

FHBAERO;

3.30 P.M.

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,
FOR THE OPENING OF THE
TASMANIAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION,
HOBART, SUNDAY 18 NOVEMBER, 1973

I MUST CONFESS THAT IT IS A NOVEL EXPERIENCE FOR ME TO BE INVITED TO OPEN AN INSTITUTION THAT HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR FIVE YEARS. I COMMEND YOUR PATIENCE AND FORESIGHT IN WAITING SO LONG FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY. NATURALLY I WAS DELIGHTED TO ACCEPT YOUR INVITATION BECAUSE I KNOW THAT THIS COLLEGE, FORMALLY ESTABLISHED IN 1968, IS AMONG THE MOST PROGRESSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONS OF ITS KIND IN AUSTRALIA. THE ADVANCED EDUCATION ACT OF 1968, BY WHICH THE COLLEGE WAS ESTABLISHED, WAS AN IMPORTANT AND FAR-SIGHTED STATUTE. IT CREATED A COUNCIL OF ADVANCED EDUCATION IN TASMANIA WHICH ADMINISTERS NOT ONLY THIS COLLEGE BUT THE WHOLE FIELD OF ADVANCED EDUCATION IN THIS STATE.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COUNCIL, SET FORTH IN YOUR HANDBOOK, ARE CLEARLY ATTUNED TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF A GROWING AND DYNAMIC COMMUNITY. I CONGRATULATE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED TO ESTABLISH THIS COLLEGE AND LAID DOWN THE PRACTICAL AND ENLIGHTENED PRINCIPLES ON WHICH IT IS CONDUCTED.

I DON'T THINK THERE CAN BE ANY DOUBT OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S WHOLEHEARTED COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION. THE STRENGTH OF THAT COMMITMENT - AND OUR READINESS TO DISCHARGE IT - HAVE BEEN DEMONSTRATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN. WITHIN A FEW WEEKS OF TAKING OFFICE WE SET UP THE INTERIM COMMITTEE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS COMMISSION; WITHIN A FEW MONTHS OF ITS APPOINTMENT THE COMMITTEE PRESENTED ITS HISTORIC REPORT; WITHIN THREE MONTHS OF RECEIVING THAT REPORT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, IN ITS FIRST BUDGET, PROVIDED AN ADDITIONAL SUM OF \$404 MILLION FOR EDUCATION IN 1973-74. THAT WAS AN INCREASE OF 92% ON LAST YEAR, THE GREATEST SINGLE UPGRADING OF EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES IN OUR HISTORY. THUS WE HAVE HONOURED THE PROMISE IN MY POLICY SPEECH A YEAR AGO THAT EDUCATION WOULD BE THE MOST RAPIDLY GROWING SECTOR OF PUBLIC SPENDING UNDER A LABOR GOVERNMENT.

I HOPE I WILL NOT BE ACCUSED OF UNDUE COMPLACENCY OR SELF-SATISFACTION IF I SAY THIS: WHATEVER ELSE MY GOVERNMENT MAY ACHIEVE IN ITS TERM OF OFFICE, WE HAVE MANAGED IN LESS THAN A YEAR TO SET A NEW COURSE FOR EDUCATION IN THIS COUNTRY AND NEW STANDARDS FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE. THAT COURSE WILL NEVER BE REVERSED. THOSE STANDARDS WILL NEVER BE DOWNGRADED.

THE GREAT THRUST OF OUR REFORMS SO FAR HAS BEEN IN SECONDARY EDUCATION - NOT BECAUSE WE REGARD TERTIARY EDUCATION AS ANY LESS IMPORTANT, BUT BECAUSE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLING HAVE BEEN THE AREAS OF GREATEST NEED, OF MOST PRESSING INADEQUACY AND IMPOVERISHMENT. SO LET ME REASSURE YOU FIRST ON THIS POINT: TERTIARY EDUCATION, BOTH IN UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS LIKE YOURS, RANKS AS HIGH IN OUR PLANS AND AMBITIONS AS EDUCATION OF ANY OTHER KIND. IT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR PHILOSOPHY THAT THE WHOLE PROCESS OF EDUCATION SHOULD FORM AN UNBROKEN AND EVOLVING CONTINUUM OF INSTRUCTION AND CULTIVATION, IN WHICH ALL CHILDREN - INDEED ALL PEOPLE - HAVE A FULL AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE AT EVERY STAGE.

HAVING SAID THAT, LET ME MAKE ONE OTHER BROAD POINT ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. IT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO WHAT COLLEGES LIKE YOURS ARE ALL ABOUT. WE BELIEVE IN WHAT OUR OPPONENTS LIKE TO CALL 'FREEDOM OF CHOICE'.

