



## PRIME MINISTER

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### IMPROVED COMMUNITY INTERPRETER SERVICES

The Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Malcolm Fraser, said today that the Government had considered the report of an interdepartmental working party on interpreters and translators which was tabled in Parliament on 22 February 1977. The Government has decided to provide an additional amount of \$200,000 in 1977-78, in order that further services may be provided in this area.

"The provision of these additional funds is evidence of my Government's concern for the many migrants from non-English speaking countries who experience difficulties because of an inadequate knowledge of the English language", Mr Fraser said.

The Telephone Interpreter Service, now operating successfully in all mainland capitals, will be progressively introduced in other centres, commencing with Wollongong this financial year.

A matter of particular concern is the need to improve arrangements and facilities within Commonwealth departments to assist in overcoming communication barriers with government clients. Measures to be progressively introduced in Commonwealth departments include the identification of jobs requiring bilingual staff, keeping records of the language skills of departmental staff and the display of multi-lingual signs in all public contact offices.

The Government will also be taking action to:

- . investigate the language needs of Aboriginals; and
- . examine ways in which services may be provided through voluntary and ethnic organisations.

On tabling the report in Parliament, the Prime Minister said that he had sent copies to the State Premiers and invited their comments. Mr Fraser said he has written again to the Premiers to establish joint Commonwealth/State Working Committees. When established these Committees will provide a means of identifying local needs and coordinating the activities of the various agencies involved in the provision of interpreting and translating services.

The Prime Minister emphasised that the Government was concerned to improve interpreting and translating provisions to the extent permitted by available resources. It was also necessary in a period of financial restraint that action be taken to ensure that any assistance provided was made available first to those most in need. This was particularly relevant in the provision of community interpreters at Government expense.