



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

FRIDAY, 22 OCTOBER 1982

CIVIC RECEPTION, PORT PIRIE

Thank you for your welcome and your hospitality and I will take note of your offer of land and services for the uranium enrichment industry. It has been exciting to see how people here in the Iron Triangle want to grasp the development opportunities that I hope are there just waiting to be grasped.

We went for a long while in the 1950's and 1960's believing development and program just happened, that the economy would just grow, that jobs would automatically be available and our standard of life would automatically increase, but then we came into some more difficult times and the world itself is in a difficult phase, maybe the worst since before the World War. We now know that the future is only going to be secure if we go out and grasp it and take advantage of the opportunities that are open to us, as and when they come, and as and when we can jointly make those opportunities come.

There are opportunities ahead of South Australia, opportunities ahead of the Iron Triangle and the possibility of real developments that would mean an enormous amount for this part of the state and indeed, as I believe, to the whole state. The developments at Roxby Downs themselves would be enormously important. Doug Anthony gave some of the figures in Parliament this week. The expected expenditure is nearly \$1,500 billion, up to 18,000 jobs during the construction phase, about 8,000 or a little better during production and up to \$650 million in each year's annual production. They are big figures, it is big money, it is a lot of work and a lot of opportunities not only for the people who are directly involved in that kind of project but also for all the service industries and other people who participate in that kind of venture.

As you know there has been the uranium enrichment study which has been operating under Commonwealth auspices, and David Tonkin and the State have been co-operating very closely in that. They have come out with a report which said they believed the site for an enrichment industry should be in South Australia or somewhere in Queensland. Now that puts me immediately between David Tonkin and his arguments and Joh Bjelke-Petersen and his. For a while at least I have to be impartial in relation to that, but I can say that the arguments that South Australia has put are very strongly based,

they are very forcefully argued and they are ones that obviously carry a great deal of weight. It doesn't need emphasising that they will be given full consideration when the matter finally comes for the Federal Cabinet to determine. But to know that there are areas that want the industry, where there is a local community that would welcome the industry, of course all of that is paramount because you cannot force industries on a district, you cannot force industries on a local government. An industry, and especially an important one which involves large investment, wants to be in an area where it is going to be welcomed, where it can become part of a community and where the two can go ahead together. To have been able to see the warmth and vigour of your own advocacy and not just yours Mr Mayor, but of other people in this part of the State for that industry is a good thing, and it obviously is an attitude that advances South Australia's claims to the ultimate site of the enrichment industry.

Having said that I hope you won't mind if I make one or two other comments because there was some reporting some time ago about alleged changes in the Australian Labor Party's policy to the uranium industry. Mr Hayden made it perfectly plain that there had in fact been no changes because he made several statements saying our commitment to end the uranium industry is as strong as ever it was, and that is one the record and it is undisputed. If you read the words of the policy it is very plain. The industry would be ended. Now if an industry is going to be ended where it already exists in the Northern Territory or in other parts of the Commonwealth does anyone believe that people committed to that objective would allow Roxby Downs to start to operate because so much of it would be dependent on processing of the uranium in the mine. Or that they would allow or encourage an enrichment industry to be established in South Australia or Queensland or anywhere else in the Commonwealth, it just wouldn't happen. Private enterprise, the people who are going to put up the dollars and cents for this kind of industry are not going to do it unless they know that governments are in a full-blooded way in support of the development and that they know they are not going to be frustrated by policies of obstruction.

It is also worth noting and recalling that this industry in other countries has now operated with a remarkable safety record over a long period of years. It is one in which the homes and the factories of millions of people in Europe and the northern hemisphere are dependent upon nuclear power for their livelihoods. To keep their factories operating and to be able to light and heat their homes. We in Australia need to understand that. Most Australians do understand it and it is obvious that here, you understand it completely.

I hope that it has been demonstrated that the Commonwealth Government in recent times and together with the State Governments which is represented by John Olsen here today, have sought to work closely with local government and indeed assist local governments to meet some of the problems and challenges that they have had in front of them.

When we first came into office we had an option of supporting local government through specific programs when somebody in Canberra would say we want to do certain things and then to be in part of the program, every local government in the Commonwealth, all 900 of them, would have had to do the same thing. But we rejected that approach totally and determined on a policy of making a proportion of all your income taxes available to local government and that is now a substantial sum of several hundred million dollars a year available to local government to be spent as you Mr Mayor, your Aldermen and your counterparts in all other municipalities to determine. We believed in the end that that was the best way for the Commonwealth to support local government because it is not we, or public servants in Canberra who know your priorities, you know them and if there are some dollars from the Federal tax bill which should go towards local government, it is you who should determine how those dollars should be spent.

The other thing that I would like to mention is the Bicentennial Road Development Program which I think is an imaginative one as we work towards 1988. I hope that we can cast our eyes to the future and have in mind the number of things that can and should be done to help mark Australia's 200 years. The Commonwealth has approved in principle and also the money involved to back up the principle, in the Bicentennial Program that the Authority under John Reid has recommended to us. That program is now going around to the states to see if they also agree and if they do then the draft program can be published and local government, everyone else will know where they fit into it. There are Commonwealth funds for important and national projects but we also hope that many things can be done as we cast our eyes ahead to that time and given a particular bicentennial focus, and they might be things that have been done in any case, but perhaps done a bit better in a more imaginative way because we are leading up to the bicentennial. To give one example, we provide funds for buying paintings and works of art for the National Gallery but for the funds that will be provided between now and 1988, we have said this is how much it will be, it will be the Bicentennial Collection and it is something that people can look forward to putting together. If we look around at all levels of government, whether it is local, state or federal, there are many things which I think are going to be able to be given a bicentennial focus and that will help us all celebrate a very significant year for Australia but at a cost that all our taxpayers can reasonably afford.

One of the programs that we are funding separately and distinctly from the program recommended by the Authority is the Bicentennial Road Development Program which will in fact have about \$2,500 billion spent on it and governments are not going to be able to snatch the money afterwards and put it into the general tax pool because the general legislation runs out in 1988. But by that time we hope there will have been an enormous advance in the construction of national highways, the basic National Highway Program should have been concluded. There will be significant increases of funds for arterial roads, urban arterial roads and if the state wanted to support urban transport systems also. Of course additional funds for local government for roads distinctly under the control of local government. This is going to mean greater resources for local government in the five years ahead of us, much greater than would otherwise have been the case and I think we will see a transformation of Australia's road system. That doesn't just help people who live in provincial cities and country towns, it is going to help all Australians, help all our commerce, it will lower transport costs and I hope it will reduce the road tolls and help Australians get about this country to be able to see and learn something more about Australia. This also is one of the bicentennial programs that the Commonwealth is supporting and it is one that has been fairly warmly support around the Commonwealth.

I would like to thank you for your hospitality. Against I am glad to not and thank you for your offer to find a paddock for the enrichment industry. I will advise John Carrick of that and I hope that it is not going to be all that long before final decisions can be made. It does offer great opportunities for this part of the State indeed for the whole of South Australia and we need those opportunities if young Australians are to have the opportunities they need and the jobs that they want to look after themselves and their families when their turn comes.

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