THAT FREEDOM, HOWEVER, MEANS SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT FOR US FROM WHAT IT MEANS FOR THEM. FOR US, FOR THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY, FREEDOM OF CHOICE MEANS THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE BETWEEN METHODS AND COURSES AND TYPES OF EDUCATION. IT DOES NOT MEAN A CHOICE BETWEEN STANDARDS OR DEGREES OF EXCELLENCE - BETWEEN A GOOD EDUCATION OR A BAD ONE, BETWEEN AN EXPENSIVE EDUCATION OR A POOR ONE. IT IS SOMETIMES SAID OF SOCIALISTS THAT WE WANT EVERYONE TO HAVE A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION. THAT WOULD BE AS SENSIBLE AS SUGGESTING THAT EVERY UNIVERSITY STUDENT SHOULD STUDY ECONOMICS. THE WHOLE POINT OF OUR APPROACH TO ADVANCED EDUCATION IS THAT A PLURALIST SOCIETY DEMANDS A PLURALIST CONCEPTION OF EDUCATION. IT DEMANDS DIVERSITY.

YOU WILL REMEMBER THE INTELLECTUAL CONCEIT PREVAILING IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND - AND IT PERSISTED WITH SURPRISING RESILIENCE UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY - THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING INHERENTLY SUPERIOR IN AN EDUCATION IN THE HUMANE ARTS, IN THE CLASSICAL DISCIPLINES AS DISTINCT FROM THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES. AGAIN, A FEW YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A QUITE FATUOUS AND SNOBBISH ARGUMENT IN THIS COUNTRY ABOUT THE PROPRIETY OF COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION AWARDED DEGREES. I HOPE WE HAVE HEARD THE END OF SUCH ARGUMENTS. I HOPE IT WILL NEVER AGAIN BE SUGGESTED THAT ONE KIND OF SECONDARY SCHOOL IS SUPERIOR TO ANOTHER, OR THAT A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IS MORE DESIRABLE THAN ONE PROVIDED BY A COLLEGE. THE IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT IS THAT THE SAME STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE, OF DEDICATION, OF MATERIAL ENDOWMENT, OF TEACHING SKILLS MUST APPLY IN WHATEVER INSTITUTION AN INDIVIDUAL CHOOSES.

I AM INDEBTED ONCE AGAIN TO PROFESSOR KARMEL, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION WHOSE REPORT I HAVE MENTIONED THIS AFTERNOON, FOR A QUOTATION FROM HIS FRANK TATE MEMORIAL LECTURE DELIVERED LAST WEEK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE. PROFESSOR KARMEL SAID THIS - AND HE WAS SPEAKING OF THE COURSE THAT TERTIARY EDUCATION SHOULD TAKE -

"ONE WILL, GENERALLY SPEAKING, AIM TOWARDS PRODUCING A CONTINUUM OF EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES, IN DIVERSE INSTITUTIONS, OFFERING DIVERSE COURSES, USING DIVERSE MODES OF LEARNING; AND NO DOUBT WE WILL ATTACH DIVERSE VALUES TO THEM... ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (WILL STILL) BE IMPORTANT FOR UNIVERSITIES AND FOR COLLEGES AND WILL SEPARATE THEM FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS, BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT THERE WON'T BE OTHER FORMS OF INSTITUTIONS THAT MIGHT EMPHASISE OTHER THINGS AND MIGHT REGARD UNIVERSITIES AS MORE BOUND UP WITH LIFE EXPERIENCES THAN WITH LEARNING IN THE TRADITIONAL SENSE."

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION HELP PROVIDE THIS ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF DIVERSITY IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. BUT THEY DO MORE THAN THAT: THEY MAKE THE WHOLE PROCESS OF ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION MORE JUST AND EQUITABLE. IF WE LOOK BACK ON THE LONG YEARS OF RULE BY LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTY GOVERNMENTS, NO ONE WILL DISPUTE THAT UNDER OUR PREDECESSORS MORE AND MORE YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ADMITTED TO UNIVERSITIES.

YET IT WAS ONLY IN THE EARLY DAYS OF WIDESPREAD COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIPS THAT THIS GREATER ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION WAS BASED FAIRLY ON CONSIDERATIONS OF ACADEMIC MERIT ALONE. AS FEES ROSE AND THE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME CONTRACTED, A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION DEPENDED MORE AND MORE ON THE ABILITY TO PAY FOR IT. I SUGGEST THERE IS A SIMPLE WAY TO TEST WHETHER GENUINE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY EXISTS. WE SHOULD LOOK TO SEE WHETHER THOSE GOING ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION ARE DRAWN FROM ALL GROUPS OF THE POPULATION IN THE SAME PROPORTION AS EACH GROUP IS REPRESENTED IN THE POPULATION.

