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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, M.C., M.P.,  
FOR THE OPENING OF THE NEPEAN DISTRICT  
AGRICULTURAL, HORTICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY'S  
ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL SHOW,  
PENRITH, 14 FEBRUARY 1975

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I HOPE NO ONE WILL ACCUSE ME OF JUNKETING IF I POINT OUT THAT THIS IS MY SECOND VISIT TO PENRITH IN THE PAST FIVE MONTHS. I HAD THE PLEASURE OF OPENING A T.V. FACTORY HERE LAST SEPTEMBER; NOW I AM OPENING YOUR ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL SHOW. AND IT IS HERE IN THIS COMBINATION OF LOCAL ACTIVITY - OF PRIMARY PRODUCTION AND VIGOROUS SECONDARY INDUSTRY - THAT WE FIND THE GREAT STRENGTH AND DIVERSITY OF YOUR CITY AND YOUR REGION.

PENRITH IS THE CENTRE OF A THRIVING AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY - RICH IN HISTORY, RICH IN NATURAL BEAUTY, RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES. IN YOUR ANNUAL SHOW WE SEE BOUNTIFUL EVIDENCE OF YOUR RURAL PROSPERITY. IT IS HEARTENING TO COME TO YOUR DISTRICT AND SENSE THE CONFIDENT AND INDUSTRIOUS SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE OF THE NEPEAN. OUR COUNTRY FACES PROBLEMS AS YOU ALL KNOW, BUT SO LONG AS THERE ARE DISTRICTS LIKE YOURS AND SHOWS LIKE YOURS WE CAN BE CERTAIN OUR PROBLEMS WILL BE BEATEN. THEY WILL BE BEATEN BY A STURDY, CONFIDENT PEOPLE, WITH FAITH IN THEMSELVES, FAITH IN THEIR ABILITY TO PRODUCE THE GOODS WE NEED, FAITH IN THE VAST NATURAL RESOURCES OF OUR COUNTRY, FAITH IN THE BASIC STRENGTH OF OUR ECONOMY, FAITH IN A STRONG DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT - A SYSTEM WE MUST STRIVE TO PRESERVE.

HERE IN PENRITH, IN THE NEPEAN DISTRICT, YOU ARE BUILDING UP THE STRENGTH AND RICHES OF OUR NATION. YOU ARE MAKING A BETTER LIFE FOR AUSTRALIANS EVERYWHERE, AND THE GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO MAKE A BETTER LIFE FOR YOU, FOR THE FARMERS AND THE TOWNSPEOPLE IN OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES. YOU HEAR A LOT ABOUT OUR WORK FOR THE CITIES; YOU DON'T HEAR SO MUCH ABOUT OUR WORK FOR THE COUNTRY TOWNS. THE PURPOSE OF SO MANY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES - OUR GRANTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OUT AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS, OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPORT AND RECREATION, TO MENTION A FEW - IS TO MAKE LIFE IN COUNTRY TOWNS AS REWARDING, AS PROSPEROUS, AS SATISFYING AS LIFE IN THE MAJOR CITIES.

PENRITH IS TYPICAL OF THE CENTRES BENEFITING FROM AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR ASSISTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT. AS A DIRECT RESULT OF OUR MEASURES MORE THAN \$1,100,000 HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO ASSIST YOUR CITY'S GROWTH AND RAISE THE STANDARD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES IN THE AREA. IN ADDITION, THE PEOPLE OF PENRITH AND THE NEPEAN DISTRICT WILL BENEFIT FROM OUR ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOLS, HEALTH SERVICES, ROADS, TRANSPORT. DON'T GET THE IDEA THAT THESE MAJOR GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS ARE FOR CITY PEOPLE ONLY. OUR POLICIES ARE DESIGNED TO BENEFIT ALL AUSTRALIANS, WHEREVER THEY LIVE, WHEREVER AND HOWEVER THEY WORK. WE HAVE LONG BEEN AWARE OF THE INADEQUACIES OF OUR CITIES. RECENTLY, IN THE INTERIM REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO POVERTY WE HAVE HAD STARK EVIDENCE OF POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION IN COUNTRY TOWNS.

