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STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
(Hon. David Fairbairn, D.F.C., M.P.)

AUSTRALIAN PLANS FOR CAPE KERAUDREN FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Minister for National Development, Mr David Fairbairn, today gave details of the arrangements made to ensure Australia's full and effective participation in the feasibility study.

"We have set up an Australian Plowshare Committee to watch over the study", Mr Fairbairn said.

"A Cape Keraudren Project Technical Committee has also been established to co-ordinate the investigations into technical and economic issues.

The Cape Keraudren Project Committee will be the working body for the feasibility study, and will maintain the necessary liaison with the United States Atomic Energy Commission.

The Chairman of the Committee will be Dr A.R.W. Wilson, of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission who is Deputy Director of the Commission's Research establishment at Lucas Heights, near Sydney. He is thoroughly experienced in the American Plowshare programme, having visited the United States on a number of occasions to study developments.

In 1963, Dr Wilson headed a three-man Australian mission which made a first-hand appreciation of the United States progress in the scientific, engineering and safety aspects of the use of nuclear explosives.

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He has also acted, at the request of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as adviser to the Government of Panama on the safety aspects of the proposed "Trans-Isthmian Canal Project".

In this, the use of nuclear explosives is being studied, since this technique is estimated to offer economies of the order of several hundred million dollars over conventional blasting techniques.

The Australian deputy co-ordinator for the Cape Keraudren Project Committee is Dr R. Warner, of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission.

Dr Warner is a Gold-medallist in the Faculty of Chemical Engineering, University of New South Wales, and has been closely associated with Plowshare developments for some years.

The Project Committee will include experts from a number of Commonwealth Departments and organisations, among them the Bureau of Mineral Resources and the Bureau of Meteorology, the Government of Western Australia, and the Sentinel Mining Company. The Snowy Mountains Authority may also be associated with the Committee.

Commenting on the decision to proceed with a feasibility study, Mr Fairbairn said it was very good news. It could have important implications for development work in Australia in future years.

"If it proceeds, the construction of a harbour at Cape Keraudren by nuclear blasting will advance our knowledge and skills in this exciting new field".

If it proves feasible in all respects the operation at Cape Keraudren is expected to require five nuclear explosives each of 200 kilotons fired simultaneously.

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It is estimated that this will produce a harbour 6,000 feet long, 1,300 feet to 1,600 feet wide and 300-400 feet deep. This could accommodate ships of up to approximately 150,000 dead-weight tons.

CANBERRA: 6.2.69

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