

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION BILL

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. R.G. MENZIES
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
5TH APRIL, 1962

This, as honourable members will see, is a simple bill. Up to now, the Australian Universities Commission has consisted of five members. One of them, a very notable Australian scientist, Sir Leslie Martin, is the full-time chairman. The other four are part-time members. They are Professor N.S. Bayliss of the University of Western Australia, Professor A.D. Trendall of the Australian National University, Sir Kenneth Wills of Adelaide and Dr. J. Vernon, a well known businessman of Sydney.

The commission has undoubtedly devoted a great deal of time to its work and has, I think, served the country with very great distinction. But the university problem is developing very rapidly. New universities, such as Monash in Victoria, are coming into existence and there is increasing pressure to have medical schools established in these new universities. One can understand that very well. It occurred to us that, under these circumstances, it would be very desirable to add to the strength of the commission a member who would be familiar with the problems of medical schools and with their administration. No current member of the commission has special qualities of that kind. We believe that if we can get a first-class man, authoritative in medical schools and their work, this will be of tremendous assistance to the commission when examining and forming judgment upon claims that are made. This means, of course, that we will be adding to the strength of the commission one more member who might be regarded, classifying them broadly, as an academic member.

Under these circumstances, the Government feels that it is desirable, in order to preserve the general balance in this commission, to add one further member experienced in business and financial matters. The commission will then number seven, six of the members being part-time and one of them, the chairman, being continually at work. I do not want to occupy the time of the House by reminding members that the Universities Commission, by its recommendations, following upon investigations and consultations, has already been able to do a great deal of good for the university system in Australia. As we all want to see that work continue, and as we want to see more opportunities for people to have the benefit of university training, I have no doubt that honourable members will agree with the proposed increase in the membership of the commission.
