



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

FRIDAY, 22 OCTOBER 1982

CIVIC RECEPTION, PORT AUGUSTA

We have had a useful discussion with your council earlier this morning on a number of matters of their concern and they will be followed up. You have always shown a very marked degree of civic pride in this city and I think you have a great deal of pride in what you have achieved.

You know that our attitude to local government is one which we have tried to make sure that local government have available to it the resources which are necessary to meet their own responsibilities. We don't believe that people in Canberra can sit down and say well local government must do this or that and therefore we'll introduce a whole host of programs which would limit your own flexibility. We believe in supplementing the resources of local government in a way which have either made it possible for local governments to do more of the things that they wanted to do, and if they wanted to choose another path in some cases (inaudible) made it possible, then not to raise rates by as much as they otherwise would have had to increase them.

I don't know if I should tell the story but I was visiting Burke in western NSW on one occasion in 1976-77 and they said they hadn't put up their rates since 1968, as a farmer that is an example that I would dearly have loved my own local government authorities to follow. I am afraid they had other ambitions and hadn't attempted to.

There are significant developments occurring here the Northern power station having a good deal of money spent on it and I would like to draw attention to the fact that the last Loan Council and Premiers' Conference, we made decisions that released the development of electricity authorities from the shackles of the Commonwealth or Loan Council control and now it is a matter for the state electricity authorities or for state governments as to how much money they raise. I don't think the alleged control of the Loans Council ever really made much difference because if you didn't get official loan funds the electricity authority knew how to get the money from trade credits for leasing arrangements of one kind or another. The earlier controls were operating very much as a farce. I suppose that is one of the reasons why we said we should abandon it and people should do their own thing in a responsible way. I think it is a sensible change and a sensible advance because I don't believe state governments or electricity authorities are going to be in the business of erecting power stations just for the fun of it. They erect power stations if people are going to use

the power and if they start to erect power stations in the capacity to (inaudible) and I have no doubt that the erectors of whatever state it might be would take it out on some future occasion.

That is a sensible devolution of authority of control from Canberra back where it ought to be in charge of the states, or particular authorities.

In the last Budget we introduced a new bicentenary roads program and it is going to be financed by a special levy under sunset legislation on distillate and on petrol. I found that people don't mind paying that additional levy because it is going to be a great benefit to road construction around Australia. Substantial progress will be made with the national highways program, there will be much greater funds for urban arterial and rural arterial roads and there will be additional funds also available for local government to spend as they think fit on their own motorways. As we approach the Australian bicentennial year in 1988 we are going to look forward to a time when road networks throughout this country is much better than we had ever dreamt it could be and this will be as a result of this bicentennial program.

I hope shortly Ralph Hunt will have collected the various proposals for construction under the program from all the states and put them together and then it is proposed there will be a major launch of the program in which everyone is going to be able to see what national highways, what arterial roads, what urban transport proposals are being accepted under the program. About \$2,500 billion in all and then, progressively over the next five years we will be able to see what advances are being made under it.

We are (inaudible) in the states. We are going to insist that big construction signs be put up wherever the works are in progress which indicates that it is some of your bicentennial money being spent on road construction. Normally we provide the money and the states put up the sign (inaudible). We thought we would get in first and say that the signs are going to have to go up saying that it is part of the bicentennial program.

In South Australia (inaudible) funds for roads will go up substantially over the next two or three years in total. In 1982/83 about an increase of 30% and the next year about another 30%. In this year the funds for local roads is going up about 24% and 18% again next year. This is providing a substantial supplement to the standard road program where there have been a number of representations from local government that not enough was being spent. Everyone is going to benefit from this program, not just the people who live in particular areas, businesses, commerce, mining developments and tourists who just want to go about this country and see what they can of it.

One of the things which holds up existing prospects for the future is the development of Roxby Downs. The proposed expenditure is about \$1.4 billion. Doug Anthony in answer to a question in the Parliament this week indicated that there could be between 9,000 and 18,000 jobs during the construction phase, up to 8,000 or a little more during the production phase and up to \$650 million worth of annual production. These are prospects

that would hold great hopes for development in the Iron Triangle. If Roxby Downs then I have no doubt that David Tonkin will be pressing firmly to see that the final decision in relation to uranium enrichment is for a site in this state.

At the moment I still have to be impartial between the states because I am not sure if David Tonkin on one hand and Joh Bjelke-Petersen on the other would (inaudible). The report that has just been produced indicates that the favoured sites are in South Australia or in Queensland. I know that David Tonkin has substantial arguments that he put with great vigour which he believes that South Australia should have first priority over those sites. I would expect him to say that but let me only say that I believe the arguments he puts, he puts with great strength, vigour and they obviously carry great validity. It would make an enormous amount of difference for South Australia if you had the Roxby Downs project going ahead with all the money being spent on it and the jobs and opportunities for the Iron Triangle and this city, and if that (inaudible) my decisions in relation to uranium enrichment it would do an enormous amount for this state. I know that is what the Premier is working for with all the vigour that he can command. I hope that you don't think I am being (inaudible) but this could only happen if uranium is mined at Roxby Downs, it cannot happen otherwise. When you have a situation in Europe, Japan and many other places the continued operating of their factories, the heating of their homes in winters that are much colder than anything we have ever found in Australia, they are becoming increasingly dependent upon power from nuclear energy, then I really do think it is a ridiculous policy to say that Australia could not be assisting and providing the power and the fuel that is necessary for those purposes. It goes ahead anyway, it will go ahead safer if Australia is involved in the business than if it is all left to other people. Policies which show that the uranium industry has to be killed off, that it cannot proceed, I think are policies of despair and certainly policies that would deny enormous opportunities for this city and the Iron Triangle. These are some of the questions which South Australia will be making a judgement in two or three weeks time. I wish I had a few votes in that election but I don't.

Thank you for your hospitality, I welcomed the opportunity of meeting you and your council and others of your community and Tamie and I appreciate your hospitality very much indeed.