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PRIME MINISTER

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GRANTS TO SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY COUNCILS

Four Councils in the south western region of Sydney will receive special grants totalling \$837,000 under a historic Australian Government scheme.

They will benefit from the Government's decision to approve the first grants ever to be made to reduce inequalities between local government areas throughout Australia. For the first time since its creation in 1933, the Grants Commission has recommended grants for local government areas.

The Government, which last year empowered the Commission to recommend aid for local government areas in addition to claimant States, has approved the body's proposals.

The Commission, an independent and non-political body, recommended that \$837,000 be allocated to the Sydney south western region in 1974/75.

The four Councils in the region to benefit from the grants are:

Camden Municipal Council	\$79,000
Campbelltown City Council	\$235,000
Liverpool City Council	\$445,000
Wollondilly Shire Council	\$78,000

The grants will be paid to the Councils through the New South Wales Government. The Australian Government has accepted the Grants Commission recommendation that no conditions be attached to the way in which the councils spend their allocations in 1974/75.

The grants to the Sydney south western region are part of a total of \$56,345,000 to be made available to local government organisations throughout Australia in 1974/75.

Councils in New South Wales will receive \$21,359,000 of this amount.

This is the first time that New South Wales has received any funds as a result of Grants Commission recommendations.

The Commission was established in 1933 to provide recommendations for special grants to be paid to claimant States under Section 96 of the Constitution.

At various times in the past 41 years these States have included Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

The basis of making such grants has been the recognition that at various times some States have been less advantaged than others, both in terms of finance and services.

Because of its strong overall financial position compared to other States, New South Wales has never qualified for Grants Commission allocations.

It will now benefit as a result of the Grants Commission Act which was introduced by the Australian Government last year.

This empowered the Commission to examine not just inequalities between States but also inequalities that exist between regions in the one State.

This recognises that while a single State may be in a strong financial position overall, some areas within it may lack adequate services and facilities.

Local Councils in such areas may not have the financial resources to overcome those deficiencies and even the relevant State Government may not be able to provide adequate assistance.

It has become quite obvious that if the disabilities of some areas of Australia are to be overcome the national Government must provide special grants.

That is the principle which has guided the Grants Commission and the Government in their deliberations.

National Government assistance for Councils is long overdue in Australia. Neither the Australian nor State Governments in the past have been prepared to provide adequate assistance to enable local government to provide the many essential services which the community now demands of it.