

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
BY THE PRIME MINISTER
MR. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
THURSDAY 13 DECEMBER 1973

WE HAVE COME TO THE END OF A MOMENTOUS AND MEMORABLE YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT. JUST OVER 12 MONTHS AGO THE FIRST NATIONAL LABOR GOVERNMENT IN 23 YEARS WAS ELECTED TO OFFICE. THAT IN ITSELF WAS AN EVENT OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE. WHATEVER THE POLICIES OR ACTIONS OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION, A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT AFTER SUCH A PROTRACTED INTERVAL OF CONSERVATIVE RULE WAS BOUND TO BRING NEW IDEAS AND FRESH DIRECTIONS TO OUR NATIONAL LIFE, TO CHALLENGE OLD ASSUMPTIONS AND STALE HABITS OF MIND, TO INVIGORATE THE WHOLE CLIMATE OF POLITICAL DEBATE IN THIS COUNTRY. SO IT HAS PROVED. FOR ALL OF US IN THIS PARLIAMENT IT HAS BEEN A UNIQUELY ARDUOUS AND EXACTING YEAR. FOR MY COLLEAGUES IN THE LABOR GOVERNMENT IT HAS BEEN A YEAR OF IMMENSE EXCITEMENT AND UNREMITTING ACTIVITY. FOR THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE - FOR THIS COUNTRY, - IT HAS BEEN A YEAR OF PROGRESS AND REFORM ON A SCALE UNMATCHED IN THE RECORDS OF THIS FEDERATION.

I HOPE THOSE WORDS WILL NOT BE TAKEN AS AN EMPTY BOAST. I BELIEVE THE RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. ANYONE WHO STUDIES THAT RECORD IMPARTIALLY - AS I NOW INVITE THE HOUSE TO DO - WILL ACCEPT THE EVIDENCE OF A PRODIGIOUS LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENT. TODAY I WANT TO BRING TOGETHER THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THAT ACHIEVEMENT AND IDENTIFY THE CONSISTENT PHILOSOPHY - THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES - THAT LIE BEHIND ALL WE HAVE DONE AND ALL WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO DO. I REMIND THE HOUSE OF THIS: NOTHING WE HAVE DONE IN THESE EVENTFUL MONTHS CAN BE SAID TO HAVE BEEN UNEXPECTED OR UNPREDICTABLE. OUR POLICIES WERE FORMULATED OVER MANY YEARS. THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THEM WERE PUT TO THE PEOPLE NOT ONCE, BUT TWICE. WE HAVE DONE NOTHING THAT WE DID NOT PROMISE TO DO, WE HAVE DONE WHAT THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE CHARGED US TO DO WHEN THEY CONFERRED UPON US THEIR MANDATE IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR. MY POLICY SPEECH FOR THE LAST ELECTIONS STANDS, UNQUALIFIED AND UNDIMINISHED, AS THE RECORD OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST YEAR AND ITS MANIFESTO FOR THE YEARS TO COME.

I DO NOT PRETEND THAT THE YEAR HAS BEEN PLAIN SAILING. OF COURSE IT HAS NOT. THERE IS MUCH IN OUR PROGRAM THAT WE HAVE YET TO ACCOMPLISH; MANY OF OUR PLANS ARE STILL IN THEIR FORMATIVE OR EMBRYONIC STAGES. THERE IS MUCH, REGRETTABLY, THAT WE HAVE BEEN PREVENTED FROM DOING OR BRINGING TO FRUITION. IF THE YEAR HAS REVEALED CLEARLY THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF THE GOVERNMENT, IT HAS ALSO REVEALED - EVEN MORE NAKEDLY, MORE UNMISTAKABLY - THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF THE OPPOSITION.

