



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP

HOWARD TO CUT 22,000 GREEN JOBS

John Howard proposed today to set up a new program to enable young people to work on environmental projects. He claims the program would provide placements for up to 2,000 people.

Unfortunately for Mr Howard, this proposal mimics a far more comprehensive set of initiatives already in place through *Working Nation* - namely:

- 9,000 Landcare and Environment Action Plan (LEAP) places
- 5,000 Jobskills places
- 10,000 Regional Environment Employment (REEP) and New Work Opportunities places.

These programs are funded through the \$9 billion, four-year *Working Nation* initiative - an initiative that the Coalition is committed to cutting.

Since the Coalition is cutting *Working Nation*, in which there are 24,000 environment jobs, the net effect of Mr Howard's plan would appear to be a decrease in green employment of 22,000.

Mr Howard has been reported as saying that the source of the money for this proposal will be announced later in the campaign. This can only mean through cuts to LEAP and other successful Government job programs - either that, or he plans to return to the Telstra magic pudding.

Through LEAP - a community-based program - the Commonwealth will be spending \$106 million in 1995-96 to help young unemployed people to gain practical experience in Landcare, environment, conservation and cultural heritage.

Importantly, LEAP is open to young unemployed people aged 15 to 20 years. Mr Howard's proposal ignores 15 to 16 year olds. Early school leavers in this age group are among the most disadvantaged in our community.

In addition, by restricting his proposal to 17 to 20 year olds, he is making a mockery of his promise to remove "rigid age requirements" from labour market programs.

On Monday this week the Prime Minister announced a new Green Volunteers initiative as part of Young Australia. This initiative will enable at least 2 000 young Australians per year to participate in environmental projects on a voluntary basis. They can do so on a full-time basis on projects up to a month's duration or part time on projects that require 1 to 3 days work per week over four weeks.

In Young Australia we also announced:

- making LEAP available to small employers and farm families by allowing single LEAP placements (in addition to the existing project-based placements)
- linking LEAP programs with traineeships to turn green jobs into permanent employment.

Mr Howard's second foray into the environment is no more credible than his first.

In truth, after a lifetime of never going near it, Mr Howard is not at home with the environment. And it shows. His new plan is a miniature version of government programs which are already operating: programs which are already employing many thousands of Australians in the essential business of caring for our environment - programs which the Coalition is determined to cut.

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