

BROADCAST:

3HA Sunday, 18 June, 1972.

3YB Thursday, 22 June, 1972.

3LK Tuesday, 20 June, 1972.

There are now few people who are not concerned about our environment, about the quality of life issue. The Australian Conservation Foundation has done much to create this public awareness.

I believe that people have come to recognise that there is a basic long term threat to our environment in Australia, just as worthy of our attention as in the heavily populated and industrialised nations elsewhere.

Of course people associated with rural industries in areas such as western Victoria have for a long time been well aware of the need for conservation, and farmers for purely commercial reasons, if for no others, have been active conservationists in their own occupation as a matter of course.

It was pleasing, therefore, to find the recent statement by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, Mr. Howson, being so well received across the whole spectrum of Australian society. Already Commonwealth and State Ministers concerned with the environment meet regularly for consultation as the Australian Environment Council. The Council will draw up standards and guidelines for its own use and it is hoped these will be generally recognised throughout Australia.

The Council has already begun to study such important environmental problems as waste disposal and non-destructable and non-returnable containers and packaging generally. Of course the Commonwealth is actively involved on joint committees

with the States in areas such as health, water resources, shipping and transport, forestry, minerals, agriculture and fisheries.

In Mr. Howson's statement the Commonwealth announced two important initiatives in the environment field. The first involves the introduction of a system of impact statements, that is to say that when a Commonwealth Minister prepares a submission to the Cabinet on any proposal that has some relevance to the environment, that submission must be accompanied by a statement setting out the impact the proposal is likely to make on the environment. It is quite certain that the impact statement will become an important element in decision making.

Even State projects for which Commonwealth financial assistance is sought will also need to be supported by assurances that all environmental factors have been considered and evaluated.

Mr. Howson also announced the membership of a special advisory committee to be set up to advise the Commonwealth on environmental problems. This committee will be free to suggest to the Minister matters that it feels it could usefully examine.

It is clear there is much Governments can do, and in Australia are now doing. But the task of protecting the environment, of combating pollution and practising conservation cannot be left entirely to Governments. The individual can do as much as the industrialist with his factories. It is as important to avoid littering the countryside and city streets as it is to prevent the belching of black smoke from industrial

chimneys. Parents and teachers have as important a role in setting an example and instilling in children an awareness and respect for their environment, as company managers and politicians have to help keep it pollution-free. Protecting the environment is a challenge for all of us.

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