



PRIME MINISTER

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Address at the Antarctic Base, Kingston, Tasmania

It gives me great pleasure to be in Kingston today.

This complex, for the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science and the Environment, will establish this Commonwealth activity in Tasmania.

The Government decided to locate the Antarctic Division here because Hobart is the closest Australian capital city to the Antarctic, and the logical springboard for our scientific interest there. The Government's decision is consistent with recommendations of the 1977 Callaghan Report which led to decisions to provide help for Tasmania such as freight equalisation. The Government has also begun other initiatives to help industry and employment conditions in Tasmania.

The contract for this building has been let with a company, Watts Construction Division, which has been long established in Hobart, and the project will assist many local industries and professional consultants. In addition, of course, the establishment of this Division at Kingston will give a substantial boost to the area's shopping trade, housing industry and general amenities. The buildings to be constructed on this site will include an administration section, laboratories, display and conference areas, and stores and workshop buildings. Every effort will be made to blend the buildings into the surroundings. In particular the height of the buildings has been restricted to two stories. And special provision has also been made for an historical display area, open to the public, where exhibits associated with Australia's long involvement in the Antarctic area will be displayed.

Australians have been associated with the history of Antarctica since the last century. A Tasmanian scientist Louis Bernacchi was a member of the first expedition to Winter in the Antarctic in 1899. In 1911 Sir Douglas Mawson led an Australasian scientific expedition to the Antarctic, departing from Hobart, and he returned to the Antarctic with a second expedition in 1929-31.

In 1947 the Antarctic Division was set up to support Australian activities in Antarctica including our three Antarctic stations.

The work of our scientists in Antarctica helps us understand the potential resources of the region, the last great unexplored land mass of the world. In Antarctica, our biologists, physicists, glaciologists, geologists, meteorologists and cartographers are pursuing work of major scientific importance. Their investigations into the Antarctic and its resources will deepen our understanding of the environment of Antarctica, and will develop our knowledge of, to name a few areas, climate, the weather, geological mapping, glaciology, wildlife and marine life.

To ensure Australia conducts an effective and balanced programme of research in Antarctica, the Government recently established an Antarctic Research Policy Advisory Committee (ARPAC). I am pleased to announce that Professor Caro, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania, has consented to be Chairman of this Body. The Committee has the task of advising the Government within six months on the organisation and priorities for scientific and technological research in the Antarctic.

The Government is also considering a submission by the University of Tasmania which proposes a national post-graduate centre in marine science and Antarctic science. The University of Tasmania and the Antarctic Division already work together on cosmic ray research. The proposal by the Tasmanian University will also be considered by ARPAC.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, Tasmania has a strong Liberal contingent in the Federal Parliament. With two Ministers, Kevin Newman and Ray Groom and with a group of enthusiastic backbenchers Tasmania's interests are ably represented.

We recognise the unique problems faced by Tasmania and the need for special initiatives to cope with Tasmania's situation. In this regard I should mention that the Commonwealth has given substantial financial assistance to the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company. Since August 1977 the company received a net \$3.3 million from the Commonwealth in interest free loans. These funds ensured that the mine would remain in operation and saved hundreds of jobs.

Today the wisdom of the Commonwealth's decision to help the mine has been borne out by the recovery in copper prices. The price of copper is now at its highest level since 1974, and on the basis of these trends the company may not need further assistance in 1979.

We have commenced a programme of rehabilitation and development of the Tasmanian railways. And in this year's budget we provided an amount of \$26 million for the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme, encouraging trade and keeping down prices in Tasmania.

Overall, the Commonwealth Government's economic policies are putting Australia and Tasmania on the path to recovery. We are encouraged by the signs of economic progress in consumer confidence,

in rising production, in investment and new resource projects. In July I shall be opening a \$30 million expansion of pulp-making facilities at APPM's Burnie Mill, an encouraging new development for northern Tasmania, which I believe is based to a large degree on freight equalisation.

Employment opportunities have been growing too slowly in Tasmania, but the latest statistics show some early signs of recovery. Overtime worked in Tasmania reached an average of 2.6 hours in December rising consistently over the first half of the current financial year. In the December quarter total employment increased by 2.2% in Tasmania, a little above the growth Australia-wide of 1.9%. These are tentative early indications, but they are encouraging.

To help the unemployed, the Tasmanian branch of the Commonwealth Employment Service commenced on 22 January, 1979 a special drive to identify vacant job opportunities, entitled "Job Search 1979". In the month following this drive vacancies rose by 18%, and I am sure this will prove an example of the importance of the co-operation between the community and Government.

In assessing our economic prospects we should not forget that for Tasmania, as for the rest of Australia, the revival of our rural industries and rising commodity prices should make 1979 the best year for a number of years.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Commonwealth Government looks forward to seeing the Antarctic Division operating in its new location. This project is one of my Government's most important current initiatives for Tasmania. It will play its part in helping recovery in Tasmania. In developing Australian scientific research and knowledge of the Antarctic continent, I am sure that the work of the Division will be of major importance to Australia.

It gives me great pleasure to lay this foundation stone at the commencement of construction of the Headquarters of the Antarctic Division.

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