I SHALL GIVE THE HOUSE PRESENTLY THE DETAILED EVIDENCE OF THE SENATE'S OBSTRUCTION. I DOUBT WHETHER ANY OF US CAN RECALL AN OPPOSITION THAT HAS BEHAVED WITH SUCH RECKLESS AND IRRESPONSIBLE INDIFFERENCE TO THE PEOPLE'S WILL. WE HAVE SEEN IN THE SENATE A PATTERN OF ELATANT OBSTRUCTION, OF FLAGRANT DEFIANCE OF A POPULAR MANDATE CONFERRED BY THE PEOPLE ON AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE TOO OFTEN SEEN IN THIS HOUSE A PATTERN OF ROWDINESS, OF DELAY, OF UNRULINESS, OF PERSISTENT ATTEMPTS TO BAIT THE CHAIR AND FRUSTRATE THE BUSINESS OF THE PARLIAMENT. WE HAVE CONTENTED WITH DINOSAURS IN ONE PLACE AND SCHOOLEOYS IN THE OTHER. YET BY LONG HOURS AND HARD WORK WE HAVE DEALT WITH AN UNPRECEDENTED VOLUME OF BUSINESS IN THIS PARLIAMENT.

SOME IDEA OF THE SCALE OF OUR LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM WILL BE SEEN FROM THE STATISTICS OF BILLS PASSED AND INTRODUCED. SINCE THE 28TH PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED ON 27 FEBRUARY A TOTAL OF 253 BILLS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED. THAT FIGURE SURPASSES ALL RECORDS. THE NEAREST APPROACH TO IT WAS 169 BILLS IN 1968. THE PARLIAMENT HAS PASSED 203 OF THE BILLS INTRODUCED THIS YEAR. THE SIZE OF THAT ACCOMPLISHMENT WILL BE SEEN MORE CLEARLY FROM THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES OF LEGISLATION DEALT WITH BY THE PARLIAMENT IN EACH OF THE PAST SIX YEARS. IN 1968, EXCLUDING CUSTOMS TARIFF SCHEDULES, THE PARLIAMENT PASSED 775 PAGES OF LEGISLATION. THERE WERE 481 PAGES IN 1969, 660 PAGES IN 1970; 872 PAGES IN 1971, AND 707 PAGES IN 1972. THIS YEAR THE BILLS INTRODUCED CONTAINED MORE THAN 2200 PAGES, ROUGHLY THREE TIMES THE TOTAL LAST YEAR. I KNOW WHAT A HEAVY BURDEN THAT WORK HAS IMPOSED ON MEMBERS AND I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE WAY THEY HAVE BORNE IT.

THERE ARE OTHER WAYS THAT WE CAN MEASURE THE VOLUME OF PARLIAMENTARY AND GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY. SINCE FEBRUARY THIS YEAR 39 REPORTS ON INQUIRIES INSTITUTED BY THE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN PRESENTED TO THE PARLIAMENT, NOT INCLUDING REPORTS FROM PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES OR REPORTS OF INQUIRIES INSTITUTED BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. THERE HAVE BEEN 19 STATEMENTS AND COMMUNIQUE TABLED ON MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH STATE GOVERNMENTS. SIX CONSTITUTION ALTERATION BILLS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED TO THE PARLIAMENT. THE TEXTS OF 39 TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN PRESENTED. BETWEEN JANUARY AND NOVEMBER THIS YEAR THE CABINET ITSELF MADE A TOTAL OF 1675 DECISIONS. WHATEVER MAY BE THOUGHT OF THIS GOVERNMENT, NOT EVEN ITS WORST ENEMIES CAN CLAIM IT HAS BEEN IDLE.

GREAT AS OUR LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM HAS BEEN, THE GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER CURTAILED OR DISRUPTED THE SMOOTH PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OR TRESPASSED ON THE RIGHTS OF MEMBERS. INDEED, THE RECORD WILL SHOW THAT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A YEAR WHEN PRIVATE MEMBERS HAVE HAD MORE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE MATTERS IN THE HOUSE AND HAVE THEM DEBATED FULLY. THE HOUSE HAS SAT FOR A TOTAL OF 908 HOURS UP TO LUNCHTIME TODAY. THE GREATEST NUMBER OF SITTING HOURS IN ONE YEAR FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY. AMONG THE PARLIAMENTS OF THE WORLD, ONLY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF CANADA HAVE SAT FOR LONGER HOURS THIS YEAR.

