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PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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The Prime Minister today welcomed the assurances that the Government had received from the Government of Syria, that restrictions on Australian passengers of the Jewish faith transitting through Damascus airport are no longer applicable.

These assurances had been given following representations by the Australian Government, which had been very concerned about reports that QANTAS was acceding to Syrian regulations that prohibited people of Jewish faith, of any nationality, travelling on aircraft that called at Damascus.

Mr Fraser reaffirmed that the Australian Government abhorred all forms of discrimination on racial, religious or other grounds.

The Australian Government had now asked QANTAS to take the necessary action to ensure that the Travel Information Manual issued by IATA is amended appropriately to conform with the current situation.

This Manual is used by a large number of international airlines and travel agents, and it was on the basis of the information contained in it that QANTAS and other international airlines had counselled passengers of the Jewish faith to avoid flights through Damascus.

Mr Fraser said that he was delighted that this restriction no longer applied, because the Government could not and would not condone discrimination against any group of Australian citizens.