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Press Release: Kangaroo Island Dispute

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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN.

Kangaroo Island Dispute.

16.7.72.

No responsible Government could stand idly by and allow an isolated industrial dispute to escalate into a fullscale general strike confrontation, the Premier, Mr. Dunstan, said today.

He was commetning on criticism of Cabinet's decision to authorise payment of the Supreme Court costs of the State secretary of the Australian Workers' Union (Mr. J.E. Dunford) in a civil action involving an industrial dispute on Kangaroo Island.

"There is no doubt whatsoever that South Australia was faced with a very real and serious threat of a general strike over the principle involved in this matter.

"Such a strike would very quickly have involved the State in costs of millions of dollars instead of the several thousand authorised.

"There would have been massive losses through layoffs, factory closures and production stoppages. The State's industrial development programme would have been wrecked.

"The State Government, throughout this dispute, has been concerned not to take sides but, solely, to provide the means of its quick and peaceful settlement.

"Cabinet's decision was completely in accord with this policy.

"To do otherwise would have irresponsible", Mr. Dunstan said.

The trade union movement had been seriously concerned about the possible repercussions of the Supreme Court decision.

The Government had always held that industrial disputes should be settled in the industrial court. The idea of taking civil court action against an individual involved in an industrial dispute was against all principles of industrial arbitration.

"Under these circumstances, and considering that similar legislation had been repealed in other States and in Britain, questions of establishing a precedent did not arise.

"We acted to prevent an expensive and dangerous industrial confrontation. It was a necessary decision. I believe it was the right one", Mr. Dunstan said.
