



DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

NO

DATE

M/10

20 December 1972

AUSTRALIA SIGNS INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr E.G. Whitlam, announced today that Australia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sir Laurence McIntyre signed on Monday 18 December in New York, two International Covenants on Human Rights. The Covenants are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Mr Whitlam said the signature was intended to affirm the Government's unequivocal agreement with the aims of the Covenants. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations these are directed towards promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedom for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

Mr Whitlam said signature of the Covenants does not impose any immediately legally binding obligations on Australia. However, signature does imply that Australia will put itself in a position to ratify them as soon as practicable. The Government has directed that work should proceed at once with a view to seeing what steps may be necessary to enable Australia to ratify.

Mr Whitlam said he hoped Australia would be in a position to ratify the Covenants by the time we observe the 25th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1973.