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Press release: Home Language Tests

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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN.

HOME LANGUAGE TESTS.

12.1.73

Migrants to South Australia will be able to take a significant number of State Government tests and examinations in their home languages under a plan being devised by the Premier, Mr. Dunstan.

Mr. Dunstan said today this would apply particularly to tests where success or failure could affect a migrant's job or means of livelihood.

One of them will be driving licence applications where migrants will be able to take the test in their home language at major State motor licensing centres.

"It seems to me unfair that migrants who are very well qualified in their field are penalised because they cannot write English," Mr. Dunstan said.

Details of the scheme were now being worked out.

It was a complicated matter but the Premier said he intended that the new system would be in operation by the middle of this year.

"Translation services for Italian, Greek and Serbo-Croat speakers will be among the first to be organised", he said.

Mr. Dunstan said migrants had made a unique contribution to South Australia and the State could not have reached its present level of development without them.

"The interpreter plan we are now organising will enable them to play a still more effective role in our society".

"It is quite wrong that a Greek or Italian migrant should be put at a disadvantage simply because he cannot write English with the same ease as other newcomers".

"The new scheme will mean that people are not penalised economically while they are acquiring fluency in written English.

"There are certain jobs - for instance in the building industry - where migrants often work almost exclusively with or for other new Australians.

"It seems to us unnecessary that people in these circumstances who can show in their home language that they have the required technical knowledge, should have to be totally fluent in written English", Mr. Dunstan said.

The Premier said he hoped the scheme could also be extended to provide a special pool of translators for migrants and their families in their dealings with Government departments and agencies.

This would include help in the filling out of Government forms and documents.