

City Aborigines 'in fear of the police'

CANBERRA, Friday. — Fear of the police was widespread among Aborigines living in Sydney, a clergyman told the Senate Standing Committee on Social Environment today.

"Even children who have not been in trouble — children from good families who are not likely to get into trouble — still have this fear of police," Dr Stockton said.

Asked for an explanation of the fear, he said: "Well, they have been picked on."

The Rev Dr E. D. Stockton, of the Paulian Association, a Roman Catholic charitable group, said he had noticed this in his five years as "Aboriginal chaplain" of Sydney.

Dr Stockton presented a submission from the association which showed a NSW Aboriginal infant-mortality rate only slightly below that in the Northern Territory.

He said the Aboriginal birth rate of twice the Australian average was offset by a high mortality rate.

In NSW, 41 per cent of Aboriginal deaths occurred before the age of five, compared with 44 per cent in the Northern Territory.

This compared with an overall Australian rate of 6 per cent.

The principal causes of

SENATORS TOLD OF BAD HOUSING

death were influenza, pneumonia, dysentery and gastro-enteritis.

Senator J. Little (DLP, Vic): "I am shocked to find the mortality rate is not all that much below the Northern Territory's."

"I am not questioning the figures at all — even if they are not absolutely accurate, they are not all that much out."

Dr Stockton said a separate survey, in Sydney alone, indicated that up to 10 per cent of Aboriginal children died in their first five years.

This was about four times the average for city-dwelling European Australians.

Sickness among Aboriginal children was high — 37 per cent suffered from an ear discharge, he said.

A survey of Aboriginal houses in Sydney had shown that 82 per cent had television but only 70 per cent had running water.

Reasons related to work and kinship kept families in areas of inferior, high-rent housing, he added.

Miss Angela Breen, a social worker with the Paulian Association, said Sydney landlords were leasing sub-standard housing in inner-city areas to Aborigines for up to \$45 a week.

She told Senator Georges (ALP, Qld) she knew of one house which had been divided into eight sub-standard flats — all occupied by Aborigines.

Aborigines had little opportunity to get decent housing because of landlords' prejudice.

Miss Breen suggested that the law should prevent people from leasing sub-standard housing in the first place.

Landlords could lease places in an appalling condition — places which should be looked at for health standards — at between \$25 and \$45 a week.

In a written submission to the committee, which is inquiring into environ-

mental conditions of Aborigines and Torres Strait islanders, the association said the rent paid per week, per room available to the household ranged up to \$10.

"The Housing Commission charges about the same for a four-bedroom house," the association said.

The style and location of Aboriginal housing in the city were among the most salient features of a generally depressed condition, the association said.

In Sydney, 25 per cent of Aborigines lived in cottages, more than half in semi-detached houses or part of a house exceeding three rooms, and the balance in three, two or one-room accommodation.

Overcrowding was frequent; at Newtown, an instance had been cited where 13 people occupied one room and shared a kitchen.

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