

Dr Ross Macleod is the first doctor to be employed on a full-time basis with the Aboriginal Medical Service.

It is expected that these developments will allow a considerable expansion of the service, particularly in regard to house calls and country visits.

He graduated from Sydney University's School of Medicine in 1966 and spent the following two years in residence at Sydney Hospital. Plans to go to Great Britain were altered when he received the offer to spend a year working at a small children's hospital in Japan. It was there that Dr Macleod's interest in child health developed and it was his contact with American paediatricians working there that lead him to a 2-year study of child health at Yale University in America.

The clinic was funded by the Federal Government but was under the control of the local people. It employed coloured community health workers and used drivers to transport patients from their homes to the clinic and Yale teaching hospital with which it worked closely.

health problems were for the first time receiving a high degree of publicity in the press and media. At this time the Aboriginal Medical Service was established and operating out of Redfern. In February of last year, while practising at the Children's Hospital, he started working on a voluntary basis with the AMS.

Shortly afterwards the Medical Service advertised for a full-time doctor. "By this time," he says, "I was convinced this was what I wanted to do." He was chosen from the ten applicants for the position and began work last October. John Mackay also applied but was unable to take up his full-time position till this month.

Although the practice is quite common in the United States this is the first time in Australia that doctors have been employed by and have been answerable to the local community. The Legal Service shares a similar distinction.

Given the connection between the social conditions faced by Aborigines and their health problems, the Aboriginal Medical Service itself provides the model for what could be an effective attack on the underlying causes of the ailments that disproportionately afflict Aboriginal people.

At the core of the problem, according to Dr Macleod, is the break-down and demoralization of Aboriginal life, the most obvious symptom of which is alcoholism. This is why the AMS is concerned with the rekindling of Aboriginal pride, identity and culture. It works closely with organizations like, for instance, the National Black Theatre.