



**PRIME MINISTER**

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 376

21 November, 1974

**BRISBANE FLOOD MITIGATION**

The Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, said today that flood mitigation works in Brisbane had been delayed by the Queensland Government's failure to co-operate with the Australian Government.

In a written reply to a question from Senator K. Martin (Queensland), Mr. Whitlam said: "As long ago as 23 March 1973 I emphasised that the provision of detailed information was essential to our decision.

"That information has still not been provided by the Queensland Government.

"As soon as explicit proposals are submitted by the Queensland Government the Australian Government will be in a position to take prompt decisions on a case by case basis."

Mr. Whitlam said he shared the concern felt by many members and senators at the long delay before mitigation works could be undertaken.

Mr. Whitlam said he first drew attention to the flood danger in Brisbane when speaking at a civic reception there on 23 March 1973.

At that time he stated: " Brisbane has a special problem with the flooding caused by cyclonic rains on the Breakfast, Enoggera, Oxley, and Norman Creeks and Kedron Brook and urban development in the flood plains of these waterways. This has been a matter of concern for the Brisbane City Council and the State Government.

" Sir Gordon Chalk, while Acting Premier, wrote to me in December 1972 and asked, among other matters, about assistance for the City Council for a flood mitigation scheme. He said the proposed scheme was under expert investigation and that when plans were completed it was intended to ask for Commonwealth financial assistance. I understand that the report arising from this investigation was completed in the last week or so.

"The Australian Government has not previously taken part in schemes of precisely this kind...

"Nevertheless, we shall look into the question of financial assistance. To do so, however, the Australian Government will need all relevant information, including the physical and economic facts, before a decision can be taken.

"My Government is therefore prepared to lend its expertise and resources to assist in a study of this matter. We shall be willing to participate at the official level in a joint working party with officials of the State and Brisbane City Council to examine the problem as a whole."

Mr. Whitlam said that on 16 November 1973 the Premier of Queensland asked the Australian Government to participate in the whole flood mitigation scheme for Brisbane on the basis that the Australian Government should contribute 40% of the cost, the Queensland Government 40% and the Brisbane City Council 20%. On 9 September 1974 he suggested that the Australian Government should meet the whole cost of the flood mitigation component of the proposed Wivenhoe Dam.

Mr. Whitlam said the Premier's requests for assistance had been closely considered by the Australian Government but they had been prevented from making any recommendations by the lack of information.

"Information as the type of works, their timing, costs, and likely benefits is essential to any financial decision by the Australian Government," he said.

"We have made repeated requests at official level to the Queensland Government to furnish firm works proposals on which we could base decisions.

"On 4 July, 1974 the Department of Urban and Regional Development put to Queensland officials a timetable which envisaged firm proposals being put to the Australian Government in October.

"A number of proposals have been received in the past few weeks but they constitute firm proposals in respect of Enoggera/Breakfast Creek only."

CANBERRA, A.C.T.