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## The Caretaker Government

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## The Caretaker Government

As a government that had not been popularly elected, the Fraser Caretaker Government had to adhere to some ground rules. It was not to put into place new policies and was to avoid making appointments [A13050, 4]. With the Appropriation Bills finally passed in the Senate, the Caretaker Government rescinded the emergency measures of the previous Cabinet and restored advertising, ministerial and departmental hospitality and the sending of Christmas cards. However, Cabinet decided to continue to restrain budget expenditure as set out in the Hayden Budget [A13050, 8].

In Decision 10, Cabinet affirmed that the Caretaker Government would not hold any inquiries into the activities of the former Government during the election campaign [A13050, 10]. However, relations between the Caretaker Government and Treasury soured following Malcolm Fraser's claims that the previous Government had not fully revealed the extent of the economic problems facing the Government. Some Treasury officers also objected to requests from the Caretaker Treasurer, Phillip Lynch, for information on Budget expenditures, and wrote to the Governor-General requesting clarification of the Caretaker Government's guidelines. The Prime Minister reiterated that his Government would 'strictly and scrupulously' adhere to the agreed guidelines [A13050, 28 and A13050, 29].

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Canberra, 12 November 1975

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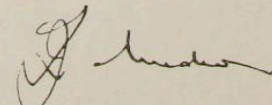
Decision No. 4

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Without Submission - Caretaker Government

The Cabinet noted that in the carry-on period to 13 December, the general rule would be that appointments to and dismissals from statutory offices would not be effected and new policies would not be initiated.

2. The Cabinet agreed that where appointments were unavoidable, these should be discussed beforehand with the Prime Minister and in any case should be proposed only in respect of a short interim period not running beyond 1 January 1976. It also agreed that if there are substantive matters on which decisions have to be made before 13 December, these should be taken by Ministers in consultation with the Prime Minister or, if of sufficient importance, should be brought to the Cabinet under the procedures laid down.



Secretary to Cabinet

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Canberra, 12 November 1975

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Decision No. 8

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Without Submission - Supply Emergency Measures

The Prime Minister reported to the Cabinet on the Supply emergency measures that were introduced by the former Government.

2. The Cabinet endorsed action proposed by the Treasury to seek the Treasurer's approval to rescind the following arrangements :-

- (a) the deferment of payments between Departments;
- (b) the deferment of payments for services rendered by the Postal Commission, the Telecommunications Commission, T.A.A., Qantas and the Australian Capital Territory Electricity Authority;
- (c) the deferment of payment of fortnightly employer superannuation payments by the Postal Commission to Consolidated Revenue;
- (d) a borrowing by the Australian Capital Territory Electricity Authority up to a maximum of \$3.5 million;

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Decision No. 8 (cont.)

- (e) alternative means of financing statutory authorities dependent on funds being provided in the Appropriation Bills; and
- (f) the suspension of the provision of prepayment of salary before leave or furlough.

3. The Cabinet agreed to remove the special restrictions introduced by the previous Government as a direct consequence of the delay in the passage of Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 1975-76 and Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 1975-76 in respect of :-

- (a) the payment of outstanding claims correctly incurred under the Regional Employment Development Scheme (REDS);
- (b) advertising by the Australian Government;
- (c) ministerial and departmental hospitality;
- (d) Christmas cards;
- (e) travel, use of Government cars, etc.

The Cabinet endorsed that the expenditure restraint imposed in respect of the 1975/76 Budget should nevertheless continue.

4. In respect of sub-paragraph 3(b) the Cabinet noted that Ministers would individually examine the provision of information services within their Departments.

5. The Cabinet agreed that all special instructions issued with the objective of conserving funds during the Supply emergency period should be identified by Departments to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; and that where any such instructions had been issued these should be withdrawn

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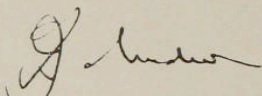
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Decision No. 8 (cont.)

and be specifically countermanded, including advice to individuals.

6. The Cabinet noted that the Administrative Arrangements Order would need to be amended in respect of the Interim Purchasing Commission to transfer the administrative responsibilities for procurement, purchase and disposal of goods to the Minister for Administrative Services.



Secretary to Cabinet

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C A B I N E T M I N U T E

Canberra, 19 November 1975

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Decision No. 28

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Without Submission - Complaints to the Governor-General  
Regarding the Caretaker Government

The Prime Minister reported to the Cabinet that the Governor-General had made it known that certain complaints that had been directed to him had been referred to the Prime Minister for advice. The complaints concern guidelines and the terms under which the present Government is operating in the pre-election period.

2. The Cabinet agreed that the Prime Minister should issue a statement indicating :-

- (a) that he has full confidence in Permanent Heads that they would not convey to their Departments any requests that they believed to be outside the guidelines;
- (b) the establishment of a procedure to enable the Prime Minister to advise the Governor-General properly concerning complaints or petitions that might be directed to him;

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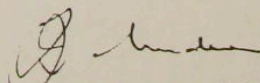
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Decision No. 28 (cont.)

- (c) that the procedure would be that matters that are referred to the Governor-General will be sent by the Prime Minister to the Chairman of the Public Service Board and the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for consultation with the Permanent Head of the Department concerned. The Chairman of the Public Service Board and the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet are to report to the Prime Minister and as necessary he would consult with the Minister concerned and forward advice to the Governor-General; and
- (d) that the undertaking that the Prime Minister has given to the Governor-General (that his Government will act as a Caretaker Government until a general election is held) will be strictly and scrupulously applied and that any doubts that a Minister may have as to conduct in particular circumstances should be discussed with his Permanent Head, the Chairman of the Public Service Board or with the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. If any doubts remain, no action is to be taken until the matter is raised directly with the Prime Minister.

  
Secretary to Cabinet.

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C A B I N E T M I N U T E

Canberra, 19 November 1975

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Decision No. 29

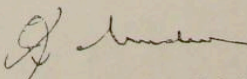
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Without Submission - Specific Complaints to the Governor-General Regarding the Caretaker Government

Further to Cabinet Decision No. 28 of 19 November 1975, the Prime Minister reported to the Cabinet that he had received from the Governor-General details of the following complaints :-

- (a) a petition from certain officers of the Department of the Treasury;
- (b) a letter from Senator the Honourable Douglas McClelland;
- (c) a letter from Mr D. Sligar; and
- (d) a letter from Senator the Honourable John Wheeldon.

2. The Cabinet noted that these complaints would be investigated in accordance with the procedures set down in Decision No. 28 and that the Prime Minister would then provide advice to the Governor-General.

  
Secretary to Cabinet.

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