

INTERVIEW WITH TELEVISION JOURNALISTS

RAAF BASE FAIRBAIRN

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QUESTION: Is there any chance at all of Mr. Withers standing down while you are away?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, good heavens no.

QUESTION: What's the significance of the broadening of the Robnson inquiry?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I'll answer that, but I thought you were going to ask me questions about other events. We were given legal advice that it should be broadened to make quite sure that the Commission could bring in findings on matters that had been put before it. Now, on the basis of evidence given, they could bring in findings in relation to Mr. Robnson and the Commissioners but no necessarily in relation to other persons and -- so that the matter could be cleared up fully and completely the attorney advised and the Government accepted the advice, that the terms should be widened and so they were.

QUESTION: How do you respond to the Opposition's claims that Senator Withers should be treated the same way as Mr. Robnson and should stand down for the duration of the Commission?

PRIME MINISTER: I would say that the circumstances are quite different and what the Opposition says is obviously utterly predictable.

QUESTION: Sorry - quite different in what way sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, look I am not going to pursue these particular matters, you know I'm going overseas. Mr. Anthony's here, I've got no doubt the Opposition will be asking the questions about the matter but the position is quite different and that is not entertained. I think it would be a wrong action to take. The inquiry is in progress. The inquiry will report. The Government will act appropriately when we have the report.

QUESTION: Are you concerned, just one final point if it is fair dinkum broadened - more people getting involved?

PRIME MINISTER: Well of course nobody likes a Royal Commission of this kind but I believe that the Government should and I believe the Government will be given credit for its openness in relation to this matter - its willingness to have these matters fully improbed by impartial authority and if all Governments behaved in that way and in that light, I think that the public reputation of governments in general would be enhanced and I believe the Australian people will recognise that. I'd have thought you wanted to ask me questions about other matters but if you are not interested about those I will go on board.