



PRIME MINISTER

2 June 1974
Press Statement No. 254

Public Comment by Public Servants,

The Prime Minister announced today that the Governor-General in Council had approved the repeal of Public Service Regulation 34(b) which has prohibited public comment by officers of the Australian Public Service on administrative matters. Mr Whitlam said the Government had asked the Public Service Board to issue guidelines to public servants explaining fully the effects of the repeal and outlining the new arrangements.

The Prime Minister said the policy of the Government and the Labor Party was that restrictions on freedom of expression of public servants and former public servants should be reduced to the minimum necessary for the conduct of affairs of state.

"The Government believes that public servants should have the maximum possible freedom to exercise the social and political rights enjoyed by other citizens" Mr Whitlam said. "This is a long-standing Government commitment in line with our promise to introduce a Freedom of Information Act for all Australians".

The repeal of Regulation 34(b) was in accordance with the views of the Public Service Board which had reviewed the Regulation after representations from the Council of Commonwealth Public Servants' Organisation.

Mr Whitlam added that the Council of Commonwealth Public Servants Organisations had been informed of the Government's decision. Mr Whitlam said that interested parties would be welcome to give their views on the question of public comment by public servants to the Commission of Enquiry into the Public Service which the Government has announced.

He said he had long felt that the blanket prohibition contained in Regulation 34(b) was wrong and futile, though he recognised that some restrictions were necessary. "I expect that the restrictions will be substantially reduced now that the Regulation has been repealed" Mr Whitlam said.