



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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EXCERPT FROM PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO
AUSTRALIAN LIBERAL STUDENTS' FEDERATION, HOBART

The package of offshore legislation which was introduced into the Federal Parliament this Session is designed to give the States a significant influence in the territorial seas.

It is important that States should be able to influence strongly policy in what happens offshore. It is not a matter that should be determined solely from Canberra.

It is especially important for an island State like Tasmania, where the fishing industry is a vital part of the economy.

The legislative package was opposed by the ALP which wants total Commonwealth dominance over the States.

Nevertheless, it has the support of all States including Tasmania and New South Wales, both of which have Labor Governments.

They took part in the painstaking negotiations extending over two years, which have resolved some ten years of concern over constitutional rights and arrangements aroused by the territorial seas controversy.

The legislative package is a classic example of the way in which constitutional problems should be resolved.

The three Tasmanian Members of the Federal Parliament, Senators Grimes, O'Byrne, and Wriedt belong to a Party which is committed to opposing the passage of this legislation through the Senate, as it was opposed, very strongly, in the House.

If Senators Grimes, O'Byrne and Wriedt are concerned for the interests of their own State of Tasmania, they will support this legislation. For them to join in the attack by the Parliamentary Labor Party on the offshore legislation would be a betrayal of Tasmania.

The legislation gives them the chance to support Tasmania's rights and the rights of the States.

From 1973 to 1975 the then Labor Government sought to dominate the States through behaviour which undermined the economies of the States and the decision-making capacity of their Governments.

That Government sought to establish total control over the nation's resources, including the seas, with their fisheries and their offshore minerals.

Indeed, the Federal Labor Party seeks to establish branches of Commonwealth Departments to do these things.

However, Senators Grimes, O'Byrne and Wriedt now have the opportunity to turn their back on this principle of centralised control and to support their own State and its interests in the seas around Tasmania.