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PRIME MINISTERFOR PRESS27. JULY 1977MESSAGE TO MR. WRAN

The Prime Minister has sent the following messages today to State Premiers. The first message was sent to Mr. Wran and the following messages to the other Premiers.

My dear Premier,

I refer to your telex letter of 24 July advising that your Government is considering the appointment of a Royal Commission on Drugs and seeking Commonwealth co-operation.

May I emphasise at the outset that my Government is deeply concerned about the sources and illegal use of and the trafficking in drugs in Australia. It would seem from your letter that although the inquiry you are considering would relate to these matters in New South Wales, it would inevitably raise questions of national significance including the importation of drugs, their distribution in Australia, their effects on communities and individuals, and the measures for control and prevention which should be adopted.

My Government is of the view that because of the national issues involved it would be more appropriate that a form of national inquiry be held rather than one confined to the limits of a particular State.

I would propose therefore that the Commonwealth and State Attorneys-General should meet urgently to consider the terms of reference that might be adopted for the purposes of a national inquiry and the procedures which would be appropriate having regard to the interests and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the States.

I am writing to other State Premiers proposing that all the States and the Commonwealth join in establishing an inquiry into drugs on a national basis. On receipt of their replies I will communicate with you again.

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At the same time my Government would not wish this inquiry to impede in any way the investigations by your Police into the disappearance of Mr. McKay at Griffith and quite clearly these investigations should proceed ahead of any national inquiry of the nature we suggest.

May I emphasise that the Commonwealth is prepared within the limits of its resources to assist your Police in these investigations.

My dear Premier,

You will be aware that recently questions concerning the sources, illegal use of and trafficking in drugs have arisen in relation to the disappearance of a Mr. McKay at Griffith in New South Wales.

Following his disappearance demands were made for the setting up of a Royal Commission in that State, and the Premier, Mr. Wran, has indicated that he is considering such a Commission.

Mr. Wran has written to me informing me of this and seeking Commonwealth co-operation. This inquiry would be confined to New South Wales but it seems to my Government that such an inquiry would inevitably raise issues of national importance including the importation of drugs, their distribution in Australia, their effects on communities and individuals, and the measures for control and prevention which should be adopted.

Needless to say, my Government is greatly concerned about these matters and has come to the conclusion that it would be preferable that a form of national inquiry should be established in relation to this. I have today written to Mr. Wran suggesting this course.

My Government proposes that the Attorneys-General of the Commonwealth and the States should meet as soon as practicable to formulate terms of reference for such an inquiry and determine the appropriate procedures.

I am writing to seek your urgent response whether your Government would be prepared to co-operate in the manner I have suggested. If you agree, my Attorney-General will arrange an early meeting with your and other State Attorneys-General for the purposes I have outlined.
