

PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH NOTES FOR MT. ISA

MT. ISA \*\*\* NOVEMBER 23

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1. THIS IS MY FIRST STAY AS PRIME MINISTER IN YOUR RICH AND REMARKABLE CITY. FEW CITIES COPE SO WELL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF ISOLATION. YOUR PROSPERITY IS GUARANTEED BY VAST NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE UNIQUE SPIRIT OF YOUR PEOPLE. AUSTRALIANS EVERYWHERE RESPECT THE VIGOR, THE FORTITUDE, THE STRONG COMMUNAL PRIDE FOR WHICH MT. ISA IS FAMOUS.

2. FROM THE BEGINNING MY GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN THE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA. WE CREATED A DEPARTMENT OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT HEADED BY MY COLLEAGUE REX PATTERSON. WE ESTABLISHED THE NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL. WE ARE UNDERTAKING A THOROUGH STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF THE NORTH-WEST OF QUEENSLAND STRETCHING FROM MOUNT ISA TO THE GULF OF CARPENTARIA A REGION WITH GREAT BEEF AND FISHERIES POTENTIAL AND RICH IN MINERALS INCLUDING LEAD, ZINC, COPPER, URANIUM AND PHOSPHATES. THE STUDY WILL HELP US INTEGRATE ALL INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION, RATIONALISE TRANSPORT COSTS AND CO-ORDINATE THE PROVISION OF POWER AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES.

3. THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR WATER RESOURCES IS ESSENTIAL TO THE FUTURE OF MT. ISA. WE HAVE RECOGNISED THAT NEED. ON 11 APRIL 1974 AN AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED BETWEEN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT FOR A LOAN UP TO \$2 MILLION TO COVER ADDITIONAL COSTS TO BUILD THE JULIUS DAM FOR THE MT. ISA WATER SUPPLY. THE AGREEMENT WAS IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST BY THE PREMIER TO THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT UNDER THE OLD NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

LEGISLATION AUTHORISING THE LOAN HAS BEEN PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

A FURTHER REQUEST FOR \$4.8 MILLION TO COVER THE MT. ISA CITY COUNCIL'S SHARE OF THE COST OF THE DAM IS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE SCREENING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL WATER PROGRAM. I KNOW OF YOUR DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THIS PROJECT. MR JACK SHEPHERD, THE LABOR CANDIDATE AND ALD. TONY McGRADY HAVE MADE STRONG REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE SCHEME. THE GOVERNMENT WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO SEE THAT DAM IS COMPLETED QUICKLY.

4. WE WANT TO ENSURE THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF MT. ISA'S MINERAL RESOURCES - COPPER, LEAD, ZINC AND PHOSPHATES. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THESE RESOURCES ARE EFFICIENTLY TRANSPORTED TO COASTAL PORTS, SMELTERS OR REFINERIES AND MY COLLEAGUE REX CONNOR IS CONSIDERING A PROPOSAL TO UPGRADE THE RAILWAY BETWEEN DUCHESS (70 MILES SOUTH OF MT. ISA) AND TOWNSVILLE. THE EXISTING LINE IS BEING USED TO CAPACITY AND IS SUBJECT TO FLOODING. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LINE SHOULD MAKE POSSIBLE A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN PHOSPHATE PRODUCTION. AT PRESENT AUSTRALIA IMPORTS 2.8 MILLION TONS OF PHOSPHATE A YEAR. THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES PHOSPHATES COULD BECOME ONE OF OUR MAJOR MINERAL EXPORTS, PERHAPS OUTSTRIPPING LEAD, COPPER AND ZINC. SUCH AN INDUSTRY WILL SUBSTANTIALLY ASSIST OUR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS. INCREASED PHOSPHATE SUPPLIES WILL ENABLE US TO BOOST PRODUCTION OF WHEAT AND OTHER GRAINS.

