



PRIME MINISTER

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STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

The Hon. E.G. Whitlam Q.C., M.P.

PUBLIC SERVICE AGE LIMITS

The Prime Minister announced today that the upper age limits applying to appointments to the Commonwealth Service as Clerk, Clerical Assistant and Typist have been removed. This move will greatly increase the opportunities for employment of middle-aged and married women in the service.

The age limits have been 28 for clerks, 30 for clerical assistants and between 30 and 45 (depending on circumstances) for typists. The removal of the limits results from a special review being carried out by the Public Service Board of all age limits currently applying to recruitment to the Commonwealth Service. This review is being made in the light of the current recruitment situation and in relation to present day social and economic conditions. The review has shown that the need of the Service for a proportion of career entrants can, in the present circumstances, be served adequately without mandatory age limits.

The removal of age limits is a contribution to the flexibility of the work force. People such as those displaced by technological change and married women seeking to re-enter the work force will no longer be debarred by age from competing for permanent appointment to the Commonwealth Service.

If present trends continue, it is probable that in the future many women will return to work when their children are old enough and will usually have about twenty to thirty years of working life ahead of them. To enable women to resume their careers when they wish to do so, and to ensure that their abilities, training and experience are not wasted, the Government hopes that other employers will be prepared to plan a career pattern for women which includes a break in service.

In other words, if there is to be real equality of opportunity, we must accept the fact that the work pattern of women is different. A woman should not be unduly penalised in employment by requirements such as unbroken service, full-time working hours and other conditions governing her eligibility for security of employment and opportunity for advancement beyond junior status.

This decision of the Public Service Board is the beginning of a realistic policy enabling women to reconcile domestic responsibilities with a career. It is hoped that further steps will include the introduction of permanent part-time work and other forms of employment as well as flexible working hours. The community as a whole will benefit in the long run.

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