ONE IN FOUR FAMILIES IN COUNTRY TOWNS LIVE IN POVERTY OR NEAR-POVERTY. THERE ARE MORE POOR FAMILIES IN AUSTRALIA'S COUNTRY TOWNS THAN THERE ARE IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE. YOU CAN BE SURE OF THIS: WE ARE DETERMINED TO MAKE COUNTRY PEOPLE EQUAL PARTNERS IN A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS AUSTRALIA. THE GOVERNMENT WILL GET THE FACTS OF RURAL POVERTY AND BASE ITS PROGRAMS ON THE BEST POSSIBLE ADVICE. WE ARE GOING TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY AUSTRALIAN HAS A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING, A DECENT WAGE, A DECENT JOB, A DECENT HOME; THAT EVERY AUSTRALIAN IS PROUD OF HIS COMMUNITY AND ITS LOCAL AMENITIES; THAT EVERY AUSTRALIAN HAS OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK, EDUCATION, RECREATION AND PERSONAL FULFILMENT EQUAL TO THE BEST IN AUSTRALIA.

I WANT PENRITH AND THE NEPEAN DISTRICT TO SET AN EXAMPLE. I WANT THEM TO SHOW WHAT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS AT EVERY LEVEL CAN DO TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNTRY PEOPLE AND CITIZENS IN COUNTRY TOWNS. ONE OF OUR FIRST INITIATIVES AS A GOVERNMENT WAS TO EMPOWER THE GRANTS COMMISSION TO REPORT ON INEQUALITIES BETWEEN REGIONS AND RECOMMEND GRANTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES TO OVERCOME SUCH INEQUALITIES. PENRITH CITY COUNCIL HAS RECEIVED \$330,000 UNDER THE GRANTS COMMISSION'S FIRST RECOMMENDATIONS. THESE ARE UNCONDITIONAL, NON-REPAYABLE GRANTS - WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED. THEY WILL HELP PROVIDE MANY OF THE ESSENTIAL SERVICES WHICH MODERN COMMUNITIES DEMAND. IN THE WHOLE OF THE WESTERN REGIONS OF SYDNEY, INCLUDING THE PENRITH DISTRICT, THE GRANTS TO LOCAL COUNCILS TOTALLED MORE THAN \$3.3 MILLION THIS FINANCIAL YEAR.

PENRITH IS ONE OF THE REGIONS WEST OF SYDNEY RECEIVING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM. THIS IS A PROGRAM TO IMPROVE LIVING CONDITIONS BY EXPENDITURE ON RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES WHEREVER IT IS NEEDED. LAST FINANCIAL YEAR PENRITH WAS ALLOCATED MORE THAN \$800,000 FOR THE PURCHASE OF COMMUNITY LAND RESERVES, PLANTING TREES, WIDENING ROADS, RESTORING BUILDINGS. MR. UREN AND SIR CHARLES CUTLER HAVE ANNOUNCED A CONTINUATION OF AREA IMPROVEMENT FUNDS FOR THE PRESENT FINANCIAL YEAR. PENRITH WILL RECEIVE NEARLY \$300,000, AND IN ADDITION, \$50,000 FOR SPORTS OVALS AND AMENITIES UNDER A GRANT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND RECREATION. TOTAL SPORT AND RECREATION GRANTS TO THE NEPEAN AREA AMOUNT TO \$250,000.

I MENTION OTHER EXAMPLES. OUR NATIONAL SEWERAGE PROGRAM HAS BEEN EXPANDED TO INCLUDE CITIES AND TOWNS IN THE 20,000 TO 60,000 POPULATION RANGE. THAT MEANS PENRITH WILL BENEFIT FROM OUR PROGRAM TO OVERCOME THE NATIONWIDE SEWERAGE BACKLOG. WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE N.S.W. GOVERNMENT, WE HOPE TO DOUBLE THE CAPACITY OF THE TREATMENT WORKS AT ST. MARYS TO SERVE 150,000 PEOPLE. WE DON'T BELIEVE PEOPLE IN IMPORTANT COUNTRY TOWNS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD HAVE TO PUT UP WITH INFERIOR SERVICES OF ANY KIND. WE ARE GETTING ON WITH THE JOB OF IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

OUR PROGRAMS FOR URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT WILL DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE PEOPLE OF THE NEPEAN/PENRITH AREA. WE ARE PROVIDING FUNDS TO WIDEN THE GLENBROOK RAILWAY TUNNEL AND QUADRUPLE THE RAILWAY LINE BETWEEN PENRITH AND GRANVILLE. THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT HAS APPROVED ARTERIAL ROAD WORKS IN THE PENRITH DISTRICT COSTING MORE THAN \$2.5 MILLION. WE RECOGNISE PENRITH'S UNIQUE PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN SETTLEMENT AND ARE DETERMINED TO PRESERVE THE BEAUTIFUL AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF THIS DISTRICT. OUR BUDGET FOR THE NATIONAL ESTATE ALLOCATED \$50,000 TO THE NATIONAL TRUST TO HELP PURCHASE AND RESTORE TWO COTTAGES AT WINDSOR AND \$100,000 TO RESTORE THE EXTERIOR OF THE MACQUARIE ARMS HOTEL.

