



PRIME MINISTER

13 May 1974

CHRISTMAS ISLAND

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam said tonight:

"Christmas Island was, in the past, administered by Britain for convenience as part of the Colony of Singapore. In 1958 it was transferred to Australian sovereignty by Britain.

"Australian sovereignty over the island is not in question. Nor are we handing over control of the rock phosphate deposits.

"When I was in Singapore in February the question of Christmas Island was mentioned to me by Lee Kuan Yew. There was no discussion in any detail. No agreement in principle about the future of the island has been reached and there has certainly been no secret "deal" as has been alleged.

"Any change in the future status of Christmas Island would involve the interests of a number of departments and instrumentalities in Australia and a number of countries such as New Zealand and Indonesia (which is closer to Christmas Island than is Singapore). No negotiations on this subject have taken place.

"Those who are making the most noise about what they allege to be a sell out of Australia's interests are those who have been most active in selling up Australia's resources over the last decade.

"If their allegations were true, their concern would be grossly hypocritical. As their allegations are untrue, they can only be seen as a malicious fabrication propagated by desperate men facing electoral defeat."

CANBERRA.