



DEPARTMENT OF  
FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS

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PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE - PARIS  
7 JANUARY 1975

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The following is the transcript of a press conference given by the Prime Minister, The Hon. E.G. Whitlam, in Paris at 1800 hours on 7 January 1975:

Begins: Are there any questions ladies and gentlemen?

Question: Mr Prime Minister, would it be possible to ask if in principle a tripartite uranium deal with Japan and France has been decided upon?

URANIUM

Prime Minister: As you are aware Japan and Australia are conducting a feasibility study into the enrichment of Australian uranium deposits in Australia. Neither of us has the technology required. You have also been informed, a couple of days ago, that there will be British officials visiting Australia in a couple of months time in this connection. They may be accompanied by West German and Dutch officials because Britain, The Netherlands and West Germany share one particular form of uranium enrichment. Any discussion with French officials would take place after that.

Question: May I ask a supplementary question my Prime Minister, the French Consul in Australia is a nuclear physicist and has been carrying on discussions with the Australian Atomic Energy Commission for some two years. Is this irrelevant?

FRENCH  
CONSUL

Prime Minister: I didn't know this.

Question: Could you tell us the main points of your talk with President Giscard d'Estaing?

Prime Minister: The President's and my conversations were purely tete-a-tete and I therefore would rather not list subjects we discussed. Also, you will notice I answered the earlier question outside any context of discussions I had with the President in particular. I think it ought to be sufficient for me to say that in the tete-a-tete with Prime Minister Chirac yesterday and President Giscard d'Estaing today a wide range of matters of common interest was discussed. I mustn't specify clearly what the subjects were or were not.

Question: Could you tell us why you made a public apology to the skipper of the Illawarra?

Prime Minister: An explanation by the Captain was brought to my notice.

TASMAN  
BRIDGE/ILLAWARRA  
DISASTER

Question: Do you intend to ask Mr Chirac to come to Australia.

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Prime Minister: I'm having dinner with him tonight and I did have this in mind.

Question: Mr Prime Minister has any progress been made during your visit to establishing a cultural or scientific agreement between France and Australia?

CULTURAL  
& SCIENTIFIC  
AGREEMENT

Prime Minister: This was raised in the talks between the two sides yesterday afternoon and I'm confident that the preparation of both cultural and scientific agreements will proceed quite rapidly. We would be very happy indeed to have such agreements with France because France's cultural pre-eminence has been known for centuries and her scientific achievements for some decades.

Question: Does Australia maintain a continuing objection to French nuclear testing even if its not in the atmosphere. Would you state precisely what that objection is and will that be a factor in any uranium deals of whatever sort between Australia and France?

NUCLEAR  
TESTING

Prime Minister: Australia would rather there were no nuclear testing at all. Nevertheless nuclear testing does proceed underground and has for some years.

Question: Will it affect Australia.....?

Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to your colleague from the Australian Financial Review.

Question: Would Australia sell uranium to any country if it were using that uranium to make nuclear weapons?

URANIUM

Prime Minister: I've got nothing more to say on this than I've already said. You know quite well what the Australian Government's attitude is to sales of uranium in one form or another.

Question: Could you elaborate on this for the French.....

Prime Minister: Well what I've said previously is that all the sales we've made up till now have been within the terms of the IAEA safeguards.

Question: Since France has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and does not accept the IAEA safeguards does that rule out the possibility of Australia selling uranium to it?

Prime Minister: No further comment.

Question: Could you tell us why you won't comment on that rather crucial and controversial aspect?

Prime Minister: It appears quite clearly from the first question I was asked today and the answer I gave to it.

Question: Could you please state again why you won't answer this question?

Prime Minister: I said that any discussions on this matter would take place - "any", "would" - take place after those that have already been arranged.

Question: Are you considering reconstructing the Atomic Energy Commission in Australia along American lines by splitting it so as to diversify the defence aspects and the economic energy aspects? <sup>Atomic Energy Commission</sup>

Prime Minister: No consideration has been given to this so far and I won't speculate as to what may be done.

Question: Have you no worries about the powers given to the Atomic Energy Commission under the present Act?

Prime Minister: No consideration has been given to altering those powers.

Question: The question about the tripartite cooperation between France and between Australia and Japan in fact has been discussed before the Labor Government came into power.

Prime Minister: Not I think with Japan had it?

Question: Yes I believe it had.

Prime Minister: Oh well I didn't know that.

Question: (unclear...why are you so secretive about these discussions?)

Prime Minister: We have made arrangements for some discussions and any further discussions would take place after the discussions which have already been arranged. Those are the only discussions which have been arranged.

Question: Did you explain your views on the future of the South Pacific region with the French leaders? What did you say and what were their comments?

Prime Minister: This wasn't discussed yesterday or today. It was recently discussed about a month ago when Mr Froment Meurice was in Canberra.

Question: Could we know a bit more about what you said to him?

