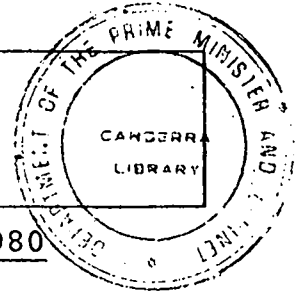




PRIME MINISTER



FOR MEDIA

TUESDAY, 25 MARCH, 1980

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE PROJECTS

The Prime Minister has written to Sir Charles Court outlining details of the proposed upgrading of defence installations in Western Australia, and thanking him for his assurances of co-operation in the development of Australia's defence capacity.

The projects are:

- . Develop HMAS Stirling for base porting by 1982 and home porting by 1986 at an estimated cost of \$26 million;
- . Develop the existing airfield at Learmonth with an expected operational readiness in 1982 at an estimated cost of \$3 million;
- . Develop a new airfield at Derby with an expected operational readiness in 1984 at an estimated cost of \$47 million;
- . Develop an amphibious training area with an expected operational readiness in 1981/82 at an estimated cost of \$2 million;
- . Develop Army stores facilities at Guildford with an expected completion in 1985/86 at an estimated cost of \$3 million.

During discussions in the United States the Government expressed a willingness to make Australian bases and facilities available to assist the United States in deterring the expansion of Soviet influence in the Indian Ocean.

The question of home porting or base porting in Western Australia of elements of the United States Navy was among the questions discussed. The United States is considering this option.

If the United States accepts the Australian offer there will be a need for considerable investment in Western Australia on the part of both the Australian Government and the United States.

There would be much detail that would need examination and consultation between the United States and Australia. Western Australia would of course be fully consulted.

Western Australia's capacity for engineering and technical back-up will be taken fully into account in the Government's planning for defence activity and development in Western Australia.

In particular, the increase in the level of operations out of HMAS Stirling will add substantially to the nature and level of demand for technical capacity in Western Australia.

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