



EMBARGOED UNTIL 10.00 PM

PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

12 JUNE 1986

The Report of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group was released in London today (12 June).

The Group performed its task with great determination and integrity. I wish to express my personal appreciation of the role of the Australian member and Co-Chairman of the Group, Mr Malcolm Fraser, in this process. He and his colleagues tackled a difficult task with energy, sensitivity and skill.

The Report is a powerful and compelling account of the daily agony brought about by the apartheid system in South Africa, of the conscientious and dedicated attempts of the seven members of the Group to carry out the Commonwealth's mandate from Nassau, and of the obduracy and intransigence of the South African regime.

Tragically, the Group was given no option but to conclude that this obduracy and intransigence have wrecked the Commonwealth initiative and that Pretoria's attitude offers no present prospect of a process of dialogue leading to the establishment of a non-racial and representative Government in South Africa.

At the very moment the Group's Report is being released, the monstrous roll-call of violence and destruction in South Africa continues to mount. The latest manifestation is the violence of vigilantes, who, with the connivance of the South African security forces, are mounting brutal attacks on black communities around Cape Town.

On top of this, there are tonight ominous reports of a crackdown on dissent in advance of the commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the deaths at Soweto on 16 June.

In this deteriorating situation, Commonwealth leaders will be meeting in London from 3-5 August to consider what further measures we can adopt to bring the South African Government to its senses.

Before this meeting, Cabinet will again be considering Australia's relations with South Africa with the aim of considering concrete steps that we can take. Unless there is dramatic change in the two months remaining before Heads of Government meet, I shall be taking to London the view that strong further measures, on a Commonwealth-wide basis, should be applied.

My conviction that this is the path which we must take is strengthened by the unanimous conclusion of the seven members of the EPG, drawn from across the breadth of the Commonwealth, that concerted action of an effective kind may offer the last opportunity to avert an appalling catastrophe in South Africa.