

PRIME MINISTER

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LORD MAYOR'S DINNER, MELBOURNE

I am delighted to be here in Melbourne this evening. I am afraid Melbourne is going to have to put up with Fraser - and a few more of his speeches - over the next few weeks. You have probably heard that there is some strange event, something we call "the campaign" in the air. This is a sort of political Moomba - where politicians all get together and have fun. My Lord Mayor, we don't fight these events with the same style and gusto of candidates who seek your office. It is just a nice, gentle, three weeks.

Tamie and I both share delight in the fact that women are here tonight - not as a privilege but as a right. Lord Mayor and Councillors, you are to be congratulated for making a move, which - dare I say it - is long overdue.

The campaign is officially a little way off, so I will not worry you with talk of implicit deflators, VDRs, M3s and underlying trends.

I want instead to speak for a few minutes about Australia - about the opportunities that we can grasp.

At this banquet, last year, I spoke about the challenges facing Australia - the challenges arising from economic difficulty and inevitable social change. There is no doubt in my mind that we are responding as a nation to that challenge. We have all come to accept that our country's resources are limited.

We cannot just keep printing money without huge costs to the nation and to families everywhere. The Government has spoken often about what economists call "reigning in the public sector" and "transferring resources to the private sector". I know this is dreadful jargon - but I think the point behind the jargon is getting across. We talked about these issues - and took action - because as a national Government we had no alternative. We had been faced with difficult decisions, particularly in the complex area of the economy.

We faced up to them - even if many of our decisions were regarded by the scribes as unhelpful to what they call the Government's "image".

Looking back, there is no doubt that those tough decisions were in the interests of all Australians. They had to be made.

I have never sought to head a Government or a Party that was not prepared to take decisions necessary for the good government of Australia. With the requests that come to Government and the resources available to Government, there are more occasions on which a Government must responsibly say "no" than say "yes". People sometimes suggest that this is a handicap. They fear and expect an adverse reaction from the community.

I think that is a very odd view to take because I have complete confidence in the good judgement and common sense of Australians. They know what is possible. They know what is in the national interest. They have infinitely greater capacity for sound judgement than many people in the public arena care to admit.

With those decisions made, we can achieve our nation's potential, we can achieve our nation's vast promise.

In Government the coalition that I lead has clearly defined objectives for Australia. Can I put it this way. Government is about people. Nations have no life but the life of their people. I believe our national objective must be to enhance the position of the individual. It must be to maximise a person's capacity for making his or her own decisions.

There has been a tendency for Governments, because they have ready access to financial resources or printing presses, to suggest that all problems can be solved by spending money. Such a Government encourages the worst in society. It creates a selfish community.

It is necessary to understand that politicians have nothing of their own to give - when they make promises they are promising something of yours: something that must be taken away from you as a taxpayer and citizen. Clearly, individuals want there to be a limit to the promises politicians make.

In the next couple of years, I believe Australia can become an example to the world. We can show the world how a resolute spirit and determination - and team work - can overcome extreme economic problems. We can show the world how people from all walks of life - all colours, all creeds - can inspire one another to high achievement. We can show the world how a concerned and caring community itself can enter the lives of those people in need and add dignity and hope where previously there was none. We can show the world that we can play a leading part in the developing of a safer world; of a less selfish world; of a world that learns to use its natural resources as a force for good and not for evil.

We can do this. It is within our grasp.

I have no doubt of the ability - or willingness - of our people to play this role. We have an educated, aware, and intelligent youth. We have a migrant population that is lifting our sights, widening our horizons and expanding our appreciation of what life can offer.

We have a nation of articulate, concerned and forward-thinking women who will play a key part in our maturing as a nation. We have energy, imagination, resources, inventiveness - and above all, we have a growing realisation that we are part of a wider world community.

We are facing up to our obligations to our near neighbours in Asia and the Pacific, and our responsibilities to our friends around the globe. What Australia says and does is important in world forums.

My Lord Mayor, powerful forces are at work for Australia. They are forces for good, for achievement, for prosperity. They are forces that will take Australia into the eighties and beyond with a real hope and confidence, and a real sense of belonging to a nation that has become an example to the world.

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