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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE

10 DOWNING STREET

SERIAL No. T 2/86

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 January 1986

Dear Prime Minister,

In your letter of 25 September you asked me to consider again whether we could accede to your earlier request for the permanent loan of one of the two original copies of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitutional Act.

This is a very difficult problem. At my request the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Lord Chancellor have looked afresh for some way in which we could meet your request, which is received here in London with great sympathy. But I am very sorry to have to tell you that we cannot make an exception for Australia by arranging a permanent loan. Our archival collections are rich in the history of the Commonwealth and other countries, and their chief virtue lies in their comprehensiveness. If we began to disperse them, even on so small a scale and for so good a cause, their value to researchers from all over the world who wish to consult them would be diminished.

I should, however, like to repeat the offer in my letter of 30 May, to present to you fine quality reproductions of the Act itself and of the Royal Commission of Assent, in a suitable presentation case. We would also be glad to make arrangements for the temporary loan of the Public Record Office copy for any commemorative exhibition.

SM

I am sorry not to be able to be more helpful, but can assure you that I have been into the problem most carefully.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Shaliter

The Honourable R.J.L. Hawke, A.C., M.P.

DRAFT: minute/letter/teletype/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

The Honourable R J L Hawke AC MP

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

As you know, firm progress is being made with our plans for participation in the Australian Bicentenary.

CAVEAT.....

I fully share the sentiments in your letter of 25 September about the importance of Britain's part in the Bicentenary celebrations.

In particular, I am glad to tell you of our decision to present as Britain's official gift to Australia for the Bicentenary, a specially commissioned Sail Training Ship for the benefit of the young people of Australia. We propose that this vessel should be sailed to Australia by a combined British and Australian crew, in time for participation as Britain's entry in the Tall Ships event, before being presented to the Australian Government.

I hope that this gift will be seen by the peoples of both countries as a fitting tribute to our longstanding relationships and as our joint commitment to future generations.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

C.D.



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MS2BKD
cpc
3 January 1986

AUSTRALIAN BICENTENARY: COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
CONSTITUTION ACT

Thank you for your letter of 30 December setting out the reasons why we cannot make a permanent loan of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act to the Australian Government.

The Prime Minister reluctantly concurs with the advice and has signed the letter to Mr Hawke.

She has enquired, however, as a matter of interest whether it would really matter if we held a good quality facsimile and let Commonwealth countries have the originals of such key documents where they have specifically asked for them. It would be helpful to have the views of the Foreign Secretary and of the Lord Chancellor on this point.

I am copying this letter to Richard Stoate (Lord Chancellor's Office).

Charles Powell

Robert Culshaw, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

6