



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

26 May 1983

I am disappointed that again the Tasmanian Premier has chosen to substitute invective for constructive discussion.

By his attitude Mr Gray has deliberately prejudiced the interests of Tasmanians.

The only issue raised around which there was no agreement was the up-grading of Wynard Airport.

The Federal Government's attitude to other programs raised in Mr Gray's letter of May 20 is that existing projects will be given fair consideration in the Budget context.

On-going projects of merit will be continued and Commonwealth officials were instructed today to immediately begin talks with their Tasmanian counterparts on matters which need further consideration.

In relation to the Gordon-below-Franklin dam, the Federal Government indicated that it was willing, without prejudice to the interests of Tasmanians, to identify, in conjunction with Tasmanian officials, employment-generating projects for which planning can start as soon as possible.

At the insistence of the Federal Government discussions between a Federal Minister and Commonwealth officials and Tasmanian Government representatives will be held next week.

It is also clear that Mr Gray is afflicted with the conservative disease of not being able to speak honestly.

The Craighourne irrigation scheme will be considered immediately by Commonwealth officials and at this stage the Commonwealth is very favourably disposed towards the project.

It is possible that it could be included within the National Water Resources Program.