

FOR PRESS

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STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
(Hon. David Fairbairn, D.F.C., M.P.)

COMMONWEALTH OFFERS TO FINANCE WORK

ON SNOWY MOUNTAINS ROADS

The Snowy Mountains Authority will offer the New South Wales Government \$3½ million to help maintain Snowy Mountains tourist roads for the next 20 years.

The Minister for National Development (Mr. Fairbairn) said this today.

He said that in addition to contributions for the maintenance of roads for the use of the public and the S.M.A., the Authority this summer was prepared to spend \$50,000 in restoring the Alpine Way to its 1965 condition - when the Snowy Mountains Authority, having no further need for the road, ceased regular maintenance.

This part of the offer was conditional upon the State accepting future responsibility for the Alpine Way.

Mr. Fairbairn said the \$3,250,000 would be made available to the State at \$200,000 a year for the first ten years, \$150,000 a year for the next five years, and \$100,000 a year for the final five years.

"The Snowy Mountains authority and the Commonwealth have spent about \$30 million on the construction of roads to and within the Snowy Mountains area," Mr. Fairbairn said.

"These roads, including the Alpine Way, were built for the simple reason that it would have been impossible to get on with the Snowy Mountains Scheme without them.

"However, they have proved a major tourist asset to the State, and this is a side dividend that we are all pleased to see.

"Most of the roads in the area are still being maintained at the expense of the Snowy Mountains Authority.

"The Authority's use of the roads is decreasing and the tourist traffic is increasing rapidly.

"We estimate that in a few years the traffic attributable to the operation and maintenance of the Scheme will be less than 2 per cent of the traffic in the area.

"In these circumstances, we think it is fair to begin a phased change in responsibility for the upkeep of these roads.

"To begin with, the Federal offer will cover more than half the estimated cost of maintenance.

"The Authority's need for the Alpine Way ended some years ago, but it is considered reasonable to restore it to its former condition before it passes into the care of the State."

Mr. Fairbairn said the Snowy Authority was still studying a suggestion that it should pay the State a licence fee for the occupation of land by hydro-electric and other works.

Canberra.

November 15, 1967.