

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,  
ON HIS VISIT TO PARKES, N.S.W.,

17 MAY 1975

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Parkes is typical of the country towns and cities benefiting from the policies of the Australian Government.

For too long people in country towns have been putting up with services and amenities inferior to those in the capital cities. The Labor Government is determined that townspeople in the country will enjoy a standard of living equal to the best in Australia.

Our opponents seem to think that a Government's responsibility in country areas ends with the farmer, the man on the land. Certainly we recognise that prosperity in country areas depends largely on a prosperous rural community. At the same time, we are not going to neglect the millions of Australians - employees and families - who live in towns like Parkes. They deserve the same standards of education, the same standards of housing, the same opportunities for health and recreation as Australians in the major cities.

One of the first acts of this Government was to empower the Grants Commission to recommend assistance for local authorities. In this way the Grants Commission will be able to alleviate inequalities between regions, in the same way that it has acted to remove inequalities between the States. In its first set of recommendations, the Commission allocated more than \$21 million for local councils in New South Wales. Parkes Municipal Council received \$76,000 for 1974-75.

That money has been provided free of interest, as a non-repayable grant. It can be used as the council sees fit for the benefit of the people of Parkes.

Under the Regional Employment Development Scheme, the Australian Government has approved assistance to the Parkes Municipality amounting to \$395,000 to date. The Parkes District Hospital has received REDS grants totalling \$253,000 for 7 projects which have created 73 new jobs. Shires within the Parkes Employment Office Area have received Government assistance under REDS totalling \$765,000.

Grants to Parkes and Forbes since 1972 for aged persons' homes and hostels total \$1,497,171.

The pre-school in Dalton Street, Parkes, has qualified for Australian Government recurrent assistance since January 1974. In the present financial year the school is receiving \$4491. Recurrent grants totalling more than \$41,000 have been made since January 1973 to 5 non-government schools in Parkes - Holy Family Primary School, Marist Borthers' Primary School, St Joseph's Infants School, Westview Special School and Our Lady of Mercy College.

As part of its program to improve health care services throughout Australia, the Government is establishing a Community Health Resources Centre to serve Parkes, Cowra, Forbes and West Wyalong. The centre will recruit and manage a team of nurses and other health workers to care for people and staff existing baby health centres. The project has been allocated \$89,690 this financial year.

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