



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SATURDAY, 28 JUNE,

OPENING OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES INSTITUTE FOR DEAF AND BLIND CHILDREN, SCHOOL FOR HANDICAPPED BLIND CHILDREN

THANK YOU FOR THE INVITATION TO BE WITH YOU THIS AFTERNOON.

I MUST SAY I FEEL SOMETHING OF AN OLD HAND HERE.

FOR I RECALL, IN 1972, ON THIS CAMPUS, OPENING THE BRAILLE LIBRARY AND SCIENCE BLOCK IN THE CENTRAL SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND.

AND IN 1978, I VISITED YOUR HEAD OFFICE AT ST. LEONARDS TO INSPECT THE BRAILLE COMPUTER.

IT WAS THEN THAT YOU PRESENTED ME WITH THE FIRST TWO VOLUME COMPUTERISED BRIALLE EDITION OF THE SENTIMENTAL BLOKE, FOR THE NATIONAL LIBRARY IN CANBERRA.

WITH SUCH A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH AS THE BRAILLE COMPUTER ALREADY BEHIND YOU, THE INSTITUTE NOW ACHIEVES ANOTHER MILESTONE THROUGH THE FORMAL OPENING TODAY OF THIS NEW SCHOOL.

IT IS A GENUINE PLEASURE TO BE HERE; TO SEE AT FIRST HAND THIS FINE INSTITUTION AT WORK.

PART OF THE STRENGTH OF A COMMUNITY IS MEASURED BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT PROVIDES CARE AND CONCERN FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL DISADVANTAGES.

I KNOW THAT SUCH PROVISION IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THIS FINE COMPLEX; AND I AM DELIGHTED TO FORMALLY CELEBRATE WITH YOU, THE COMPLETION OF A NEW SECTION OF IT - THE SCHOOL FOR MULTI-HANDICAPPED BLIND CHILDREN.

AS A GOVERNMENT, WE BELIEVE STRONGLY IN THE VALUE, AND ESSENTIAL ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY, OF VOLUNTARY WELFARE ORGANISATIONS.

THE GOVERNMENT ACTS UPON THIS BELIEF BY WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS; RECOGNISING THAT IT IS IN THIS ACT OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMUNITY THAT THE MOST PRODUCTIVE WELFARE WORK IS DONE.

THE ROYAL NEW SOUTH WALES INSTITUTE FOR DEAF AND BLIND CHILDREN IS ACTIVE TESTIMONY TO THIS TRUTH.

I AM AWARE OF THE THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTARY WORKERS IN SEPARATE AUXILIARIES WHO, BY THEIR OWN EFFORTS, AND IN THEIR OWN WAY, CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUND RAISING PROGRAMME OF THE INSTITUTE.

IT IS EFFORTS OF THIS KIND WHICH ENCOURAGE AND JUSTIFY GOVERNMENT SUPPORT.

AND THAT IS WHY THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HAPPY TO CONTRIBUTE IN EXCESS OF \$2 MILLION, TO THESE NEW EXTENSIONS AND TO THE PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT AND FURNISHINGS FOR THEM.

TODAY WE WITNESS THE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF CO-OPERATION IN ACTION.

THESE EXPANDED FACILITIES FOR MULTI-HANDICAPPED BLIND CHILDREN EFFECTIVELY TAKE THEIR CARE OUT OF THE "TOO-HARD BASKET" INTO A PROGRAMME OF ACTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE DEDICATION TO THEIR WELFARE.

WHAT BEGAN IN 1974 AS A PILOT PROGRAMME WITH AN ENROLMENT OF TEN CHILDREN, NOW STANDS AS THE ONLY SPECIAL SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA ESTABLISHED TO EDUCATE AND TRAIN MULTI-HANDICAPPED BLIND CHILDREN.

INDEED, THE INSTITUTE IS TO BE CONGRATULATED FOR PIONEERING THIS FACILITY IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE AND PROVIDING ONE OF ONLY FOUR SIMILAR FACILITIES IN THE WORLD.

IN THIS WAY, TODAY'S CEREMONY CARRIES ON A PROUD TRADITION WHICH WAS BEGUN AS FAR BACK AS 1860.

SINCE THEN THE INSTITUTION HAS STEADFASTLY ADHERED TO A POLICY THAT NO CHILD SHOULD BE TURNED AWAY.

IT HAS MOST EFFECTIVELY SERVED DEAF AND BLIND CHILDREN IN NEW SOUTH WALES OFFERING THEM LOVE, INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT; AND IMBUING THEM WITH A DETERMINATION TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES.

THE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION THAT EXIST WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, TOWARDS THE INSTITUTE, IS WELL-FOUNDED.

OF COURSE, WE CAN BE INSPIRED IN OUR EFFORTS BY THE UNSELFISH AND REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL WORK OF WORLD FAMOUS TEACHERS LIKE ANNE SULLIVAN WHO DEVOTED PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ENERGY, WHICH EVENTUALLY ENABLED HELEN KELLER TO MAKE SUCH AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN LIFE.