Prime Minister: I'd rather you asked me a specific question as to attitude on any particular aspect. There again I don't believe it appropriate for me to detail discussions which have been tete-a-tete.

Question: What is the future of Franco/Australian relations?

Prime Minister: I believe there will be a considerable increase in relations between France and Australia. M. Segard, the Secretary who deals with Overseas Trade is soon to visit Australia and he is interested, I believe, in the whole range of matters which can come within trade between the two countries.

Question: Do you envisage any cultural exchanges between the two countries?

CULTURAL  
& SCIENTIFIC  
AGREEMENTS

Prime Minister: I certainly hope so. One of your colleagues asked a question about Cultural and Scientific Agreements between France and Australia. We are anxious to have such Agreements. My Government has made cultural agreements with several countries and scientific agreements with some countries in the two years that we have been in office and we were very happy indeed at the prospect of such agreements with France.

Question: In your discussions with M. Chirac did you discuss the development of the situation in Southern Africa and the difference in Australia's and France's approach to South Africa?

Prime Minister: This wasn't raised.

NON-PROLIFERATION  
TREATY

Question: Could you tell us what is exactly the Australian stand on non-proliferation and what do you think of the French stand - France not joining the Treaty but saying it would comply with the clauses of the Treaty.

Prime Minister: There is a prospective conference to review the Treaty and I believe it is in that context that these matters may be discussed and promoted.

Question: Did you receive or did you ask during your discussions with the French <sup>Prime</sup> Minister the firm guarantee that French atmospheric nuclear testing in Pacific has now ended?

Prime Minister: No

Questions: Can I ask you why?

Prime Minister: I rely on public statements by the President and his Ministers.

PURCHASE OF  
AIRCRAFT FROM  
FRANCE

Question: Did you discuss the problem of Australia buying some aircraft from France?

Prime Minister: Yes. There is active consideration being given to the purchase of further aircraft for Australia's domestic airlines and there is competition in particular between the Tristar and the Airbus and it is a very difficult decision for us to make. The domestic airlines which are not as confident in Australia, any more than domestic airlines seem to be in any other country, that there will be such an increase in business as there was in recent years, are not really urging the acquisition of these aircraft as much now as they were several months ago. Therefore the whole question is not as urgent at the moment as it was say in the middle of 1974 but it's very difficult to make up our minds between these two excellent aircraft. I'm not a technical man so it might be invidious for me to compare the qualities which appeal to us in these matters.

TRIPARTITE  
ENERGY  
CONFERENCE

Question: Can you explain to us the Australian position on the French proposals for tripartite Energy Conference.

Prime Minister: We are attracted to the French proposals that there be consultations rather than confrontation in these matters and we were very interested indeed to hear from the Prime Minister and his colleagues the proposals for the preliminary conference and their views as to how soon there could be a conference itself. Australia has however to await the agenda of the conference before it would give further commitments to attending it, but the general idea of having consultations is attractive to us and I believe it has been a most valuable initiative by the French Government.

ENERGY  
CONFERENCE

Question: On the question of the Energy Conference would it be true to say that you are more concerned with transportation problems than supply problems?

Prime Minister: It would be true to say that transportation is a bigger worry for Australia than supply but it would be quite wrong to say that supply wasn't also a worry but we do not depend on other countries as much for supply as we do for transportation.

Question: Do I gather that Australia has been or may be invited to the Energy Conference (unclear)

Prime Minister: That is to the major conference?

Question: Yes

Prime Minister: I would think it's quite likely that we will be invited to the major conference. We are not of course invited to the preliminary one.

Question: Mr Prime Minister, were the declarations of Dr Kissinger about possible military intervention in the Middle East discussed during your talks in Paris and if possible what is your point of view?

Prime Minister: I don't want to comment on this. Dr Kissinger was asked a hypothetical question and it seemed to me he was at pains to give a very guarded answer to that question. Now I don't believe that it helps if I elaborate on this matter or if I speculate on it.

Question: Mr Prime Minister in your discussions with Mr Sauvagnargues, the Foreign Minister, did the question of Cambodia come out particularly French (unclear)

Prime Minister: There was no specific discussion with Mr Sauvagnargues on this matter. There was obviously an interest expressed by us in the contributions which France can make in those territories for which over 100 years she has had a particular interest. French contributions in that part of the world could clearly be of great value and therefore of great interest to us who live near it and who have had unfortunate involvements in it.

Question: (Unclear - concerning Australian aid for Africa).

