



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 1

6 December, 1972

Immediately upon the return of the Labor Government, Senator Lionel Murphy, Q.C., set out to arrange for the release of seven young men serving eighteen-month gaol sentences under the National Service Act.

Last night, I signed letters to the Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck, recommending remission of the sentences.

In my letters, I said:

"The effect of these decisions is that all obligations to render national service will cease and that there will be no further court proceedings against those who opposed the scheme. In the recent elections, it was a part of my party's election programme that this action would be taken and that a recommendation would be made that Your Excellency exercise the prerogative to bring about the release from custody of those offenders against the National Service Act who are still in custody. It may be assumed that this was endorsed by the electors and that Your Excellency's Government has a mandate to take these steps. The decision having been taken not to proceed with pending prosecutions, it would not be just to keep in custody those now serving prison sentences for offences under the National Service Act."

This morning the Governor-General exercised the prerogative of mercy to release the men on my recommendation.

Arrangements have now been made with prison authorities in the States for the immediate release of the seven men. Three were serving sentences in Victoria, two in New South Wales, one in South Australia and one in Western Australia.

The seven are : Michael John Payne, Ian Robert Turner, Michael Christopher Matteson, Michael Kocan, Robert Geoffrey Scates, Kenneth Joseph McLelland and Robert William Martin.

I firmly believe that this historic decision marks the end of peace-time conscription in Australia for all time.

ATTACHMENT TO PRESS STATEMENT NO. 1

6 December, 1972

The men who will be released from gaol today, the names of the gaols where they have been held and the dates on which they were imprisoned are as follows:

NEW SOUTH WALES

Michael KOCAN, Mannis Afforestation Camp, 27 April 1972;

Michael Christopher MATTESON, Long Bay, 9 November 1972;

VICTORIA

Kenneth Joseph McLELLAND, Pentridge, 8 March 1972;

Ian Robert TURNER, Ararat, 21 January 1972;

Robert Geoffrey SCATES, Pentridge, 26 April 1972;

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Robert William MARTIN, Cadell Training Camp, Renmark, 25 February 1972;

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Michael John PAYNE, Kames Training Centre, Serpentine, 23 October 1972.