YET WE HAVE ONLY SAT ONCE AFTER 11 PM. THE EXHAUSTING FARCE OF SITTING INTO THE SMALL HOURS, ITS INTOLERABLE TOLL ON THE EFFICIENCY AND DIGNITY OF THE PARLIAMENT, HAS BEEN ABOLISHED. WE HAVE ALLOWED 70 DEBATES ON THE ADJOURNMENT - THE GREATEST NUMBER ON RECORD. WE HAVE NEVER ONCE CURTAILED OR SUSPENDED DEBATE ON GENERAL BUSINESS, AND EVERY MATTER RAISED BY A PRIVATE MEMBER HAS BEEN DEBATED AND VOTED UPON.

THE GREAT THEME OF OUR LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM HAS BEEN ONE OF REFORM AND RENOVATION. WE RECOGNISED FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THE REFORMS WE WERE SEEKING FOR AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR A MORE JUST AND HUMANE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY - WOULD BE POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH REFORMS IN THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT ITSELF. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE ORGANISATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE WERE ESSENTIAL TO PROVIDE THE ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM. THAT WAS OUR FIRST TASK. WE SET ABOUT IT WITH VIGOUR AND DETERMINATION. WE CREATED NEW DEPARTMENTS OF URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION, TOURISM AND RECREATION, MINERALS AND ENERGY AND THE MEDIA TO ADMINISTER WHOLE AREAS OF POLICY THAT HAD BEEN NEGLECTED OR DOWNGRADED IN THE PAST. OUR PROGRAM DID NOT MEAN SIMPLY A NEW EMPHASIS HERE OR A LITTLE EXTRA MONEY THERE. IT MEANT A NEW AND RADICAL ASSESSMENT OF OUR SOCIAL PRIORITIES AND GOALS. TO HAVE WORKED WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK OF OUR PREDECESSORS WOULD HAVE MEANT, IN LARGE MEASURE, ACCEPTING THE VALUES AND PRIORITIES OF OUR PREDECESSORS. WE WERE NOT PREPARED TO DO SO.

OUR ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES WERE MADE IN TWO STAGES. THE FIRST STAGE WAS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS FROM 27 TO 37. QUALIFIED EXPERTS FROM OUTSIDE THE PUBLIC SERVICE WERE BROUGHT IN AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL. I MENTION A FEW - MR. JAMES OSWIN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE MEDIA, DR. DON McMICHAEL IN THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION; MRS. MARIE COLEMAN AS HEAD OF THE NEW AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SOCIAL WELFARE; MR. CHARLES HALTON IN THE AMALGAMATED DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT.

AT THE SAME TIME WE FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECT ECONOMIES BY MERGING SOME DEPARTMENTS AND REDUCING THE FUNCTIONS OF OTHERS. THUS, IN THE SECOND STAGE OF OUR ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS, WE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS FROM 37 TO 31. WE MERGED THE SERVICE DEPARTMENTS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AND CIVIL AVIATION WITH TRANSPORT. WE COMBINED THE DEPARTMENTS OF HOUSING AND WORKS AS A SINGLE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION. THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL TERRITORIES WAS ABOLISHED. I COMMEND UNRESERVEDLY THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE FOR THE PROMPT AND EFFICIENT WAY IT HAS ADAPTED TO THESE CHANGES. THE PUBLIC SERVICE HAS RESPONDED TO THE GOVERNMENT'S HEAVY DEMANDS WITH IMMENSE PROFESSIONAL SKILL AND DEDICATION.

