

**PRIME MINISTER**FOR PRESS4 DECEMBER 1977DROUGHT RELIEF - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Commonwealth Government today agreed to a request from the Premier of Western Australia to support an increase to \$40,000 in the maximum limit for concessional loans to primary producers for carry-on and restocking purposes in drought declared areas.

This assistance is being provided under the Natural Disaster Assistance Arrangements agreed between the Commonwealth and the States.

The Commonwealth has already agreed to support various drought relief measures in Western Australia including freight subsidies for the carriage of fodder, stock and water, a cattle slaughter compensation scheme, and assistance to local and semi-government authorities to slaughter and dispose of helpless and unsaleable stock.

Similar drought relief measures have been supported in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.

All producers affected will be eligible for this assistance and the Commonwealth will meet the cost of all expenditure in Western Australia above \$1.5 million in 1977-78.

The Commonwealth sympathises with the plight of the many producers affected by the drought.

Mr. Fraser said "When natural disasters such as drought occur in a State, the Commonwealth stands ready to assist the State financially under the Natural Disaster Assistance Arrangements. The present assistance being given to New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, are examples of the way in which the Commonwealth helps the States in such emergencies."