



PRIME MINISTER

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JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER FOR
PRIMARY INDUSTRY

RURAL POLICY

The Prime Minister, Mr E.G. Whitlam, and the Minister for Primary Industry, Senator K.S. Wriedt, today announced the Australian Government's decision to hold an inquiry into all aspects of rural policy in Australia. The inquiry will be conducted by a working group consisting of:

- Sir John Crawford, C.B.E., formerly Secretary of the Department of Trade and Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics;
- Dr S.F. Harris, Deputy Secretary, Department of Overseas Trade and formerly Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics;
- Prof. F.H. Gruen, Consultant to the Prime Minister's Department and Professor of Economics at the Australian National University;
- Mr N.D. Honan, Director, Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

Dr Harris will be convenor for the group.

Sir John Crawford's membership is on the basis that he will give what help to the group that his earlier commitments will allow. His unmatched qualities and background in the field of rural policy will however be available to the group.

The working group will be able to draw on the resources -of the Department of Primary Industry, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Department of Overseas Trade, the Bureau of Census and Statistics and other Government offices during its examination. The Group will welcome submissions from farm organisations, other interested bodies and the public. Submissions should be directed through the Secretary, Department of Primary Industry.

In making the announcement, Senator Wriedt and the Prime Minister emphasised that the decision to call for an inquiry was based on two major considerations. First, there was not place in the economy for a rural policy that was not both equitable for primary

producers and economically sound. Second, there has been no Government sponsored report on overall rural policy since the publication of "Agricultural Production: Aims and Policies" by the former Department of Commerce and Agriculture in 1952, over 20 years ago.

The present Government wishes to avoid ad hoc decisions that might appear to some to be politically attractive at the time, but which in fact might offer no long term security or real benefits to the genuine primary producer. The Government needed a basis of expert advice on which to formulate economically sound and socially equitable measures that would help the resident farm family.

It also saw a need for a rural policy that recognised that large and important sections of the rural community are not themselves engaged in farming although the prosperity of many did depend on the health of the primary industries.

The working group would draft, for consideration by the Government, a "Green Paper" on Rural Policy, incorporating aspects from present Australian Government policies such as selective decentralisation, conservation, rural reconstruction and long-term international commodity agreements. It would also attempt to integrate these and other factors into a set of principles upon which future policies could be built.

It is anticipated that the Green Paper will be published by Government authority but without formal approval. In that form, it would be debated in Cabinet, in Parliament, and in the community generally - particularly in the rural sector. These debates will assist the Australian Government to create a more viable rural sector in the Australian economy.

The Australian Government anticipates receiving the working group's report by April 1974.

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