BUT THERE ARE MANY OTHERS, NOT AS FAMOUS AS HELEN KELLER AND ANNE SULLIVAN - PARENTS, RELATIVES AND FRIENDS WHO PUT SIMILAR AND CONSISTENT EFFORT INTO OBTAINING FACILITIES AND SERVICES NEEDED TO GIVE DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AN APPROPRIATE EDUCATION AND WORTHWHILE OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE.

SOME OF THE PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY THE COMMUNITY IN ADJUSTING TO THE NEEDS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN, DERIVE, I BELIEVE, FROM THE TERM ITSELF, "HANDICAPPED CHILDREN."

IT IS AN UNHAPPY PHRASE WHICH ATTRACTS ATTENTION TO THE DISABILITIES RATHER THAN TO THE POSITIVE ABILITIES, APTITUDES AND INTERESTS POSSESSED BY THESE CHILDREN.

INSTITUTES SUCH AS THIS CONSTANTLY REMIND US THAT CHILDREN WITH HANDICAPS HAVE SIGNIFICANT ASSETS AND POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH PROVIDED THEY ARE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEY CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM.

THEREFORE, IN THE EDUCATION OF THESE CHILDREN, THE PROSPECTS OF THEIR SUCCESS IS GREATLY ENHANCED IF WE BUILD ON THEIR ASSETS WITH A FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE LIMITATIONS THAT THE HANDICAPS MAY IMPOSE.

VIEWED THIS WAY, WE ARE ABLE TO PLACE OUR EMPHASIS ON THE CHILDREN FIRST AND THE DISABILITY SECOND.

INDEED, THE EXAMPLE SET BY MANY YOUNG PEOPLE WHO RECEIVE THEIR TRAINING HERE, IS AN EXAMPLE WE CAN ALL PROFITABLY FOLLOW.

FOR, IN LIFE, IT IS ALL TOO EASY TO GIVE IN; TO IMAGINE THAT THE CHALLENGES WE FACE ARE TOO DIFFICULT TO SURMOUNT.

WHAT IS DEMONSTRATED HERE, IS THAT IN SPITE OF THE DIFFICULTIES AND THE CHALLENGES, THERE ARE ALSO REWARDS.

WHEN THESE REWARDS ARE GAINED IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY, AND THROUGH PERSISTENCE AND PERSEVERANCE, THEY CAN BE VERY GRATIFYING INDEED.

THE COURAGE OF THOSE WITH HANDICAPS, OF THEIR PARENTS AND THEIR RELATIVES, IS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION TO US ALL WHO WITNESS DAILY THEIR WILLINGNESS AND THEIR SUCCESS IN OVERCOMING DIFFICULTY.

A GOOD DEAL IS SAID THESE DAYS ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING YOUNG PEOPLE GROWING UP IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX SOCIETY.

INEVITABLY, FOR SOME CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS, THE FUTURE MUST SEEM, AT TIMES, CONFUSING AND DISPIRITING.

THE CHALLENGES FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN, AND FOR THEIR PARENTS ARE MUCH GREATER.

THE PROCESS OF GROWING UP, OF LEARNING, OF ACQUIRING SPECIAL SKILLS TO ENABLE CHILDREN WITH HANDICAPS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY - NONE OF THESE ARE EASY.

ASSISTANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THESE CHILDREN MUST BE A MATTER OF CONCERN TO US ALL.

CERTAINLY, THE FAMILY MUST NOT BE LEFT TO PROVIDE THIS ASSISTANCE ENTIRELY FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES.

THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY, HAVE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND THEIR ROLE TO PLAY.

I KNOW THIS ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY HAS BEEN MET WITH UNPARALLELED SUCCESS BY THE ROYAL NEW SOUTH WALES INSTITUTE FOR DEAF AND BLIND CHILDREN.

IT MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO LOSE MOMENTUM.

ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCTIVE ROLES FOR THE GOVERNMENT LIES IN ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, AND IN PARTICULAR, INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THIS.

AS A GOVERNMENT WE ARE PROUD OF OUR REPUTATION AS ECONOMIC MANAGERS.

BUT TALK OF INFLATION AND INTEREST RATES TENDS TO OBSCURE OUR PROVEN RECORD OF CARE AND CONCERN FOR THOSE IN NEED.

IMPROVED CARE FOR THE DISABLED IS CENTRAL TO OUR COMMITMENT.

OVER MANY YEARS NOW, WE HAVE PROVIDED FINANCE TO COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS THROUGH THE HANDICAPPED PERSONS' WELFARE PROGRAMME.

IN THIS WAY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS HELPED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF FACILITIES FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND ADULTS.

LAST YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED SUBSTANTIAL FUNDS TO ELIGIBLE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS UNDER THIS PROGRAMME.

