



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

JANUARY 25 1985

I am concerned at false, misleading and damaging reports about a letter I sent recently to the Rt. Hon. David Lange, Prime Minister of New Zealand.

I will not depart from the principles and practice of this Government by releasing copies of private communications with foreign Governments.

The facts of the matter are, however, that on 10 January, after consultation with my colleagues the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence, I wrote to Mr Lange to inform him that I would be visiting the United States in early February for talks with President Reagan and senior members of his Administration. I said that I expected the Americans to want to discuss in some depth the state of and prospects for the ANZUS Alliance. At the same time I indicated that it was important, from Australia's point of view, that I should explore at first hand United States thinking on this key matter.

I informed Mr Lange that, in developing views for my talks in Washington I would value his thoughts on ANZUS and, in particular, on the longer term management of the question of ship visits. I stressed that I had no wish or intention to act in any way as an emissary. But I knew that the New Zealand and United States Governments had had a number of bilateral exchanges on the subject, and that it would be helpful to have his judgement on where the matter now stood and the prospects of an agreed outcome.

I noted that Australia, as I knew Mr Lange would understand, had important and direct interests at stake, notably the future of the ANZUS Alliance and of two of Australia's most important bilateral relationships. He would recall that, when the ALP Government came to power in 1983, we made it an early objective to initiate a review of ANZUS, in association with our Treaty partners. We had firmly concluded from that review that ANZUS continued to serve fundamental Australian security interests.

I went on to say that, in the light of this unequivocal conclusion, the Australian Government would need to continue to make clear that, whatever New Zealand's position or policies might be, Australia, as a sovereign nation which must protect its fundamental security interests, had its own well-known and clearly expressed position on visits by United States warships and the importance of maintaining the neither confirm nor deny principle. We could not accept as a permanent arrangement that the ANZUS Alliance had a different meaning, and entailed different obligations, for different members.

I said that Australia would be avoiding any public statements which cast doubt on whether the USA was applying its policy of neither confirming nor denying that warships were carrying nuclear weapons in particular cases and, as New Zealand's Alliance partner, saw it as important that the New Zealand Government should do the same.

I indicated that I was leaving Australia on 2 February for meetings on 6 and 7 February, and I understood that late in January he and his colleagues would be taking important decisions on the question of ship visits. If time constraints permitted, I would greatly welcome any views he might wish to let me have before I left. Similarly, I wanted Mr Lange to have an indication of the very broad lines of my thinking before my meetings in Washington.

I concluded by saying that I would also be visiting Brussels and both there and in Washington I planned to take up trade matters, including issues of concern to both our countries such as dairy products and progress in consultations on trade in the Pacific region. I undertook to pass on to Mr Lange the outcome of my discussions on my return.

As the facts I have outlined above indicate, the letter in no way departs from established Australian policy on these matters.