



THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION

SUBJECT FILED ON:

~~Australia: Relations. Sept 79~~
~~Reference Incident Pt 6~~

AUSTRALIA HOUSE
STRAND
LONDON WC2B 4LA
01-438 8000

4 July 1984

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T120/84

Dear Prime Minister,

Mr Hawke has asked me to pass to you the following text of a letter concerning the British nuclear tests held in Australia between 1952 and 1963:

"My dear Margaret,

My Government has decided to recommend to the Governor-General in Council that a Royal Commission should be established to inquire into the British nuclear tests in Australia between 1952 and 1963. It will probably be a week or so before we will be in a position to make a formal recommendation, but I thought I should let you know now of our decision.

There have been consultations between Australian officials and the British High Commission in relation to the inquiry. The co-operation already extended by your Government and the High Commission has been much appreciated.

The focus of the planned inquiry will be on measures that were taken for the protection of persons against the harmful effects of ionising radiation and the dispersal of radioactive substances and toxic materials as judged against standards applicable at the time and with reference to standards of today. Emphasis will be placed on those groups or individuals who were closely involved, including Australian Service personnel and civilians, employed at the test sites, and Aborigines and other civilians in the general region of the sites.

The Royal Commission will be requested to ensure that any written or oral evidence tendered to it that is drawn from British classified documents is not taken in public or publicly released or referred to in public proceedings of the Commission without the concurrence of your Government. My Government hopes that, in the interests of a full and public disclosure of the facts, it will not often be necessary for the Commission to take evidence in camera.

The Commission will also be asked to consider issuing a separate report, with appropriate recommendations as to whether that report should be published so as to refer to any such material drawn from British classified documents. We shall, of course, be consulting your Government before taking any decision on whether such a report, if produced, should be publicly released.

The British High Commissioner will be provided with a copy of the Letters Patent as soon as they are available.

I look forward to your Government's continued co-operation with the Australian Government in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Bob Hawke"

The original copy of this letter will be sent on as soon as it is received.

Yours sincerely

A.R. Parsons

A.R. Parsons

The Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1