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## PRIME MINISTER

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E & O E - PROOF ONLY

PM: ... as the Aboriginal people come to understand that we are increasingly accepting their observations and that Aboriginal people in turn will recognise and accept that so that together we can move faster in the task that we have of rectifying many of the injustices that have accumulated over the nearly 200 years of European settlement in this country.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, next year does mark the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the British in Australia and many Aboriginal people around Australia are concerned that in 1988 there is some recognition of ... Aboriginal people have suffered over the last 200 years.

PM: I have made it quite clear since I became Prime Minister - I think you will notice whenever I speak, the bicentennial I talk about it being a celebration of 200 years of European settlement because we must all remember that while it is appropriate that we remember that period that we have got to ... the most fleeting stage of the history of this country goes back 40,000 years or more. And I very much want to see a situation before 1987 finishes whereby there can be a clear understanding by all of us that that is the case. And I would like to see 1988 preceded by some sort of understanding - compact, if you like, I don't want to get caught up in particular words - but a compact of understanding between the whole Australian community which recognises that 1988 is the celebration of 200 years of European settlement. And to recognise that in that 200 years very many injustices have been suffered by the Aboriginal people; to recognise, I hope, that since 1967 when the referendum was passed and power given to the federal government, that there has been a significant acceleration in that period of action directed towards meeting some of the problems of the Aboriginal. And certainly I would hope that recognition has been further accelerated in the last 4½ years. But that compact, or statement of understanding, should recognise that there is an obligation and commitment on the part of the whole Australian community to move further in the areas of education, health, employment, training so that there can be confidence in the Aboriginal community, as we go into 1988, that the proper celebrations that there should be of the bicentenary in the sense that I have described it, is something with which they can identify.

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JOURNALIST: But can you see your Cabinet Ministers ... making a treaty ... Aboriginal people by the end of '88.

PM: I have discussed with Gerry Hand, and I think we must address the question of stating the relationship and the obligations that are involved in that relationship. Whether it is called a treaty, I am open-minded about it. I don't think we should be hung on words - a treaty, a compact. The important thing is that there be a clear statement of understanding by the total Australian community of the obligations that the community has to rectify some of the injustices that have occurred during the our 200 years. ... statement of understanding, of obligation, and of commitment, those are the important things. So whether you call it a treaty or a compact, I don't think matters very much and I am not hung up about the words, it is the substance that I think is important.

JOURNALIST: ... inaudible question ...

PM: Yes, and I have already made sure that is done as far as is in our powers. The negotiations that will be continued by Gerry Hand with the States and Territories and our commitment to that will continue to be made quite clear as happened before the Parliament rose in the middle of this year. You know that the changes that were made in regard to mining and aboriginal rights in the Northern Territory recognised the unequivocal right of the Aboriginal people to have a veto at the ... stages that they wanted to say because of their perception of the importance of sites, they simply don't want to negotiate about that. And that is written into the legislation.

JOURNALIST: The Federal Government has really ... is your Government going to extend ...

PM: I would regard that as appropriate in the circumstances where there was a clear aboriginal community interest and involvement - and I think we have shown the commitment.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, just going back ... if there is to be a treaty ... aboriginal culture, history and rights?

PM: Let me take the first point. You are absolutely right that there has to be an increased understanding on the part of non-Aboriginal Australians about the history of this continent. And the history of that 200 years that we will be celebrating next year as being a super-imposition upon the 40,000 years or more of previous history. And I think that the more that Australians see the 200 years that has passed as an important part of that longer period, then there will be a growing sense of realisation of the importance of that culture and history and of our obligation to ensure that the Aboriginal inheritance of that 40,000 have their interests, grievances, and concerns properly recognised.

I don't think there is one particular way in which this educative process can proceed. I think we all ought to accept, in the process of trying to get some statement this year before 1988 starts, of the nature of the obligation. Then, if we can get that general statement, then the process of education should permeate all the things that we do. There is no one particular way that I think we should single out because if you do that it seems artificial.

PM cont: I think the important thing is, and we have an obligation, I have an obligation as Prime Minister, I have certainly tried well before the end of this year to get a clear statement made of how we should be thinking of 1988. And within that clear statement to try and get into the minds of all Australians the importance of seeing this 200 years against the background of the 40,000 years that have gone before. If we can get that sort of fundamental understanding then I think the educative process that you need will flow to just about that we do.