THE KARMEL REPORT HAS CLEARLY SHOWN THAT IN NO COUNTRY HAS THIS IN FACT HAPPENED. WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THE SOCIALLY DISCRIMINATING NATURE OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. MANY AUSTRALIAN STUDIES HAVE ILLUSTRATED THE GENERAL EXPERIENCE. A TYPICAL SURVEY OF STUDENTS ENTERING FOUR PROFESSIONAL FACULTIES IN SIX AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES IN 1965 AND 1967 SHOWED THAT NEARLY HALF THE STUDENTS ENTERING HIGHER EDUCATION WERE THE CHILDREN OF PROFESSIONAL AND MANAGERIAL FATHERS, WHO REPRESENTED 17.5% OF THE POPULATION IN THE AGE GROUP LIKELY TO BE FATHERS. INDUSTRIAL WORKERS REPRESENTED NEARLY 60% OF THE POPULATION, BUT THEIR CHILDREN ACCOUNTED FOR ONLY 22.6% OF STUDENTS ENTERING THE FOUR FACULTIES. A STUDY OF STUDENTS ENTERING SCIENCE COURSES AT UNIVERSITIES AND DIPLOMA COURSES IN APPLIED SCIENCES AT COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA IN 1969 SHOWED THAT 64% HAD FATHERS IN PROFESSIONAL, MANAGERIAL OR FARM-OWNING OCCUPATIONS, ALTHOUGH THIS CATEGORY ACCOUNTED FOR 25% OF THE MALE POPULATION; 20.2% OF THE STUDENTS HAD FATHERS IN MANUAL OCCUPATIONS, ALTHOUGH SUCH WORKERS ACCOUNTED FOR 59% OF THE MALE POPULATION.

PROFESSOR KARMEL'S COMMITTEE CONCLUDED: "AMONG TERTIARY STUDENTS OF ALL KINDS, THE CHILDREN OF MANUAL WORKERS ARE UNDER-REPRESENTED AND THOSE OF HIGHER STATUS FAMILIES OVER-REPRESENTED. TO THE EXTENT THAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS FINANCED FROM TAXES IT HAS THUS A SOMEWHAT REGRESSIVE EFFECT, POORER PEOPLE CONTRIBUTING TO THE COST OF EDUCATION OF A GROUP IN WHICH THE CHILDREN OF RICHER PARENTS PREDOMINATE AND FROM WHICH RECIPIENTS CAN EXPECT TO DRAW HIGHER THAN AVERAGE INCOMES."

I DON'T WANT IT TO BE THOUGHT FOR A MINUTE THAT WE SEE COLLEGES AS THE PRIME RECEPTACLES FOR POORER OR LESS AMBITIOUS STUDENTS, WHILE UNIVERSITIES CONTINUE TO CATER FOR THE WELL-TO-DO. OUR PURPOSE IS TO SEE THAT ALL INSTITUTIONS OF ADVANCED EDUCATION ARE OPEN TO THE WIDEST RANGE OF PEOPLE. TERTIARY EDUCATION, IN WHATEVER FORM, MUST BE AS ACCESSIBLE, AS INTEGRAL A PART OF THE RANGE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION AS EDUCATION OF ANY OTHER KIND. THIS IS WHERE GOVERNMENTS IN THE PAST HAVE FAILED. NO ONE WOULD DENY THAT THE UNIVERSITIES HAVE VASTLY IMPROVED IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY SINCE THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM. YET IN 1971 UNIVERSITIES REFUSED ADMISSION TO 31 PER CENT OF THE QUALIFIED APPLICANTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES, 20 PER CENT OF THE APPLICANTS IN VICTORIA AND 11 PER CENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. EIGHTY-SIX UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS WERE OBLIGED TO IMPOSE ENTRY QUOTAS. ONLY ONE STUDENT IN EVERY THREE AT UNIVERSITIES AND ONE STUDENT IN EVERY 10 AT COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION HAS RECEIVED ASSISTANCE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.

THE MAJORITY OF PLACES AT TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED NOT BY THE STUDENTS BEST EQUIPPED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM, BUT BY THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD THE FEES.

AS YOU KNOW, FROM NEXT JANUARY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUNDING OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES. I DO NOT NEED TO EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS STEP FOR INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THIS, OR - IF I MAY SAY SO - FOR THE FUTURE OF COMMONWEALTH-STATE FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIPS. OUR FIRST ACT WILL BE TO ABOLISH ALL FEES. TO DO SO WILL COST US \$33 MILLION FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1973-74 - A SMALL PROPORTION OF THE INCOME UNIVERSITIES RECEIVE, BUT A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE INCOME OF STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION WILL BE ON THE BASIS OF MERIT RATHER THAN MONEY.

AT THE SAME TIME, MY COLLEAGUE THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, HAS ANNOUNCED A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF LIVING ALLOWANCES AND OTHER BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN APPROVED COURSES. THESE MEASURES WILL DO A GREAT DEAL MORE TO MAKE HIGHER EDUCATION GENUINELY FREE THAN SIMPLY REPLACE THE EXISTING COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEMES. IN TASMANIA THIS YEAR LESS THAN 20% OF STUDENTS IN ADVANCED EDUCATION ARE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE UNDER PROGRAMS INITIATED BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. NEXT YEAR, ALL AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE ON THE BASIS OF NEED.