OUR CHANGES AND REFORMS, HOWEVER, DID NOT END WITH THE RESTRUCTURING OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS. WE HAVE ARMED THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINE WITH NEW FUNCTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS TO DEAL WITH THE INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT PROBLEMS OF PLANNING FOR THE NEEDS OF A GROWING INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY. SOME OF THE ORGANISATIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN PERMANENT STATUTORY FORM, SUCH AS THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION, THE SOCIAL WELFARE COMMITTEE, THE PRICES JUSTIFICATION TRIBUNAL AND THE PIPELINE AUTHORITY; OTHERS HAVE HAD THEIR STATUTORY CHARTER UTTERLY TRANSFORMED, SUCH AS THE GRANTS COMMISSION, THE CITIES COMMISSION AND THE INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE COMMISSION. IN ADDITION SPECIAL TASK FORCES HAVE BEEN SET UP TO DEAL WITH SPECIFIC AREAS OF POLICY AND PLANNING. NO FEWER THAN 94 COMMISSIONS OR COMMITTEES OF INQUIRY WERE ESTABLISHED THIS YEAR. THE BEST KNOWN OF THEM, PERHAPS, WAS THE COOMBS TASK FORCE, WHICH REPORTED TO US ON THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S EXPENDITURE PROGRAMS AND RECOMMENDED ECONOMIES IN THEM. NO OTHER GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA HAS APPLIED SUCH A SEARCHING SCRUTINY TO THE EXPENDITURE OF PUBLIC MONEY. IN ADDITION, MINISTERS HAVE DRAWN ON THE SERVICES OF CONSULTANTS AND OUTSIDE ADVISERS. WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A WHOLLY NEW INSTRUMENT TO PROVIDE LONG-TERM ADVICE ON PUBLIC PRIORITIES - A "THINK TANK" - WHICH WE HAVE NAMED THE PRIORITIES REVIEW STAFF. I BELIEVE WE CAN NOW CLAIM THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS EQUIPPED WITH THE MOST MODERN, EXPERT AND COMPREHENSIVE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY EVER SEEN IN AUSTRALIA.

I WANT TO SUMMARISE FOR HONOURABLE MEMBERS THE MAIN LEGISLATION AND POLICY DECISIONS THE GOVERNMENT HAS INITIATED IN THE PAST YEAR. LET ME DEAL WITH TWO BASIC PRINCIPLES COMMON TO ALL OUR PROGRAMS. THE TWO GREAT AND GUIDING THEMES OF THIS GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN THE PROMOTION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR PEOPLE AND THE PROMOTION OF AUSTRALIAN OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF OUR INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES.

WE ALONE HAVE PROCLAIMED - AND FOUGHT FOR - THE RIGHT OF AUSTRALIANS TO PARTICIPATE TO THE FULLEST POSSIBLE EXTENT IN THEIR OWN INDUSTRIES. WE ALONE HAVE PROCLAIMED - AND FOUGHT FOR - THE RIGHT OF AUSTRALIANS TO OWN AND CONTROL THE PRECIOUS RESOURCES OF THIS CONTINENT. IS THERE ANYTHING STRANGE OR UNNATURAL ABOUT THESE RIGHTS? HOW OFTEN DID WE HEAR THEM EXPRESSED OR ARTICULATED UNDER OUR PREDECESSORS? HOW OFTEN DID OUR PREDECESSORS TAKE FIRM OR DECISIVE ACTION TO SAFEGUARD THEM? WE SEEK FOR THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE A GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE DESTINY OF THIS COUNTRY. WE SEEK FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE IN THAT DESTINY AND TO LIVE THEIR LIVES WITH THE HIGHEST MEASURE OF MATERIAL SECURITY AND WELL-BEING AND WITH THE HIGHEST MEASURE OF INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL FULFILMENT.

