



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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ELECTORATE TALK

Last Thursday I announced in the Parliament that there will be a general election on October 18. The result of this election will shape Australia's future for many years to come. That is why, in a difficult and demanding world, the decision to be made by voting Australians is a critical one.

It is a decision to select a Party for Government which is capable of successfully meeting the challenges faced by Australia in the decade ahead. Our record over the last five years and our policies for the future entitle us as a Government, and as a nation, to great confidence.

For five years ago we inherited an economy which threatened Australia's future security. Yet today Australia's economy is the envy of much of the industrialised world. Inflation, while still too high, is lower than the average of major industrialised countries; and much lower than the level of inflation in America and Britain. And the claim of any Party to Government in the 80s must be based, above all else, on its capacity to contain inflation and secure sustainable economic growth. Because everything we want as a people and as a nation depends upon that.

This we have done; this, the Labor Party failed to achieve in the 70s and, on the eve of this election, they still have no anti-inflation strategy. It is because of the success of our anti-inflation strategy that business confidence in high and overseas investment is being attracted to Australia. As a result, in mining and manufacturing alone, \$29 million of investment is either under way or about to go. One needs only to remember the investment collapse that occurred under Labor in the 70s, to realise the extent of our investment achievements in the last five years.

Our rural industries are looking good again; and rural exports last year were the highest for a decade. Of course, the Government is aware that significant parts of Australia are now in the grip of severe drought conditions. It is because of these unpredictable seasonable variations, faced by Australian farmers, that the Government has consistently provided incentives and support for rural industries including comprehensive drought relief programmes. And these will continue.

This is not the time for a Party in Government which is unsympathetic and hostile to rural interests. The most pleasing barometer of Australia's improved economic health has been the remarkable growth in employment over the last year.

While unemployment is still too high, in the 12 months to July this year, employment in Australia rose by 212,000, the highest annual increase for 10 years. And a recent survey by the Bureau of Statistics shows that expected investment for the year ahead is 40 per cent higher than expectations which existed at this time last year. It is our ability to sustain these expectations on which we base our claim to Government in the 80s.

For it is only through the creation of national wealth that any community or government can meet its responsibilities and provide for those in need. Because of our success in strengthening the economy over the last five years, and in spite of much needed restraint in many areas of Government expenditure, we have been able to maintain our pioneering commitment to those in our community who, through no fault of their own, need our assistance.

\$600 million has been spent on man power and training programmes for the unemployed. 570,000 Australians have been assisted by these programmes in the last four years. Over 230,000 will be assisted this year. We have built 500 new self-contained hostels and nursing homes for the aged and this programme is to continue. And our assistance to families, the handicapped, migrants and Aborigines has provided new and imaginative benefits.

The Government's energy policies, in particular our oil parity pricing policy, are making sure that Australia will maintain its energy independence in the future. Expenditure on exploration and development is five times what it was in 1975. During this year, 50-60 on-shore wells are likely to be drilled compared with 6 in 1975. And in the last four years, one billion barrels of petroleum liquids have been added to Australia's economically recoverable reserves. Momentum such as this, which has been generated in so many areas of national activity, must be maintained.

Yet our Opposition, the Labor Party, because of its policy and platform commitments to date threatens our hard won achievements; and challenges the very foundations that have so painstakingly been established. At a time when international, academic and business commentators point to the absolute priority that must be given to containing inflation, the Labor Party have announced massive spending programmes which would dramatically increase the national debt, fuel inflation, promote unemployment and threaten the national confidence and capacity that have been so successfully generated in the last five years.

In only six areas, Labor have announced policies to spend more than \$2,500 million of taxpayers' money - of your money. And, almost unbelievably, there are more than 250 other programmes to which the Labor Party is committed, and which have not yet been costed. What Labor never understand is that governments have no resources of their own. When the Labor Party promises massive spending programmes, they are effectively promising to take money from you - your neighbour and from all Australian taxpayers. They are promising something of yours. It needs to be understood that what governments spend cannot be spent by Australian families.

The productivity, the production of this country is limited. It is finite. In any one year if government consumes more, families must consume less. That is why, quite deliberately of course, Labor avoids costing these programmes. Indeed Mr. Hayden is on record as saying, "we have to present our policies in an attractive and digestible form ... now this requires us to be selective." This simply means that Mr. Hayden will hide some of his commitments from the nation, in the weeks ahead, because he knows they would mean a colossal drain on taxpayers' money.

They would plant inflation, once again, deep in the national soil. These consequences must be resisted and rejected. Economic responsibility will continue to be the watch-word of my Government in the 80s. Because it is on that economic responsibility that your standards of living can, and will, rise.

We will continue to restrain Government expenditure. And by the containment of inflation we will continue to encourage the development of all Australia's natural resources; including the great and proven creative resources of the Australian people. We will continue, as in the past, to work with all Australians, to see that we secure the bright prospects that now lie before us.

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