



## PRIME MINISTER

Press Statement No.555  
11 September 1975

### BH SOUTH LIMITED PHOSPHATE DEPOSITS AT DUCHESS, QUEENSLAND

The Prime Minister, Mr E.G. Whitlam, announced tonight that in response to a request by BH South Limited the Government had agreed to allow the Company to export rock phosphate from its deposits at Duchess in Queensland. Initially exports would be up to two million tonnes per annum over the next ten years.

In order to develop these deposits which were of national importance, the Company needed to secure long term export markets as there was no immediate local market for its product. There was a proven 2,000 million tonnes in the deposits held by BH South Limited.

Before making its decision the Government gave consideration to the needs of the Australian fertilizer industry for supplies of phosphate rock from the Duchess deposits. The approval to export was given subject to the Company's undertaking to give priority to making up shortfalls in supplies for the local market if that situation should arise in the future. The Company would also be expected to meet the requirements of the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act. Environmental impact statements on the project would be made available for public comment.

The Australian and Queensland Governments were currently undertaking a major developmental study of north-west Queensland and it was expected that the region's huge phosphate deposits would provide an important cornerstone in this development. The export approval could help BH South to establish itself on a commercial basis in the region and take the first steps towards the large scale development of its deposits.

The development of the Duchess deposits would bring early benefits to Queensland. The project would provide employment opportunities at Duchess and there would be employment and revenue gains for the Queensland railways and the port of Townsville.

The Prime Minister said that BH South expected to achieve a level of production of one million tonnes during 1976/77 and two million tonnes by 1977/78. The capital investment that was required to achieve this level of production would exceed \$80 million, and expenditure at this level would give a useful stimulus to various Australian manufacturing industries.

Several Asian countries have expressed considerable interest in securing supplies of phosphate rock from the Queensland deposits. The Prime Minister said it was necessary that these countries have some assurance of supplies of phosphate rock for the development of their fertilizer industries. The Queensland deposits were so large that these exports would not prejudice any future plans for treatment of the rock locally.

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