

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY GROUP ON THE SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

On 9 February I announced that Dr J.A.L. Matheson, the Chairman of the Interim Australian Science and Technology Council had been asked to form a small Advisory Group to advise me on the role of a continuing science and technology council, its terms of reference and of other matters concerning its operation.

The Advisory Group reported to me on 24 March. It recommends an interim and short term course of action, bringing the Advisory Group into the Interim Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTECC), which would continue with changed membership and functions. The first task of the Council will be the preparation, by the end of 1976, of a definitive report to assist the Government in its decisions on the long-term future of ASTECC. In this task, the Council will consult with interested parties, including Government Departments and Agencies. The Permanent Heads of Departments and Agencies with a significant research and development budget will be able to participate in the discussions of the Council to foster mutual understanding. The Council will also consult with universities, academies and other relevant bodies. In recognition of its short-term nature the terms of office for members of the reconstituted Council will be for one year only.

The Advisory Group also recommends that the Council should be independent of any Department or Ministry having a significant concern with scientific and technological resource and development. This is consistent with my statement of 8 December 1975 that, as the problems of science involve all areas of Government and are of the highest importance to Australia, ASTECC will report directly to the Prime Minister who will report to Parliament. I have therefore confirmed that the Council should report directly to me and decided that its secretariat should be located for the time being within my Department.

The membership of the reconstituted Council will be announced as soon as those approached have indicated their willingness to serve.

I wish to place on record my appreciation of the work of the Advisory Group and the speed with which they made their report.

29 April 1976