

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
THE RT. HON. HAROLD HOLT, IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON THE
24TH AUGUST, 1966

NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Government has decided that an investigation will be commenced this year into the feasibility of establishing Naval support facilities for the R.A.N. at Cockburn Sound, near Fremantle.

The Royal Australian Navy has indicated the desirability of such a facility in the short and long term.

It has been decided that before any firm decision is taken, an expert technical investigation should be carried out at Cockburn Sound by a firm of consultant engineers to be engaged through the Commonwealth Department of Works. The purpose of this investigation will be to select the most suitable site for the possible establishment of the facilities, prepare a design study and cost estimates. The results will be the essential basis for further consideration by the Government. The terms of reference for the study and the necessary arrangements will be completed as quickly as possible.

While the investigation will be directed primarily to the requirements of the R.A.N., it will, of course, take fully into account the possible needs of Allied Navies for use of the proposed facilities including, in particular, the possible needs of the Royal Navy. In this context, honourable members will recall that I said last February, following the talks with Mr. Healey, the United Kingdom Minister for Defence, that we in Australia, if we were considering in future the establishment of facilities here for the purposes of our own growing establishment, would take into our thinking the circumstance that these facilities might at some point of time and in some contingencies be needed for United Kingdom Service requirements.

In deciding to have the feasibility study made, the Government has also taken into account the continuing development in the Cockburn Sound area and hence its growing capacity to provide industrial support. The investigation now ordered into the question of a further expansion of defence facilities at Cockburn Sound is in harmony with the Government's general policy of encouraging regional development in appropriate areas of Australia in accordance with their particular characteristics and potentialities.

Naturally, the Commonwealth activity will proceed in the closest collaboration with the Western Australian Government to ensure that Naval requirements and plans are properly integrated with those of the Western Australian State authorities for the development of the area.
