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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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NATIONAL MARINE SCIENCE CENTRE FOR TASMANIA

The Commonwealth Government is to establish a Marine Science Centre at a cost of about \$25 million including \$9 million for a research vessel.

The decision follows a special examination by the Callaghan Task Force.

The move involves:

- . transfer of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Division of Fisheries and Oceanography at present headquartered at Cronulla (NSW) where it occupies land on lease from the State;
- . acquisition of a suitable site in Hobart and construction of the CSIRO Marine Science Laboratories;
- . construction of a multi-purpose oceanographic research vessel able to range around the Australian continent.

The Centre is scheduled to be fully operational within the next five to seven years, with initial funds being committed next financial year.

This is in line with already-announced Government initiatives to strengthen Commonwealth support for the fishing industry and to upgrade oceanographic research following the declaration of the 200 mile zone.

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The Marine Science Centre together with the transfer of the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science and the Environment will constitute in Tasmania a research establishment of international standing. As well as the purchase of a site, and the construction of laboratories, it will involve the transfer to Tasmania of 170 positions, with a significant effect on the employment opportunities for the Tasmanian economy.

The decision marks another step in the progress that has been made in Commonwealth assistance to Tasmania through the Callaghan Task Force.

The enquiry into the structure of industry and the employment situation in Tasmania was set up under Sir Bede Callaghan because of the Government's concern for Tasmania's special problems and because of the Government's commitment to meet these problems.

The decision to choose Tasmania as the base from which to undertake enhanced research activity in marine science - work of national significance - is well-founded.

The existing Cronulla site is inadequate, is 24 kilometres from a deep-water berth, and is held on lease due to expire in 2001.

The Government drew on many expert sources in determining the site for the Centre including:

- . the review of physical oceanography in Australia conducted by Professor H. Charnock, FRS, of the University of Southampton (UK);
- . the report to me by the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC) on marine sciences and technologies in Australia; and

the Independent Inquiry into the CSIRO chaired by Professor A.J. Birch.

As well, the CSIRO Ocean Sciences Review Committee recommended to the Executive that the present Division of Fisheries and Oceanography be divided into two distinct research groups.

One group would be involved in physical, chemical and biological oceanography, and ocean production programs. The other would become a fisheries research group examining aspects such as living resources, coastal ecology and physiological ecology.

The CSIRO will implement these new research directions progressively as the Marine Science Centre comes into operation.

The new Centre will also enhance co-operation between the CSIRO and the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science and the Environment, as well as collaborative research with the University of Tasmania.

The CSIRO's other marine science research laboratories at Marmion near Perth and Cleveland near Brisbane will continue to operate.

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