

UNIVERSITY SALARIES

Statement by Acting Prime Minister, Mr. J. McEwen

The Acting Prime Minister, Mr. McEwen, said today that the Australian Universities Commission, having regard to movements in professorial salaries during the past two years, has proposed that the Commonwealth Government should accept an increase in the basic professorial salary on which Commonwealth assistance is made available under the States Grants (Universities) Act. Some States, he said, had sought a lead from the Commission on the question of University salaries. The Commission had advised the Commonwealth that it would be appropriate to assist the States in respect of salary rises up to £4,000 a year for basic professorial salaries as from 1st July, 1960. The Commission has also recommended that the salaries of sub-professorial staff should be suitably adjusted.

Mr. McEwen said that the Commonwealth accepted these recommendations. He emphasised that the actual level of salary increases in each State was not a matter for the Commission or the Commonwealth Government to determine. The Commonwealth, however, is prepared to meet its share of any increase in University salaries up to the level indicated. Whether the actual professorial salaries paid in State Universities were higher or lower was a matter for the State Governments and their Universities.

Mr. McEwen pointed out that there had been general acceptance of the Murray Committee report (on which the present level of assistance is based) which includes the concept that University salaries throughout Australia should be more or less in line.

The Commonwealth has assumed heavy financial commitments under the States Grants (Universities) Act, and it also has its own direct responsibility for the Australian National University and the Canberra University College. Because salaries form such a large element in University costs, the Commonwealth must necessarily concern itself with movements in University salaries.

During the past eight months the Commission has visited all Universities and has considered their needs for the 1961/63 triennium. Since approximately 60% of the recurrent expenditure at Universities is devoted to salaries, the Commission recommended the appointment of an expert committee to advise it on the appropriate levels for academic salaries throughout Australian Universities for the 1961/63 triennium and on other relevant matters. The Acting Prime Minister said that the Government had accepted this recommendation.

Mr. McEwen said that the committee would be under the Chairmanship of Sir Leslie Martin, the Chairman of the Australian Universities Commission, and would comprise the following members: Dr. H.C. Coombs, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, Mr. L.B. Hamilton, First Assistant Secretary, Department of the Treasury, Canberra, Professor Sir George P ton, Chairman of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Mr. G.F. Seaman, Under Treasurer, South Australia and Mr. L.J. Jeickhardt, Technical Director, Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia and New Zealand Limited. The Acting Prime Minister added that the committee would have power to co-opt where special information was required and that interested bodies would be invited to prepare submissions for the consideration of the committee.

CANBERRA,
27th May, 1960.