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO BE AMONG THE PEOPLE PRODUCING THE PRIMARY WEALTH OF OUR COUNTRY , AND EXHIBITING THAT WEALTH IN SHOWS SUCH AS YOURS. WE DON'T TAKE THE VIEW THAT BECAUSE PEOPLE LIVE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OR WORK ON FARMS THEY DESERVE SOMETHING LESS THAN OTHER AUSTRALIANS. IF THE COMMUNITY HAS A DUTY TO PROVIDE BETTER SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, ROADS AND HOUSING IN THE CITIES IT HAS THE SAME DUTY IN THE COUNTRY AREAS. I KNOW FARMERS SOMETIMES THINK, OR ARE PERSUADED TO THINK, THAT THEY GET A RAW DEAL FROM A LABOR GOVERNMENT, BUT WE KNOW YOUR PROBLEMS, AND THEY ARE PROBLEMS FACED BY FARMERS EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

YOU CAN TAKE GREAT HEART FROM THE FACT THAT THE WORLD WILL ALWAYS NEED, AND INCREASINGLY NEED, WHAT YOU PRODUCE. DEPENDABLE LONG-TERM MARKETS ARE THE KEY TO YOUR PROSPERITY. NO GOVERNMENT HAS WORKED HARDER TO SECURE THOSE MARKETS AND DEVELOP THE INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL ON WHICH TRADE DEPENDS. BEING A GREAT TRADING NATION BRINGS OBLIGATIONS AS WELL AS BENEFITS. WE HAVE TO BE SURE THAT IN PROTECTING OUR LOCAL INDUSTRIES WE DON'T HARM OUR PROSPECTS AS AN EXPORTER OF FOOD OR RAW MATERIALS. THESE ARE DIFFICULT DECISIONS, COMPLEX DECISIONS; BUT SUCH DECISIONS ARE THE STUFF OF MODERN GOVERNMENT. IT IS NOT EASY TO SAFEGUARD LIVING STANDARDS AND PRESERVE JOBS IN A WORLD OF INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT. WE NEED COOL JUDGMENT, A STEADY NERVE, A BALANCED AND RATIONAL SYSTEM OF PRIORITIES.

WE DON'T BELIEVE IN SHORT-TERM, PATCH-UP MEASURES TO HELP THE FARMING COMMUNITY. WE WANT TO GET TO THE ROOTS OF YOUR DIFFICULTIES. THAT'S WHY WE ESTABLISHED THE INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE COMMISSION TO GIVE EXPERT ADVICE ON THE PROBLEMS OF ANY INDUSTRY, PRIMARY OR SECONDARY, AND TO RECOMMEND HELP AS NEEDED. THAT'S WHY WE CALLED FOR AN EXPERT GREEN PAPER INTO RURAL INDUSTRY - THE MOST THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF FARMERS' NEEDS AND PROBLEMS EVER MADE IN AUSTRALIA. THAT'S WHY WE ARE STUDYING THE WHOLE QUESTION OF FLUCTUATING RURAL INCOMES - TO GIVE FARMERS A MORE STABLE AND ASSURED EXPECTATION OF INCOME OVER A LONGER TERM AND REMOVE MUCH OF THE HARDSHIP AND UNCERTAINTY OF RURAL LIFE.

I CONGRATULATE THE ORGANISERS OF THIS SHOW. IT IS AN INSPIRATION TO SEE THE WORK OF A VIGOROUS AND BUOYANT RURAL COMMUNITY, TO SHARE THE OPTIMISM AND HOSPITALITY OF COUNTRY PEOPLE. I WISH YOU WELL IN YOUR EFFORTS TO DEVELOP THE AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL POTENTIAL OF YOUR DISTRICT AND ASSURE YOU OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT. I HAVE PLEASURE IN DECLARING OPEN THE NEPEAN DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL, HORTICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY'S ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL SHOW.

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