

NEW YEAR MESSAGE TO THE NATION

From the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

This is the first time I have had the privilege, as Prime Minister, of wishing you all a happy, prosperous and successful New Year. This - the last year of the sixties - can be all these things for us, but at the same time, it will be a "crossroads" year for Australia.

Our environment, our resources, our high standards of living and our many other advantages can give us the good things of life; but 1969 will confront us with many changes and many challenges on the international scene: What will be the outcome of the Paris talks on Vietnam. . . . what will be the United States' attitude to Asia and the Pacific under its new Administration. . . . what is to be the basis for defence and stability in our part of the world after Britain completes her withdrawal?

These are imponderables that face us in 1969. You can rest assured that your Government will be making policies and deciding priorities based on an honest assessment of what we believe is best for Australia.

At home we must press on with the urgent task of national development so that we grow stronger and more self-reliant as each month goes by.

We must continue to people our continent, to save and invest our money and attract the capital we still need to finance our growth.

We must continue to diversify our industries and increase our exports. We must nourish our world markets of long standing and develop new ones, particularly in South East Asia where the future holds a bright promise for the emerging nations and for Australia.

We must carry on the work we began last year of giving increased help to the aged and the chronically ill and those citizens who are still in need so that 1969 will hold better things for them and bring a new dignity to their lives.

We have done reasonably well in the year past, but let us not be satisfied. There is much to do. . . . and I am heartened by the fact that we tackle the future with a burgeoning belief in our nationalism and a growing faith in ourselves as Australians.

A Happy New Year to you all. I will be doing my best to see that it is.