

FOR PRESS

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SIGNING OF AGREEMENTS FOR THE DARTMOUTH DAM

The Prime Minister and the Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia today signed the two agreements relating to the construction of Dartmouth Dam.

One agreement amends the River Murray Waters Agreement to authorise construction of the Dartmouth Dam on the Mitta Mitta River, a tributary of the River Murray, while the other agreement relates to the financial arrangements. The opportunity has also been taken to modernise the original River Murray Waters Agreement - parts of which have been in force since 1915.

The Prime Minister said the way was now clear to introduce legislation into the four Parliaments to ratify the amendments agreed to.

With Dartmouth, South Australia will get an increased allocation of almost one quarter of a million acre feet per annum.

A further amendment provides that, in times of drought, all water available to the River Murray Commission will be shared equally. Up to now, the sharing has been in the proportions 5:5:3 (3 being South Australia).

The Dartmouth Dam itself will consist of a central earth core flanked by rock as an outer shell, forming an embankment of maximum height of 590 feet, with a crest length of 2,300 feet and a total volume of fill of about 20 million cubic yards.

A storage of approximately 3 million acre feet will be impounded behind this Dam.

The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission of Victoria will be the Constructing Authority for the Dam and it is expected to retain the Snowy Mountains Authority as consultants to undertake designs and prepare contract documents.

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In 1963, a bridging agreement was reached between the River Murray Commission and the State of New South Wales whereby the Commission became entitled to use some of the water from the Menindee Lakes Storage. This agreement was to operate for seven years and one of the new amendments will provide for the use of this water from the Menindee Scheme in perpetuity.

Amongst other things, this will ensure adequate emergency supplies of water for South Australia within a reasonable distance of that State.

Another amendment provides for the provision of a system of storage at Lake Victoria with inlet and outlet works that are of a size that will, in the opinion of the Contracting Governments, ensure the effectiveness of the system of storage in the regulation of the River Murray (including operations after the Dartmouth Reservoir has become effective for the purpose of the Agreement).

The financial arrangements for the construction of the Dam provide for the Commonwealth, in addition to paying its own share, to lend to each of the States - at the long-term Commonwealth bond rate prevailing at the time when the loan was made - one half of their share of the costs. Such loans would be subject to the usual interest payments, but repayment of capital would be deferred for ten years and would take place over the subsequent fifteen years.

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CANBERRA  
26 February 1970