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## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE, OLD MINT, SYDNEY, 13 JANUARY 1989

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JOURNALIST: What do you think about the resignation of Justice Muirhead?

PM: Well I've known about this now for some time that it was impending. I've had discussions with him and it's a decision which I understand completely. He has made a great contribution and he has the opportunity of taking up the appointment as Administrator of the Northern Territory, a position for which he is eminently well equipped. I think the work that he has done in the Commission sets a very firm foundation for the future work of that Commission. The interim report is a very useful one. He will continue to work until April. We will receive further reports from him before the end of this month as his statement has indicated and at the appropriate time in consultation with the State Governments will nominate the successor to Justice Muirhead. ~~As I want to take this opportunity of putting on the public record my appreciation for the great work that he has done,~~ for the foundation that he has laid and to wish him well for the future.

JOURNALIST: Did you try and get him to stay Mr Hawke?

PM: I was able to get Justice Muirhead to stay for perhaps longer than the personal pressures upon him before would have led him to do, so he stayed, as I say, perhaps longer than he perhaps thought was possible as a result of the discussions I had with him. I am confident that, as a result of the work he has done and the team that he's got working with him, that we will be able to nominate an appropriate successor. He is confident, as I am confident, that the work will be carried through to a successful conclusion.

JOURNALIST: Sir, why was the decision made to appoint him to the Northern Territory today? Why did the Government make that decision today?

PM: I didn't make that decision today is the answer to that question.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, there was talk that there was some sort of political pressure on Justice Muirhead to leave. What do you think of those -

PM: Well, it's nonsense.

JOURNALIST: Is there any implication with the Western Australian election coming on that the Northern Territory appointment was made?

PM: None whatsoever. You would need to have even the most fervid imagination in the silly non-political season to work that one out. I'd just like to know what the machinations in your mind are to think that one up. There is absolutely no foundation for it at all.

JOURNALIST: Who is the likely successor?

PM: That's a matter that we will decide in consultation with the States.

JOURNALIST: Will his departure disrupt the Commission at all?

PM: No. I thought I'd made it quite clear in the answers I'd given a moment ago that the work that has been done by Mr Justice Muirhead, in consultation and in association with his colleagues, will mean that the work will go on. I've already made that quite clear.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, how confident are you that the \$250,000 reward can do something in the Winchester case?

PM: We obviously hope it will do something, otherwise we wouldn't have put it there. But you can't be certain in these matters. What we have decided to do of course is to give as much incentive by that step and to ensure that all the resources are going to be available to maximise the chances of apprehending the perpetrator of this monstrous crime. We hope that that will play a part in bringing to justice whoever is responsible for it.

JOURNALIST: Sir, on the Muirhead matter, do you have any preference for a likely successor?

PM: Well, if I have I'm not going to announce it publicly here. I will take that into account in my discussions with my colleagues and with the States.

JOURNALIST: Sir, a report too that Mr Fraser, Malcolm Fraser, would be enlisted to call the aboriginal compact to white Australia, do you have any reaction to that?

PM: Again, like a previous question put, rather inaccurately put, if we can get down to the substance of it, in discussions that I have had last year with a number of people including representatives of the Aboriginal people and with Mr Hand, I had mentioned Mr Fraser's name as one of a number of people in the community who I thought would be appropriate in promoting discussion of and also in soliciting support within the community for the concept of a treaty. I think that the reputation of Mr Fraser in this area is impeccable, but his was one of a number of names that's in my mind.

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