WHEN I SPEAK OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY I AM NOT THINKING SIMPLY OF THE REMOVAL OF POVERTY OR THE REDRESS OF OBVIOUS INJUSTICES SUCH AS THOSE IN EDUCATION OR HEALTH. THE EVIDENCE OF UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY IS TO BE FOUND AT ALL LEVELS, IN ALL AREAS OF SOCIETY. WE ARE PLEDGED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO GIVE GREATER EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY TO WOMEN, WHO HAVE LONG BEEN DISADVANTAGED - OFTEN IN SUBTLE AND HIDDEN WAYS - IN A MALE-ORIENTED SOCIETY. NO GOVERNMENT HAS DONE MORE FOR THE WELFARE OF WOMEN - AND I DO NOT MEAN SIMPLY WOMEN IN NEED OR WOMEN IN OBVIOUS HARDSHIP. SIMILARLY, WE ARE PLEDGED TO GIVE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY TO ABORIGINALS; NO GOVERNMENT HAS DONE MORE FOR THE ABORIGINALS OF THIS COUNTRY. FOR THE FIRST TIME THEY ARE REPRESENTED IN AN ELECTED CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL WHICH CAN DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. AGAIN, WE ARE PLEDGED TO GIVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO MIGRANTS; NO GOVERNMENT HAS DONE MORE FOR MIGRANTS. THESE ARE NOT IDLE OR PIOUS ASSERTIONS. THE EVIDENCE OF ALL WE HAVE DONE IS ABUNDANT AND MANIFEST IN THE RECORDS OF THIS ADMINISTRATION. IT WILL STAND, PROUD AND UNCHALLENGED, IN THE STATUTES OF THIS COUNTRY.

NO ONE DISPUTES THAT WHAT WE HAVE DONE FOR EDUCATION IS PRODIGIOUS IN SCALE AND REVOLUTIONARY IN CONCEPTION. WE HAVE INCREASED FEDERAL SPENDING ON EDUCATION BY WELL OVER 90%. WE HAVE ESTABLISHED AN EXPERT AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COMMISSION TO BRING SANITY AND JUSTICE TO THE WHOLE PROCESS OF ASSISTANCE TO PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS. WE HAVE GIVEN A NEW DEAL TO THE CHILDREN OF AUSTRALIA. IT IS HERE THAT THE FORCE AND SINCERITY OF OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IS MOST CLEARLY SEEN AND READILY TESTED. IT IS A TEST ALSO FOR OUR OPPONENTS.

IT IS A TEST THAT MOST OF THEM HAVE FAILED. HOW STRIKING IT IS, HOW REVEALING, HOW SALUTARY A LESSON FOR THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE, THAT THE TWO AREAS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY MOST FUNDAMENTAL TO THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS - EDUCATION AND HEALTH - ARE THE VERY AREAS WHERE OUR OPPONENTS HAVE RESISTED OUR REFORMS WITH THE GREATEST DETERMINATION. NOTHING REVEALS MORE CLEARLY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US -- THE GOVERNMENT'S FORTHRIGHT COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY, THE OPPOSITION'S REARGUARD DEFENCE OF INEQUALITY AND PRIVILEGE.

I ASK THE HOUSE TO EXAMINE IN DETAIL THE RECORD OF THE OPPOSITION, HERE AND IN THE SENATE. LET US LOOK AT THE BILLS THEY HAVE BLOCKED AND DELAYED AND FRUSTRATED AND AMENDED. LET US LOOK FOR THE COMMON THEME IN ALL THEIR OBSTRUCTIVE TACTICS. THE OPPOSITION MAY LACK A COMMON VOICE, BUT IT IS NOT WITHOUT A COMMON CAUSE. THAT CAUSE IS THE DEFENCE OF VESTED INTERESTS.

