

Pay us \$20,000: Aborigines

From MICHELLE GRATTAN

CANBERRA. — Most of the 41 members of the newly formed National Aboriginal Consultative Committee want \$20,000 each a year.

This is double their present salary and more pay than a Federal Parliament backbencher gets.

The Aborigines want a salary of \$12,000 with an allowance of \$8000.

Present pay is \$6000 with allowances of \$2000 for urban members and \$3000 for country ones.

Some members say the Government should also give them secretaries and transport — where necessary four-wheel drive vehicles and motor boats.

Aborigines throughout Australia elected the committee this month. It will advise the Federal Government on Aboriginal policy.

The committee met for the first time yesterday.

No formal motion was put, but most members clearly supported a suggestion by speakers that their salaries be doubled.

The proposed, combined salaries and allowances would put NACC members financially ahead of members of the House of Representatives.

Back-benchers now receive \$14,500 with up to \$4100 in electoral allowances.

One West Australian member of the NACC described the present salary as "pitiful"

The question of salaries is expected to be raised when the NACC meets the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Senator Cavanagh) this morning.

The meeting was arranged at the NACC's request yesterday.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Whitlam) told a lunch for members yesterday that the Government hoped the declaration of the NACC poll would mark a "watershed" in the history of the Aboriginal people.

Mr. Whitlam promised the Government would attach "great importance" to the NACC's meetings.

"We want the committee to be a forum for the expression of Aboriginal opinion" he said.