

Mr Fraser

F76/57



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony, welcomed the fact that Goff Letts, Majority Leader of the Legislative Assembly, his Deputy Grant Tambling and other members had come to Canberra for discussions.

The discussions had been useful and constructive concerning a number of aspects of concern to Territorians and to the Legislative Assembly of the Territory.

Amongst major matters discussed was the question of legislation concerning Aboriginal land rights.

The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister gave a complete and unequivocal affirmation as had the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that there would be full and thorough consultation on all aspects of the preparation and implementation of the proposed legislation.

At the moment the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was in the process of preparing a submission to put before the Government. Once the broad guidelines of that submission had been determined wide-ranging consultations would be necessary with all interested parties. Out of that consultation, detailed proposals for legislation would develop.

It is hoped that legislation would be introduced in the Federal Parliament in this session. It may well be that the legislation, once introduced, would require further consultation. Since this is a matter vitally important for the future development of the Northern Territory and for all people in the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth is determined that all views will be taken into account. The possibility of complementary Territory legislation is also a matter that needs to be examined.

The Commonwealth has responsibilities given to it under the Referendum concerning the future of Aboriginal people, and it cannot in any sense, abdicate from the responsibilities placed upon it by that Referendum. However, it has always been the philosophy of the Liberal and National Country Parties that problems should be approached cooperatively.

We are committed to working with the States in a spirit of partnership, and that applies equally to the Northern Territory which is destined for Statehood. We will pursue that partnership constructively.