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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon

The Australian Government has noted the rapid succession of events which suggest a marked development in the willingness of the People's Republic of China to deal with the rest of the world.

We have already stated that it is our long term objective to normalise our bilateral relations with the Government of the People's Republic of China and we have further decided that we will now explore the possibilities of establishing a dialogue with the Government of the People's Republic.

We must bear in mind that a major obstacle to the development of formal relations with the People's Republic of China has been that Government's support for insurgency and subversion in countries of the region with which we as an Australian Government have close relations and mutual strategic interests.

For those reasons we will proceed with caution and we will want to ensure that when any steps are taken there will be some response of a reasonable kind from Peking.

Whatever we do will be without prejudice to the rights of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Subject to security requirements there are, of course, no restrictions on the rights of Australians to visit the People's Republic of China.

CANBERRA
11 May 1971