



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP,
ADDRESS TO ST VINCENT DE PAUL, TOWNSVILLE, 15 NOVEMBER 1992

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We support voluntary agencies in programs with funny names. One we call SAAP, Supportive Assistance Accommodation Program, and that program is recurrent expenditure which we provide to voluntary agencies for overnight and other accommodation and care. We have another thing called CAP, the Capital Assistance Program, which builds the accommodation which provides for those people. We have the general relief program where, if people need a bit of money for the gas bill or the light bill or food or whatever it might be, we supply some money as well.

We're not the dominant supplier but we're becoming more significant in support for the voluntary agencies. In the One Nation program announced earlier this year, I put some extra money in for the voluntary agencies this year because of the problems the recession has brought.

But the thing that will always matter the most when dealing with the underprivileged or the weak or the poor or the sick, will be in this sort of society public provision. That's why we must keep a strong social security system. We should reject those, as the American electorate have just rejected those, who have argued the line that if we support the poor it drags the rest of us down.

I might say to you that some of my opponents are arguing that - if you put a hand out to pull the poor up behind you it instead pulls the rest of us back. I don't believe that. I think as a community we've got to go along together. Sure, some will earn more in this community and some will earn less, but the gap shouldn't be so great as to see an underclass actually occur, where it actually grates away from the main community.

The public system has got a role to play in providing a good, secure safety net for people. And that's why I was very pleasantly supportive when I found myself able to tick off the sentences in the statements of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice and Peace in recent months, saying these very things. That community value is the value that we have to play to, and not the value of the individual. Private initiative and private reward have their place, but it shouldn't be the dominant culture of Australia. It has to be a community and a broad culture.

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