



A large, handwritten mark resembling a stylized '7' or a signature, enclosed in a faint circular outline.

PRIME MINISTER

16 April 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
LAUNCH OF GREEN CORPS PROJECT
TINCHI TAMBA WET LANDS - BRISBANE**

E&OE.....

Thank you very much Elizabeth. To Senator Ian Macdonald, to Mr Tony Abbott, Teresa Gambaro, the member for Petrie; Gary Hardgrave the member for Moreton; the Mayor of the Shire of Redcliffe, representatives of the Brisbane City Council, other guests, ladies and gentlemen. I'm really very pleased indeed to be associated with the formal launch of the Green Corps.

It is appropriate that Tony Abbott is with us this morning because I have to give Tony some of the credit a couple of years ago way back when we were still in Opposition when we were talking about ideas and concepts that might fire the enthusiasm of people, particularly young people about Australia's environmental future. Tony Abbott spent some time putting ideas to me about the validity of having a Green Corps and I was very heavily influenced by those views and it is appropriate is with us and is associated with the launch. This is yet another element of the Coalition's very strong commitment to caring for and being concerned about Australia's environment. There used to be a time in Australian public life when the environment was regarded as an issue over on the side - when it was only something that a small seemingly preoccupied group of people were interested in and it wasn't something that touched the everyday lives of people and that is why so many parts of our heritage fell into disrepair and into disuse and why we now look back with some horror at the way in which we allowed environmental atrocities to take place and how we allowed the environment to be spoilt.

But in the last ten years all of that has changed. The environment is properly a mainstream political issue. All generations of Australians are concerned about restoring our physical environment, refurbishing our built environment and seeing what we can do to reverse over a longer period of time some the very negative and deleterious trends which have developed over many many years and are effecting our environment.

And one of the policies of which I am particularly proud within the environmental area of course is our commitment through the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia to invest almost \$1.2 billion into capital projects to restore the environment of Australia. A few weeks ago I had the opportunity of going to Mildura and of touching the Murray-Darling basin and cleaning up the Murray Darling basin will be of absolutely inestimable value to Australia's environment. It is the cradle of about one quarter of the food production of Australia and the contribution cleaning up the Murray Darling will make to the environmental future of Australia is immense and the sort of things that we are interested in in the environment are those practical things and what we have sought to do in relation to the Green Corps which is currently attracting an investment of \$42 million from the Government.

What we hope to do in the Green Corps is to marry together the idealism in the interests of young Australians in caring for Australia's environment, provide to them an opportunity to learn skills about environmental care, provide to them the opportunity of friendship and association in caring for the environment in a very very healthy atmosphere, and what the Green Corps does is to marry those enthusiasms with our concern for the environment. And it will provide people with good training, it will provide them with a useful subsidy at the end of the period of training, a useful subsidy towards further educational pursuits and it brings together what I might call the volunteer sector and also the government sector and I am very pleased that one of the features of this is that when we decided to go down the path of the Green Corps we called for tenders from the private sector from volunteer organisations. And if my understanding is correct the headquarters of the organisation which is managing the Green Corps is in fact in Ballarat in Victoria and I think I visited the headquarters when I was in Ballarat a few months ago and it won the tender from competition all around Australia. And what is also very good is that there's a local partnership and I want to thank the Brisbane City Council for its contribution. What it has done to restore, what it has already done to restore the Tinchi Tamba wetlands deserves very high praise and I particularly acknowledge in the presence of representatives of the Brisbane City Council the contribution that the Council has made to the restoration of the wetlands and also the willingness and the very enthusiastic way in which the council has gone into partnership with the volunteers for the environment to run this particular project and as Ian Macdonald said, we are embarked upon a series of projects all around Australia and naturally and quite properly - and there would be plenty of people in the audience who have seen to it that it has occurred - Queensland is getting its fair share of all of those projects. I've never known it to be otherwise and I always acknowledge the enthusiastic pursuit of Queensland interests by my Senatorial and House of Representatives colleagues.

So I do want to say to all of you particularly those who are involved in the Green Corps that it is one of those things that mixes a bit of idealism with a practical goal and a forward looking objective. And that is in a sense the stuff of good government decision making. You need a bit of idealism. You can't live by bottom lines and numbers and statistics alone, you do need some idealism and I think marrying a concern for the environment with practical training in the outdoors and actually restoring something and making something look more attractive, more beautiful, it really is marrying together a number of objectives and I think the Green Corps will attract great interest. Certainly the early experience is that there are more people at present who want to be in the Green Corps who can at present be accommodated and that is something that will be born in mind by the government as the weeks and months go by and decisions in the future have to be made about the allocation of resources because this is obviously going to be a very attractive programme.

And I want to thank the young Australians who have displayed an interest in it. The programme as you know is not just available to people who are out of work although it is obviously something of great interest and appeal to people who may be temporarily or perhaps for a longer period of time have been unemployed. It is open to all young Australians and both people who've been in the workforce and those who haven't have flocked to it. And I thank them and I have already met some of them and I hope to have the opportunity of meeting few more of them. But it is a very strong commitment by the Coalition Government, a very strong commitment by the Liberal and National parties for practical solutions to improving Australia's environment, marshalling enthusiasm and idealism of young Australians, providing them with incentives, practical goals, practical opportunities to learn skills and the assurance at the end of the training course of some assistance.

So I want to thank you Ian in particular for the work that you have put into organising today. I want to thank you for the work that you in conjunction with Tony have done in overseeing and supervising at an administrative and political level the operation of the Green Corps. I thank all of those who have supported, I thank the department of Employment and Youth Affairs, I also thank the volunteer organisation whose representative will speak in a moment and most particularly I thank the participants and I have very great pleasure in formally declaring launched the Green Corps young Australians for the environment.

Thank you.