



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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### THE 1977 REFERENDUM

I would like to thank the people of Australia for their support. There has been a strong 'yes' vote nationally for all four proposals and it is clear that three of the questions have been carried in four or more States.

Although it will be some time before we have a final result it now seems unlikely that the question on simultaneous elections will have the requisite majority of four States, despite the fact that a majority of Australians have registered their support for it. In New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, every electorate voted 'yes' on all four questions, and there was substantial support in the other States.

In the 77 years of Federation a total of 36 questions have been put at referendums on 16 different occasions. Until now, the the total of Constitutional changes approved at these referendums was only five.

As a result of yesterday's vote the total now rises to at least eight. Yesterday's result certainly vindicates the great effort that went into the Hobart Constitutional Convention last year and into the 'yes' campaign the past two weeks.

I regret that a misleading campaign was mounted against the simultaneous election proposal. It will be sometime before we know how effective those deceptions were.

I am particularly gratified that the proposal for filling casual vacancies has been accepted. This is perhaps the most important of the four questions. Its passage will put a halt to the manipulation which the Labor administration attempted in 1974. It means the right of the people to have their choice preserved has been protected, in relation to both State and Federal Government. The proposal made great sense and I notice it won overwhelming support.

Justice has now been done in respect of the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory. Residents of those Territories will have the same rights to vote in any future referendums as their fellow Australians.

Also as a result of this referendum a retiring age will be put for appointments to the High Court.

Again, I would like to thank the people of Australia for their support.

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