

# A visit to the protesters' camp



Mr Whitlam ducks his head as he leaves one of the protesters' tents.

Sydney Morning Herald 9th february 1972

## Whitlam pledge to Aborigines

CANBERRA, Tuesday. — The Leader of the Federal Opposition, Mr Whitlam, today pledged a Labor Government to granting Aborigines ownership of traditional land on the basis of freehold title.

He said Aboriginal communities should be allowed to own land and use it as they desired instead of for a specific purpose approved by the Government.

Mr Whitlam gave the undertaking after he and the Labor MP for the ACT, Mr K. E. Enderby, had held talks with a group of Aborigines protesting opposite Parlia-

ment House against the Federal Government's non-recognition of Aboriginal land rights.

Mr Whitlam and Mr Enderby discussed the grievances for about 45 minutes inside one of the Aboriginal "embassy" tents with three of the protesters, Mr Michael Anderson, of Walgett, Mr John Newfong and Mr Barry Coe, both of Sydney.

They were joined in the tent during the discussions by Mrs Whitlam.

Mr Whitlam said later he had told the Aborigines that immediately a Labor Government assumed office, it would accept the principle that there should be

community ownership of land by an Aboriginal tribe or clan, with the land being used as the community desired.

"We have to get away from the old traditional English law that the only people who can own land are individuals and defined companies," he said.

Mr Whitlam said the Labor Party was committed to a fully elected Legislative Assembly for the Northern Territory.

It would require non-discrimination provisions to be written into the charter of such an assembly, with the National Parliament retaining the power of ensuring that the assembly abided by its guarantees.