

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

From the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Dated 15th February, 1939. Received 11.42 a.m., 15th February.

No. 18. Telegram as follows has been sent to the New Zealand Government. Text begins:-

*no trace*

Secret. Proposal contained in your telegram of 24th January has been given full consideration. While being in full agreement concerning the holding of a Conference it would appear to me that the proposed Agenda implies a full scale conference. It has been shown by past experience that many of the matters listed could be properly discussed only in London at an Imperial Conference where the British Cabinet and Chief of the Staff are located. It is also observed that some of the subjects were discussed at the 1937 Imperial Conference and that Committee of Imperial Defence Paper or the Report of Chief of Staff Sub Committee of recent date are available on most questions. I am sure you will agree with me that in such a wide range of important subjects difficulties in achieving any great progress will be experienced without the presence of the United Kingdom Ministers and Chief of Staff. As you will be aware the Senior Defence Officers in Australia are hard pressed with work on their programme and we should like to have a fuller understanding of what is proposed than the list of items for discussion. It would be inconvenient to lose the services of these officers while they were preparing extensive data in addition to the time spent in travelling to and from New Zealand.

As the success of the Conference is dependent upon the adequacy of the preliminary examination of the proposals,

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may I suggest that you should as a first stage circulate documentation and the proposals for the information of the United Kingdom-Australian Governments. As you know the principle of documentation and its prior circulation is observed by the United Kingdom Government. The date of the Conference could be fixed after the documents have been examined by all concerned.

Copy of this telegram is being sent to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. Text ends.