



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, WARREN SNOWDON'S OFFICE, ALICE SPRINGS, 30 MARCH 1989

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, were you able to give the Aboriginal people a timetable for the introduction of the ATSIC Bill or for the completion of the ATSIC Bill?

PM: I spoke to them about that, but that's something that's got to go to the Cabinet on Monday and it's not appropriate, I've told them in conference the broad outlines of what I think will be happening. But it's got to go to the Cabinet and you'll become aware of it in due course.

JOURNALIST: Do they want any major changes?

PM: No I didn't talk about major changes at all.

JOURNALIST: Are you hopeful of legislation this session, this year?

PM: I hope so.

JOURNALIST: Are they prepared to offer support for Minister Hand?

PM: There was no question, other than of support for Mr Hand. Why should there be?

JOURNALIST: What about their concerns of a new legislation in the Northern Territory affecting sacred sites?

PM: Yes, we talked about that.

JOURNALIST: Were you able to give?

PM: Well the situation there is that Minister Hand took up with the Northern Territory Government the concerns that have been expressed to him by the Aboriginal people. In the light of Minister Hand's discussions with the Northern Territory Government they have undertaken to introduce amendments. So they, I understand, will come in at the end of April or the beginning of May and so we just have to wait and see whether those amendments meet the legitimate concerns.

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JOURNALIST: Was there any discussion of the treaty that you talked about last time you were here?

PM: No there wasn't.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what's your reaction to Mr Namaliu's decision to defer his visit to Australia?

PM: Well that's perfectly - a matter appropriate for him to be taking into account. He's got problems in Bougainville and he and the Cabinet discussed those and the Cabinet decided it was not appropriate for him, with the troubles they've got there in Bougainville, for him to be out of the country. It's a perfectly understandable decision. It's a postponement, not a cancellation.

JOURNALIST: Was there any discussion on stock routes and stock reserves?

PM: And excisions? Yes, we talked about that. Yes we did.

JOURNALIST: Will the Federal Government be doing anything about that?

PM: Yes, I'm going to be discussing this matter with Mr Hand. I want to find out from him exactly where he's reached on it. I think there will be a submission coming to the Cabinet shortly but I've undertaken with my friends here to raise that matter with him and see just when it will be coming to Cabinet.

JOURNALIST: Have you got anything to say about the visit of Vice President Quayle for the Coral Sea celebrations?

PM: No, other than to say that it's a very significant decision. He's the Vice President of the United States, a half head away from the Presidency as it's often put, and he will be a welcome visitor to Australia.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what's your reaction to Fred Chaney's preselection ?

PM: Oh yes, he made it at last did he? Well, I am not concerned about it, perhaps John Howard is, he ought to be.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, are you concerned about -

PM: He's not going down to the Lower House for the good of his health or the good of John Howard's health.

JOURNALIST: Do you think he'd make a good Opposition leader?

PM: Room for improvement isn't there?

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke are you concerned about the security of Commonwealth drivers? There've been some revelations this morning?

PM: Well, I just saw the reference to that. I don't think that that reference to one driver should induce me to a state of panic about the condition or state of Commonwealth drivers generally.

JOURNALIST: Should they be checked, their bona fides be checked?

PM: I think all our bona fides should be checked even the media, don't you?

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, were the Aboriginal people happy about the amount of consultation there's been on the ASTIC Bill?

PM: Yes, I mean they raised no concerns with me about that. Their concern is that the legislation get through. They seem totally committed to it.

JOURNALIST: And you think that'll happen before the next election?

PM: I trust so, yes, yes.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, has there been any progress on the treaty, was there any discussions?

PM: No, there was not any discussion here. My friends didn't raise it with me here, but I've just recently, this week had discussions with Minister Hand about it and he will be coming to me within the very near future, within the next week I think, with further details about the processes that he has underway for furthering the consultations in the Aboriginal community and also in the non-Aboriginal community because it's quite clear that we need to not only have the Aboriginal people themselves discussing the sorts of things that they want to see in such a treaty but we have to have these things discussed in the general community and he has developed ideas about that to further these processes. He'll be coming back to me, as I say, very shortly on that.

JOURNALIST: Would you support the idea of using someone like former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser to be involved in those sort of discussions?

PM: I think those concepts make a lot of sense. I mean I think the idea of getting a group of Eminent Persons whose stature, commitment is beyond question. That sort of concept makes sense and I think it is maybe that sort of thing that the Minister will be developing with me.

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