
SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE OPENING OF THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ABORIGINAL ARTS

The Prime Minister, Mr E. G. Whitlam



“There can be no qualification about my Government’s commitment to the cause of the Aboriginal people. We are determined that the long record of injustice, repression, neglect, the record that has marked our treatment of the Aboriginal people for two centuries of white civilization on this continent, will be brought to an end.

“Let there be no illusions about this. Let there be no mistaking our sincerity. Above all, let there be no mistaking our motives. Our commitment to the Aboriginal people is no token gesture to modish theories, no easy device to improve the ‘image’ of white Australia overseas, no comfortable sop to world opinion.

“We regard the Aboriginals’ rights and dignity as more important than the white man’s reputation. I repeat what I said in my policy speech last November: ‘The Aborigines are a responsibility we cannot escape, cannot share, cannot shuffle off.’

“In 1967, the Australian people, by an overwhelming majority at a referendum, gave the