



PRIME MINISTER



FOR MEDIA

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THE AUSTRALIA CENTRE IN NEW YORK .

The Prime Minister, The Rt Hon. Malcolm Fraser, announced today that the Australian Government will establish an Australian Centre in New York.

The Centre will be located in a prestige highrise building now under construction at the corner of Third Avenue and 48th Street, Manhattan.

It will accommodate both the Australian Consulate-General in New York and the Australian Mission to the United Nations which at present are situated in separate locations in the city. The Prime Minister said that agreement in principle on this has now been reached and letters of intent exchanged between the Government, represented by the Australian Consul-General in New York, Sir Robert Cotton, and Mr Robert Kaufman, the principal of the building's owners, The William Kaufman Organisation Ltd of New York.

The William Kaufman Organisation Ltd is one of New York city's major builders. It currently own and operates nine highrise office buildings in the city, four of which are on Third Avenue.

The agreement followed many months of negotiations by Sir Robert on behalf of the Australian Government. The Secretary of the Department of Administrative Services, Mr Peter Lawler, and the Assistant Secretary of the Department's Overseas Branch, Mr A.A. Hillier, visited New York last April to take part in the negotiations.

Mr Fraser said the decision to lease part of the Third Avenue - 48th Street building followed detailed examination of several other options. The site chosen offered many attractions and advantages for Australia, he said. The leasing agreement signed would guarantee Australian Government representatives occupancy rights for up to 80 years.

"This building will provide a unique opportunity to focus Australian representation in one of the world's largest cities and most important financial centres, and demonstrates Australia's faith in its long-term relations with the United States", Mr Fraser said.

"It will enable the Australian presence to be seen 'on the street' and to be visibly identified with all of the many activities in which Australia is involved in the United States.

"For these reasons we proposed, and the building's owners agreed, that the building should be named "The Australia Centre".

Mr Fraser said the building would be 40 storeys high, with Australian Government representatives and agencies occupying the first six floors from street level. The building would carry the name "Australia Centre" and the Coat-of-Arms at the street level.

"An open plaza at Ground floor level would be one of the design features which would complement the attractive buildings in the vicinity", Mr Fraser said.

The Consulate-General, administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs, includes representatives of the Department of Trade and Resources, of the Australian Information Service and of the Departments of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and Business and Consumer Affairs.

Mr Fraser said that tourism and other aspects of Australian Government activities would also be able to be catered for by various authorities concerned which would be invited to take space in the new building.

State Premiers and Australian Banking and Commercial interests in New York would be advised by the Government of its decision so that, if they wished, they could seek space in what would be a prestige building under Australia's name.

Mr Fraser said that the Government had taken the view that the site would be very efficient for the purpose of a total Australian presentation in New York and for the work at the United Nations Mission.

The existing library at the Consulate-General in New York is an important and much used research facility - the biggest of any overseas post. There was also a large lending library of Film Australia Productions. The inclusion of these libraries in the new Australia Centre would provide Australian Government officers and the public easier access to these important information resources.

"Australia intends to further develop its cultural relations with the United States, and facilities within the new building would help achieve this," Mr Fraser said. "For example, provision would be made for a theatrette where Australian films would be screened, and there would be provision for exhibitions of Australian paintings, sculpture and other arts and crafts arranged by the Government."

Mr Fraser said he expected the Consulate-General and the U.N. Mission to be operating from the new building in the third quarter of 1981. He said he had taken a continuing interest in the matter since it was first raised by Sir Robert Cotton who would be returning to Australia next year.

The Department of Administrative Services, under the supervision of The Honourable John McLeay, M.P., would supervise the new space.