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5. TO FURTHER IMPROVE MT. ISA'S TRANSPORT LINKS, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL HELP BUILD THE LANDSBOROUGH HIGHWAY FROM MT. ISA TO BRISBANE AS A FULL-SCALE ALL WEATHER ROAD. THIS ROAD WILL BE PART OF OUR NATIONAL HIGHWAYS PROGRAM, FOR WHICH WE ARE PROVIDING \$1.126 MILLION TO THE STATES OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. MT. ISA WILL THUS BE LINKED EVENTUALLY BY FIRST-CLASS HIGHWAYS TO BRISBANE, SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE. NO STATE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ABLE TO BUILD THIS HIGHWAY SYSTEM DESPITE THE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS THEY HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR ROADS. MY GOVERNMENT WILL SEE THE JOB IS DONE. I KNOW PARTS OF THE EXISTING ROAD FROM MT. ISA TO BRISBANE ARE IN BAD REPAIR. AS FAR AS POSSIBLE WE WILL GIVE PRIORITY TO THESE SECTIONS.

WE WILL SPEND \$24 MILLION IN QUEENSLAND ON NORTHERN BEEF EXPORT ROADS OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT THE BJELKE-PETERSEN GOVERNMENT PROMISED IN 1972 TO MAKE ALL QUEENSLAND STATE HIGHWAYS FULL BITUMEN ROADS BY 1975. THIS WILL NOT BE DONE. THE BITUMEN SURFACE OF THE FLINDERS HIGHWAY FROM MT. ISA TO TOWNSVILLE NOW HAS A TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION IN 1976.

6. THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WANTS EVERY CITY AND REGION TO PROVIDE AMENITIES AND SERVICES TO ITS CITIZENS COMPARABLE WITH THE BEST IN AUSTRALIA. TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES BETWEEN REGIONS WE EMPOWERED THE GRANTS COMMISSION TO RECOMMEND GRANTS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES ON THE BASIS OF COMPARATIVE NEED. MT. ISA IS RECEIVING \$250,000 FROM THE GRANTS COMMISSION AND CLONCURRY \$86,000.

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7. THESE GRANTS ARE HEAVILY IN FAVOUR OF RURAL AREAS. BRISBANE HAS RECEIVED \$3.12 A HEAD FROM THE GRANTS COMMISSION GRANTS, WHILE RURAL AND PROVINCIAL CITIES AND COUNCILS ARE RECEIVING \$6.23 A HEAD. THIS GIVES THE LIE TO ANY CLAIM THAT WE ARE FAVORING URBAN AREAS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE COUNTRY DWELLER. WE ARE MAKING BIG GRANTS FOR SPORTING AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN QUEENSLAND CITIES. MT. ISA IS RECEIVING \$115,000 FOR A COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTRE. THIS IS EASILY THE BIGGEST SINGLE GRANT FOR A QUEENSLAND CITY FOR THIS PURPOSE. TOTAL SPORTING GRANTS TO QUEENSLAND AMOUNT TO \$536,200.

8. A REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY WILL BE OPENED AT MT. ISA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE - PROBABLY BEFORE 30 JUNE NEXT YEAR.

THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY, MR BILL HAYDEN, AND HIS DEPARTMENT ARE KEENLY AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES FACING RESIDENTS OF MT. ISA CLAIMING PENSIONS AND BENEFITS. A SOCIAL WORKER WILL BE INCLUDED AMONG THE STAFF OF THE MT. ISA OFFICE. THERE ARE 340 AGED PENSIONERS, 133 INVALID PENSIONERS, 123 WIDOW PENSIONERS, AND 3,929 FAMILIES RECEIVING CHILD ENDOWMENT PAYMENTS IN THE AREA.

9. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING AN APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR A 34-BED HOSTEL FOR THE CARE OF AGED PEOPLE IN MT. ISA. THE APPLICATION IS ON BEHALF OF THE MT. ISA MEMORIAL GARDEN SETTLEMENT FOR THE AGED. THE PROPOSAL TO ERECT THE GARDEN SETTLEMENT HAS BEEN HEAVILY SUPPORTED BY MT. ISA MINES AND THE UNIONS. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE PROJECT IS \$371,000. DISCUSSIONS ARE TAKING PLACE BETWEEN THE MEMORIAL GARDEN SETTLEMENT ORGANISATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY TO ARRANGE THE TRANSFER OF HOSTEL BED ENTITLEMENT FROM ANOTHER ORGANISATION TO ENABLE A GRANT TO BE MADE UNDER THE AGED PERSONS HOSTEL ACT WHEN THE RELEVANT LEGISLATION HAS BEEN PASSED.

