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STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER
AT CAIRNS AND MAREEBA, QLD.
24 NOVEMBER, 1974

1. THERE ARE FEW CITIES WHICH I VISIT MORE OFTEN - WHETHER FOR BUSINESS OR PLEASURE - THAN CAIRNS. IN MAY I OPENED YOUR NEW CIVIC CENTRE AND CULTURAL COMPLEX - SYMBOLIC OF THE GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OF THIS CITY AND YOUR REGION. SINCE THEN WE HAVE DONE A GREAT DEAL MORE FOR THE WELFARE AND PROGRESS OF CAIRNS. WE HAVE MADE A GRANT OF \$18,750 TOWARDS YOUR BASKETBALL STADIUM AS PART OF MY GOVERNMENT'S DRIVE TO EXPAND SPORTING AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA. WE HAVE APPROVED THE FIRST DIRECT GRANTS EVER MADE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS BY AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. UNDER OUR PROPOSALS CAIRNS CITY COUNCIL IS RECEIVING \$176,000 AND MAREEBA IS RECEIVING \$180,000 ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE GRANTS COMMISSION. THESE GRANTS ARE GIVEN WITHOUT INTEREST; THEY NEED NOT BE REPAID. THERE ARE NO STRINGS ATTACHED. THEY CAN BE SPENT BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS THEY SEE FIT TO IMPROVE THE SERVICES AND AMENITIES AVAILABLE TO THE COMMUNITY.

2. IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE IN THIS CAMPAIGN TO BE SUPPORTING RAY JONES, THE MEMBER FOR CAIRNS, AND BILL WOOD, THE MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER. THEY WILL BE VALUABLE MEMBERS OF A NEW STATE GOVERNMENT LED BY MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE PERC TUCKER. AS SHADOW MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, RAY JONES WILL COOPERATE WITH MY GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLANS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL HIGHWAYS SYSTEM.

3. UNDER LABOR'S PROPOSALS A HIGH-GRADE ALL-WEATHER HIGHWAY WILL LINK CAIRNS WITH BRISBANE - AND EVENTUALLY WITH SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE. DESPITE OPPOSITION OBSTRUCTION WE HAVE PASSED THE NECESSARY LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE \$1,126 MILLION FOR OUR NATIONAL ROADS PROGRAM OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. WE ARE THE FIRST NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO UNDERTAKE THIS ESSENTIAL PROGRAM. NO STATE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD THE RESOURCES TO DO IT ALONE. NO PREVIOUS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CARED ENOUGH TO DO IT - EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD THE NECESSARY CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS. WE ARE USING THOSE POWERS. WE ARE GETTING ON WITH THE JOB.

4. WE WANT TO SEE CAIRNS PROPERLY SERVED BY SHIPS OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL LINE. MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN, ALONE AMONG THE PREMIERS, HAS PREVENTED A.N.L. SHIPS OPERATING BETWEEN PORTS WITHIN HIS OWN STATE. QUEENSLAND CITIES H'VE BEEN DENIED AN ESSENTIAL SHIPPING SERVICE SOLELY BECAUSE OF THE OBSTINACY AND PREJUDICE OF THE OUTGOING PREMIER. MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN'S ATTITUDE IS NOT SHARED BY THE AUTHORITIES IN CAIRNS. MR. BORZI, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CAIRNS HARBOUR BOARD, AND A FORMER STATE CANDIDATE OF THE NATIONAL PARTY (AS IT IS NOW CALLED) SAID IN HIS 1973-74 ANNUAL REPORT:

"THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL LINE'S WEEKLY CARGO SERVICES TO AND FROM THE SOUTH BROUGHT INCREASED TRADE AND REVENUE. UNFORTUNATELY THE BOARD'S SUPPORT OF MOVES TO HAVE A.N.L. GRANTED THE PRIVILEGE OF CONDUCTING AN INTRA-STATE CARGO SERVICE HAS NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL TO DATE."

EARLIER TODAY I WAS IN WEIPA, A CITY THAT HAS SUFFERED AS MUCH AS CAIRNS FROM MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN'S OBSTRUCTIONISM. WE HAVE SEEN THE FARCICAL SITUATION OF FOREIGN SHIPS CARRYING BAUXITE FROM WEIPA TO GLADSTONE BECAUSE A.N.L. SHIPS WERE PREVENTED FROM DOING THE JOB.

5. MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN HAS REFUSED TO COOPERATE WITH US IN OTHER PROJECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUEENSLAND AND THE BENEFIT OF HER CITIZENS. 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.
6. ALTHOUGH RURAL ELECTRICITY COSTS IN QUEENSLAND ARE THE HIGHEST IN ALL THE EASTERN STATES, THE BJELKE-PETERSEN GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO COOPERATE WITH US IN SEEKING WAYS TO REDUCE THESE COSTS. HIGH ELECTRICITY COSTS HELP BUMP 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.

