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PRIME MINISTER

EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED IN THE COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE

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

The Government has approved a recommendation of the Public Service Board, made after consultation with other interested Commonwealth authorities, for a further relaxation of the basic medical standard for permanent appointment to the Commonwealth Public Service.

Subject to maintenance of the requirement of efficiency for the duties to be performed, greater flexibility will in future be observed in assessing the medical fitness of candidates for permanent appointment.

At present the general practice is to expect appointees to the Service to meet a medical standard designed to ensure a period of at least seven years' efficient service.

In future, a three-year minimum period will be used as a general guideline. This guideline will be flexibly administered according to the duties to be performed and any other relevant factors so as to allow consideration, on their particular merits, of borderline cases. On the other hand, as at present, a longer period may be required in some cases - for example, where lengthy training as a Cadet is involved.

This decision represents the second general relaxation of the basic medical standard.

Until 1962, the general rule was that permanent appointees to the Service (other than returned soldiers) should be in sound health and likely to remain so until retiring age. In May 1962, the Government approved a recommendation of the Public Service Board which gave opportunities for many handicapped people to be permanently appointed. These people contribute to the Provident Account.

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Upwards of 10,000 handicapped people have been accepted for permanent appointment as a result of the 1962 decision.

The manner in which the handicapped can be employed in the Commonwealth Public Service has received continuing attention by the Public Service Board. In its 1971 Annual Report, the Board indicated that an officer in each of its Branch Offices in the States and Territories had been nominated to assist with the placement of handicapped persons.

The revised standard to be followed in the future will significantly increase the employment opportunities in the Commonwealth Public Service for the handicapped, a development which should be well received by all interested in their welfare.

CANBERRA,
1 October 1972