



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

JULY 31, 1983

The Tasmanian Premier, Mr Gray, is being politically duplicitous in his reaction to the Federal Government's decision to stop funding for the Crotty Road construction.

The road was to have been the prime access to the Franklin-below-Gordon Dam.

With construction of the Dam stopped, the Crotty Road is an expensive thoroughfare to nowhere.

Only last Monday, July 25, at a meeting with me, requested by Mr Gray, the Premier volunteered that the Tasmanian Government was not in favor of the road being further extended to Kelly Basin.

There was general agreement that until the management plan for the wilderness area was agreed to by both governments there was little point in continuing with building a road which could eventually be irrelevant.

Mr Gray pointed out to me that the State's announced intention to proceed with the construction of the King River hydro scheme would mean the partial flooding of Crotty Road.

In effect, Mr Gray agrees with the Federal Government's decision that work on the Crotty Road should cease. His anger is contrived.

It ill-becomes Mr Gray to accuse the Federal Government of showing "a callous contempt for the workers".

Prior to the High Court decision it was Mr Gray who delayed Government-to-Government meetings proposed by me as a means of identifying alternative employment schemes to ensure a speedy transfer of the Dam workforce.

The Federal Government's proposal for such meetings was made shortly after its election, but because of Mr Gray's attitude the first meeting was not held until late June.

In its dealing with Mr Gray, the Labor Government has adopted a bipartisan attitude of goodwill and has had the welfare of all the people of Tasmania uppermost in its mind.

It is to be hoped that Mr Gray's ill-considered statements over the Crotty Road decision are not a manifestation of his attitude to the necessary future negotiations.

The cessation of Federal funding for the Crotty Road will mean some disruption and uncertainty for the people employed on the project, and that is a matter for regret.

But so that Mr Gray may be able to understand it, let me repeat: The Federal Government has agreed to extend for another month arrangements for income maintenance for HEC employees and for financial assistance to contractors, including assistance for contractors' employees.

In the meantime, the Commonwealth will continue as quickly as possible in co-operation with State authorities, to identify alternative employment projects.

Provided Mr Gray is prepared to co-operate, I am sure the present problems will soon be overcome.