

# Aboriginal numbers up sharply

The Aboriginal populations of Victoria and NSW increased sharply between the 1971 and 1976 censuses, while the Aboriginal population of the ACT more than trebled, from 255 to 827.

The figures for NSW and Victoria were announced yesterday and support indications that Australia's black population has for years been underestimated.

The 1971 census put the NSW population at 23,873 (including Torres Strait islanders), but the 1976 census put it at 40,450. In Victoria the rise was from 6,371 to 14,768.

Figures for other States and Territories, published last month in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs statistical section newsletter, indicated that Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander population rose from 31,922 to 41,345 five years later.

The Northern Territory population hardly changed: in 1971

there were 23,381 and in 1976 23,751.

In Western Australia the population increased at a slightly higher rate, from about 22,000 to 26,000 and in South Australia from 7,299 to more than 10,000.

The census estimated the population in Tasmania at 671 in 1971 but 2,942 in 1976.

The figures of the Australian total show a rise from about 116,000 to 161,000 in 1976. A spokesman for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs last night gave some reasons for the apparent increases.

Apart from the natural rate of increase among Aborigines and Torres Strait islanders, which is greater than the European rate by a ratio of 3 to 1, there was an increase in the number of people identified as Aboriginal after 1971.

Many Aborigines in outlying

areas are not counted in census while others cannot or do not respond to the census.