

ABORIGINAL POLICY

In May, 1967, as a result of the Referendum, the Commonwealth received a new responsibility for Aborigines. During the lifetime of the last Parliament we have fashioned a policy to meet that responsibility. In the next Parliament we intend to develop it still further.

My predecessor, the late Harold Holt, first set up the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, and I took the next step by appointing a Minister-in-Charge within my own Department.

Our basic aim is to give our Aborigines the opportunity to be self-supporting, and to end the "mentality of the hand-out". We want them to choose for themselves their own future, and to regain their initiative and independence. Not all will make the same choice, since their various circumstances are so very different.

The constitutional powers of the Commonwealth in this field are not exclusive, but we share with the States. It is not our intention to usurp State functions, particularly because we believe that decentralisation and regional administration will be in the interests of the Aborigines themselves.

Our grants to the States last year for Aboriginal advancement were \$3.5 million: this year they will be \$5.4 million. These grants are used for the purposes of housing, education, health and employment.

We have sponsored training schemes, education schemes and schemes of regional development. Through our Aboriginal Enterprises Capital Fund, we are making it possible for Aborigines to own their own businesses, whether on an individual or a group basis.

We believe that Aborigines should be able to retain features of their own culture where they so choose. The work of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, which was set up by us, will help here. We are encouraging Aboriginal handicrafts and arts. We aim to create a higher degree of mutual respect between Aboriginal Australians and other Australians.

We gratefully acknowledge that, towards these ends, there is a great deal of work being done by non-Governmental organisations, including both Church bodies and lay bodies. We aim to utilise the great reservoir of goodwill towards the Aborigines which exists throughout the community.

Our plans for the next phase are as follows:

1. Regional schemes such as we have worked out in collaboration with the Aborigines themselves for Arnhem Land will be followed both in the Northern Territory and in conjunction with State administrations.
2. Increased allocations will be made for Aboriginal housing in both the States and the Northern Territory: in addition we shall be encouraging Aborigines to make use of our Aged Persons Homes programme and of finance through co-operative building societies.
3. Where a State has land for Aborigines, we will provide through our Capital Fund the resources to develop it for Aboriginal advancement and under Aboriginal ownership.
4. We intend to involve Aboriginal communities in their own local government and in the maintenance of law and order among themselves to the greatest possible extent.
5. We shall continue and expand our programmes for Aboriginal health and education, with the aim of ensuring to them, in practice as well as in theory, all the advantages enjoyed by other Australians.
6. In recent years, most discriminatory legislation against Aborigines has been abolished. We intend to see that this process is completed in the life of the next Parliament upon both State and Federal levels.
7. Our policies of research into all aspects of Aboriginal welfare will be continued. We shall continue to foster Aboriginal culture and to give them a chance to participate in sport. We shall press on with our programme of helping other Australians to appreciate both the value of their culture and the problems which face them.

We do not intend to take the easy way of deciding everything for the aborigines, and telling them what they are to do and what they are to be. Instead, we will take the slower and better way of consulting them, and working out plans in accordance with their real wishes.

PRIMARY INDUSTRY

Following its established and proven policy of consultation and negotiation with the primary industries, the Government has continued and will continue to introduce measures designed to stabilise and strengthen these important industries and thereby to strengthen the economies of the countries, towns and cities which depend on them.

The Government is well aware of the cost pressures which national policies of rapid growth and development have brought to bear on the primary industries and has constantly sought to devise new measures to offset these pressures. Coupled with low and in some cases, declining prices on overseas markets, these pressures have caused considerable difficulty for many primary industries.

In addition to the many established methods of offsetting these special difficulties such as production subsidies, stabilisation schemes, bounties on fertilizers, equalisation of petrol prices, tax concessions, building of beef roads and establishment of water conservation projects, the Government has recently introduced significant new measures designed to further lighten the cost burden falling on primary producers.

One of the most important of these is in the area of estate duty where for the first time the Commonwealth has moved to give special concessions on the estates of primary producers by raising the existing statutory exemption by 20% and in addition reducing the amount of estate duty payable in proportion to that part of the duty attributable to the value of real assets such as land, livestock, plant and machinery.

Further measures introduced in the recent Budget included increases in both the superphosphate and nitrogenous fertilizer bounties bringing the cost of these bounties up to \$65 million a year. Tax concessions for primary producers have been extended to allow the cost of all structural improvements for conserving water or fodder to be deductible in full for tax purposes in the year in which the expenditure is incurred. This measure is seen as a very strong incentive to farmers to conserve more water and fodder on their own properties so they can better cope with the droughts which are a feature of Australia's weather pattern. For direct relief of drought effects the Commonwealth over the last four years has provided by way of grants and loans a total of \$119 million.

Australia's biggest foreign exchange earner, the wool industry, is on the threshold of big and important development. The Government, again to help wool growers to meet their cost problems, has offered to almost double its contribution towards research and promotion while halving the cost to growers. This would mean that the Government, if this offer is accepted by the industry, would provide up to \$27 million a year for research and promotion.

