

83

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

5 APRIL 1975

11

GROWTH CENTRES IN QUEENSLAND

It is unfortunate for the people of Queensland, and particularly for those of Townsville who would be the first to benefit, that the Queensland Premier is more interested in making political points than in receiving financial assistance from the Australian Government.

His ill-informed comments on growth centres contrast starkly with the attitude of Liberal Premiers in New South Wales and Victoria who have welcomed the Australian Government's initiatives and cooperated with them.

The principles involved have been approved by the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and are in the process of being implemented in Albury/Wodonga, Bathurst/Orange, the South-West sector of Sydney and Monarto.

The basic principle agreed is that people should be able to build their homes on their own land and hold this land in freehold tenure for all time. The only condition that has been placed on residential freehold is that land owners should not be able to make private profit out of public decisions such as a change in land use zoning.

At no time has the Australian Government considered any proposal that all homes built in growth centres should be for rental. In all growth centres supported by the Australian Government people will have full opportunity to buy houses of their own choice.

The Australian Government and all State Governments with whom agreements have been negotiated want to see viable growth centres that do not have to rely for their establishment and continued growth on subsidies. The objective of the Australian Government has been to provide special financial support in the early stages of growth and provide, where necessary, facilities in advance of the normal time by which they would be needed. For all revenue producing investment a basic principle of repayable loans has been established. For the growth centres agreed with State Governments, long term loans are being provided at the long term loan rate with initial grace periods. But agreements have been reached with State Governments on the provision of non-repayable grants for certain purposes. For example, in the case of sewerage backlog the assistance provided by the Australian Government has been one-third grant and the remainder long-term loans. Grants on a two for one matching basis are being made available for the purchase of non-urban land. Assistance will also be provided for projects to a standard higher than they would have been provided for an equivalent population in other areas in a State. The aim is to develop attractive well-planned growth centres.

A detailed evaluation of proposals for international airport facilities at Townsville is being undertaken currently by the Bureau of Transport Economics. A report is expected to be available at the end of next month. It is important, of course, that any major proposals such as this for Townsville be effectively integrated with other major projects and programs to cater for future growth.

Accelerated growth in Townsville could be successfully achieved if an agreement were reached between the Australian Government and the State Government on the basic objectives of a program and the basic principles to underly that program. The Australian Government wants to see a more rational distribution of population, improved access of people to the range of specialised services which can only be made available in large centres and the access of people to cheap developed land.

The Australian Government has promised to help promote that growth. Its programs however need the cooperation of the Queensland Government if they are to be fully realised.

Townsville, Qld.
April 5, 1975