

EMB. 8.00pm

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,  
AT A PUBLIC MEETING AT MITCHAM HIGH SCHOOL, MELBOURNE,  
FRIDAY 1 MARCH 1974

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IT IS WITH A SPECIAL SENSE OF PLEASURE THAT I COME TO THE EASTERN AREA OF MELBOURNE TONIGHT. FOR IT IS THIS AREA WHICH PLAYED A VITAL ROLE ON 2 DECEMBER 1972 IN THE ELECTION OF THE FIRST NATIONAL LABOR GOVERNMENT IN 23 YEARS. WE NEEDED TO WIN FOUR SEATS TO GAIN GOVERNMENT. ONLY ABOUT AN HOUR AFTER THE START OF COUNTING ON THAT NIGHT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT WE WOULD WIN THESE SEATS IN THIS AREA. WE KNEW THEN THAT CASEY, HOLT, DIAMOND VALLEY AND LA TROBE HAD GONE TO LABOR. OUR GAINS ELSEWHERE WOULD CONSTITUTE OUR WORKING MAJORITY, OUR SAFETY MARGIN.

ONE OF THE VICTORIES HERE GAVE ME PARTICULAR SATISFACTION; IT MEANT THAT RACE MATHEWS, WHO, AS MY PRIVATE SECRETARY HAD DONE SO MUCH TO DEVELOP OUR POLICIES FOR GOVERNMENT, WOULD ENTER PARLIAMENT AS THE MEMBER FOR CASEY. NO LEADER WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS THAN DELIGHTED BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE WOULD TAKE HIS SEAT ALONGSIDE MAX OLDMEADOW, DAVID MCKENZIE AND TONY LAMB. AS CANDIDATES THEY PROMISED TO BE EXCELLENT MEMBERS; AS MEMBERS THEY HAVE ALREADY PROVED THEIR EXCELLENCE.

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NO PART OF AUSTRALIA PROVIDES A BETTER INDICATION OF WHY WE WON THE ELECTION THAN THE EASTERN SUBURBS OF MELBOURNE. THEY HAVE SEEN PHENOMENAL GROWTH IN THE POST-WAR YEARS BUT WITH THIS GROWTH HAVE COME A HOST OF PROBLEMS. OUR SCHOOLS, OUR HOSPITALS, OUR HEALTH SERVICES, OUR TRANSPORT FACILITIES, OUR COMMUNITY SERVICES HAVE NOT KEPT PACE WITH THE GREAT EXPANSION OF OUR MAJOR CITIES. THIS WAS PLAIN TO THE VOTERS OF THESE SUBURBS AND THEY MADE THEIR AWARENESS EQUALLY PLAIN WITH THEIR VOTES. THEY KNEW THAT NO PROMISE MADE BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT COULD COMPENSATE FOR 23 YEARS OF NEGLECT AND MIS-MANAGEMENT. THEY KNEW THAT ONLY AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST AND MOST REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL PARTY - THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY - HAD DRAWN UP PROGRAMS TO TACKLE THE MAMMOTH PROBLEMS OF OUR CITIES.

THEY ALSO KNEW THAT ONLY THE LABOR PARTY WOULD BE GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY AND EQUITY IN ITS APPROACH TO THESE PROBLEMS. THOSE PRINCIPLES HAVE REMAINED OUR BEACON IN THE 15 MONTHS SINCE THE PEOPLE OF THIS AND OTHER AREAS OF AUSTRALIA RECORDED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THEM. IN ALL THAT WE HAVE DONE IN THAT TIME WE HAVE SOUGHT TO MEASURE UP TO THE IDEAL CONTAINED IN MY ELECTION POLICY SPEECH WHEN I SAID: "IT'S TIME FOR A NEW TEAM, A NEW PROGRAM, A NEW DRIVE FOR EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITIES; IT'S TIME TO CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIANS, TIME FOR A NEW VISION OF WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE IN THIS GENERATION FOR OUR NATION AND THE REGION IN WHICH WE LIVE."

IN THAT SAME SPEECH I SAID THAT OUR PROGRAM WAS AMBITIOUS, AND THAT WE COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO CLEAR AWAY THE BACKLOG OF 23 YEARS IN 3 MONTHS OR EVEN 3 YEARS. A START, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN MADE AND, IN LINE WITH OUR GOAL OF SHARED OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS, WE HAVE SET OUR NATION ON A NEW COURSE. I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE ALREADY DONE ENOUGH TO ENSURE THAT THERE CAN BE NO TURNING BACK FROM THAT COURSE.

LET US LOOK AT THE ACHIEVEMENTS THAT JUSTIFY SUCH A PRONOUNCEMENT. THERE CAN BE NO GREATER JUSTIFICATION THAN OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION. WE HAVE RAISED THE EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN. WE HAVE TAKEN THE FIRST MAJOR STEPS TO FULFIL OUR OBJECTIVE OF BRINGING HIGHER STANDARDS OF EDUCATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION TO EVERY CHILD AT EVERY LEVEL FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO TERTIARY. IN ITS FIRST BUDGET THE GOVERNMENT COMMITTED \$843 MILLION TO EDUCATION FOR 1973/74 - ALMOST DOUBLE THE AMOUNT GIVEN BY OUR PREDECESSORS IN 1972/73. THE ALLOCATION FOR GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VICTORIA ALONE IS \$57.7 MILLION - AN INCREASE OF 153 PER CENT. WE HAVE ASSUMED FULL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION AND HAVE ABOLISHED FEES. FOR THE FIRST TIME WE ARE GIVING ASSISTANCE TO TEACHERS COLLEGES AND PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS COLLEGES ON THE SAME BASIS AS UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION; WE WILL SPEND \$188 MILLION ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE TWO AND A HALF YEARS FROM 1 JULY LAST YEAR. WE ARE GIVING MUCH MORE GENEROUS ALLOWANCES TO STUDENTS AND WE HAVE MORE THAN TREBLED THE NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS.

