

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.  
FOR THE OPENING OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CENTRE, HOBART,  
FRIDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 1974

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THIS IS THE FIRST MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING ERECTED IN TASMANIA BY ANY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SINCE FEDERATION. THE NEED FOR THE BUILDING AROSE IN THE LATE 1960S WHEN THE LACK OF SUITABLE PREMISES AVAILABLE FOR LEASING FORCED THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO BUY LAND AND PLAN THE BUILDING. ITS CONSTRUCTION IS VERY MUCH IN ACCORD WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON OFFICIAL BUILDINGS. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN FACED WITH AN INCREASING RENT BILL WHEREVER IT MAINTAINS OFFICES. IN MANY AREAS LEASING HAS RESULTED IN ITS OFFICES BEING UNDULY SCATTERED. THE GOVERNMENT HAS THEREFORE STATED THAT ITS FUTURE POLICY WILL FAVOUR GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP.

THE SITE FOR THE NEW AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CENTRE IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AS IT IS ON THE FRINGE OF HOBART'S RETAIL BUSINESS CENTRE, YET NEAR ITS EXPANDING ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL CENTRE. IT IS READILY ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC USING EITHER PRIVATE CARS OR PUBLIC TRANSPORT. THUS, IN THIS ONE BUILDING, THE GREATER PORTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S ADMINISTRATIVE AND WELFARE SERVICES IN HOBART WILL BE EASILY AVAILABLE TO THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS TO BE HOUSED IN THE BUILDING INCLUDE SOCIAL SECURITY, IMMIGRATION AND LABOUR AND THE AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE.

THE GOVERNMENT CENTRE, BUILT AT A COST OF \$5.2 MILLION, IS ONE OF SEVERAL BUILDING PROJECTS PLANNED FOR HOBART BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. A MULTI-STORY BUILDING IS PROPOSED ON THE SITE ADJACENT TO THE EXISTING HOBART CENTRAL TELEPHONE EXCHANGE. THE GROWTH OF THE NUMBER OF TELEPHONE SUBSCRIBERS IN THE HOBART AREA HAS PUT GREAT PRESSURE ON EXISTING FACILITIES. A MAIL EXCHANGE AND TRANSPORT COMPLEX IS ALSO PROPOSED FOR THE CITY.

THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE ANNOUNCED ON 25 JANUARY THAT THE ANTARCTIC DIVISION OF HIS DEPARTMENT WILL MOVE ITS HEADQUARTERS TO HOBART. THE DIVISION IS NOW DISPERSED OVER SIX LOCATIONS IN MELBOURNE AND HOBART. A NEW UNIFIED COMPLEX TO COST ABOUT \$3 MILLION IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN 1977. THIS IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF MOVING BUILDINGS NOR OF THE EXPENDITURE OF ABOUT \$3 MILLION ON THE HEADQUARTERS. YOUR EXCELLENT PORT FACILITIES WILL BENEFIT FROM MOUNTING THE ANNUAL EXPEDITIONS TO THE ANTARCTIC. THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA WHICH HAS HAD A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH THE DIVISION IN RESEARCH WORK ON COSMIC RAYS WILL BE IN A POSITION TO CO-OPERATE MORE CLOSELY IN OTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH AND BUILD UP ITS SCIENTIFIC REPUTATION. THE ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, SIR GEORGE CATLAND, AND THE ACADEMIC STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY TO THE TRANSFER OF THE DIVISION UNDERLINES THE LONG-TERM IMPORTANCE THAT THEY SEE IN MY GOVERNMENT'S DECISION.

WE WILL BE CO-OPERATING CLOSELY WITH THE TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE HOBART COUNCIL AND OTHER AUTHORITIES IN THE SITING AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE HEADQUARTERS. WE ARE ANXIOUS TO ADD TO AND NOT DETRACT FROM THE GREAT CHARM OF YOUR CAPITAL.

