

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH WEST AUSTRALIA

Statement by Acting Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. John McEwen, M.P.

I conferred today in company with the Treasurer, Mr. Holt, and the Minister for National Development, Senator Spooner with the Premier of Western Australia, Mr. Brand and the Minister for the North West, Mr. Court. They put before us various proposals related to the further development of the north of Western Australia.

It will be recalled that in the speech delivered by the Governor-General on the occasion of the Opening of Parliament in February of this year, it was stated on behalf of the Commonwealth Government that we believe in the development of the north of Australia, a development which we regard as essential. We reaffirmed our determination to continue our efforts in that field. We pointed to assistance already given to basic public works in the north of Australia. These include, in the case of Western Australia, the Ord River Scheme and the programme of beef roads. We referred also to the important research work being conducted through the Bureau of Mineral Resources, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. We said at that time that we would continue economic and scientific research and survey work with a view to the production of developmental plans. We recognized that in these matters the co-operation of the State Governments would be essential and this would be sought. The present talks are in accordance with this general statement of policy.

The proposals put before us by the Premier and Mr. Court offer, in their judgment, good economic prospects and would contribute to the strength of the Australian economy either by way of increased export income earnings or by the replacement of certain current imports. We have agreed to study these matters closely with appropriate Commonwealth officers and will arrange, where that appears desirable, for consultation to take place between officers of the Commonwealth Government and the Western Australian Government. Some of the matters would involve budgetary provision by the Commonwealth Government and these will be given appropriate Cabinet consideration.

CANBERRA,

13th June, 1962.