WE ALSO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES TO ASSIST HANDICAPPED PEOPLE WHO WANT SO MUCH TO PLAY A USEFUL PART IN THE COMMUNITY.

BECAUSE OF OUR BELIEF IN THE GREAT NEED FOR THIS TYPE OF ASSISTANCE TO BE MORE FREELY AVAILABLE, THE GOVERNMENT IN 1977 WIDENED THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR REMEDIAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES.

WHERE FORMERLY, REHABILITATION HAD BEEN AVAILABLE ONLY TO THOSE WITH A REASONABLE PROSPECT OF EMPLOYMENT; IN NOVEMBER 1977, THIS WAS EXTENDED TO THE MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED TO ENABLE THEM TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IN THEIR OWN HOMES.

FROM THAT DATE ONWARDS, THIS REHABILITATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE TO THESE PEOPLE.

AND LAST YEAR, THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT MADE INCREASED PROVISION FOR THIS PURPOSE.

OF COURSE, 1981 HAS BEEN DECLARED BY THE UNITED NATIONS AS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR DISABLED PERSONS.

SUCH A DECLARATION HAS THE WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT; AND WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO IT BEING A YEAR OF ACTION AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA.

I HOPE THAT IT WILL ENCOURAGE A COMBINED EFFORT, FROM DISABLED PEOPLE, VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS, GOVERNMENTS AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE, TO PROMOTE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF THE DISABLED.

THE SUCCESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR DISABLED PERSONS WILL BE MEASURED BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT PROVIDES FURTHER IMPETUS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES TO ASSIST THE INTEGRATION OF HANDICAPPED PEOPLE INTO THE COMMUNITY.

THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO AREA OF GOVERNMENT, OR COMMUNITY ACTIVITY, WHICH WOULD NOT BE IN A POSITION TO MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO AUSTRALIA'S OBSERVATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR; AND I URGE THEM TO DO SO.

IT IS MOST APPROPRIATE THAT DURING THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO 1981, THIS OUTSTANDING COMPLEX SHOULD BE OPENED.

THE GOVERNMENT IS PROUD OF ITS PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE INSTITUTE IN ENABLING THIS FACILITY TO COME ON LINE.

BUT THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INSTITUTE ARE SUBSTANTIALLY ASSISTED BY SUPPORT FROM MANY SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY.

IN PARTICULAR, I COMMEND MOST WARMLY THE ROYAL NEW SOUTH WALES BOWLING ASSOCIATION.

THROUGH ITS AFFILIATED BOWLING CLUBS, AND MAGNIFICENTLY-SUPPORTED BY THOUSANDS OF BOWLERS THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES, IT HAS RAISED OVER A QUARTER OF A MILLION DOLLARS FOR THE INSTITUTE IN 18 MONTHS.

THERE COULD BE NO MORE FITTING WAY FOR YOUR ASSOCIATION TO COMMEMORATE ITS CENTENARY THAN IN CONTRIBUTING, SO UNSELFISHLY, TO SUCH A WORTHWHILE CHARITY AS THE INSTITUTE FOR DEAF AND BLIND CHILDREN IN THIS STATE.

I KNOW THAT THE SAME SPIRIT MOTIVATES THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANNEL TEN IN THE CONDUCT, EVERY TWO YEARS, OF THEIR TELETHON; AND THE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONCERNED CITIZENS AND ORGANISATIONS TO THE CHANNEL TEN APPEAL HAVE HELPED LESSEN THE BURDEN OF BUILDING COSTS FOR THIS SCHOOL.

AND SO IT IS WITH THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES WHOSE EFFORTS HAVE HELPED GIVE THESE YOUNG AUSTRALIANS NEW DIRECTION IN LIFE.

I HOPE THAT MANY PEOPLE WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE AT FIRST HAND THE WORK WHICH IS CARRIED OUT HERE BY STAFF AND PUPILS.

I KNOW THAT IN THIS NEW SCHOOL ALL OF THE STAFF, INCLUDING THE TEACHING STAFF, ARE SUPPORTED BY THE INSTITUTE WHICH MAKES ITS EXISTENCE, AND ITS ACHIEVEMENTS, A PROUD RESULT OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE, THE COMMUNITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT THESE SERVICES WILL BENEFIT IMMENSELY THE CHILDREN WHO USE THEM.

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE AMONGST YOU.

I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING OF THE PROGRESS THAT YOU MAKE IN THE FUTURE.

TO THE YOUNG CHILDREN, I EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT YOU WILL ALL WORK HARD WITH YOUR TEACHERS; THAT YOU WILL UTILISE TO THE FULL THIS SPLENDID ENVIRONMENT; AND THAT BY YOUR EFFORTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS YOU WILL BE AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL.

I HAVE MUCH PLEASURE IN DECLARING OPEN THIS SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR MULTI-HANDICAPPED BLIND CHILDREN.

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