



PRIME MINISTER

Press Release for Queensland
24 May 1975

EMPLOYMENT IN QUEENSLAND

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, predicted today that the employment situation in Queensland would soon improve. He said traditionally, Queensland had higher unemployment than other States, but the present rate was unacceptably severe.

He said legislation introduced last Wednesday would enable Queensland beef producers to obtain carry-on finance at 3½ per cent interest.

The Australian Government would make available \$10 million for this purpose in Queensland, matching the State Government's contribution.

Mr Whitlam said the re-opening of the market for beef in Japan was another reason for greater confidence. Employment activity in the beef industry would accelerate as the Japanese market expanded.

He said the sugar industry had enjoyed a record-breaking year and this would improve the economic climate in many areas of Queensland, producing more jobs.

The Prime Minister said that while unemployment remained at its present level there would be no cut-backs in relief funds provided by the Australian Government to Queensland. He said Queensland had received more money from the RED scheme than any other State but N.S.W.

The Australian Government had provided \$29.5 million for 955 projects in Queensland. Total cost of the project was \$33.5 million and 9,893 unemployed workers had found jobs under the scheme.

Mr Whitlam said he was concerned by reports of anomalies and inefficiency in the RED scheme. He said it was up to local authorities and other sponsors to ensure the proposals they submitted were sensible and useful projects. The Australian Government did not plan individual projects but only approved those submitted to it by the local sponsors.

Money was allocated to areas with the highest unemployment. It was disturbing that the State Government's own unemployment relief scheme was discriminating against these areas because they were receiving RED grants.

Mr Whitlam also appealed to the State Government to maintain its own employment levels. He said there should be no basis for talk of lay offs from State Government departments.

The State Treasurer Sir Gordon Chalk had made a most thorough assessment of Queensland's needs prior to the Premiers Conference on 14 February. The Queensland Government had received \$47.5 million - all it asked for, and more - specifically to maintain its own employment levels, and re-employ people who had been laid off.

If lay-offs were now being predicted again it meant either that Sir Gordon Chalk had miscalculated his needs or that the funds had been used inefficiently.

BRISBANE.