



PRIME MINISTER

27/92

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. P.J. KEATING, MP

MOCKERY OF ABORIGINAL DEATHS A NATIONAL DISGRACE

The scene on television tonight of two police officers mocking the death of Aboriginal people was sickening.

Their behavior brings disgrace on themselves, on their police force and on Australia.

I think every decent Australian tonight will feel anger and shame at this incident.

The Aboriginal Deaths in Custody report should have made Australians reconsider their attitudes to Aboriginal people and their circumstances.

The episode in Bourke, and recent evidence of similar racist behavior in Sydney, suggests that for some Australians nothing has changed.

Two weeks ago I told the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation that I didn't want talk, I wanted changes, real changes.

I told them that we had to close the gap in living standards and we had to change attitudes.

These incidents show how much the onus is still on white Australians to make that change.

Whatever economic and material progress we make, whatever progress we make towards what we think will be a good society, will be nothing if our attitudes to Aboriginal people continue to be no better than those of the 19th century.

CANBERRA
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