

'CYNICAL EXERCISE'

Aboriginal land policy hit

The Government's announcement on Aboriginal affairs was "a cynical exercise based on false values", Mr Bryant (ALP, Vic) said yesterday.

In a statement issued in Canberra, Mr Bryant said "Land rights for Aborigines is not a question of economics but a spiritual, even a religious matter.

"The Australian Aborigines are the least materialistic of people and to them the land is fundamental".

Mr Bryant said the only hope for Aboriginal people was to make Aboriginal advancement, including land rights, a major election issue in 1972.

Referring to Mr Justice

Blackburn's decision in the Yirrkala case in April last year, Mr Bryant said that while the judgment refused to grant ownership, it noted also that the Aborigines belonged to the land rather than vice-versa.

"The Government has stressed ownership in the Western sense and exploitation in its narrowest sense in its approach to Aboriginal lands.

'Militant local population'

"The Government's cynicism is demonstrated by the different approach in Papua New Guinea", Mr Bryant said.

"Faced with a watchful United Nations and a numerous and militant local population, the Australian Government pays cautious respect to the native people's feelings for their land".

The Minister for the Environment, Aborigines and the Arts, Mr Howson, called yesterday for the "full co-operation and interest of all Australians" in bringing about changed conditions for Aborigines and for their acceptance in society.

Australian Governments had a responsibility, but their policies and programs were only part of the overall pattern of change, he said.

ADELAIDE, Wednesday. — The Premier of South Australia, Mr Dunstan, said today that the Federal Government's announced policy on Aboriginal land did not give land rights to Aborigines.

He said the Government retained most reserves as Government property and could repossess or dispose of them as it wished.

The Premier said South Australia remained the only State in Australia with legislation establishing land rights for Aborigines.