



PRIME MINISTER

MACQUARIE NETWORK WEEKLY BROADCAST

BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT HON.
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U N E M P L O Y M E N T

Yesterday the Government announced the April figures for unemployment in Australia. Rightly, serious unemployment is a problem we all feel deeply about. This is a view I have held ever since I have been in political life. It is a deeply held conviction of mine that every Liberal Government should do everything in its power to ensure the fullest employment of our manpower and resources. I want to repeat that policy to you now. And we have, over the years, been unbelievably successful with these policies.

We must also remember that over the Christmas/New Year period a large number of school leavers and those who finished their tertiary education, entered the work force for the first time. This year there were about 180,000. Please keep this in mind.

At the end of January there were about 130,000 registered unemployed. These figures were reduced considerably in February, March and April. For the third month in a row, unemployment fell - this time to about 93,400, a fairly big drop from 130,000 in January.

Just as important and looking to the future, a healthy trend developed in job vacancies in all States. All these facts are important not only because of the vital fact that many more people have found jobs, but because these are facts - not opinions, but facts which confirm the predictions my Ministers have been making of the improving trend of the economy and the growth of business confidence. They give the lie direct to the pessimists in the Labor Party who have made wild and irresponsible forecasts of unemployment figures as high as 200,000.

Back in January, when many people, including myself, were very worried about the level of unemployment, the Leader of the Opposition stepped off a plane and immediately made the prediction that - and I quote - "There would be another 50,000 unemployed within three months". If Mr Whitlam's guess had come true, it would have brought the total of unemployed to 170,000. In fact it is now a little over 93,000. Once again the facts themselves destroy the Labor Party's forecasts.

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Five days later, with time for sober reflection, he repeated exactly the same dangerous forecast. His spokesman on Industrial and Labour matters, Mr Clyde Cameron, was making the same sort of anguished cries to any reporter or television interviewer who would listen, that there would be 200,000 people out of work.

There is only one conclusion to be drawn from these statements. Both these leaders of the Labor movement treated unemployment as a political issue. They wanted greater uncertainty and more unemployed. The more people who were out of work the more votes for them. I think most Australians will agree with me that people who try to make politics out of unemployment really do not care about the people themselves. This applies to Mr Hawke of the A.C.T.U. as well. If, and I emphasise if, it was not a deliberate and premeditated political tactic, then it was negligent and downright dangerous.

The employment position we are now in is pretty good under the circumstances.

Now let me talk to you about the positive decisions we have taken to live up to our promise of full employment. We did not hesitate to take action to fight unemployment. We will not hesitate in the future.

We do not think unemployment is a political issue. And don't want it to be.

We believe that all Australians want unemployment to be treated with seriousness and with sincerity and that the Liberal policy of full employment be sustained. I assure you that is what the Government has done. I assure you that is what we will do.
