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PRIME MINISTER

MACQUARIE NETWORK

WEEKLY BROADCAST

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CH, MP

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ABORIGINAL POLICY

Good Evening :

Next Friday is National Aborigines Day throughout Australia.

Recently I talked to large numbers of aboriginal leaders in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley. I was able to discuss with them face to face how they felt about the assistance we are giving and the directions in which we are moving.

Since the last National Aborigines Day twelve months ago, there has been a steady and significant development of Commonwealth policy and objectives for the aboriginal people. So now I want to outline to you some of the objectives of the Commonwealth policies as they affect aborigines.

The most important development was the five point statement I made on Australia Day, six months ago, setting out my Government's policies for aboriginal citizens. Those points are worth recalling now when our attention can be focused on the one day of the year when we can look at the problems and prospects for Australia's own aboriginal population. It is very important that we should try to understand the aims and directions of national policy.

First, we want to ensure that aborigines have free and unimpeded access to the rights and privileges of our society.

Next, we want to encourage and assist aborigines to keep and develop their own culture as a worthwhile and wholesome part of Australian life. That is, we want to emphasise that every aborigine has the right to say how closely and how soon he will become integrated into the mainstream of Australian society. We think this is more likely to happen when aborigines retain their own identity and traditions and their own culture. The concept of separate

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development as a long term aim is alien to our objectives.

The Liberal/Country Party Government's objectives must be based on programmes which take notice of the wishes and the aspirations of the aborigines themselves, which provide the opportunities to develop their own personalities and abilities and which involve the aboriginal people themselves in formulating the policy programmes.

Our fourth objective is to make certain the Government's programmes encourage aboriginal citizens to manage their own affairs as much as practicable so that they can improve their potential and participate fully in national progress, and that handicaps for aborigines in health, in housing and in education, and in vocational training may be steadily reduced.

Lastly, we want to get rid of the few remaining laws which discriminate against aborigines.

Those are the five objectives of the Australia Day statement. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that this statement means that Australians as a nation, and through their national Government, recognise that aborigines have a great many problems and difficulties not faced by others.

And I assure you it means we have shouldered the burden. It means we will see that aboriginal citizens have the opportunities to reach at least the same standards of living and education as are enjoyed by all other Australians.

Since the 1967 Referendum on the question of Federal responsibility for aboriginal policy, special funds have been established concerned with aboriginal housing, health, education, employment and business enterprises. In the financial year just ended, direct national expenditure on aboriginal advancement was nearly \$45 million.

We intend to create a new form of leaseholding on aboriginal reserves to assist in land rights. There is a new mining code setting up guidelines for mining on aboriginal reserves. And I want to emphasise - because it is not always clearly understood - that these reserves are not only very extensive, covering an area nearly as great as Victoria, in the Northern Territory alone, but that the reserves are of permanent duration for the aboriginal people themselves.

We have allocated \$5 million in the first year of the scheme to buy land outside reserves for aboriginal groups. We are currently considering an offer to acquire land for one aboriginal group in this way. We will delineate and protect land for aboriginal religious and ceremonial purposes.

One of the groups I visited at the beginning of this month was the Yirrkala at Gove in the Northern Territory. They are receiving directly 10 per cent of royalties from the nearby bauxite and alumina development as a result of the Australia Day decisions.

I recently announced the first royalty payment of about \$21,500 to the Yirrkala, and as time goes on, the total aborigines' royalty from the Gove project will reach \$1 million a year.

After meeting and having the pleasure of associating with them, it is fair to say that they believe they are being satisfactorily treated.

After I came back south, one of the most important of their leaders sent me a message rejecting press reports about agitation to send several aborigines to Switzerland in protest against the mining venture. I thought that indicated their attitude pretty clearly.

As a nation we have a long road ahead in ensuring that our aboriginal citizens take their rightful place in our society. Since 1967, we have been taking more and more vigorous action towards this aim.

I believe we have been doing so sincerely, wisely and for the real benefit of the Australian aborigines themselves. It is a course that I hope all Australians will wholeheartedly support.