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MR. LJELKE-PETERSEN HAS REFUSED TO COOPERATE IN OUR PLANS FOR A SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAM. I WROTE TO ALL THE PREMIERS ON 17 SEPTEMBER OFFERING A TOTAL GRANT TO ALL STATES OF \$2.5 MILLION FOR AN INTERIM PROGRAM FOR UP TO JUNE 1976. QUEENSLAND WAS OFFERED \$160,000 IN 1974-75 AND \$700,000 IN 1975-76 - THE HIGHEST AMOUNTS FOR ANY STATE. THE OUTGOING PREMIER HAS NOT YET TOLD US WHETHER HE WILL ACCEPT OUR OFFER. ALL OTHER STATES EXCEPT NEW SOUTH WALES HAVE ACCEPTED IT.

7. 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.

8. 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 CARPENTERIA. WE ARE SPENDING \$24 MILLION IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS ON EXPORT BEEF ROADS IN QUEENSLAND.

9. AS PART OF A RICH AND IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL REGION C IRNS AND MAREEBA HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RURAL POLICIES. IN OUR LAST BUDGET OUTLAYS ON RURAL ASSISTANCE TOTALLED \$488 MILLION. THERE WAS A NET INCREASE IN OUR PAYMENTS TO AGRICULTURE OF \$88 MILLION OVER THE BUDGET IN 1973-74. WE ARE SPENDING \$56 MILLION ON AN ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY - A PROJECT OF ENORMOUS LONG-TERM IMPORTANCE TO ALL LIVESTOCK INDUSTRIES.

10. WE HAVE OPENED UP NEW MARKETS FOR THE SUGAR INDUSTRY. WE ARE NEGOTIATING A LONG-TERM SUGAR CONTRACT WITH CHINA WORTH \$50 MILLION. MALAYSIA HAS ALSO SHOWN INTEREST IN LONG-TERM SUGAR SALES WORTH \$50 MILLION. WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK A NEW INTERNATIONAL SUGAR AGREEMENT TO BRING EFFECTIVE MARKET MANAGEMENT TO THE WORLD SUGAR TRADE.

WE HAVE RETAINED THE NITROGENOUS FERTILISER SUBSIDY, WORTH ABOUT \$13 MILLION A YEAR, TO ASSIST SPECIALISED REGIONAL GROWTH, TO ENSURE CONTINUED LOCAL PRODUCTION AND TO RETAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF SOIL FERTILITY.

11. WE ARE PARTICIPATING ON A DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR BASIS WITH QUEENSLAND IN A \$720,000 PROGRAM FOR LOCUST CONTROL IN QUEENSLAND.
12. THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY TO YOUR STATE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MAREEBA TO THAT INDUSTRY. THE AVERAGE MINIMUM RESERVE PRICE FOR LEAF SOLD AT AUCTION THIS YEAR WAS INCREASED BY 36 CENTS TO 288.4 CENTS A KILOGRAM. THE AVERAGE PRICE OBTAINED AT AUCTION IN MAREEBA THIS YEAR HAS BEEN 295.13 CENTS. THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER FURTHER PRICE REVIEWS DURING THE CURRENCY OF THE FIVE-YEAR TOBACCO STABILISATION PLAN WHICH BEGAN THIS YEAR.

THE MARKETING QUOTA FOR 1975 HAS BEEN SET AT 15,422,000 kg - THE SAME AS THIS YEAR.

13. UNDER THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WE HAVE SEEN THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT POST-WAR FALL FOR MANY YEARS IN THE INDEBTEDNESS OF RURAL PRODUCERS. IN 1971 THE BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS REPORTED THAT 7,570 AUSTRALIAN FARMERS APPLIED FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE RURAL RECONSTRUCTION BOARD. THIS YEAR THE FIGURE IS DOWN TO 523.

14. IN KEN WRIEDT, FARMERS HAVE THE ABLEST, BEST INFORMED, MOST ACTIVE AND INTELLIGENT MINISTER EVER APPOINTED TO ADMINISTER PRIMARY INDUSTRY. IN OUR RECENT GREEN PAPER ON RURAL INDUSTRY FARMERS HAVE THE BEST AND MOST COMPREHENSIVE BASIS FOR INFORMED GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON RURAL INDUSTRY EVER DRAWN UP IN AUSTRALIA. IN OUR INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE COMMISSION FARMERS HAVE THE MOST EXPERT AND EFFICIENT INSTRUMENT FOR GUARANTEEING THE STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF OUR RURAL INDUSTRIES EVER APPOINTED IN AUSTRALIA. ALL THESE THINGS PROVIDE FIRM GROUNDS FOR CONFIDENCE AND FAITH IN THE FUTURE.