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REBUTTAL TO PAPUA/NEW GUINEA STORY

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R. G. Menzies

My attention has been directed to a story published in the Melbourne Herald on February 5, and also, I believe, in the Brisbane Courier Mail. I had not seen this article until today.

It states categorically that Australia will try to give Papua/New Guinea representative self-government by 1968 and complete its political independence by 1972 at the latest.

The story purports to be based upon inside knowledge of Government policy. Mr. Hasluck made a statement in Rabaul on Saturday, February 9, categorically denying this story and setting out in completely accurate terms the real policy of the Australian Government which is "that we will stay in Papua/New Guinea as long as the people of the Territory need our help. No-one other than the residents of the Territory can tell us when to go."

Mr. Hasluck's full statement deserves to be read. It is entirely in accord with Government policy. The story about 1968 and 1972 is one which I had never heard of until I read it today. It is a mischievous story because it may well create confusion, not only among the indigenous inhabitants, but also among the Australians who live and work in this Territory. I am quite unaware of any differences of opinion in the Government on this matter.

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CANBERRA,

11th February, 1963.