



**PRIME MINISTER**

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 237

25 April 1974

THE NATIONAL ESTATE REPORT

The Australian Government will take action to preserve the national estate - ranging from protection for natural reserves to the safeguarding of historic buildings.

The basis of its planning for future action will be the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate. The Committee has just handed its report to the Minister for Urban and Regional Development, Mr. Uren, and the Minister for Environment and Conservation, Dr. Cass.

The Government has not yet had time to make final decisions on the detailed recommendations of the Committee but it supports them in principle. There are a number of matters on detailed administrative procedures and taxation questions which must be subjected to close scrutiny before any final conclusions can be reached. These are now being looked at by the Government.

The Committee states as its central theme:

"The Australian Government has inherited a National Estate which has been downgraded, disregarded and neglected. All previous priorities accepted at various levels of government and authority have been directed by a concept that uncontrolled development, economic growth and 'progress', and the encouragement of private as against public interest in land use, use of waters, and indeed in every part of the National Estate, was paramount".

The concept of the National Estate was devised by my colleague, Mr. Tom Uren. In my policy speech in December 1972, I promised that a Labor Government would preserve and enhance the quality of the National Estate. We have acted swiftly to discharge the mandate given us to identify, conserve and present the National Estate.

In April last year, a Committee of Inquiry was appointed with Mr. Justice Hope as Chairman. The other members of the Committee were Mr. Reginald Walker, Mr. Milo Dunphy, Ms Judith Wright-McKinney, Mr. David Yencken, Mr. Keith Wallace, and Ms Judith Mary Brine.

The Committee's report runs to more than 600 pages. It is now being printed and will be tabled in Parliament. Meantime, because of the interest the work of the committee has aroused, I have decided to make public the findings and recommendations of the Committee.

The Australian Government is determined that our National Estate will no longer be degraded and despoiled. The Report confirms that the present Government is the first administration to make a commitment to identify, conserve and present the National Estate when it says:

"We believe that the rapid growth in public concern, involvement and interest, means that this is among the most far-sighted decisions this Government has made and that it will be seen as such, not only by a large proportion of the electorate of today, but particularly by younger people and Australians of the future."

I am pleased to see that the Report rejects the widely-accepted notion that preservation of the environment has a socio-economic basis, that conservation is a "middle-class" issue. The Committee affirms that this assumption is not true and that the conservation of the National Estate is the concern of everyone. It punctures once and for all the illusion that the National Estate is the preserve of the privileged. The forces which threaten our National Estate often bear most heavily on the less privileged through the loss of parkland, familiar city-scapes and even dwellings. The Report makes it clear that often it is the less-privileged who are the most active in working to preserve the best features of our present way of life. The pillage and neglect of the National Estate diminishes us all in equal measure.

The Committee has devoted a great deal of work to defining with precision the components of the National Estate. The breadth of the National Estate as defined by the Committee is impressive - the elements of the cultural and natural environment which are:

- (a) of such outstanding world significance that they need to be conserved, managed and presented as part of the heritage of the world;
- (b) of such outstanding national value that they need to be conserved, managed and presented as part of the nation as a whole;
- (c) of such aesthetic, historical, social and cultural, ecological, or other special value to the nation or any part of it, including a region or locality, that they should be conserved, managed and presented for the benefit of the community as a whole.

This comprehensive definition of the National Estate includes elements of remarkable diversity and richness. The range of the National Estate extends from great National Parks to such homely parts of our heritage as paddlesteamers and a Chinese Joss House.

I do not want to comment in detail on the specific recommendations, except to say that the Government regards it as a most important and comprehensive document. The findings and recommendations will be studied most intensively in the months ahead.

The Report directs particular attention to the role of the Australian Government in nurturing the National Estate. It suggests a number of new tasks which the Government should undertake.

I want to make it clear that my Government has not been idle in its approach to the National Estate. Mr. Uren has announced grants for National Estate projects in all States out of a National Estate allocation of \$2.5 million in the last Budget. Grants have also been made to assist a number of conservation groups to meet administrative costs. The Hope Committee assisted the Government in determining the allocation of these funds. Now the recommendations of the Committee will greatly assist the Government in putting National Estate financial programs on a firm and continuing basis.

The work of Mr. Justice Hope and his Committee deserves the highest praise. The Government is also grateful for the help and co-operation given by State and Local Government authorities, by a host of voluntary organisations, and by hundreds of individuals in developing and refining the concept of the National Estate.

The Report of the National Estate Committee is a recognition of the great physical and cultural endowment we have inherited. By acting now with firmness and decision we can ensure that future generations will not lead their lives content with what we have spoilt.

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