

Former Minister says Australians racist

A former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Johnson (Lab, NSW), said last night that Australian society was racist and that work politicians did for Aboriginal welfare was unrewarding.

"You can work your guts out", Mr Johnson said, "but Australian society being as racist as it is, there is not always a bonus for it".

Mr Johnson said the eyes of the world were on Australia over its treatment of Aborigines, and it was an area of extreme vulnerability for Australia.

Speaking on a move to set up a new Aboriginal Affairs Committee, Mr Johnson said, "People will take on this responsibility with the prospect of electoral disaster".

Mr Ruddock (Lib, NSW), who followed Mr Johnson in the debate, said he had hoped Mr Johnson would have made a more constructive speech. He would not like new Members to be deterred from serving on committees because of what Mr Johnson had said.

Mr Bryant (Lab, Vic), another former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, said he hoped nothing would be done to interfere with the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee.

[The present Minister, Mr Viner, recently told the committee that an inquiry would be held into its functions and future operations and would make recommendations to the new Government.]

Mr Bryant said his colleague Mr Johnson had said he was disappointed with the NACC's work. On the other hand, Mr Bryant said, 43 per cent of the people of

Australia were not satisfied with the work of Parliament itself.

Mr Bryant said it was "unfortunately true" that local councils did not take work out to where Abori-

gines lived.

"The post office does not bring the telephone out there", he said. "Health services are not quite as expansive. The education system doesn't quite work as well."

"This is no reflection on the political party in power. It is endemic".

The motion to re-establish the committee was agreed to.