



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 412

12 December 1974

WORKING PARTIES ON THE ECONOMY

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, said today the Australian Government has still not received assurances from all States that they would co-operate in implementing joint economic measures, particularly in relation to prices.

Mr Whitlam was commenting on a report that the South Australian Premier, Mr Dunstan, had claimed that the Australian Government had ignored offers by the States to hand over their powers on prices to the Prices Justification Tribunal.

Mr Whitlam also denied that there had been any breakdown on the Australian Government's part in implementing recommendations of joint Commonwealth/State working parties on prospective joint economic action.

He said only two State Governments - Tasmania and South Australia - had said they would co-operate fully with the Australian Government on strengthening the powers of the Prices Justification Tribunal.

He had written to the Premiers as long ago as 16 September. So far Queensland had not replied at all, Victoria had not yet indicated its attitude and New South Wales and Western Australia had said they wanted a special Premiers' Conference but did not say if they accepted the proposal.

Mr Whitlam said the Australian Government had dealt promptly with the report from working parties dealing with various aspects of inflation. The working parties were concerned with action to limit wage increases; the multiplicity of wage fixing tribunals; tax penalties on companies granting excessive wage increases; State legislation to support the jurisdiction of the Prices Justification Tribunal; Government tendering procedures; and on control of restrictive trade practices.

The working parties had been commissioned by the Premiers' Conference on 13 August.

The Australian Government was anxious to get State approval for the transfer of powers recommended by these groups of Australian and State Government officials, Mr. Whitlam said.

CANBERRA, A.C.T.