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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

The Prime Minister and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, today reaffirmed the Government's opposition to racial discrimination and its commitment to the basic principles of freedom and dignity for all people regardless of race, sex, language, religion or ethnic origin.

Mr Whitlam said that in 1966 the United Nations General Assembly had proclaimed 21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in commemoration of the Sharpeville tragedy. The aim was to draw world attention to the urgent need to eliminate racial discrimination wherever it existed.

Mr Whitlam said that the Government would continue to condemn the apartheid policies of the South African Government, but he did not see the day simply as an occasion to point to the shortcomings of others. It was also an opportunity to examine where Australia itself was headed.

Mr Whitlam said that on 21 November last, the Government had introduced into the Senate two Bills, the Racial Discrimination Bill 1973 and the Human Rights Bill 1973, both of which had important implications for the prevention and elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in Australia.

These Bills would be re-introduced in Parliament in an amended form in the Autumn session.

The proposed legislation on racial discrimination would implement the terms of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which the Government would ratify.

This Convention recognised that any doctrine of superiority based on racial differences was fundamentally false, morally

indefensible and without any social justification. The Racial Discrimination Bill condemned racial discrimination as being unlawful and provided administrative machinery as well as legal sanctions to prevent and eliminate racial discrimination as far as possible.

Mr Whitlam said that the Bill provided for an Australian Race Relations Commissioner, and a Race Relations Council. Their functions would be to promote understanding and tolerance between racial and ethnic groups.

The Racial Discrimination Bill was a major step in Australia's program to implement the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, launched by the United Nations on 10 December 1973. Australia welcomed the Decade as a positive and necessary means of tackling the problem.

Mr Whitlam said that other action taken by the Government to counter racial discrimination included contributions, totalling \$25,000 in 1973/74, to the United Nations Educational and Training program for Southern Africa, the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa and the United Nations Fund for Namibia.

By its actions and votes at the 28th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1973 the Government had clearly indicated its resolve to help to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination.