



5

MR. CEEB

**PRIME MINISTER**FOR MEDIA5 MAY 1979JOINT TASK FORCE ON DRUG TRAFFICKING

The Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Fraser, and the Premier of New South Wales, Mr Wran, today jointly announced the establishment of a Commonwealth/State Task Force aimed at securing convictions of persons engaged in drug trafficking.

The two leaders said that the establishment of the Task Force flowed from the joint recommendations of the Commonwealth and New South Wales Royal Commissioners on Drugs, Mr Justice Williams and Mr Justice Woodward. They praised the co-operative attitude which had been adopted by the judges.

"Through their inquiries the two Royal Commissions have probed into many areas associated with the drug problem and have been able to identify possible leads to people involved in drug trafficking", Mr Fraser and Mr Wran said. "It is now the hope of both our governments that the Task Force will follow these leads and bring offenders before the Courts, and that convictions will follow".

The Task Force represents a unique exercise in Commonwealth/State co-operations between law enforcement agencies. It will involve elements of the New South Wales Police, the Commonwealth Police, and the Federal Narcotics Bureau and will operate independently of other law enforcement agencies in the pursuit of particular targets.

The exercise, if successful, may lead to similar operations in other States and Territories.

The Task Force will act on advice obtained from the Royal Commissions and from all relevant Commonwealth and State agencies. In particular, the law enforcement agencies of the Commonwealth and the State will supply all intelligence available to them relating to the targets of the Joint Force.

In accordance with the co-operative nature of the arrangements, the Commonwealth will provide accommodation for the Task Force and expenditure other than the salaries of the officers involved will be shared equally by the Commonwealth and the State.

.../2

"The co-operative effort of the two Governments in setting up the Task Force clearly demonstrates their concern at the extent of illegal drug trafficking in this country, and the formation of the Joint Force is a positive step towards more effective investigation and suppression of drug offences", the two leaders said. "To say this is not to overlook the significant contribution already made by the State and Commonwealth law enforcement agencies in combating the illegal drug trade, but rather to add a new dimension to the fight against the despicable trafficking that endangers the lives of so many Australians, particularly the young", said Mr Fraser and Mr Wran.

"The existence of this new Force, and the heavy penalties now available to the courts for those convicted of drug offences, should act as a clear disincentive to those thinking of engaging in this most insidious and destructive of crimes."