I would like to mention the Governor General's speech which he made at the opening of this session of the Parliament and in which there were a number of important announcements. These affected several Departments and covered a number of future activities. I will itemise them quite briefly.

The Department of Territories that was previously responsible for Papua—New Guinea and the Northern Territory is going to be renamed the Department of External Territories and will no longer be responsible for the Northern Territory. This is an indication that the Government recognises that the destinies of the Northern Territory are different from those of Papua—New Guinea. The Northern Territory's destiny is to develop ultimately as a State of Australia. The destiny of Papua New Guinea is to become a self-governing country, developed for independence if and when it is clearly demonstrated by the majority of the indigenous population that this is what they want. This has been the basic objective of Government policy for some time in relation to Papua New Guinea but it has not previously been spelt out in clear terms.

Through, Mr Wentworth, Minister for Social Services and Minister in charge of Aboriginal Affairs, the policies of the Commonwealth, of the State Departments and instrumentalities for the welfare and advancement of aboriginal citizens of Australia will be co-ordinated. An objective will be to establish circumstances in which aboriginal citizens will be able to choose their own representatives to consult with and advise the Council and Office of Aboriginal Affairs.

It is particularly pleasing to see that Mr Wentworth will have responsibility for these matters because he has shown a very long standing concern for the problems of aborigines. He will now have an opportunity to see that some real advance is made.

15 March, 1968
Departmental changes announced in the Governor General's speech

15 March 1968

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