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VS RELEASE

PRIME MINISTER

69/95

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

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MR MCLACHLAN'S RESIGNATION

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The Member for Barker has paid the appropriate price for his gross impropriety. His actions reflected at best a failure to comprehend the culture and rights of Australian Aboriginal people, at worst a cynical disregard for them.

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The attempts to escape the implications of his actions in Parliament, beginning with his attack on the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, only compounded his offence.

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Mr Howard can take no credit in this matter. He showed no more understanding of the significance of the stolen documents than Mr McLachlan did in using them so offensively in Parliament and elsewhere.

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said.

His press release and letter to Mr McLachlan indicate that he still has not grasped the nature of the offence. In both he refers only to the "political sensitivity" of the matter, as if the hurt and offence it has caused Aboriginal people are of no consequence.

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It would be reasonable to conclude that while the Member for Barker has run on his sword, neither he nor his leader understand the implications of the impropriety, and Australians - particularly Aboriginal Australians - could be forgiven for asking if the Coalition itself has any understanding of them.

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BERLIN
10 MARCH, 1995

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