census counts (410,003).

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis of the socio-economic disadvantage of the Indigenous population, the reader is referred to the 'Key Indicators Report' produced by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2003, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence ATSIWTFVR, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development, Queensland Government, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> A significant proportion of Indigenous persons participating in VET are aged 15 to 17 years. Thus, it is argued that this finding may help to account for some of the variance in poor year 12 retention rates among Indigenous students.

<sup>8</sup> Defined as attainment of a level 3 certificate or above.

<sup>9</sup> According to the SCRGSP (2003, p. 11.10), '[t]o participate in the scheme, unemployed members of a community or group choose to give up their Centrelink entitlements. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) offers a grant to the CDEP community organisation to enable it to undertake community-managed activities and pay wages to participants'.

<sup>10</sup> Defined as households comprising of at least one Indigenous individual.

---

<sup>11</sup> Infants born weighing > 2,500 grams are classified as being of low birthweight (ABS, 2003a; SCRGSP, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Given the low prevalence of deaths in custody, presentation of findings in proportions or rates can be misleading. For example, 66.7% of all deaths in custody in the Northern Territory were Indigenous persons. However, this equates to only two deaths. Likewise, while only 14.7% of the total deaths in custody in New South Wales were Indigenous individuals this equated to five deaths (more than the Northern Territory).

<sup>13</sup>See, Prenzler T. 2004. Stakeholder Perspectives on Police Complaints and Discipline: Towards a Civilian Control Model, *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 85-113(29), for an examination of a model ('civilian control') for maximising stakeholder confidence in police integrity.