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From the Private Secretary

19 May 1988

See Tony,

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO AUSTRALIA

Thank you for your letter of 13 May on the vexed question of the aircraft for the Prime Minister's visit to Australia.

I have had a couple of discussions with Colin Marshall of British Airways. The upshot is that the only aircraft they could make available at that time is Concorde and there are considerable disadvantages to using it. It would need to make more stops than a subsonic aircraft, the accommodation is quite limited and the full charter cost would be £700,000. Added to that it is of course a rather temperamental aircraft.

Br I have not pursued the idea of the British Aerospace Airbus A300 or the loan of a Virgin Atlantic aircraft. So we are really left with the RAF VC10 and shall have to resign ourselves to travelling in greater discomfort, with the only consolation that there will be a fair number of stops. We shall have to try to arrange matters so that we have space for at least 12/15 press. In the light of Canberra telegram number 331 we shall also have to allow two seats on internal journeys for the High Commissioner and his wife, although we clearly cannot take his information officer or any Australian officials. Could you please let me see a revised layout, or perhaps alternative layouts, which would meet our requirements as well as possible. In one alternative you should dispense with the beds in the forward cabin to allow more room for additional seats.

*your sincerely,
Chris Powell*

(C.D. POWELL)

A.C. Galsworthy, Esq., C.M.G.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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