



EMBARGO: 3.00 p.m.

PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSFERS TO CANBERRA

The Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, announced today that the Commonwealth Government intended transferring approximately 500 Public Service and Defence Service positions from Melbourne to Canberra in 1978/79, and transferring further contingents totalling about 500 positions in the two subsequent years. In addition, the Government has approved the permanent location in Canberra of the Human Rights Commission, the Commonwealth Legal Aid Commission, and the Institute of Criminology, which together would have an establishment of over 100 positions. The units to be transferred from Melbourne in 1978/79 are:

Department of Defence	195 positions
Department of Transport	164 positions
Department of Employment and Industrial Relations	50 positions
Department of Construction	75 positions

Further staff of the Departments of Construction and Transport will be transferred to Canberra during 1979/80 and the remainder of the Department of Construction transfers will be effected during 1980/81.

"These transfers will continue the process of consolidation in Canberra of policy advising and related support Central Office staff of Commonwealth departments which I referred to in December last year when announcing the 1977/78 transfer programme.

The Government believes that the efficiency of its administration and the standard and responsiveness of advice it receives, will be enhanced by these moves. It is essential for the Ministry to have ready access and effective communication with its policy advisers", Mr Fraser said.

The Prime Minister also noted that the transfer would assist the Government's aim of restraining government expenditure by producing long term savings in communication and travel costs.

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"The transfer decisions have not been taken lightly", the Prime Minister said. "The Government is very conscious of the impact such decisions have on the affected officers and their families. In accord with past practice, it is intended that conditions of employment, timing and other aspects of implementation of the transfers will be the subject of consultation between departmental management and the Peak Councils within the framework of the Canberra Relocation Coordinating Committee chaired by the Public Service Board. As in the past, those public servants whose positions are subject to compulsory transfer will receive at least twelve months notice of this".

He added that consultations on the Government's intentions had been sought with Peak Councils on a confidential basis prior to the announcement of final Government decisions. The Peak Councils had, however, declined to enter into such consultations on this basis. However, full opportunity would still be available to the Peak Councils to consult on implementation of the transfers as indicated above.

The Prime Minister noted that the transfers would have a major beneficial effect on the service industries in Canberra. Canberra's role as the National Capital would be strengthened by these decisions.
