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Mansell flies on in face of storm

DESPITE the seeming universal condemnation of his plans, Libya aficionado Mr Michael Mansell says his flight to Tripoli with 11 Aborigines and two Maoris to seek support for the Aboriginal nationhood of both countries is a 100 per cent certainty.

"If three Jumbo jets could be laid on, we'd fill them with Tasmanian Aborigines alone," he asserted this week, although the mission is the subject of severe criticism from Aborigines on the Bass Strait islands.

Three Jumbos are not being provided, and Mr Mansell refuses to disclose who is footing the bill for the 14 seats the party will fill on one Jumbo.

His reticence raises the question of direct sponsorship already from Libya, since there should have been no reluctance on his part to confirm that each traveller was paying for himself.

Mr Mansell, a barrister specialising in litigation for those

By **BRUCE MONTGOMERY**

thousands of Tasmanians who identify as Aborigines, has yet to set a firm departure date.

He led the media to believe it was to be earlier this month but failed to leave. Scepticism grew that the trip was merely the latest in a series of publicity exercises for his cause.

This week, Mr Mansell narrowed the date, saying he wanted to be in Tripoli by the end of the Muslim festival of Ramadan (May 17), when he would be more certain of being able to meet Libya's leader, Colonel Gaddafi.

Accordingly, he plans to arrive with the rest of the delegation a few days before that. The party would stay for 10 days and hold talks with Libyan government officials as well as Colonel Gaddafi himself.

"There are two certainties," Mr Mansell said. "We will be going and we will be meeting Gaddafi. Libyans have as-

sured me that we will get to talk to him."

He discounted reports that the trip would be cancelled if the Federal and Tasmanian governments were to implement immediate uniform land rights, an improved Aboriginal medical service and imprisonment reforms.

So where are the air tickets?

"I haven't been keeping track of them," he said, "but they are being organised at the moment."

Have visas been arranged?

"We don't need them," he said, "We'll be travelling on Aboriginal passports."

According to Mr Mansell, the Libyan immigration authorities will recognise this passport, designed and printed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

The party will show Aboriginal passports on departure from Australia, have them refused and travel on their normal Australian passports to Tripoli.