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Mansell says he will seek Libyan cash

By TONY HEWETT

Libya and other countries will be asked to give millions of dollars to a new Aboriginal political movement, according to the Tasmanian Aboriginal activist Mr Michael Mansell.

Mr Mansell, who plans to visit Libya later this year, said yesterday: "If we really wanted money from Libya we could get it, no problems. And no strings would be attached. There would be less strings attached to money from countries like Libya than there is with the Australian Government. They give Aboriginal people money to keep quiet.

"We need millions, not millions for welfare but millions for a strong Aboriginal political movement. We need money for negotiating trips, money to politically educate our communities. We will be opening up negotiations with Libya and a host of other countries this year."

Mr Mansell, a barrister and legal adviser to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in Hobart, said governments

of five countries had expressed a desire to negotiate with Aboriginal groups not affiliated with the Australian Government. He would not name them for "diplomatic reasons".

"Getting money is only one thing, but we also need overseas governments to get us other international help," he said. "I believe the only way to force the Australian Government into action on Aboriginal issues is to get more and more international focus on our plight. We want trade sanctions on Australia; more pressure on the Federal Government at the United Nations.

Mr Mansell went to Libya last year amid criticism from the Federal Government, particularly the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Holding, who ordered an investigation into the Aboriginal centre's financial affairs to see whether any Commonwealth money was used to pay for the trip.

Other Aboriginal groups, such as the Federation of Aboriginal and Is-

lander Research, have already indicated that they will also send officials overseas this year to talk to the governments of South Pacific countries.

— Sydney Morning Herald

Churches urge reconciliation

By MARK BROLLY, religious affairs reporter

Australia's church leaders have called for Aborigines to be given an assured place in the political process as part of a program of reconciliation for the Bicentenary.

The 14 leaders, in a joint statement entitled 'Towards Reconciliation in Australian Society: Reconciliation and Aboriginal Australians', also urged the churches to be more open to "the blessings and insights" offered through Aboriginal culture and spirituality.

The statement said that 26 January 1788 was significant for all Australians because the mixing of Aboriginal and European cultures had created, shaped and even destroyed the lifestyles of Australians.

"The past which many Aborigines have endured cannot be undone but, heeding the call for reconciliation and justice, we might shape a new future and become a nation in which all belong," the statement said. "This land will be home again for all who live here only when we all have a place for our neighbor in our hearts."

Leaders of the Australian Council of Churches and the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and other Eastern churches endorsed the statement, the first of six papers on reconciliation to be published this year.

Aboriginal councils at local, state and federal levels would provide "powerless Aborigines" with an

assured place in the political process, the statement said. Federal Parliament should unanimously pass a motion that could be acknowledged by the Queen at the opening of the new Parliament House on 9 May, recognising Australia's Aboriginal prehistory and the enduring place of Aboriginal heritage.

A secure land base for dispossessed Aboriginal communities was needed, with special attention for traditional groups. The statement also called for a just process to resolve conflicting claims to the land and its use, especially between Aborigines, pastoralists and miners; legal protection of Aboriginal heritage, and public education of all Australians about Aboriginal history and the vitality of contemporary Aboriginal culture.

"Every social indicator still places Aborigines in the most disadvantaged socio-economic group, despite the provision of special services in recent years," the statement said.