

STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 5 PM EASTERN SUMMER TIME
FRIDAY 26 JANUARY 1973

NATIONAL ANTHEM

AUSTRALIAN DAY BROADCAST BY THE PRIME MINISTER

During the election campaign, I undertook that the Labor Government would seek a new National Anthem for our country. I promised that the people of Australia would be invited to help choose the Anthem. On this Australia Day, it is appropriate that I tell you of the Government's plans for fulfilling this promise to the people.

First let me explain why my colleagues and I believe that a new National Anthem is needed. We feel it is essential that Australians have an Anthem that fittingly embodies our national aspirations and reflects our status as an independent nation. We need an Anthem that uniquely identifies our country abroad, and recalls vividly to ourselves the distinctive qualities of Australian life and the character and traditions of our nation. These aims are particularly important to the Labor Government which I lead. It has been one of the central ambitions of my administration to foster a fresh and distinctive reputation for Australia overseas, and to encourage in our domestic affairs a greater spirit of shared purpose and national unity. My Government does not believe that our present National Anthem is adequate for these purposes.

It is not the Government's intention to impose its own choice of an Anthem on the Australian people. This is clearly something which the people must choose for themselves. A new Anthem will belong to the nation. I have therefore asked the Australian Council for the Arts to confer with Government departments and other organisations and to assume responsibility for bringing together a number of suitable compositions from which a choice can be made by the people.

We propose, during a period of three months, to invite any members of the public who are interested to submit the words and music for an Anthem. We hope that prominent writers and composers will wish to collaborate in this task, and a small number of established writers and composers will be specially invited to do so. At the end of the three months a judging panel will select several works from those submitted. These will be played on radio and television and in other ways throughout Australia. The public will then be asked, with the help of the national media, to vote for the composition they would wish to see adopted as the new National Anthem.

There are, as you know, several popular songs which already have some claim to being accepted as our Anthem. Many of them have a long and colourful history. An opportunity will be given at the time of the national vote for these to be considered, and voted upon, along with the entries selected or invited by the judges. An award of \$500 will be made for each of the works invited and for each of the compositions selected by the judging panel. The public's final choice will receive an award of \$5,000.

On the advice of the Australian Council for the Arts, similar arrangements will be made to select a short fanfare and a more formal composition, without words, which may be useful on other public or official occasions. These works, however, will be used more rarely, and will not have the status of a National Anthem. In addition, as a member nation of the Commonwealth, we will continue to use "God Save The Queen" on occasions when Her Majesty is present, or when it is especially important to acknowledge our links with the Crown.

The details of this scheme will shortly be announced by the Australian Council for the Arts, whose advice on this question has been of great value to the Government. I hope the scheme will result in some distinguished collaboration between our composers and poets, and some imaginative entries from members of the public. I know that all Australians will welcome an opportunity to express their personal view in a matter which concerns us all. I am aware that many people and organisations have been active in this matter, in some instances for many years, and I believe this plan will enable the results of their work to be taken into account. A new Anthem will be a symbolic expression of our national pride and dignity. It is long overdue, and I have no doubt that it is fervently desired by the great majority of Australians. After 72 years of Federation, it is astonishing that we are among the very few nations in the world without an Anthem of our own. It is time we reminded ourselves and the rest of the world of what Australia stands for.

CANBERRA. A.C.T.