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PRIME MINISTERCO-ORDINATION IN WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

The Prime Minister announced today that he is proposing to establish formal machinery for the co-ordination of Federal Government activity in women's affairs.

Earlier this year he wrote to the Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs; Education; Environment, Housing and Community Development; Health; Social Security and the Attorney-General asking that they consider setting up units within their Departments to give proper consideration to women's issues. More recently he has written in the same vein to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

Several Ministers have now followed up the Prime Minister's suggestion, in keeping with the Government's policy that the special concerns of women - equality of opportunity, freedom from discrimination, equal status in society - should be stressed within the framework of individual policy areas.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the units could be comprised of existing Departmental officers.

With the generally favourable response, the Prime Minister considers it timely to initiate more formal consultations between interested Departments, and is moving towards the establishment of an interdepartmental working group on women's affairs.

It is expected that participating Departments and authorities will include those with well-established units as well as those who are now in the process of setting units up. Departments with special functions relating to women's affairs would also be involved.

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I will also shortly be making a further announcement about consultations that will be proposed with a wide range of women's groups throughout Australia with the objective of establishing a Womens Advisory Committee.

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