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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, 14 JUNE 1981

ELECTORATE TALK

The first Parliamentary session for this year ended last Friday. We began the sitting with a great deal to do and we have achieved all our objectives. It has been one of the most significant and constructive legislative sessions for many years.

118 Bills were passed during the twelve sitting weeks and these Bills demonstrate in the plainest terms the Government's direction and its determination to act in the interests of all Australians. Our legislative programme re-affirms our vision of growth and development for Australia, a vision of opportunity, security, prosperity stability and concern for those in need. This legislative programme also underlines unmistakably our commitment to strong and effective, yet limited, Government.

The historic and visionary review of Commonwealth functions set the overall pattern of the session's legislation based upon Liberal principles. That review led to some 350 decisions which were aimed at eliminating duplication between Commonwealth and state governments, passing to private enterprise activities which it can handle better than Government, and rationalising the functions which properly belong to the Commonwealth. Limited Government does not signify mean or ungenerous government. What it does is establish the conditions under which there can be increased opportunities for all and better care for those in need. It must not be forgotten that while the review will lead to some expenditure cuts, it does not lead to any reduction in income security arrangements.

The Government's new health policy again expresses our philosophy. It provides incentives to insurance and encourages people to look after themselves. But at the same time our health policy looks after those in need, and indeed it provides for free health care for about 3 million people. And, it eliminates the situation where the health costs of the well-to-do were entirely borne by taxpayers and means that one bureaucracy, rather than two, will be involved in running each state's public hospitals.

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A further major achievement in this session has been the new financial arrangement between the Commonwealth and the states. The Commonwealth has legislated to provide a more stable basis for the grants which the states receive from the Commonwealth.

Since 1975, the Commonwealth Government has been fundamentally concerned to curb its own expenditure, for the Government believes that taxpayers cannot be required to pay more and more every year. It is the Government's view that all levels of Government must share in the task of easing the tax burden. And while talking of taxes there is for the coming year a tax cut which will leave \$500 million more in taxpayers' pockets, and the rebate on health insurance is expected to reduce the Commonwealth's revenue by a further \$500 million in the following year. In recent years a considerable number of gross and anti-social tax avoidance schemes have come into existence, and in this session the Government was able to bring forward a comprehensive new anti-tax avoidance provision designed to eliminate these schemes.

On top of these measures, this session has seen legislation for the new Human Rights Commission, and for freedom of information. Both these pieces of legislation are important Liberal initiatives, and the freedom of information legislation in particular makes an important start in an area in which Governments have talked for a long time and done nothing. It was this Liberal Government which acted, where other governments had only talked.

In addition there were new airline arrangements which established an independent airfares committee, and which will convert TAA into a public company and increase competition in the airline industry.

It is true that there were pressures during the session, that is inevitable when such a volume of legislation is presented for debate and passage through Parliament. But it has been possible to achieve a most satisfactory result. It has been an exceptionally productive session, which will have far-reaching effects of tremendous benefit to all Australians.