The wool industry also is now examining the Government's offer of finance for the industry's new marketing proposals. These proposals came forward from the Australian Wool Industry Conference and the Government, after careful examination made certain changes in the proposals and offered up to \$7.3 million a year to assist in their implementation - \$1.2 million more than the assessed cost of the original proposals. The Government's offer has been formally conveyed to representatives of the A.W.I.C. for consideration and the conference will have the assistance of the cost/benefit analysis now being revised by the Australian Wool Board in coming to a decision. The Government believes its offer, if accepted by the industry, will be a means of helping the industry to take a vital first step in the modernisation of the wool industry, without interfering with its traditional and well proved method of selling through the auction system.

With the wheat industry facing serious difficulties because of very hard production and diminishing world markets, the Government has responded to the industry's request for help in introducing a delivery quotas scheme to bring production and markets more into balance. The Government agreed to the industry's request to guarantee finance totalling \$440 million to allow a first advance of \$1.10 to be paid on all quota wheat this season.

Recently, the Government arranged with the Australian Wheat Board for an additional 60 million bushels of storage space to be provided so that all wheat produced this season can be taken into storage by the middle of next year. Last year the industry's stabilisation plan was renewed for a further five years. Under the plan, the protective cover over the industry has been increased by extending the guaranteed export price to 200 million bushels of wheat, compared with the 150 million bushels previously. The plan also fixes prices for wheat consumed in Australia and these are subject to annual variation as a result of movements in certain costs.

The Government has entered into strenuous negotiation to ensure that Australia's access to the United States Meat Market is maintained and if possible increased. These negotiations led to a worthwhile increase in the quantity of meat entering that market from Australia although Australia's share of the total market declined. The Government has provided at a cost of more than \$5 million a year an export inspection service to ensure that all meat leaving Australia meets the highest standard of quality demanded by overseas consumers. This service has helped Australia keep markets it could otherwise have lost. Support to the Dairy Industry has continued, this year including substantial compensation for losses resulting from Britain's devaluation of her currency two years ago. Total devaluation compensation paid or committed to all Australian primary export industries has now reached approximately \$86 million.

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The Government has actively assisted the sugar industry by taking a leading part in the negotiation which produced the new International Sugar Agreement and by entering into a new domestic agreement with the Queensland Government on the domestic pricing arrangements for sugar. In addition the Government has made loans totalling about \$24 million to the industry to assist it in recent periods of difficulty.

These are examples of the many ways in which the Government is continually working to ensure the stability of Australia's primary industries. One which has attracted a great deal of attention is the rapidly developing fishing industry in which the Government has taken a number of steps such as the claiming of an exclusive 12 miles fishing zone for Australian fishermen; the establishment of Navy and Air Force patrols to police the zone; the enactment of laws to give Australia control of the living marine resources of the Great Barrier Reef; the conclusion of an agreement with Japan, providing for the phasing out of all Japanese fishing operations within the 12-mile zone and the closing of Australian ports to foreign fishing vessels. The Government has acted to assist a number of other primary industries in a variety of ways and is currently examining the problems of others in an effort to find ways of helping the industries concerned to overcome these problems.

PRIME MINISTER'S POLICY SPEECH 1969

Supplementary Statement on Health

Commonwealth medical benefits and fund benefits will be increased so that the difference between the benefit entitlements and fees most commonly charged by doctors will not exceed \$5 even for the most complicated and costly surgical procedures. For simpler procedures, which are less expensive, the difference between the benefits and doctors' common fees will be very much less.

At the same time, we firmly believe that the patient should carry a personal responsibility for a portion of the cost of medical services he receives.

Significant reductions in the proportion of the medical charge that will be met by the patient will be achieved by making substantial increases in both Commonwealth medical benefits and fund benefits. For our part we are proposing an overall increase of 30 per cent in Commonwealth medical benefits at a cost of \$16 million a year.

The health insurance funds will also increase their fund benefits and to do so small increases in the rates of contributions will be necessary. In most States these increases will not exceed 5 cents a week for a single person and 10 cents a week for a family contributor to the highest table available. In N. S. W., where doctors' charges are higher than in other States, an increase of 7 cents per single contributor and 15 cents a week respectively for family contributors will be necessary. In order to simplify the scheme and to ensure an adequate coverage for contributors only one medical table will be available in each State when the new arrangement commences.

The increased benefits will be applied selectively so that the biggest increases will be made for the high cost services where the need is greatest. We are confident that contributors will willingly accept the small increase in contribution rates in the knowledge that it will bring them a far better medical benefits coverage than they have ever had before.

We are aiming at the following margin between total benefit entitlements and doctors' common fees:-

General Practitioner Services
Surgery consultations - 80 cents
Home visits - \$1.20
Other services - graduated up to \$5

For the more costly services the margin of \$5 to be met by the patient will be as low as 2 per cent or 3 per cent of the cost of the service.
