

TRANSCRIPT OF PRIME MINISTER'S COMMENTS TO THE PRESS AT
INTERNATIONAL MOTOR RALLY, SYDNEY, 8 APRIL 1978

...We had a meeting yesterday. Mr Viner has reported publicly, and officials are working on a number of options available to the Commonwealth. We have had for several days a group of officials and Ministers working to analyse what courses of action the Queensland Government might take and what we ought to do if they did take action. The legislation that we had introduced was confined, as it was, to its proper purpose in relating to the circumstances of Aborigines on Queensland reserves, because we believed and hoped that the Queensland Government would then discuss with us the best way of providing for the means of the Aborigine people - because that is what it is all about. So far as states rights is concerned that is a nonsense issue on this question because the people of Australia determined that by, I think, about eight to one - an overwhelming majority - including an overwhelming majority in the state of Queensland itself.

QUESTION: Well do you think what the Bjelke-Petersen Government has done indicates that it has an over-riding concern for the Aborigines, or is it concerned about maintaining states rights?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't think it will be helped if I try and judge the motivations of the Queensland Government.

QUESTION: Did you anticipate that move by them Sir?

PRIME MINISTER: This is one of the moves that we thought they might undertake, but we hoped that they wouldn't.

QUESTION: What options does it leave for you now?

PRIME MINISTER: There are a number of options and the Government will be examining these on Monday. The only thing that I want to make completely clear, and I think Ian Viner did last night, is that our concern is overwhelmingly and predominantly the interests of the Aborigine people, to establish the circumstance in which they can and will be treated as equals with other Australians.

QUESTION: ...long legal wrangle Sir? What is going to happen to the Aborigines while that goes on?

PRIME MINISTER: This is one of the matters that concerns us, but it will not deter us from pursuing the course which we believe is right and necessary in achieving racial equality in Australia

ENDS