

Aboriginal health review

By JACK WATERFORD

A major review of Aboriginal health programs, and associated government programs affecting Aboriginal health, has been ordered by the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser.

The review was ordered in a letter from Mr Fraser to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Chaney, read into Hansard by an Opposition senator to whom it was leaked. Senator Keefe (Qld).

Mr Fraser said he wanted a review "to draw together information on the broad range of Commonwealth programs which directly or indirectly aim to improve the

health and lifestyle of Aboriginals, and to clarify the direction of Commonwealth policy".

This would include alcoholism and "the extent to which government policies and programs impact [sic] on it".

He asked that a senior-level task force, with members drawn from the Departments of Aboriginal Affairs, Health, Finance, Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Social Welfare secretariat, be established, with a requirement of reporting by April, 1980.

He recommended the following terms of reference:

The quantum and quality of Aboriginal health programs and

their effectiveness in lifting health standards.

Areas requiring change or improve-

ment.

health standards.

Areas requiring change or improvement.

The impact of other programs and policies, such as housing, and outstations, on health.

The review should take account of relevant studies such as the Hay report, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs reports on alcoholism (1977) and Aboriginal health (1979), the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program report and the report of Aboriginal statistics in Australia.

Senator Keefe criticised the absence of Aboriginal participation in the review.