



**PRIME MINISTER**

FOR PRESS :

PM. No. 8/1972

PAYMENT OF PENSIONS OVERSEAS

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr William McMahon

My Government has decided to accept the principle of payment of pensions overseas.

It had before it a submission from the Minister for Social Services (Mr Wentworth) and the report of an Interdepartmental Committee which was completed late last year.

We decided that age, invalid and widows' pensions should be payable in those overseas countries which make corresponding arrangements for their own pensions to be payable in Australia.

In order to qualify for payment of his pension overseas, the pensioner in Australia will be required to have lived here for at least 20 years after reaching the age of 16. However, in the case of invalid pensions, where invalidity arises from an accident or disease which occurred in Australia, there will be no such residential requirement. Similarly, where a husband has died in Australia, the widow will be able to take her pension abroad irrespective of her period of residence in Australia.

The Government has thus accepted the principle that where a person has contributed to the life of the Australian community, his pension rights should be portable overseas.

Legislation to give effect to this decision will be introduced into the Parliament early this year, and we shall endeavour to have it passed as soon as possible. It will then operate in any countries which have concluded the reciprocal arrangements to which I have referred.

Discussions relating to the possibility of appropriate reciprocity in social security have at different times since 1967 been held with representatives of Yugoslavia, Italy, Malta, West Germany and Turkey. The subject has also been raised from time to time in discussions with other countries.

In order to obviate unnecessary delay in concluding arrangements, I have asked the Minister for Social Services to begin forthwith his negotiations with representatives from countries from whom our migrants have come. He will be in consultation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Immigration in these negotiations.

Arrangements to make Australian pensions payable overseas will be made as soon as it is possible to reach agreement with a particular country.

The policy which we have now approved is the result of quite considerable investigations which took place last year, and follows principles which are gaining international acceptance.

Australian development owes much to our migrants intake in the decades since the War. Some of these will, of course, wish to return home in the evening of their life, and they should feel free to do so if they so choose. But I believe that most of them now see Australia as their true home, and will not want to leave us.

The new privileges of pension portability are not, of course, confined to migrants. They will be open to all holders of Australian Social Service pensions, wherever they may have been born, who go to countries which make the appropriate reciprocal arrangements with Australia.

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CANBERRA,

30 January, 1972.