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MIND YOU, I CONFESS THAT I SOMETIMES FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TELL WHICH OF THEIR SPOKESMAN, THEIR LEADERS, SHOULD BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WOULD AGREE THAT THERE ARE MORE BLUE-TAILED FLIES IN THE SENATE THAN HERE. ON ONE VERY IMPORTANT MEASURE BEFORE THIS PARLIAMENT - THE INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BILL - THE COUNTRY PARTY VOTED AGAINST THE LEGISLATION WHILE THE LIBERAL PARTY SUPPORTED IT. ON THE QUESTION OF GRANTS TO SCHOOLS, THE LIBERAL PARTY VOTED AGAINST THE MEASURE WHILE THE COUNTRY PARTY SUPPORTED IT. WE WILL BE FORGIVEN FOR FEELING SOME CONFUSION.

IN THE PAST YEAR THE SENATE HAS REJECTED 13 BILLS, DEFERRED ANOTHER 10 OF WHICH SIX REMAIN SHELVED, AND AMENDED 21. I LIST THE 13 BILLS IT HAS REJECTED UP TILL TODAY: COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL - TWO BILLS; CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION; REPRESENTATION - TWO BILLS; SENATE (REPRESENTATION OF TERRITORIES) - TWO BILLS; LANDS ACQUISITION (AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY); SEAS AND SUBMERGED LANDS (ROYALTY ON MINERALS); CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS); CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES); HEALTH INSURANCE; AND HEALTH INSURANCE COMMISSION. IN DEFENCE OF THEIR WEALTHY FRIENDS AND VESTED INTERESTS, THEY HAVE REJECTED THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL ELECTORATES; THEY HAVE BLOCKED ATTEMPTS TO DEMOCRATISE AND MODERNISE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT; THEY HAVE DENIED REPRESENTATION IN THE SENATE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY;

THEY HAVE SOUGHT TO DENY TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIRECT ACCESS TO NATIONAL REVENUES AND BORROWINGS; THEY HAVE PRESERVED FOR FOREIGN MINING INTERESTS THE RIGHT TO EXPLOIT OUR OFF-SHORE RESOURCES; THEY HAVE PRESERVED THE INEQUITY, INEFFICIENCY AND INJUSTICE OF AN ANTIQUATED HEALTH SCHEME.

BY SHELIVING THE TRADE PRACTICES BILL THEY HAVE LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO MONOPOLIES AND BIG CORPORATIONS TO FIX PRICES, ORGANISE CARTELS AND EXPLOIT THE AUSTRALIAN CONSUMER. BY SHELIVING THE AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL THEY HAVE BLOCKED THE MOST EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT FOR ENSURING AUSTRALIAN CONTROL OF OUR INDUSTRIES AND DEVELOPING NEW INDUSTRIES. THEY HAVE LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO FOREIGN TAKEOVERS AND FOREIGN EXPLOITATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY. YET FOR ALL THE LEGISLATION I HAVE MENTIONED THE GOVERNMENT HAD A CLEAR MANDATE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE.

I SOMETIMES HEAR IT SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING TOO MUCH, THAT WE OUGHT TO SLOW DOWN. THIS IS AN ARGUMENT THAT COMES EASILY AND NATURALLY FROM CONSERVATIVES. I REJECT IT. I REJECT IT BECAUSE THE TASK BEFORE US IS STILL A GREAT AND FORMIDABLE TASK, BECAUSE MUCH THAT COULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED THIS YEAR STILL REMAINS TO BE ACHIEVED, BECAUSE A NATION THAT HAS WAITED 23 YEARS TO SEE ESSENTIAL AND OVERDUE SOCIAL REFORMS CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO WAIT ANY LONGER. THE GOVERNMENT IS PROUD OF ITS RECORD. WE HAVE ABOLISHED UNEMPLOYMENT AND RESTORED A HEALTHY RATE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH. AUSTRALIA HAS A NEW STRENGTH AND CONFIDENCE AT HOME AND A NEW RESPECT ABROAD. WE ARE NO LONGER A CIPHER OR A SATELLITE IN WORLD AFFAIRS. WE ARE NO LONGER STAMPED WITH THE