Prime Minister: Australia as a relatively developed country of course has a very great concern for the developing countries. This was particularly true because of all the developed countries

AUST. AID TO  
AFRICA

CAMBODIA

AID TO  
FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS

Australia lives closest to developing countries. North, East and West of Australia there are tens, in fact hundreds of millions of citizens of developing countries. Australia for two generations has had the responsibility for one such country which this year will become independent and which last year became self-governing, Papua New Guinea. So quite naturally Australia is interested and has been involved in this question. My government recently established an Australian Development Assistance Agency to specialise in these matters. We accept the general United Nations objective of having 0.7 per cent of the national product devoted to international assistance and we have already reached over 0.6 per cent of that figure. We would in general give more assistance to countries in our neighbourhood, South East Asia and the neighbouring countries in the Indian Ocean and in the South Pacific than to the African countries. This is not because we are unaware of the problems of the African countries or unsympathetic towards them. They do have a continuing association, they still command the interest of France and Britain and in fact other European countries, but the sheer history and proximity means that Australia is more involved with the countries of South East Asia and the Indian and South Pacific Oceans. My government also stresses that assistance can be given to developing countries not only by aid but by trade. We probably have devoted our aid more than most countries, or perhaps any countries, to outright grants. In general we do not require the repayment of advances we make or any interest payments on those advances. We have had a fairly elaborate system of trade assistance to the developing countries.

U.S. FLEET  
VIETNAM

Question: Are you aware of reports that the American Seventh Fleet is off the coast of Viet-Nam in a show of strength? If so what is your reaction to this buildup?

Prime Minister: I wasn't aware.

Question: I understand that in your speech yesterday at the dinner party with M. Chirac you said that Australia did have some hesitation in the past towards a united Europe but these reservations have now gone. I wonder if you could tell us why the attitude of Australia has changed and in what way a united Europe is beneficial to Australia's interests?

Prime Minister: The big reason for the change of attitude has been that there has been a change of government in Australia. I'm sure that in France in particular you now recognise the Second of December as not only the Anniversary of Austerlitz or the coup d'etat but also of political liberation of Australia. There have been some other incidental reasons and that is that the pattern of trade has changed in the twelve and a half years - perhaps a bit longer - since a British Government, that of Mr McMillan, formally applied to join the European Economic Community.

BEEF SALES TO  
EUROPE

Question: (Unclear - concerning whether prospects for resuming beef sales to Europe improved in Paris)

Prime Minister: Yes, but not for some months.

Question: When Sir, how many months?

Prime Minister: No, I wouldn't specify, I wouldn't make any particular forecasts, because we've received different estimates in different member countries of the community with whom we have discussed this matter.

Question: Due to the present economic situation in Australia, do you consider you will have a raise in tariffs for trade in the near future?

Prime Minister: Well, there may be but if there were increases in tariffs in Australia I would expect they would be within the context of the international arrangements that Australia has made and the legislation that the Australian Parliament has passed. In other words it would be, if the increases in tariffs were due to temporary factors then the increases also would be temporary. Tariffs in Australia, in general, are lower now than they have been for probably over forty years, but there has been a very great increase in imports into Australia and some of the imports have adversely affected some Australian industries, so therefore we are persuading the importers to reduce the amount of imports closer to what they were before my Government took action which, by tariffs and by currency revaluations, to promote imports. Perhaps it would be useful for me to say in this context that Australia is a very considerable trading country. It's the twelfth largest trading country in the world. There are very few countries where there is a larger percentage of the national product involved in international trade than is the case in Australia. Therefore the prosperity of Australians depends very greatly on international trade and it is for this reason that it is very distressing and disheartening for Australians that some of the most affluent countries in the world, some of the biggest trading countries in the world, should have suddenly, without any pretence of justification, or warning, have cut down on some of the exports which Australia can make in very economic and attractive terms, such as beef exports. The Common Market, just cancelled Australia's beef exports. Japan just cancelled Australia's beef exports. The United States is now pressing Australia to reduce beef exports. Now in many of these cases the countries had previously urged us to increase beef exports. There is no question that our beef exports are of good and dependable quality, and very competitive price. It is very disheartening, discouraging that affluent trading countries such as those I've mentioned, the only countries in the world, among the few countries in the world which eat meat, among the still smaller number of countries in the world which can afford from time to time to import meat, should take so retrograde and selfish a step. It is disappointing, it is reprehensible, I would say, that for domestic political reasons great trading countries, affluent countries should set such a bad example. Australia tries, even at the cost of some hardship to herself and her people, to have good trading relations. We would expect other countries, bigger ones in

most cases, to be no less principled and progressive in matters of trade.

Question: Having noted the reaction of the Shah of Iran to the joint statement emerging from the meeting between Giscard d'Estaing with President Ford, particularly on the question of revaluation of gold reserves, do you sympathise with the Shah of Iran on this question and what is Australia's attitude?

Prime Minister: I don't want to make any comment at this stage on this. I'm very interested in what the Shah says on this and many other matters. As it mightn't be generally understood here, the Shah recently visited Australia last September, and it was interesting to us that this visit should have been regarded as appropriate by him before he made it, and we have every reason to believe regarded as well worth while after he'd made it.

Question: Prime Minister, you've now been on the road for three weeks and it's been a fairly strenuous, as the of us who've been travelling with you know.

Prime Minister: You're bearing up quite well.

Question: How are you feeling, Sir?

Prime Minister: Likewise.