ABOUT \$170,000 HAS BEEN RAISED FOR THE PROJECT IN THE MT. ISA AREA. THIS IS A TREMENDOUS EFFORT. MR HAYDEN HAS INSTRUCTED THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY TO GIVE THE FULLEST POSSIBLE SUPPORT TO THE PROJECT.

10. MY COLLEAGUE LIONEL MURPHY, THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY THAT ONE OF TWO NEW REGIONAL BRANCHES IN QUEENSLAND OF THE LEGAL AID SERVICE WILL BE AT MT. ISA.

11. ALTHOUGH RURAL ELECTRICITY COSTS IN QUEENSLAND ARE THE HIGHEST IN ALL THE EASTERN STATES, THE BJELKE-PETERSEN GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO CO-OPERATE WITH US IN SEEKING WAYS TO REDUCE THESE COSTS. HIGH ELECTRICITY COSTS HELP PUSH UP PRICES OVER A WIDE RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES. THE BJELKE-PETERSEN GOVERNMENT REFUSES TO USE ITS WIDE POWERS TO CONTROL PRICES AND RESISTED OUR ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN COMMONWEALTH POWER OVER PRICES BY REFERENDUM. THE PEOPLE OF MT. ISA VOTED YES IN THE PRICES REFERENDUM LAST YEAR. THE BJELKE-PETERSEN GOVERNMENT HAS IGNORED THEIR EXPRESSED WISH FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION TO RESTRAIN PRICES.

12. THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN OVERWHELMINGLY GENEROUS TO QUEENSLAND IN ITS FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS. QUEENSLAND HAS RECEIVED MORE FROM US THAN IT HAS RECEIVED FROM ANY PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT IN CANBERRA. OUR TOTAL PAYMENTS TO QUEENSLAND IN THE LAST FINANCIAL YEAR WERE \$739 MILLION - OR \$382 PER HEAD COMPARED WITH AVERAGE PAYMENTS TO ALL STATES OF \$345 PER HEAD.

13. I HAVE DRAWN ATTENTION TO MR BJELKE-PETERSEN'S OBSTINATE REFUSAL TO CO-OPERATE WITH US IN PROJECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUEENSLAND AND THE BENEFIT OF HER CITIZENS. HE HAS SPURNED OUR EFFORTS TO MAKE TOWNSVILLE A GROWTH CENTRE, HE HAS ~~SPURNED OUR OFFER OF FUNDS FOR LAND STABILISATION~~, HE HAS REFUSED TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS ON OUR OFFER OF FUNDS FOR ABORIGINAL ADVANCEMENT. MR BJELKE-PETERSEN HAS THROWN AWAY \$50 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDS FOR THIS STATE. HIS ATTITUDE IS AT ODDS WITH THAT OF ALL THE LIBERAL PREMIERS AND ON MANY ISSUES, SUCH AS ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS, WITH THE ATTITUDE OF A FORMER LIBERAL PRIME MINISTER, MR GORTON.

14. QUEENSLAND'S ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ARE FLAGRANTLY RIGGED AGAINST LABOR. IT IS NOT JUST BRISBANE VOTERS WHO ARE DISADVANTAGED BUT PEOPLE IN PROVINCIAL CITIES LIKE MT. ISA. HERE YOU HAVE 16,002 ELECTORS. THAT IS ALMOST EXACTLY THE SAME AS THE AVERAGE ENROLMENT IN BRISBANE SEATS (16,059). YOU HAVE CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF ELECTORS ENROLLED IN ALL PROVINCIAL CITY SEATS (15,510), MUCH MORE THAN THE AVERAGE IN THE COUNTRY ZONE (11,215), AND NEARLY TWICE THE AVERAGE NUMBER IN THE WESTERN AND FAR NORTHERN ZONE (8,782). MT. ISA PEOPLE ARE PRIME VICTIMS OF MR BJELKE-PETERSEN'S SCANDALOUS GERRYMANDERING.