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TALKS WITH PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

There was a discussion today between representatives of the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments on the question of an extension of the Brigalow Scheme into Area 3.

Area 3 is the Mackenzie Isaac River Basin section of the Fitzroy Basin area. It contains an area of about six million acres. It has a rainfall of about 25 inches per annum.

Major operations in Areas 1 and 2 are nearing completion, and the Premier of Queensland, Mr. Nicklin, put it to Commonwealth Government representatives that this is an appropriate time to consider Area 3.

In addition to the Prime Minister, the discussion was attended by Mr. C. Adermann, Minister for Primary Industry, Mr. D.N. Sutherland, Head of the Northern Division of the Department of National Development, Mr. D.H. McKay, Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Mr. J.H. Garrett, First Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, and Mr. D.J. Munro, First Assistant Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department. The Queensland representatives were, in addition to the Premier, the Hon. A.R. Fletcher, Minister for Lands, and Mr. E.C. Muir, Chief Commissioner for Lands.

The Commonwealth Government views the Brigalow Scheme as one of the most hopeful development prospects in Australia. Despite having to contend with drought conditions early in the history of the Scheme, experience in Areas 1 and 2 had been sufficiently encouraging to call for a full and early examination by the Commonwealth Government of the request now made to it in respect of Area 3. I assured the Premier of Queensland that the matter would be brought promptly to the Cabinet for its consideration. The Commonwealth Government would view the request against its general objective of maintaining a good rate of progress in Northern development.

This morning's discussion also dealt with the effects of drought in Queensland. Mr. Nicklin expressed appreciation of the assistance already provided by the Commonwealth Government, and pointed to problems which remained, particularly in relation to the matter of re-stocking where serious stock losses had been experienced. I assured him that this matter had been actively under consideration and announcements could be expected shortly on this and other aspects of drought relief.

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CANBERRA,  
4th March, 1966.