



**DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

NO

DATE

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AID TO GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS

Australia is to give assistance to the value of \$450,000 to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony for the construction of a water supply system in the town of Betio on the Tarawa Atoll.

Announcing this today, the Special Minister of State and Minister assisting the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Willesee, said that the assistance included equipment, pipelines, pumps and storage tanks. These materials will be supplied through the Department of Works, which will also provide an engineer to supervise the project. Funds for the scheme will be taken from the GEIC's share of the current Australian \$15 million aid pledge to the South Pacific area up to the end of 1975, and it ties in with the GEIC Administration's Three Year Development Plan which gives water supply a high priority.

The town of Betio has 665 households and a population of 4,600 according to the last census. With this relatively high population density and lack of adequate sewerage facilities the water sources are subject to contamination and a piped water supply system will eliminate the currently high risk to public health.