



# PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

21 AUGUST 1978

STATEMENT IN RELATION TO  
ARTICLE IN THE BULLETIN

I have been reluctant to make this statement, for it is my wish to protect the confidentiality of discussions between Ministers. I believe this is absolutely essential to the working of good government. However, the gross distortions of fact contained in the Bulletin article, widely repeated since, demand that this statement be made, and the Minister for Finance, Mr Robinson, has agreed that I should make it.

I categorically deny that I requested Mr Robinson to cast doubts on his evidence to the McGregor Royal Commission or to say that that evidence was not a perfect recollection or that it was based on uncertain, vague or hazy memory.

The facts of this matter are as follows:

On 7 and 8 August discussions took place between Ministers concerning the findings of the Royal Commission.

In the course of these discussions Mr Robinson stated that his then recollection was that I had been informed on 17 January of the fact of a telephone conversation between Senator Withers and the Chief Electoral Officer, but not of the contents of that conversation.

I asked Mr Robinson, if he was sure of his recollection, to write me a note.

Mr Robinson thereafter re-read the transcript of his evidence before the Royal Commission and concluded that in his opinion a note would not add anything to it.

In these circumstances, when Mr Robinson informed me of this conclusion I agreed with him that this should be the end of the matter.

Before re-reading the transcript, Mr Robinson did dictate a draft note. It was never signed or sent. I saw it for the first time today. To put this matter to rest, the draft is being made public and is attached to this statement.

DRAFT

My dear Prime Minister,

I refer to my evidence given to the Royal Commission regarding a conversation held on the 17 January between yourself, Senator Withers and me. My recollection of that conversation, which took place in your office during the luncheon adjournment of Cabinet was that during a discussion lasting approximately 15 minutes, a number of matters were discussed.

These included my concern about continuing press reports of allegations made against me regarding re-distribution by Mr Cameron. The matter of Mr Cameron's declaration of polls' speech and the question of unrest amongst Queensland Liberal Parliamentarians and suggestions of meetings held during the Christmas New Year break about alleged electoral malpractice in Queensland.

During that conversation I recall Senator Withers, amongst a number of comments made about the general allegations, making reference to a telephone call that he had made to the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr Pearson.

I do not recall any specific detail of that conversation being offered. In fact I was not aware myself of the specific content of that telephone call until Mr Pearson gave evidence at the Royal Commission about Senator Withers' telephone call to him and the action that he, Mr Pearson, took because of it.

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