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PRIME MINISTER

BURDEKIN DAM

I give an unequivocal commitment on behalf of the Federal Government to total continuity of funding for construction of the Burdekin Dam.

There have been promises to build the Burdekin Dam virtually continuously since the Second World War.

I am proud it is only the Federal Labor Government that has matched its promises with action.

The \$13 million we will spend on the Dam this financial year will enable construction of the main Dam Wall to commence at last.

The Chifley Government's Snowy Mountains Scheme was an historic recognition of the significance to Australia of major developmental works.

The Snowy Scheme became a cornerstone of post-war reconstruction.

The early completion of the Burdekin Dam will confirm the Federal Labor Government's role in fulfilling the historic needs of Australians - a Government pursuing coherent, confident, robust policies for national development.

The demeaning and destructive comments about the dam by the Deputy Opposition Leader, Mr Howard, are an indictment of the Coalition.

For example, The Age of 19 August quotes Mr Howard as saying:

" I wouldn't have regarded the Burdekin Dam as any more sacrosanct than other areas. I'd have put it into hotch-potch with some of the other things".

The last thing the people of North Queensland need is for a cloud to be cast over this great national development project.

With a Federal Budget of over \$50 billion, it is amazing that Mr Howard has singled out the Burdekin Dam as the one project to be consigned to the scrap heap.

The people of North Queensland have waited 30 years for the Burdekin Dam. Isn't that long enough - even for Mr Howard?

Even more disturbing is the absolute silence on Mr Howard's remarks by the Opposition Leader, Mr Peacock, and the Leader of the National Party, Mr Anthony.

In the face of their apparent disinterest or worse there is no doubt Mr Howard would get his way as Treasurer under a Liberal-National Government - although on the Opposition's current performance such a Government is a long way off.

There is an interesting parallel between the Burdekin dam and the history of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States.

The Tennessee Valley Authority was dogged by interference, was vilified in Congress, was abandoned by two American Presidents, was hindered at every turn - for 20 years.

Australia's 20 year wait - indeed 30 year wait - is over - at least while I have any say in the matter.

A great deal of the credit for our final decision to proceed with the Burdekin Dam must go to the forceful and persuasive representations of the State Opposition Leader, Keith Wright.

He has been a great advocate for North Queensland to his Federal Government colleagues - and will continue to be as Premier.

I have noted Keith Wright's commitment on behalf of the State Labor Party to the building of a water pipeline from the Burdekin Dam to Townsville on the basis of one-third funding from each of the Federal, State and Local Governments.

I look forward to discussing this proposal with Keith Wright when he is Premier.

Tenders for the mass concrete gravity wall of the Burdekin Dam closed on September 20. Eleven tenders have been received.

I understand the range and quality of these tenders has been very favourable. There should be little difficulty in selecting an appropriate tender. Accordingly, I urge the Queensland Government to quickly come forward with a recommended tender for the Federal Government's consideration and approval.

We want the construction of the Burdekin Dam to proceed as quickly as practicable and will work hard for its completion by 1988.

Townsville
9 October 1983