

PREMIER AGREES Royal commission into WA incidents

A Royal commission is to be held into Aboriginal and police relations in Western Australia, the State Premier, Sir Charles Court, announced in a statement issued in Canberra yesterday.



Senator Cavanagh

In a separate statement, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, said he was pleased with the attitude of Sir Charles in the matter.

Terms of reference are to be agreed upon by the Federal and Western Australian Governments.

Senator Cavanagh said the inquiry would include the incident on January 5 at Skull Creek in which 28 Aborigines were arrested and detained overnight.

The next day, there was an agreement between the prosecutor and Aboriginal Legal Aid Service for the charges to be withdrawn, he said.

Also to be investigated would be the behaviour of Aborigines and the resultant police action at Laverton some weeks before the Skull Creek incident.

The Royal commission is expected to have three members, one of whom would be nominated by the Commonwealth.

Senator Cavanagh said the Commonwealth nominee, who had not yet been

selected, would head a later Federal Royal commission to investigate Aboriginal and police relations in central Australia.

Sir Charles's statement said the report from the Western Australian Assistant Police Commissioner, Mr Parker, on the Laverton incidents had not recommended any disciplinary action against members of the police force.

He had every confidence in the ability and fairness of Mr Parker, but feeling was running so high among a number of people that he had no doubt they would reject the findings.

Sir Charles said, "I gather they might have been more inclined to accept the situation had the report recommended some disciplinary

action, because the advice given to us by some of the responsible Aboriginal members of the community was that most of the Aborigines would be satisfied if disciplinary action were taken against certain members of the police force.

"We could hardly expect Assistant Commissioner Parker to produce a scapegoat if he believed no police force disciplinary action was needed.

'Disturbing aspects'

"On the other hand, there are reports from different

"On the other hand, there are reports from different quarters which suggest there are some disturbing aspects which require further investigation, both in the interests of those making allegations and the police themselves".

Sir Charles said his Government was anxious to receive the benefit of the Laverton Study Group work, under the chairmanship of a magistrate.

Senator Cavanagh said the full terms of reference would be wide enough to cover all incidents leading up to the Skull Creek incident and subsequent incidents, to suggest any action justified as a result of any incident, and recommendations for future action to prevent repetitions of undesirable incidents.

