



## PRIME MINISTER

Press Statement No. 449  
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### SENATE VACANCIES AND THE STATES

Earlier today I released the text of a letter dated 10 January 1952, from the then Premier of Western Australia, Sir Ross McLarty to the then Premier of South Australia the Hon. T. Playford. Mr Eric Reece has now confirmed that an identical letter was sent to the then Premier of Tasmania, the Hon. R. Cosgrove, M.H.A. Mr Cosgrove replied in the following terms:

"I thank you for your letter of 10th January with regard to the vacancy which has arisen in the Senate because of the death of Senator Nash of Western Australia. I agree with your opinion that, in view of the fact that proportional representation is now the method of election to the Senate, a member of the same Party, nominated by the Executive of the Party, should be appointed when future vacancies arise, through death or other causes."

I have sent a telegram to Sir Charles Court, the Premier of Western Australia asking him to release the 1952 correspondence with all Premiers relating to this matter. Over 23 years ago there was an agreement among all the Premiers that casual vacancies in the Senate would be filled by a member of the same party. For 23 years State Governments of all political complexions have honoured this agreement. Now, for the first time, the new Premier of N.S.W. threatens to break this Constitutional convention. This is not a matter between the Australian Government and State Governments. The agreement in question was made among the State Governments themselves. The Premier of N.S.W. is threatening to break an agreement which Premiers in every State and of all parties have scrupulously observed since 1952.

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