

Australia to apologize for abuse of Aborigines

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE
and ASSOCIATED PRESS

SYDNEY, Australia — Australia's government will apologize for past mistreatment of the country's Aboriginal minority when Parliament convenes, addressing an issue that has blighted race relations in Australia for years.

In a measure of the importance Prime Minister Kevin Rudd attaches to the issue, the

apology will be the first item of business for the new government when Parliament meets Feb. 13, Jenny Macklin, the federal minister for indigenous affairs, said yesterday.

Macklin said she consulted with Aboriginal leaders, but it was not clear what form the apology would take. "The apology will be made on behalf of the Australian government and does not attribute guilt to the current generation of Australian people," she said.

Rudd, who was elected in November and whose pledge to apologize overturns a decade of refusals by his predecessor, has ruled out paying compensation. But he says he is determined to help all Aborigines achieve better health, education and living standards.

Marcia Langton, professor of Australian indigenous studies at the University of Melbourne, said the apology was a good first step. But "there can't be any next step without a

compensation fund," Langton, who is also one of Australia's prominent Aboriginal advocates, said yesterday.

Aborigines — 450,000 among a population of 21 million — are Australia's poorest ethnic group and are most likely to be jailed, unemployed and illiterate. Their life expectancy is 17 years shorter than that of other Australians.

Tens of thousands of Aborigines died from disease, war-

fare and dispossession in the years after European settlement, and it was not until 1962 that they were able to vote in national elections.

From 1910 until 1970, about 100,000 mostly mixed-blood Aboriginal children — the "stolen generations" — were taken from their parents and placed either with white families or in state institutions as part of a drive to assimilate them with whites.

Iran's president predicts nuclear energy by 2009

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TEHRAN, Iran — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday that his country would produce nuclear energy by next year, and he lashed out at Israel as a "filthy entity" that would soon collapse.

His speech came as the U.N. Security Council is considering imposing new sanctions on Iran because of its refusal to halt sensitive uranium-enrichment activities.

"We have been promised that we will have nuclear power this time next year in our power grid," the ISNA news agency quoted Ahmadinejad as saying in a speech in the southern city of Bushehr, where Iran is building its first nuclear power plant.

Ahmad Fayezbakhsh, managing director of Iran's Production and Development of Nuclear Energy Co., said in Tehran that the Bushehr plant was expected to be operational in October. Russia is helping Iran to build the plant and made the eighth and final delivery of its nuclear fuel this week.

U.S. Navy Announces Alternative Arrangements for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act and Requests Public Input



On January 15, 2008, the Department of the Navy accepted alternative arrangements, approved by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These alternative arrangements specifically address the use of mid-frequency active (MFA) sonar and its effects on marine mammals during Navy exercises in the Southern California (SOCAL) Operating Area. These exercises include Composite Training Unit Exercises (COMPTUEXs) and Joint Task Force Exercises (JTFEXs) scheduled to occur between January 15, 2008 and January 23, 2009. A Decision Memorandum documenting the Navy's acceptance of these alternative arrangements was published in the Federal Register on January 24, 2008.

Information on the Navy's proposals for the SOCAL Operating Area including the full text of the Decision Memorandum is available at www.SOCALRangeComplexEIS.com.

The Navy will prepare a post-exercise assessment after each exercise. By this Notice, the Navy requests input from the public on the process for reviewing the post-exercise assessments. The Navy is also offering the public the opportunity to discuss the implementation of these alternative arrangements. Input on reviewing the post-exercise assessments and any requests to meet with Navy and CEQ representatives about the alternative arrangements may be submitted by contacting Mr. Alex Stone at (619) 545-8128 or in writing to:

Naval Air Station North Island
Attn: Alex Stone, CPF Environmental
McCain Boulevard, Building 678, Room 218
San Diego, CA 92135

For more information about the Navy's Decision Memorandum, visit www.SOCALRangeComplexEIS.com.

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