

4



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

13 DECEMBER 1988

The Minister for Science, Customs and Small Business, Mr Jones, has made a convincing case for early consideration of initiatives to enhance the Government's science policy.

Senior officials had identified concerns of the research community, in a report prepared for Cabinet consideration.

The officials' report followed an intensive round of consultations with peak academic, research and union groups in the science and technology field. It found a high level of support for the Government's basic objective of aligning public sector research efforts more closely with Australia's economic strengths and national priorities, and of increasing the R and D effort of the private sector and their involvement with the public research institutions.

We are all now better informed. Mr Jones' task will be to take the options identified by officials and structure them according to national priorities.

Other Ministers, including Mr Kerin, Dr Blewett, Mr Dawkins and Senator Richardson will be consulted.

Mr Jones' Submissions will be dealt with early in the New Year.

The Government recognises that there are particular problems with career structures for researchers, post-graduate stipends, and the generally poor level of private sector research funding.

Mr Jones has forcefully argued these points.

The Cabinet will look at these areas, together with early assistance measures but we are not after a 'quick-fix' package. The importance of research to Australia's future industrial structure is too important for that.

Long-term approaches agreed as a result of Mr Jones' Submission will be given high priority in the 1989-90 Budget process.