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PROVISION OF COMMONWEALTH FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE FOR SEALING BEEF CATTLE
ROADS IN QUEENSLAND

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies

The Commonwealth Government has offered to provide financial assistance to Queensland over a period of four years for the sealing of beef cattle roads in the north and west of the State.

The Commonwealth has already undertaken to assist Queensland by providing £5 million for the construction of beef roads over the five-year period from 1961/62. Last financial year the Commonwealth contributed £650,000 under this scheme, and this financial year will be providing an estimated £1,480,000. The decision to provide an additional £250,000 in 1962/63 for sealing roads included in the programme was announced in the Budget. The Queensland Government has now proposed a sealing programme extending over four years from 1962/63, at an estimated cost of £3.3 million (i.e., including the £250,000 for which provision has already been made), and has requested Commonwealth assistance up to this amount.

The Commonwealth Government is convinced of the need for improved road facilities to assist Queensland's beef cattle production, which is an important source of export income, and is satisfied that the provision of special financial assistance by the Commonwealth for the purpose is warranted. The Government has, therefore, decided to agree to the Queensland Government's request. This assistance will take the form of loans with interest at relevant long-term bond rates. An agreement on the matter will need to be concluded between the two Governments, but quick progress with this can be expected and the Government hopes to present the necessary legislation to Parliament during the current sittings.

This assistance to Queensland, added to the increased assistance to Western Australia for development projects in the Kimberley area that has recently been announced, amounts to a very substantial Commonwealth contribution to the development of the North, with particular reference to the development of its export potential. The Commonwealth's special assistance for beef roads, including its £4.6 million programme for the Northern Territory, will now exceed £16m.

A request by the Queensland Government for further Commonwealth financial assistance for the development of an extensive area of brigalow country in the Fitzroy Basin is under close practical consideration between the two Governments concerned.

CANBERRA,

12th October, 1962.