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PRIME MINISTER

Press Statement No. 521

20 June 1975

TRANSFER OF TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS TO AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

(Joint statement by the Prime Minister the Honourable E.G. Whitlam, Q.C. , M.P., and the Premier of Tasmania, the Honourable W.A. Neilson, M.H.A.)

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam and the Tasmanian Premier Mr Neilson announced today that they had signed a certificate required to bring into force the transfer of the Tasmanian Railways to the Australian Government on 1 July 1975.

"The transfer of the Tasmanian Railways represents the first step in the achievement of a truly national railway system", the Prime Minister and Premier said.

"In 1972 the Australian Government offered to accept responsibility for State Railway systems which represent a major problem to all State budgets. The agreement reached on the transfer of the Tasmanian Railways will confer major benefits to Tasmania", the Prime Minister and Premier said.

"Apart from the obvious benefits to the Tasmanian budgetary situation the arrangements entered into also provide for the Railway system to be rehabilitated. A program of railway upgrading will be undertaken to ensure that the railways play their proper role in providing efficient transport in Tasmania."

"The arrangements provide for Tasmania to receive \$5 million this financial year as a first contribution in consideration for land, minerals and other assets. An amount of #3.3 million is to be added to the "base" level of financial assistance for future years. In addition, the State will be relieved of capital debts standing against the railways, as agreed between the Australian and Tasmanian Governments."

"The transfer of the Tasmanian railways will not only benefit Tasmanians but Australia as a whole for it will enable greater co-ordination of transport particularly sea and rail and make more economic use of Australia's transport resources."

The Prime Minister and Premier concluded by saying that it was intended that the Regional office of ANR in Tasmania will be located in Launceston, the major centre of the State's railway operations.

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(Photograph available)