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**Title:**  
Press release - Eyre Highway

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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN.EYRE HIGHWAY.

4/9/71.

The Commonwealth Government had "ignored its responsibilities in the area of national development" and rejected South Australia's request for special assistance to complete sealing of the Eyre Highway, the Premier, Mr. Dunstan, announced today.

Mr. Dunstan pledged that, despite this, the State Government would go ahead with its own programme to spend some \$3M. on this project over the next five years.

Total cost of sealing the section from Ceduna to the Western Australian border is about \$9M. on present estimates and South Australia sought Federal Government assistance of \$6M. towards this.

The Premier recalled that he had renewed this request formally to the Prime Minister, Mr. McMahon, in a letter last April.

"The Prime Minister has just informed me that 'while the Commonwealth agrees that it would be desirable for the sealing of the Highway to be completed, we are of the view that this is clearly a State responsibility.'

"I am surprised and extremely disappointed that the Prime Minister should take this attitude which completely ignores its responsibilities in the area of national development and the facts of the case.

"In my letter to Mr. McMahon I said the State Government was deeply concerned by the rising number of fatal accidents on this stretch of the road and by the economic loss to the State as a result of its unsatisfactory condition.

"I specifically pointed out to him that South Australian registered vehicles formed a minority - only 16% - of those using this section of the road.

"More importantly I stressed that this project was national in character from the point of view of prestige, defence and tourism. "This view was unanimously endorsed by all State Tourism Ministers last month and has been supported by many other transport and other bodies", Mr. Dunstan said.

The Premier added that the Prime Minister had said in his letter the State was receiving over a five year period a supplementary grant of \$9M. which could, if desired, be spent on the Eyre Highway.

"Again this ignores the facts.

"The Prime Minister must be aware that a substantial part of this \$9M. has already been allocated.

"There are also many other roads in South Australia which are in urgent need of attention, which are of at least competing importance with the Eyre Highway and which are also national in character.

"Allocating this money to the Eyre Highway would absorb the total amount leaving nothing for other pressing projects.

"Examples of these are the Stuart Highway, particularly the section of Woomera, the road north of Hawker to Leigh Creek and the road to Murray Bridge.

"Despite these competing claims we have allocated approximately \$600,000 a year over five years to the Eyre Highway.

"Work on the 44 mile section from Ceduna to Penong is expected to be completed by January, 1973.

"Unfortunately the Federal Government's decision, for which Mr. McMahon must take responsibility, means the total scheme cannot proceed with the speed which the Governments and people of South Australia and Western Australia believe to be essential.

"Following receipt of the Prime Minister's letter, I shall ask the Roads and Transport Minister, Mr. Virgo, to re-examine the situation to see what other, if any, measures can be taken," the Premier said.

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