



PRIME MINISTER

Press Statement No.571
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HIGH COURT JUDGEMENTS

This morning the High Court delivered judgements on a Queensland Act of Parliament and three Australian Acts of Parliament. It declared that the Act of the Queensland Parliament was not valid and the Acts of the Australian Parliament were valid.

The significance of the judgement on the first of the Australian Acts of Parliament is that it confirms that the people of the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory can elect two Senators to represent them and vote for them. Those Senators will be elected on the first occasion that there is a general election for the Federal Parliament, whether it is an election for half the Senate or whether it is an election for the House of Representatives. If it is an election for half the Senate, they will take office from the day that the poll is declared. And, incidentally, the successors to Senator Bunton and Senator Field would take office, not from the 1st of July next from but the day the poll was declared.

The significance of the judgement on the other federal Acts, concerns the principle of one vote, one value. There have been suggestions that the Australian Government should not have sought to distribute the States on this basis of one vote, one value, because these Acts were under challenge in the High Court. The High Court has now said that these Acts were valid. Accordingly the distribution of the States on the principle of one vote, one value, should go ahead.

There have been some ironies in the question of representation of the Territories in the Senate, in that when these Bills were first debated two and a half years ago, the Liberals opposed them but the Country Party in the House of Representatives supported them. In the Senate the Liberal Senators and the Country Party Senators all opposed them. On the two subsequent occasions when the Bill for Territory Representation in the Senate was passed by the House of Representatives the Opposition didn't record votes against it, but in the Senate on those two further occasions every Liberal and Country Party Senator opposed the Bill. At the joint sitting the Liberal and Country Parties opposed the Bill. There is obviously a difference of opinion in the Country Party on this question. The Bill was challenged by the Queensland Premier, a member of the Country Party, in the High Court although supported by members of the Country Party in the House of Representatives

on the only occasion when a vote was taken in the House of Representatives. The Country Party Premier of Queensland sought to deny the right of the Country Party to have a vote for the Country Party Member for the House of Representatives for the Northern Territory or to have a senator for the Northern Territory at all.

The Liberal governments of New South Wales and Victoria supported the Queensland government in its challenges to the one vote, one value bills which were first introduced in March 1973.

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