

# NORTHERN TERRITORY News

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# Howard backs State move



Mr Howard

**ALICE SPRINGS.**— The Federal Liberal Leader, Mr John Howard, reaffirmed his party's support for the Territory's statehood bid yesterday at a Centre 200 dinner in Alice Springs.

Mr Howard said the Liberal Party would have sorted out its policy on the details of statehood by August or September next year, but already had no hesitation in supporting the basic principle.

"There will of course be some questions about matters such as Senate representation," Mr Howard said.

"It is also important to have a rational timetable."

The Chief Minister, Mr Steve Hatton, welcomed Mr Howard's remarks, which came in a break during an important policy meeting of Liberal leaders from all States.

"It's very comforting that Mr Howard has seen fit to give a timetable for setting in place a statehood strategy," Mr Hatton said.

Mr Howard also offered a warning to the Federal Government that plans for a compact of understanding with Aborigines could

**By JENNY BRANDS**

worsen the alienation of the original inhabitants of Australia.

"We have to be honest enough to recognise there is no section of the Australian community which has more proven disadvantage than Aboriginal Australians," Mr Howard said.

**Answer**

He said the answer is not to seek refuge in talk of treaties or compacts — concepts which are only further dividing Australia.

"The most important thing is to locate the areas of disadvantage, and direct policy toward reducing those areas."

Mr Howard, who on Thursday made his first visit to an Aboriginal community, said there was no need for the "self-flagellation" which Australia seemed to give itself over its past at times.

"We should look at what has been achieved," he said.

The Liberal leaders meeting had earlier resolved to throw all the party's resources behind each State Liberal group as elections came up.

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