LET ME MENTION SOME OF OUR OTHER MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE STANDARDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION OTHER THAN IN UNIVERSITIES. ONE OF OUR FIRST ACTS IN JANUARY THIS YEAR WAS TO SET UP A COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION. THAT COMMITTEE IS DUE TO REPORT IN THE FIRST HALF OF NEXT YEAR. I HOPE IT WILL BRING AS MUCH FRESH AIR TO THE STUDY OF ADVANCED EDUCATION AS THE SCHOOLS COMMITTEE HAS BROUGHT TO SECONDARY EDUCATION. IT WILL TAKE ACCOUNT OF OVERALL MANPOWER POLICY AND THE NEEDS OF INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT AND COMMERCE. ANOTHER OF OUR EARLY INITIATIVES THIS YEAR WAS TO GRANT AN ADDITIONAL \$5 MILLION FOR LIBRARY MATERIALS IN ALL COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION DURING THE 1973-75 TRIENNIUM. TASMANIA'S SHARE OF THIS WILL BE \$135,000.

NEXT, WE HAVE APPOINTED A COMMITTEE OF THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION TO ADVISE ON AN OPEN UNIVERSITY. ONCE AGAIN I ACKNOWLEDGE THE ASSISTANCE OF PROFESSOR KARMEL, WHO WILL BE THE CHAIRMAN OF THAT INQUIRY. WE HAVE ASKED THE COMMITTEE TO SEE HOW AUSTRALIA CAN BEST EXPAND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTRA-MURAL DEGREE COURSES OF UNIVERSITY STANDARD AND RAISE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL LEVELS IN THE COMMUNITY.

FINALLY, WE HAVE DECIDED TO TACKLE THE REALITIES OF COST ESCALATION IN FINANCING TERTIARY EDUCATION. IN TAKING OVER THE FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS OF THE STATES, THE GOVERNMENT WILL, FROM THE BEGINNING OF NEXT YEAR, PROVIDE FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO APPROVED PROGRAMS OF EXPENDITURE. THIS WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT COST VARIATIONS IN BOTH CAPITAL AND RECURRENT EXPENDITURE WHICH WERE NOT ALLOWED WHEN THE PROGRAMS WERE ORIGINALLY ADOPTED.

THIS WILL BE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN TIMES OF RAPIDLY RISING COSTS. I MIGHT MENTION HERE THAT I AM AWARE OF YOUR OWN PRESENT DIFFICULTIES WITH RECURRENT FUNDS. MR. REECE WROTE TO ME A FEW DAYS AGO ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. HE HAS SENT A DETAILED STATEMENT TO THE COMMISSION ON ADVANCED EDUCATION TO SUPPORT HIS REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS. I ASSURE YOU THAT MR. BEAZLEY WILL BE LOOKING CLOSELY AND SYMPATHETICALLY AT YOUR NEEDS.

I BELIEVE I CAN CLAIM THAT WITHIN A YEAR OF TAKING OFFICE THE NEW AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS TRANSFORMED THE PROSPECTS FOR EDUCATION IN THIS COUNTRY. ACROSS THE WHOLE FIELD OF LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION - PRE-SCHOOLS, PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SECONDARY SCHOOLS, TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION, UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION - WE HAVE ACTED WITH SPEED AND DETERMINATION TO RAISE STANDARDS AND INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES. A LONG ERA OF NEGLECT AND IMPVERISHMENT IS AT AN END; BARRIERS OF PRIVILEGE AND INEQUALITY ARE BEING STEADILY REMOVED. YOU KNOW OF THE ATTEMPTS BY OUR OPPONENTS TO USE THEIR POWER IN THE SENATE TO FRUSTRATE AND DELAY THIS PROCESS. THEY HAVEN'T THE COURAGE TO BLOCK OUR REFORMS OUTRIGHT. THEY PREFER TO HINDER US BY NIT-PICKING AND STEALTH. I TELL YOU THEY WILL NOT SUCCEED. THEY WILL NOT SUCCEED BECAUSE THEY KNOW, AS WE KNOW, THAT THE NEW DEAL IN EDUCATION, THE NEW VISTA OF OPPORTUNITY WE ARE OFFERING TO AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN - TO ALL CHILDREN, WHATEVER THE BACKGROUNDS, THEIR INCOMES, THEIR ENVIRONMENT - HAS THE WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT AND ENDORSEMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE. I APPLAUD THE WORK OF THIS FINE COLLEGE AND OTHERS LIKE IT. YOU ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR PLANS TO RAISE THE EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE.