



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

17 FEBRUARY 1988

The Structural Adjustment Committee of Cabinet met today with the principal players in Australia's waterfront industry. The reduction of shore-based shipping costs is crucial to Australia's international competitiveness, and a central element in the Government's general economic reform strategy.

Thirteen Ministers, including all the senior economic Ministers, attended the two hour meeting with participants in the Government's Waterfront Strategy group, who between them represent the full spectrum of importers, exporters, port managers, stevedoring companies and the waterfront unions.

The Committee received full reports on the progress that has been achieved over the fifteen months since the Strategy process was set in train. While it was acknowledged that there continue to be real problems on the waterfront, in port administration and in linkages with land transport, it was made clear that very real progress had already been achieved, including:

- . successful second tier wage negotiations under the co-ordination of the Stevedoring Industry Review Committee, involving for the first time port by port discussions and agreements leading to significant improvements in work and management practices, reductions in manning and other efficiency measures;
- . implementation of productivity based container packing operations at depots in Melbourne and Sydney;
- . joint venture initiatives by the Waterside Workers Federation at small ports in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania which in some cases have halved the cost of stevedoring of grain and other cargoes; and
- . improvements in truck-queuing and related problems.

The Committee was impressed with the general degree of optimism that was expressed by the industry representatives, all of whom expressed confidence in the possibility of achieving significant improvements in waterfront and port efficiency, productivity and reliability.

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All of the industry representatives emphasised the importance of continuing with the present process of extensive consultations with both users and providers of port stevedoring services, under the umbrella guidance of the Inter-State Commission. A draft report is expected from the Commission in July, which will outline the possible elements of the major package of industry reform measures.

On the industrial relations front while problems still remain, it was recognised by all parties that significant progress has occurred in recent years and, further, that all parties are committed to further improvements within the framework of the Waterfront Strategy and bilateral arrangements like the Stevedoring Industry Review Committee.

The Government will continue to liaise very closely with the Waterfront Strategy group through the Minister for Transport and Communications. Ministers were impressed by the evident commitment of all parties and their willingness to work co-operatively to achieve change. Accordingly there is a firm basis for hope that the consultative processes that have been set in train should result not only in the resolution of a number of smaller obstacles to efficiency along the way, but the achievement by the end of the year of a broad package of measures that will achieve industry, trade union and Government acceptance.

Attending the meeting with Ministers were:

- . Sir John Moore, Chairman of the Stevedoring Industry Review Committee
- . Mr Ted Butcher, President of the Inter-State Commission
- . Mr Ivan Deveson, Managing Director, Nissan Australia and Chairman of the Importer/Exporter Panel
- . Mr Ian Webber, Managing Director, Mayne Nickless, and Chairman of the Industry Committee of the Waterfront Strategy group
- . Mr John Jenkin, President of the Association of Australian Ports and Marine Authorities
- . Mr Tas Bull, General Secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation
- . Mr Colin Coventry, Executive Director of the Association of Employers of Waterside Labour, and
- . Mr Ian Court, Industrial Officer, ACTU

SHORE BASED SHIPPING STRATEGY

Inter-State Commission

Role

- Oversee and report to Government on progress of the Committees.
- Assist the Committees and the panel developing solutions to problems.
- Develop comprehensive data base to allow efficiency of the industry to be assessed.
- Draw up long term integrated plan for development of the industry.

Industry Committee

Committee will oversee working parties comprising representatives drawn from

- transport operators
- stevedoring companies
- freight forwarders
- unions
- importers/exporters
- port authorities
- other government agencies

Role

- To bring action to bear on day-to-day problems inhibiting efficiency particularly communication arrangements and co-ordination between the various elements of the industry.

Stevedoring Industry Review Committee

Members

- Association of Employers of Waterside Labour
- Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia
- Australian Stevedores' Association
- Australian Foreman Stevedores' Association
- Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union of Australia
- Australian Council of Trade Unions

Role

- To consider all aspects of improving efficiency and productivity in the stevedoring industry.
- To implement changes to management and work practices as necessary to achieve improved efficiency.

Importer/Exporter Panel

Membership

- Representatives of major importer and exporters of rural, mining and manufacturing goods

Role

- To bring forward for consideration by other committees and the ISC issues causing problems or increasing costs to importers and exporters.
- To liaise with committees on the progress being made on considering issues and proposing solutions to overcome problems faced by shippers.

Australian Transport Advisory Council's Standing Committee on Transport

Members

- Federal and State Transport and Marine Officials

Role

- To oversee action being undertaken on port and rail matters.

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