IN ADDITION, A NEW MULTI-STORY BUILDING, DUE TO BE COMPLETED IN SEPTEMBER 1975, IS BEING CONSTRUCTED AT THE REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITAL, HOBART, AT A COST OF \$2.5 MILLION. THIS BUILDING WILL CONTAIN TWO THIRTY-BED WARDS PREVIOUSLY HOUSED IN 50 YEAR OLD PREMISES, PARAMEDICAL FACILITIES AND NURSING STAFF ACCOMMODATION. NURSING AIDE TRAINING WILL BE UNDERTAKEN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TASMANIA AT THIS HOSPITAL. THIS TRAINING IS AT PRESENT BEING UNDERTAKEN IN VICTORIA AND, AS THIS RESULTS IN HIGH WASTAGE, THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS ARE EXPECTED TO HELP RETAIN THESE SKILLS LOCALLY. IN LINE WITH PRESENT POLICY, ANY SPARE BED CAPACITY AT THE HOSPITAL WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY GENERALLY.

THE NEW BUILDING ACTIVITY IS IN LINE WITH A GENERALLY GREATER AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT EMPHASIS ON TASMANIA. IT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED ITS EXPENDITURE IN HOBART AND THE REST OF TASMANIA IN THE LAST YEAR. TOTAL PAYMENTS TO THE TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT IN 1973/74, FOR ALL PURPOSES AND INCLUDING THE STATE'S LOAN COUNCIL PROGRAM, ARE ESTIMATED TO TOTAL ABOUT \$228 MILLION.

THIS IS AN INCREASE OF ABOUT \$32 MILLION OR 16 PER CENT OVER PAYMENTS IN 1972/73. IT REPRESENTS MORE THAN \$570 PER HEAD OF POPULATION IN TASMANIA, COMPARED TO AVERAGE PAYMENTS TO ALL STATES OF ABOUT \$337 PER HEAD. THIS IS ONE INDICATOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RECOGNITION OF THE SPECIAL NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF TASMANIA.

TWO AREAS THAT HAVE BENEFITED PARTICULARLY FROM A MUCH GREATER INFUSION OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDS ARE HOUSING AND EDUCATION. ADVANCES TOTALLING \$16.3 MILLION WILL BE MADE TO TASMANIA IN 1973/74 UNDER THE NEW HOUSING AGREEMENT WITH THE STATES. THIS IS AN INCREASE OF NO LESS THAN 82 PER CENT OVER THE CORRESPONDING ALLOCATION IN 1972/73. THE PURPOSE OF THE HOUSING AGREEMENT IS TO ASSIST TASMANIA AND OTHER STATES TO PROVIDE MORE HOUSING FOR NEEDY PERSONS.

FOR EDUCATION, TASMANIA IS EXPECTED TO RECEIVE GRANTS TOTALLING ALMOST \$19 MILLION IN 1973/74. THIS IS AN INCREASE OF 111 PER CENT OVER THE PRECEDING YEAR. IN 1972/73 THE COMPARABLE INCREASE WAS ONLY 12 PER CENT. THIS MASSIVE INCREASE WILL PROVIDE MORE MONEY FOR UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION, TEACHERS' COLLEGES, TECHNICAL COLLEGES, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND PRE-SCHOOLS, IN THE SPECIFIC FIELDS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION. TASMANIA WILL RECEIVE A TOTAL OF \$20 MILLION IN 1974 AND 1975, FOLLOWING THE GENERAL ACCEPTANCE BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE KARMEL COMMITTEE. THE FIRST PAYMENT UNDER THE STATES GRANTS (SCHOOLS) ACT 1973 - \$962,000 FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1974 - HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE.

THIS BUILDING IS A TANGIBLE SYMBOL OF THE EXPANDED  
ACTIVITY OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IN TASMANIA. WE HAVE  
DIRECTED OUR POLICIES IN THE LAST 15 MONTHS TO ENSURING  
THAT THIS STATE SHARES IN THE BENEFITS OF THE NEW  
INITIATIVES WHICH WE ARE TAKING THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA.  
WE WILL CONTINUE TO DIRECT OUR POLICIES TO THAT END.

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