



PRIME MINISTER

3 May 1974

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., MP.

DARTMOUTH DAM

The River Murray Commission in the immediate future will have to make a decision about letting the main contract for the Dartmouth Dam, which will be the means of adding very substantially to the water available to South Australia in the years to come.

The Australian Government had last year suggested that there could be some merit in slowing down the rate of construction of this project. Over the last few months, however, an appraisal of the overall impact of the project has shown that it would not be appropriate to slow down or defer the work. The appraisal will be published as soon as printed. The Australian Government will therefore facilitate an early decision by the River Murray Commission.

The Australian Government still feels the grave concern over the management of the River Murray which I expressed at my meeting with the Premiers of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria early last year. Indeed my concern has increased, since I do not believe it can be said that the progress made since that meeting has been such as to provide much cause for satisfaction. I would hope that as work goes on at top speed to build the great storage in the upper catchment of the Murray, there will be a similar sense of urgency associated with studies that will pave the way for the most effective use and management of this river and its associated land resources. I hope also that there will be a serious and concerted effort to reach agreement on the means whereby the River Murray Commission, in accordance with modern concepts of water management, can have a really effective role in the development and management of the River Murray.

CANBERRA. A.C.T