



PRIME MINISTER

MACQUARIE NETWORK WEEKLY BROADCAST

BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.

WILLIAM McMAHON, CH, MP

URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Interviewer: Paul Lynch

- Q. With the announcement of your plan to set up the National Urban and Regional Development Authority, we have for the first time a clear programme from the Government to ease the strains of urbanisation in Australia which are considerable. I understand that you have a number of targets for this Authority. Could you tell us what they are, please?
- PM: I wouldn't like to call them targets. I doubt whether that is the correct term. But what we are doing is to promote two different concepts. The first one is what we call sub-metropolitan centres around existing cities and the second is the development of regional growth centres. What we will do is provide the finance to the States in order for these two concepts to be made a reality. Those are the concepts that we hope to achieve.
- Q. Sir, in forming your plans for this, have you any figures in front of you in terms of foreign experience, of what has been achieved in countries such as the United Kingdom, which has tried this sort of thing?
- PM: Yes, we have had documents relating to overseas experience. That has not been the decisive factor with us. We want something that is peculiarly suited to Australian conditions, and so we hope to develop something that will be imaginative, that will secure a better quality of life for Australians and that will truly reflect the Australian environment and the spirit of the Australian people.

Q. The New South Wales State Minister for Decentralisation has suggested that initially the Commonwealth Government will simply be co-ordinating the State Departments of Decentralisation. Would you accept that?

PM: No, I don't. I don't think that is a correct concept. Naturally we want to have the closest co-operation with the States. This is essential. But what we will be doing is establishing the Authority itself - that is the Regional and Urban Development Authority - under an authority itself, and then, we will be developing feasibility studies and plans for the development of these areas, submitting them to the States for their approval, and if they are approved, we will provide finance. So it is not a co-ordination in that sense. It is a dramatic new initiative to improve the quality of life in Australia.

Q. Prime Minister, this is, of course, a very large canvas on which something like this would be painted, and I imagine you will have considerable research to do before the first active steps are taken. What will you be studying?

PM: That is why I have decided to appoint an Authority immediately and have the Act passed in the Parliament before the next break occurs at the end of another four weeks. We will require the Authority to make recommendations to us. But there are two other organisations that are important. The approvals will mainly be on the basis of Prime Minister/Premier relationships, and we will also establish a technical committee with the best brains that we can get in Australia to assist the Authority itself to develop plans for the new regional and urban centres.

Q. This could take a couple of years, I take it?

PM: No, we will be starting work in the course of a few days, and I hope that Sir John Overall will be able to collect a staff around him and we will be getting to work fairly quickly. We want these plans developed as quickly as we can, and that is why we made the decision to bring down a statute immediately, to make it a reality and to let us get on with the job as quickly as we can.

Q. A final point, Prime Minister. This could be seen as a Commonwealth intervention in a State area. What would your response to that be?

PM: I wouldn't use the word "intervention". It will be Commonwealth/State co-operation in the best way that is practicable, and particularly designed to ensure that people have better standards of living, won't have the difficulties of travelling and will not have the problems associated with the isolation in big communities, or alienation in big communities, and we hope that this will permit individuals to develop their characters and their opportunities to the maximum. I don't regard it as in any sense interfering with the States. It must be based on co-operation.

Q. Prime Minister, thank you very much.
