



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

11 January 1988

My Department has today responded to a Freedom of Information request which the Leader of the Opposition made on 31 December 1987 about Mr John Brown's resignation.

All documents have been released other than those which are exempt under the FOI Act. The exempt documents - and they are few - relate directly to Cabinet discussions, legal professional privilege or contain information which is commercial in confidence. The matters to which the documents relate have already been aired at length in public.

There are two distinct aspects in these matters. The first relates to my involvement in the processes that led to AAV Australia being given the contract in April 1987 to produce the Australian theatre at Expo. The second relates to the events in December last year which led to Mr Brown's resignation.

I have made it clear before that my own involvement early in 1987 was simply to ensure that due process was being followed in the selection of a tender. My attention was drawn in February 1987 to concerns about the adequacy of the tender processes related to awarding a contract to produce the Australian theatre exhibit at Expo. As the Chairman of Cabinet, I arranged for the matter to be discussed on 24 February. As a result of that discussion Cabinet agreed that new tenders would be called and assessed by a panel chaired by an official from the Department of Local Government and Administrative Services - the organisation responsible for Commonwealth purchases. This was announced by Mr Brown on 24 February.

Mr Brown told Cabinet on 13 April 1987 about the results of these new tender processes and that he intended to accept the recommendation that AAV Australia be given the contract. He announced this on the same day.

My role in these events, through Cabinet, was to ensure that the proper tendering processes were followed and this was done, as the documents clearly show.

The subsequent handling of the matter was properly left to the Minister and his Department.

The documents also indicate that the 24 February Cabinet decision made no reference to voting rights of members of the panel.

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In relation to the events in December 1987 leading to Mr Brown's resignation, the Leader of the Opposition has claimed that I must have known before newspaper reports on 17 December that Mr Brown had inadvertently misled the House of Representatives on 10 December. The fact is I did not know, and the released documents confirm this.

Mr Brown's statement of 10 December was not brought to my notice until 17 December, nor was my Office or my Department aware until that day that Mr Brown had inadvertently misled the House. Moreover, I would not have expected my Office or my Department to have known unless they were advised by Mr Brown, his Office or his Department - which they were not. As indicated earlier, the handling of this matter was properly left with the Minister and his Department once it was established earlier in the year that due process was being followed.

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