JOURNALIST: Can you tell us ... land rights. It is very difficult to get ... land rights. How is the Government going to handle the Burke Government in Western Australia and get land rights in that State?

PM: Let me make this preliminary observation. We have taken the view that what is fundamentally important if we are going to make negotiations and meaningful decisions about land rights *stick* is that we have as much support as we can from the people in government of the states because the worst thing that could happen, I think, in this area, would be if there was an attempt just quickly and unilaterally to impose something from the centre. And that there was within the states concern, who after all do the responsibility of administering ... activities which are important to the Aboriginal people. If there was a sort of backlash, lack of involvement, that could be counterproductive. So what we have tried to do since we have been government, the previous Minister and *can* be pursued by Gerry Hand, the current Minister, is to negotiate with the states in a way which will hopefully get their co-operation and involvement. You mentioned Western Australia. Let me point out that already we have negotiated relatively early in the life of our Government, an agreement with the Burke Government in regard to leases in the Kimberleys. *The lease* *had were purchased there* And we put in \$6 million to facilitate the purchase by the Government in Western Australia and on the condition that there would be a significant proportion of those cattle leases in the Kimberleys that would be made available to the Aboriginal communities in that area. In this sort of way we are trying to negotiate, not only with the Government in Western Australia, but with the other states, in a way which, in the end, will produce a situation, as far as *you possibly can*, there will be agreement from the states calling for a broad model that we think is appropriate. And I don't think it is very helpful at this stage while Gerry is going to be involved in negotiations of saying now if that doesn't work this is what we will impose. *It is in the interests* Aboriginal people, as much as anyone, to try and continue the process *of* co-operation. For instance here in the Territory, Gerry will on the 4th September, Gerry is going to be sitting down and negotiating with the Northern Territory ... *Cattlemen about the question* ... to try and bring about a situation there where it is by agreement we will be able to get the sort of outcome that is desirable. So we have got provisions in the legislation that we passed earlier this year but which we haven't proclaimed. We could just legislate but it seems to us much better for Gerry to sit down and negotiate. And if we can get agreement on these issues then that, over the longer term, is going to be much more beneficial for the Aboriginal people as well as for the non-Aboriginal community.

JOURNALIST: What about land rights throughout Australia. There was the referendum in 1976 that changed the constitution so that the Commonwealth could make laws for Aborigines all over Australia. When do you see this power being exercised to make a national land rights bill ... Northern Territory land rights.

PM: In fact the referendum was passed in 1967 not 1976 so in one sense you might think that makes it work because if it is 20 years ago now that that referendum was passed and it is worth noting that it was passed by an overwhelming majority. At that stage the Australian people made a clear judgement that they wanted the national government to have responsibilities ... in an important area of Australian affairs. In a sense I have answered this question in some of the observations I made earlier. And that is that we, when we came to office in 1983, developed broad principles in regard to aboriginal land rights and then decided that what we would want to do would be to negotiate with each of the states. And I think you will appreciate the conditions, the areas involved, differ from state to state. And that, by definition, is a pretty slow and painful process. I think progress has been made and I know that it is going to be one of Gerry Hand's prime areas of interest and activity now that he is the Minister to pursue those negotiations with the various states. I repeat what I said earlier - that ideally you would like to be able to negotiate this ~~thing~~ in a co-operative way because in the end it seems to me that the interests of the Aboriginal people are going to be best served if what comes out of those negotiations is something which is as a result of co-operation and agreement rather than something which has been imposed. And let me make this point - I am optimistic that these processes of negotiation with the various states will be productive. I really am optimistic about that. But I do say this - if at the end those processes of negotiation can't, in a particular state, produce an acceptable outcome then the Government will have to face the issue of exercising its legislative powers which were *specifically* given to us by the Australian people 20 years ago. But I repeat we will be sending our best ... to try and get that result by the processes of *co-operative negotiation*.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, I have ... Aboriginal people in Central Australia ... and on behalf of CAAMA ... I would like to thank you for your time on CAAMA radio and hope that the rest of your stay here ...

PM: Thank you very much. Could I just say how ... to be here at CAAMA. I have only been here, obviously, for a very short time but I am impressed by ... and by the enthusiasm of Freida and all the people involved. And I certainly wish you all the best in your ... endeavours.

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