TAINT OF RACISM. WE ARE NO LONGER A COLONIAL POWER. WE ARE NO LONGER OUT OF STEP WITH THE WORLD'S PROGRESSIVE AND ENLIGHTENED MOVEMENTS TOWARDS FREEDOM, DISARMAMENT AND CO-OPERATION. WE ARE NO LONGER IN THRALL TO BOGIES AND OBSESSIONS IN OUR RELATIONS WITH CHINA OR THE GREAT POWERS. WE HAVE STRENGTHENED OLD FRIENDSHIPS AND ESTABLISHED NEW ONES.

IN NO FIELD IN ITS FIRST YEAR OF OFFICE HAS MY GOVERNMENT SO PROFOUNDLY, SO BENEFICIALLY, AND - LET ME BE QUITE CLEAR - SO SUCCESSFULLY ESTABLISHED NEW PERSPECTIVES AS IN AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICIES. THAT THIS HAS BEEN SO WAS FIRST OF ALL THE RESULT OF THE BITTER DISTORTIONS INTO WHICH OUR PREDECESSORS HAD FORCED AUSTRALIA'S POLICIES, THE INJUSTICES THEY DID TO THE GREAT MASS OF DECENT AUSTRALIANS IN A SHORT-SIGHTED PURSUIT OF POLICIES AS UGLY AS THEY WERE OUTDATED, AS NARROWLY CONCEIVED AS THEY WERE EQUIVOCAL. IF ANYTHING CAME TO AN END ON DECEMBER 2 - THE ANNIVERSARY OF AUSTERLITZ LAST YEAR - IT WAS THE DEMEANING OF AUSTRALIA IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD AS THE COUNTRY OUR PREDECESSORS HAD REPRESENTED IT TO BE: INSIGNIFICANT, RACIST, MILITARIST, SYCOPHANTIC, A TIMID AND UNWORTHY CREATURE OF THE GREAT POWERS TO WHOM IT HAD SURRENDERED ITS IDENTITY. AUSTRALIA IS NO LONGER THOUGHT OF IN THOSE WAYS: IF I TAKE PRIDE IN THAT IT IS BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT THE UGLY AUSTRALIA OF THE PAST DID AN UNFORGIVABLE VIOLENCE TO THE WAY IN WHICH ORDINARY AUSTRALIANS THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES, AND TO THE WAY THEY HOPED THEIR GOVERNMENT WOULD ACT IN ITS DEALINGS WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.

THERE HAVE BEEN GREAT CHANGES. MY GOVERNMENT IS UNEQUIVOCAL IN ITS BELIEF IN THE EQUALITY OF MEN OF ALL RACES: WE HAVE PROCLAIMED THAT BELIEF AND HAVE CONSISTENTLY ACTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH IT. MY GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE WAR IN VIETNAM WAS A BITTER DISASTER, THE END RESULT OF THE SQUANDERING OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE PRESENTED TWO DECADES AGO. WE SHALL HAVE NO MORE VIETNAMS, AND WE SHALL DO ALL IN OUR POWER TO PROMOTE THE FORCES FOR PEACE IN OUR REGION AND THE WORLD. ABOVE ALL MY GOVERNMENT BELIEVES IN THOSE ABIDING VIRTUES IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY WHICH HAVE GIVEN US A DISTINCTIVE NATIONHOOD, THE BELIEF IN FRATERNITY AND INDEPENDENCE, THE INSTINCT FOR FAIR PLAY, JUSTICE AND FREEDOM THAT EUREKA SIGNIFIES. IT IS THOSE VIRTUES WHICH AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICIES HAVE SOUGHT TO EMBODY OVER THE LAST YEAR: IT IS THAT INDEPENDENCE WHICH MY GOVERNMENT HAS CELEBRATED AND REVIVED.

