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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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The Government has decided in principle to appoint three additional Commissioners to assist the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, following a request by Commissioner Muirhead.

The additional Commissioners will operate as separate fact-finding Royal Commissions charged with responsibility for investigating the circumstances of particular Aboriginal deaths. Their work will be co-ordinated by Commissioner Muirhead who will retain responsibility for the final overall recommendations.

I am writing to each of the Premiers and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory to consult with them concerning these revised arrangements and the names of possible new Commissioners.

These measures follow a significant increase in the number of deaths identified since the Royal Commission was set up. The increase raised the prospect of a much more protracted inquiry than would be acceptable when such important issues of justice and human rights are under scrutiny.

The appointment of additional Commissioners should allow the Commission to complete its work in a timely manner and with a proper degree of care and thoroughness.

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