



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 234

24 April 1974

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE POST OFFICE AND APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The Prime Minister announced today that the Commission of Inquiry into the Australian Post Office had tendered its report to His Excellency the Governor-General last Friday. The Commission was appointed in February 1973 to report on what changes should be made in the organisation, administration and operations of postal and telecommunications services.

Mr. Whitlam said the Government had accepted the Commission's recommendation that the Post Office should be independent of the control of the Public Service Board and that separate statutory corporations should be established to administer the postal and telecommunications services. Each corporation would have responsibility for organisation, staff, pay and the conditions of its employees. The Government had also accepted the recommendation of the majority of the Royal Commissioners that the new telecommunication corporation should incorporate the Overseas Telecommunication Commission.

Mr. Whitlam said the recommendation for separation of the Post Office from the Public Service Board confirmed the view of the Australian Labor Party. Mr. Whitlam recalled his statement in his 1972 policy speech: "Australia's largest employer - the Post Office - will be severed from the control of the Public Service Board."

Mr. Whitlam said the report had been sent to the Government Printer and would be published as soon as possible. It was a document of some 600 pages, in two volumes. Mr. Whitlam said he wished to express to the Chairman of the Commission, Sir James Vernon, C.B.E., and his fellow Commissioners, Mr. B. J. Callinan, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., and Mr. J.J. Kennedy, the Government's appreciation of their work in undertaking this wideranging and important inquiry and carrying it through so expeditiously.

The Prime Minister said that with the completion of the Post Office Inquiry, the Government was now ready to proceed with the proposal it had announced last December to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the Australian Public Service.

Mr Whitlam said that the Public Service Commission of Inquiry would be commissioned immediately after the elections. He proposed that Dr H.C. Coombs should be Chairman of the Commission. Dr Coombs had indicated his readiness to undertake this task.

Mr Whitlam said that there had not been a comprehensive inquiry into the Australian Public Service since 1920. There had been recent inquiries into the British Public Service by the Fulton Committee in 1968 and the Canadian Public Service by the Glassco Commission in 1962. Mr Whitlam said he had been informed that a Commission of Inquiry would be welcomed by all the Australian Public Service staff associations and trade unions. He had also been informed by the Public Service Board that it would welcome a Commission of Inquiry.

Mr Whitlam reiterated the view expressed in his Garran Oration in November 1973 that the Australian Public Service commanded universal respect for its professionalism and impartiality. The Government's decision to establish this new Commission of Inquiry was evidence of its desire to continue the process of modernising the national public administration already begun with the reallocation of administrative functions and the variety of other initiatives taken by the Australian Government during the past 17 months. Work was continuing on the proposals for reorganisation of the Departments of Supply and Customs and Excise.

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