



PRIME MINISTER

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TERRITORIAL SEA AND CONTINENTAL SHELF BILL 1970

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon.

William McMahon, CH, MP

The Territorial Sea and Continental Shelf Bill 1970 was discussed at the normal weekly meeting of the joint Government Parties.

Three aspects of the Bill were discussed :

- . The progress made between the Commonwealth and the States relating to the matters to be discussed at the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference, possibly in 1973.
- . The report of the Senate Select Committee on Offshore Petroleum Resources. Some of the conclusions of the Select Committee dealing solely with the petroleum legislation were discussed. These have been referred to the Standing Committee of the Australian Minerals Council and will be on the agenda for the Council's next meeting.
- . The Constitutional aspects which were raised in the Senate Committee report. These will be referred to the next meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General by the Commonwealth Attorney-General.

The Prime Minister has written to State Premiers on the Senate Select Committee report and the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea. He indicated arrangements which were in hand or available for full discussion and consultation on these matters.

After lengthy discussion in which varying views were expressed, the parties agreed it was important to proceed on these lines of consultation with the States in an endeavour to resolve the Constitutional problems as early as practicable. In the meantime, no action will be taken on the Bill.

There was a general desire to ensure that the problem of Constitutional jurisdiction be resolved, particularly in view of its wide-ranging implications and the many matters which arise in this field, but it was also the general desire that this should be resolved by consultation and co-operation.

CANBERRA,
29 March 1972