



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 51

12 February 1973

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, announced last night that in future the Education Minister, Mr. Beazley, would have the responsibility for all special education including adult education in the Northern Territory. The decision, Mr. Whitlam said, was the result of an agreement following discussions between Mr. Beazley and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Bryant, who formerly controlled the area.

It would become effective from tomorrow, 13 February. Mr. Whitlam said the Minister for Education was already responsible for the community education system in the Northern Territory.

There would be continuing consultations between the Ministers and Departments of Education and Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Whitlam said, to ensure that the overall policies of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs were reflected in the education programs.

Particular consideration would be given to the special and sometimes different needs of aborigines, including such matters as staff/pupil ratios, teaching in Aboriginal languages and instruction in Aboriginal culture.

Mr. Whitlam said he was confident that the new arrangements would provide the most effective means of ensuring that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory had the best possible educational opportunities.

He said that consultation between the two Departments had led to a start in the plans for implementing the policy of teaching Aborigines in their own languages.

Mr. Whitlam went on to say that grouping the formerly separate educational systems under the Department of Education would allow an integration of resources and a more effective approach to the provision of educational facilities in the Northern Territory.