

PM rejects Nats' call for a race referen

By MARGO KINGSTON
in Canberra

The Prime Minister yesterday dismissed demands by the National Party for a race referendum to be held at the time of the next election.

The rejection came after the Nationals altered their plan and said they would exempt the Native Title Act, which discriminates against Aborigines, from their proposed constitutional

ban on laws concerning particular races.

Mr Howard played down the rifts in the Federal Coalition, despite conflicts over tax, the privatisation of Telstra, and now the constitutional race power.

"I don't think the Coalition is in any danger at all," he said on Melbourne radio.

The National Party Federal president, Mr Don McDonald,

this month demanded in a letter to his leader, Mr Fischer, that the Nationals sponsor a private member's bill for the referendum.

The Prime Minister said yesterday there was "no intention by the Government to sponsor any referendum of any kind on that subject".

The matter had not even been raised with him by the National Party parliamentary party, and

he had not raised it with them, "because it is not on my agenda".

Mr McDonald said that in the wake of Mr Howard's partial impeachment down on Wik, it was "now imperative" that the Nationals use their constitutional power to abolish the race-based laws.

He said that a new constitutional prohibition on any law discriminated between

races would take its place. In fact, this would be of huge benefit to Aborigines, as it would make the Native Title Act invalid, leaving it to the States to regulate native title.

Unlike the Federal Parliament, the States cannot override the Racial Discrimination Act, which bans discrimination.

But senior National Party sources said the proposed constitutional amendment would

exempt the Native Title Act, which is only the second Federal law discriminating against Aborigines to be passed under the race power.

(The first was the Government's Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act, which banned an Aboriginal tribe from seeking heritage protection to stop the bridge.)

The Opposition Leader, Mr Beazley, said the National Party policy "would seriously com-

pound the damage to our international image already caused by One Nation and its racist policies".

"The Queensland election should have taught the National Party that the way to defeat One nation is not to mimic its policies," he said.

A spokesman for the shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, Mr Daryl Melham, said it was "now official" that the

Jimmy brings an ancient new vision to London

By CHRISTOPHER HENNING
in London

Is this the most expensive piece of real estate in London? It is just outside the Rebecca Hosack Gallery in Bloomsbury. A week ago it was just another piece of footpath. Now it is a Jimmy Pike original (high-gloss exterior enamel on paving stones, 4x1 metres, kindly lent by Camden Borough Council).

Inside the gallery, original works of the artist sell for around £25,000 (\$65,000) apiece. This piece of footpath is five times the size. That would make it worth £125,000, which is spectacular even in London's inflated property market.

The painting shows an emu, a kangaroo, and over on the other side of a maze of interconnected square vortices, a man.

Jimmy Pike has painted the Kimberley, his own country, on this footpath, in yellow and brown and blue.

The paintings are more than just images: they are information - a culture handed down from one generation to the next.

"This is a painting of the laws in the Kimberley country in Australia," he told the *Herald*. "It is men's culture, not women's culture. It is teaching the young men."

generation of his Walmajarri people are going to see this painting here, half a world away from where it is relevant. Whom is it going to teach?

Pike's wife, Pat Lowe, explains: "I think he definitely sees it as integrating with white culture. He would not be doing it for his own people. For them, he would be doing what he is talking about through the stories and songs, but not through painting pictures."

In a way the need to communicate with ignorant whites, and the possibilities of modern technology have liberated Pike: to tell their ancient story, his canvases come alive with 20th century colours - aquamarine, yellow and peach are mixed with more traditional ochre and black.

How did he think London responded to his work?

"Big party last night. Big mob. Have a drink and all gone. They liked it."

This is an understatement. Just two weeks after the two-month exhibition opened, half the paintings are sold.

Pike has done no painting in London, but he finds it hard to resist slipping away to do some ink drawings. On Thursday he went to Russell Square. Its solid, orderly Victorian facades and its



Pike makes the pavement part of

something of the outback when interpreted by him.

One reason for his visit to London has been to attend a



his exhibition... "This is a painting of the laws in the Kimberley country in Australia."

place. He and Lowe collaborated on a book about land rights and the Mabo and Wik cases, called *Jimmy and Pat and the Queen*, which was

the palace visit added point. Although the pair did not meet the Queen, Pike has drawn his experience of the palace: a

man surrounded on four sides by

windows and walls, with a small space in the middle which is where the guests are met. Most of his drawings have human beings in them. Not this one.

You get the sense that, despite the warmth of his welcome here, Pike may not be entirely desolate when he gets back home to the desert.

Photograph by SIMON GROSSET