



PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF JOINT NEWS CONFERENCE WITH HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH, WWF INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT, SIR NINIAN STEPHEN, AMBASSADOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, PETER HUNNAM, COORDINATOR WWF SOUTH PACIFIC CONSERVATION PROGRAMME, WWF AUSTRALIA OFFICE, SYDNEY, 23 NOVEMBER 1990

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Does Australia put itself in a difficult position, being a relatively wealthy country telling developing Pacific nations they should make environment a higher priority?

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS: No, because, that's exactly what I was trying to say that that's not the way it works. The fact that Peter Hunnam here will be, the programme will be developed in conjunction with the people in the region. I mean, nothing will be imposed on them. They won't be told what to do. Their problems will be discussed with them and we will offer to design projects to meet their particular problems. So it's very much a two way business.

PM: Could I just add something to what His Royal Highness said there. As I've said before, talking about the relationship of Australia with the countries of the South Pacific generally, we've always got to be careful, we've got to walk a fine line between, on the one hand recognising what is the truth and the reality that they are sovereign independent nations, and secondly that we are in economic terms the big brother of the South Pacific and we have the capacities to help and assist them. So we want to do that in a way which recognises their own responsibilities. Now we've tried to fashion our decisions in this sort of area, as in others, in a way which recognises those realities. Now how have we done that? For instance, we've made a significant amount of money recently available to enable them to participate in their own right at international meetings and the international panel on climate change. We just didn't go along and say look we're representing these bodies. We made the money available to them so that they could go and represent themselves. Secondly in the very important area of the greenhouse emissions and the great concern that we as a world community have about rising sea levels, which for some of those islands are literally a matter of life and death. I mean, if you look at Tuvalu or Kiribati as probably the most obvious. I mean, we are talking about literally life and death for those people.

Now what we've done there is to make a significant sum of money available where we're setting up monitoring stations in these island countries and we're going to be training their own people so that they can man those monitoring stations so that they have a real sense of involvement in the world-wide approach to dealing with these challenges. So I think, while we'll never get it perfectly right, I mean, I think we've got the basic approach right.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, one of those areas, that of course borders the Pacific is Cape York. Yesterday His Royal Highness mentioned as a first priority ... get that joint land use study underway up there. I just wonder what the hold-up might be?

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS: Could I just - we had a discussion about this before and there's obviously been a misunderstanding. I said that this was necessary, well in point of fact the Commonwealth Government has made the finance available, the commitment has been made. This was not apparent in Brisbane when I was there. There's undoubtedly the commitment by both Governments to a land use assessment and eventually a land use plan for Cape York is not in doubt. The commitment is not in doubt. I think, at the moment, there's possibly uncertainty about how far it's got. That's about all there is. But there's certainly a moratorium on activities. I did want to put this straight because I'm afraid I gave the wrong impression the other day in Brisbane. I'm sorry would you -

PM: Well I'm indebted to His Royal Highness. The position there is that we have had discussions with the Queensland Government and you can always tell whether discussions have advanced or not. There's one very simple test. That is whether you've committed money in your budget. Now I've committed \$1.5 million in this financial year's budget and \$3.5 million in the next budget. That's already down, it's committed, it's promised. We will undertake with the Queensland Government this land use study which will be looking at the environmental implications of proposals for development and, of course also very importantly, the implications for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. We are really at this stage, as Your Royal Highness said, we are in the process of working out the mechanics between us of how that's being done. But the commitment is there and you can be assured that no decisions will be made unless and until both Governments are satisfied that any such proposals are consistent with the proper environmental and Aboriginal safeguards that should be in our minds.

JOURNALIST: Is there any real threat from the Chile meeting that mining will be sanctioned in the Antarctic or not?

PM: No. I would, as I said, the Spring racing carnival is over now, the season of betting has passed. I'd be prepared to take any sort of wagers you'd like - I think the Antarctic is safe from mining.

JOURNALIST: Your Royal Highness, with the French nuclear testing and the burning of the chemical weapons on Johnston Atoll, do you think there's a sort of an attitude from Europe that the South Pacific is one of the dumping grounds?

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS: It's difficult to say. I suppose there is.

JOURNALIST: Do you disagree with the chemical weapons being placed there?

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS: I'm delighted that chemical weapons are being destroyed. I would imagine that the science of this business is such that they're not in danger. I would be very surprised if people who were doing it were so irresponsible as to cause any sort of problems. I would have thought that was very unlikely.

PM: Could I just make the point there because it has had some coverage in recent months following the South Pacific Forum. I mean, you should be aware, as I think you probably are, that the United States accepted a delegation from the Forum countries who had the opportunity of going there and inspecting the operation, and of course more recently President Bush met with the representatives of the Pacific island countries in Hawaii. He, there, repeated the assurance that was given earlier, and it's very important that it should be understood, that the Johnston Atoll facilities will be limited to these categories; those that are already there, those that are already stored, secondly, and with the agreement of the Pacific island countries that if there are any others that are found still in some of the Pacific island countries, for instance, there's still some in the Solomon Islands area, those will be taken there plus those that have been brought, this lot that have been brought from Europe. It will be limited to that. The rest of the disposal program by the United States will be done in mainland America. Now I think from the feedback we've got from the Pacific island countries that as a result of the visits they've had and the discussions they've had with President Bush that they're very, very much more satisfied now than they were earlier when we were having the discussions before and when they still felt they didn't have all the information.

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