



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

NO
M/73

DATE
18 April 1973

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

The following statement was issued in Apia tonight by the Australian delegation to the South Pacific Forum Meeting:

"The Chief Minister of Papua New Guinea, Mr Michael Somare, denied categorically that he had been involved in any 'horse play' with sailors from HMAS Vampire in Aggie's Hotel on Monday night.

Both Mr Somare and the Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, had been engaged in some light-hearted encounters with crew members from Vampire and one sailor had mistaken the Chief Minister's identity. He at once apologised for the mistake.

At no time was Mr Somare man-handled by the sailors in any way. In fact, Mr Somare, like Mr Whitlam, much enjoyed his informal encounter with members of HMAS Vampire."