

RESTRICTED

141275
MDHIAN 6920

RESTRICTED
FM CANBERRA
TO DESKBY 021200Z FCO
TELNO 26
OF 020425Z FEBRUARY 98

YOUR TELNO 009

SUBJECT: BLOODY SUNDAY ENQUIRY: NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN JUDGES

SUMMARY

1. Sir Daryl Dawson seems to be an extremely suitable appointment.

DETAIL

2. Sir Daryl Dawson has a reputation as a conservative High Court judge, but a man of absolute principle. He is not instinctively anti-government, but if he is satisfied that there is sufficient grounds for such a finding he will be vigorous in pronouncing it. While he was Solicitor-General in Victoria, there was no DPP. He therefore has considerable experience of criminal matters.
3. He is a private man and very much not a publicity seeker. We are not aware that he has made any public comment on matters of public controversy, including Northern Ireland. He is a Presbyterian, but worked on a high court where the other six judges were catholics without religion being an issue at all. Had he remained as a High Court judge he would now be a very strong candidate for the post of Chief Justice. He retired because he wished to reduce his workload, but we understand that he is likely to be interested in working overseas. As you know he is one of the panel of foreign judges for the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal. He is also Chairman of the Commission considering the action by Sandline against the PNG Government.
4. His only, albeit indirect, association with any scandal occurred when the warden of a Presbyterian college, of which he was president, was found guilty of sexual harassment of students. Sir Daryl later resigned as President of the College, not because there was any suggestion of wrong-doing on his part, but because he felt that the scandal showed that it was no longer appropriate for a High Court judge to hold such a position.

PAGE 1
RESTRICTED