A price on our guilt

Mr. McMahon's reason for refusal is that Australia Day is for the Aboriginal race, the anniversary of the Aboriginal calamity, 184 years ago. To choose that day as the occasion to announce a Government decision on the inevitable transfer of ownership or perpetual lease of Yirrkala land is unnecessarily to reiterate why this is so. A more appropriate time would be the anniversary of the promulgation of the historic act.

The Prime Minister obviously believes he is right to seek a compromise with the Aboriginals. He has offered them a small price, the amount of which can be doubled by the generous spirit of those who have been asked to make sacrifices for the benefit of the nation.

Australia is paying great sums to support sections of the pastoral industry, and the nation is paying a small price to ask Country Party leaders to pay in return that they do not impede the national and materially poor group among us.

The altemative set of fringe proposals, as outlined in Mr. McMahon's statement, are not very remarkable when considered as the fruit of public opinion in the country. How much these proposals are converted from paper to purpose of Aboriginal affairs and his administration is a matter for the future, but we can join Dr. Country enthusiasts in expressing earnest, ancient hope.