IN SPITE OF MANY CHANGES CERTAIN THINGS ABIDE: AUSTRALIA'S INTERESTS HAVE NOT CHANGED, ONLY THE WAY IN WHICH MOST AUSTRALIANS PERCEIVE THEM. THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS ITS BASIC RESPONSIBILITY TO CREATE FOR THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA A SECURE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEY CAN MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP THEIR WELFARE FREE FROM FEAR, THREATS OR ARTIFICIAL CONSTRAINTS WHETHER INTERNALLY OR EXTERNALLY INSPIRED OR CONTRIVED. THAT TASK WILL BE MORE READILY PURSUED, MORE EASILY ATTAINABLE FROM NOW ON THAN WAS EVER POSSIBLE BEFORE. THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT NO SOCIETY CAN PROGRESS IF IT RESTS ONLY ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST. I BELIEVE WE HAVE REACHED A MORE SANE AND EQUITABLE BALANCE WITH THE COUNTRIES OF IMPORTANCE TO US IN THE WORLD THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST, BUT IT IS OF THE NATURE OF OUR TASK THAT IT CONTINUES WITH ITS IMPORTANCE UNDIMINISHED.

I INVITE THE HOUSE AND THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE TO COMPARE THIS GOVERNMENT WITH ITS PREDECESSOR, TO COMPARE THIS GOVERNMENT WITH THE TIRED, RESENTFUL, NAGGING AND SQUABBLING RABBLE WHO OPPOSE US IN THIS PARLIAMENT. WHO CAN DOUBT THE IMPORTANCE AND THE URGENCY OF ALL WE SEEK TO DO, THE IDEALISM OF OUR MOTIVES, THE RELEVANCE OF OUR REFORMS TO A BETTER AND MORE SECURE AND PROSPEROUS LIFE FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS? WHO CAN DOUBT THE TRIVIALITY, THE SELF-SEEKING BITTERNESS, THE PETTY METHODS OF OBSTRUCTION AND REACTION THAT MOTIVATE OUR OPPONENTS? WHO CAN DOUBT THAT AUSTRALIA IS NOW MORE RESPECTED AND ADMIRERD IN THE WORLD BY ITS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS? WHO CAN DOUBT THAT THERE IS A NEW SPIRIT OF ACTIVITY, OF EXCITEMENT, OF ADVENTURE IN OUR LIVES?

WE DO NOT REGARD THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS COUNTRY - AS OUR OPPONENTS REGARD IT - AS A DIVINE RIGHT, A PRIVILEGE THAT IS OURS TO ENJOY IN PERPETUITY. WE REGARD IT AS A TRUST FROM THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE. WE SEE NO POINT IN ACCEPTING THAT TRUST IF WE ARE UNABLE TO DISCHARGE IT FULLY AND WHOLEHEARTEDLY. I GIVE THIS ASSURANCE TO THE PARLIAMENT AND THE PEOPLE: WE WILL CARRY ON WITH OUR TASK, WE WILL NOT SHIRK OUR RESPONSIBILITIES. WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK FOR A MORE JUST AND PROSPEROUS AND ENLIGHTENED NATION. IN THIS FIRST YEAR OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT WE HAVE MADE GREAT AND LASTING PROGRESS TOWARDS OUR GOALS. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY OF THE MAJOR REFORMS WE HAVE ACHIEVED WILL EVER BE REVERSED OR ABANDONED. AFTER ALL THE CARPING AND NIGGLING, BACKING AND FILLING BY THE OPPOSITION, THE CHANGES WE HAVE MADE WILL REMAIN - LIKE ALL GREAT LABOR LEGISLATION - PERMANENT LANDMARKS IN OUR HISTORY. THE YEAR AHEAD WILL BE

ANOTHER YEAR OF PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT. I AM CONFIDENT
THAT THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE - WHEN NEXT THEY ARE ASKED TO
CHOOSE BETWEEN THE ALTERNATIVES BEFORE THEM - WILL ENDORSE
OUR RECORD AND RENEW OUR MANDATE.
