



PRIME MINISTER

MARITIME UNION OF AUSTRALIA MEETING

Today, at their request, I met Ms Jennie George, President of the ACTU, the Joint Secretaries of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), John Coombs and Tony Papaconstuntinos and other officials of the union.

I reiterated the Government's commitment to industrial relations reform and that it was our desire to achieve that reform in a co-operative atmosphere and without confrontation.

I also stressed that the Government would fully meet its pre-election commitments on industrial relations, particularly that any worker entering an Australian Workplace Agreement would at least receive the take home pay he or she would be entitled to under the relevant award.

The Liberal and National Parties have the clear authority of the Australian people to implement practical industrial relations changes enunciated openly and often long before the election.

When the Minister for Industrial Relations and I met the ACTU President and Secretary on 12 April, it had been agreed that there would be a meeting between the Government, the ACTU and representatives of the MUA to discuss maritime reform and, in particular, to establish if possible agreement on facts relating to the industry.

At our meeting today, it was agreed that that meeting should be expedited.

I made it clear to the MUA officials that the Government was in no way discriminating against the MUA or its members. Our goals are effective freedom of choice and the opportunity for better pay for better work for all Australians.

The union delegation also raised with me their concerns regarding implementation of the Coalition's pre-election commitment to remove the tax benefits provided under the *Ships (Capital Grants) Act*. Legislation giving effect to this commitment is currently before the Parliament. I declined their request that the Government suspend action on this legislation, however I said that the union representatives would be free to raise this or, indeed, any other relevant matter at the forthcoming meeting on maritime reform.

17 May, 1996