



PRIME MINISTER

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPUTATION

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. William McMahon,
CH, MP

The Prime Minister, Mr McMahon, today received a deputation from the Australian Council of Local Government Associations comprising the President of the Australian Council of Local Government Associations, Councillor A.A. Mills (Western Australia), the Past and incoming President, Councillor H.G. Behan, CMG, MBE (Queensland) and the Secretary of the Association, Mr N.T.G. Miles.

The deputation was introduced to the Prime Minister by the Hon. Bob Katter, Minister for the Army and Chairman of the Canberra Committee on Local Government, and Senator G. Davidson, Secretary of the Canberra Committee.

The Prime Minister told the deputation that he was impressed by moves in the United States to restore more authority to government at the grass roots level.

As life in the cities became increasingly complex and populations grew, local government authorities would have to play an increasingly larger part in improving the quality of life, particularly with regard to recreational, sporting and cultural matters, in addition to other traditional responsibilities.

The Prime Minister expressed his specific concern for the problems of local government, particularly in relation to their prestige, authority and responsibility.

The Prime Minister recalled that at the recent Loan Council meeting, the limit on local government borrowings without the approval of the Loan Council had been raised from \$300,000 to \$400,000. This was a recent and clear indication of the Federal Government's concern for local government and it was hoped that this liberalisation would improve the range of local government activities.

The Prime Minister also indicated to the deputation that he would like to see local government represented at the forthcoming Constitutional convention. He confirmed that he would strongly support the attendance of local government authorities at the proposed Constitutional convention.

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Councillor Mills, on behalf of the Australian Council, expressed appreciation that the Prime Minister had been able to meet the deputation at short notice. It was the first time in more than two decades that national representatives of local government had been received by the Prime Minister.

While the deputation recognised that state Governments had the responsibility for local governments, it nevertheless felt that the Prime Minister should himself be aware of the tremendous pressure on local government for increases in services and amenities.

Councillor Mills informed the Prime Minister that the Australian Council was preparing a pamphlet setting out the current requirements of local government. When this was complete, it would be personally presented to every candidate in the coming Federal elections by Mayors and Shire Presidents.

Councillor Mills emphasised that, while the Australian Council was a non-political body, it believed it was necessary that its message be understood by all sections of opinion.

Councillor Mills also emphasised that the deputation did not in any way seek to infringe on procedural matters prior to a Constitutional convention, but it believed it should take the opportunity to express its fundamental views when meeting the Prime Minister. Councillor Mills said the deputation had been impressed by the fact that during the discussions, the Prime Minister himself, had taken the initiative in expressing his specific concern for the problems of local government.

Mr. Katter said at the conclusion of the discussion he hoped that now that a dialogue had been opened, it would introduce a new era of top level contact between the Federal Government and local government.

CANBERRA,

20 July, 1972.