

PRIME MINISTER

75/14

FOR PRESS

18th NOVEMBER 1975

STATEHOOD FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Liberal and National Country Parties Government will take steps after December 13 to bring the Northern Territory to Statehood .

Our aim is that the Territory should achieve full Statehood over the next 5 years.

As a first step and in co-operation with the Territorial Assembly we would begin the immediate implementation of recommendations by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the transfer of powers to the Northern Territory. This report has been ignored for 12 months by the Whitlam administration.

Our aim is the maximum degree of autonomy for the Northern Territory in the shortest possible time.

During the 23 years of Liberal National Country Party Government up until 1972, the Northern Territory prospered and Darwin grew from a city of 8,000 to a city of 48,000.

During the past three years there has been stagnation. As a first step towards progress we will begin the implementation of the recommendations which the Joint Parliamentary Committee made in November last year.

This Committee recommended that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly should acquire executive responsibility for a large number of Northern Territory Statutory authorities.

Among the responsibilities which the Joint Parliamentary Committee said could be taken over immediately were such bodies as the Housing Commission and the Tourist Board, museums and art galleries and the public service.

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The Committee also recommended the transfer from Canberra to Darwin of such State functions as collecting payroll tax and other local taxes agricultural services local transport and local government, sewerage and electricity, liquor licensing and gaming laws.

It also recommended as a first stage that powers be shared between the Territory and the National Government in the fields of Education, Health, the Courts, Rural and Urban Land, Urban Development and Ports and Roads.

We will set up a Joint Federal and Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Committee to work on arrangements for the transition to Statehood.

This Committee would set about implementing the Parliamentary Committees other recommendations on the transfer of responsibilities

It would recommend solutions to problems as they arise.

During the transfer, the status and opportunity of the public service will be preserved. There will be full and proper revenue equilisation arrangements to enable the territory to develop as it once was able to.

The aim is the maximum degree of autonomy and control in the shortest possible time.

The Liberal and National Country Party Government after December 13 will also adopt and implement two reports by the Industries Assistance Commission on the Beef Industry.

The first of the IAC Reports make provision for emergency aid to the industry by suspending the export levy on beef of 1.6 cents per pound and by providing funds for special assistance for producers who have been hit by the fall in beef prices.

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The second IAC recommendation is that producers should be compensated when their cattle show positive reactions to tests under the tuberculosis and brucellosis eradication programs.

Beef producers in the Territory and throughout Australia have suffered severely during the uncertainty produced by the Labor administration during the past three years.

The past Government has pursued a hard line resources policy abroad which has rebounded on Australian producers.

This week the U.S. Authorities closed their market to further meat exports for the remainder of the year.

Immediately after December 13 we will initiate Government to Government discussion to ensure past misunderstandings are resolved.

We will recreate the circumstances in which mining ventures can operate.

Overseas Investment will be welcomed in partnership with Australian investors.

We are going to get Australia moving.

The Mining Industry which means so much to the Northern Territory will be part of that.

There has not been a single major mineral development project started in the past three years.

What has happened to mining industry demonstrates Labor's failure and incompetence as much as anything else.

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