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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

8 OCTOBER 1987

Mr David Simmons, Member for Calare (NSW) has been appointed chairman of the Prime Minister's Country Task Force.

Mr Simmons was previously deputy chairman of the task force. He succeeds Mr Barry Cunningham, Member for McMillan (Victoria) who has taken on the position of Government Whip. The new deputy of the task force is Mrs Wendy Fatin, Member for Brand (WA).

Both Mr Simmons and Mrs Fatin have been members of the task force since I announced its formation in March 1986. During that time the task force has fulfilled the important role of listening to, assessing, and reporting directly to me on issues of importance to country people.

The task force is based on the Government Caucus Primary Industry and Resources Committee, which is also chaired by Mr Simmons. The task force works in close consultation with the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Mr John Kerin, the Minister for Resources, Mr Peter Morris, the Minister for Trade Negotiations, Mr Michael Duffy and the Minister for Local Government, Senator Margaret Reynolds.

Since its formation the task force has dealt with a wide range of rural and socio-economic issues relating to people living in provincial cities and towns, as well as to the farm sector. These issues include small business, women's affairs, education, job generation, care for the elderly, primary production, Aboriginal affairs, and local government.

The task force's objective is to provide long-term solutions to the problems facing people who live in non-metropolitan Australia by meeting with a wide range of community groups, assessing their points of view, and reporting to me and my Ministers on issues of concern.

Under Mr Cunningham's leadership the task force has provided rural Australians with a direct link to me on issues which most affect their lives. I thank Mr Cunningham for his valuable contribution to the task force, his commitment, and his understanding of rural people and rural issues. I am certain Mr Simmons, who represents a major rural area of NSW, will continue to provide country people with a direct link to my Government, and an understanding of their concerns.

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