IN THE SPECIFIC FIELDS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION WE WILL MAKE AVAILABLE A TOTAL OF \$700 MILLION TO ALL SCHOOLS IN 1974 AND 1975. OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE TO THIS GREAT INCREASE IN FUNDS, IS OUR ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT SCHOOLS COMMISSION TO GIVE AID TO ALL SCHOOLS WITHOUT DISTINCTION ON A "NEEDS" BASIS. THIS WILL BE A MECHANISM BY WHICH WE WILL SEEK TO ENSURE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN.

I BELIEVE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS RIGHT TO BE PROUD OF SUCH ADVANCES. IT MUST BE RECOGNISED, HOWEVER, THAT MUCH OF THE DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR NEW PROGRAMS IN EDUCATION WILL DEPEND UPON THE PLANNING AND CO-OPERATION OF THE STATE GOVERNMENTS AND NON-GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITIES. FOR THIS REASON I AM DISTURBED AT THE PROPAGANDA EMANATING FROM CERTAIN STATE GOVERNMENTS THAT THE FUNDS PROVIDED FOR 1974 AND 1975 ARE RIGIDLY EAR-MARKED. IT IS TRUE THAT ABOUT \$44 MILLION IS ASSIGNED TO GOVERNMENT DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS - THAT IS TO AREAS OF PAST CHRONIC NEGLECT AND UNDER-ACHIEVEMENT. IT IS TRUE THAT \$20 MILLION IS ALLOTTED TO BUILDING PROJECTS FOR SCHOOLS FOR THE HANDICAPPED AND NEARLY \$9 MILLION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND RETRAINING OF TEACHERS OF THESE CHILDREN. IT IS TRUE THAT \$16 MILLION IS ALLOTTED TO PRIMARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES WHICH HAVE RECEIVED NO DIRECT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN THE PAST AND MORE THAN \$17 MILLION IS ALLOCATED TO SECONDARY LIBRARIES. SURELY NO ONE WOULD DISPUTE THE SPECIAL NEEDS IN THESE AREAS; SURELY NO ONE WOULD CRITICISE A GOVERNMENT FOR A DETERMINATION TO MEET THESE NEEDS. EVEN ALLOWING FOR THIS SPECIFIC GRANT, IT IS ABSURD TO TALK ABOUT RIGIDITY WHEN A GLANCE AT THE STATES GRANTS (SCHOOLS) ACT SHOWS THAT THE STATES WILL RECEIVE \$100 MILLION IN GENERAL BUILDING GRANTS AND \$174 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR GENERAL RECURRENT EXPENDITURE FOR GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS.

IT IS BREATHTAKING EFFRONTERY FOR STATE LIBERAL MINISTERS, WHO SUPPORTED A LIBERAL GOVERNMENT MAKING GRANTS TO STATE SCHOOLS AT THE RATE OF \$32 MILLION A YEAR WITHOUT A COMPLAINT, TO SUGGEST INDIFFERENCE ON THE PART OF AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WHOSE GRANTS TO STATE SCHOOLS REPRESENTS SOMETHING LIKE A EIGHT-FOLD INCREASE.

CRITICAL WORDS ARE ONE THING; ACTIONS ARE ANOTHER. THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MR BEAZLEY, HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY CONCERNED TO ENSURE THAT EDUCATION AUTHORITIES IMPLEMENT THE "NEEDS" POLICY WITH INTEGRITY. HE HAS BEEN INFORMED - HE HOPES INCORRECTLY - THAT ONE STATE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, IN HIS ALLOCATION OF THE EXTRA MONEY PROVIDED FOR DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS, IS OFFERING A MERE \$2,000 EACH TO THE PRINCIPALS OF A VAST RANGE OF SCHOOLS, INCLUDING A NUMBER WHICH ARE CLEARLY DISADVANTAGED. HE HAS ALSO BEEN INFORMED - AGAIN HE HOPES INCORRECTLY - THAT THIS MINISTER IS IDENTIFYING AS DISADVANTAGED SOME ALREADY EXCELLENT HIGH SCHOOLS, INCLUDING ONE WHICH, IN THE CONSTITUENCY OF A FORMER MINISTER FOR EDUCATION OF THE STATE, WAS A RECIPIENT OF SPECIAL ADVANTAGES IN THE PAST. WE WANT FROM EDUCATION AUTHORITIES A CLEAR STATEMENT ON THEIR CRITERIA OF DISADVANTAGE AND A CLEAR CONCENTRATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED EXPENDITURE ON SLUM SCHOOLS TO BRING THEM UP TO STANDARD.

BEFORE I LEAVE THE SUBJECT OF EDUCATION, I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE TOO OFTEN SUFFERED NEGLECT IN THE PAST. I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED OUR ALLOCATION FOR BUILDING PROJECTS FOR SCHOOLS FOR THE HANDICAPPED. IN THE LAST FORTNIGHT, THE CABINET HAS DECIDED TO APPROPRIATE A FURTHER \$1 MILLION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION APPLIED SPECIFICALLY FOR RESEARCH AND FOR THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN. ULTIMATELY THIS WILL PRODUCE "THE TEACHERS OF THE TEACHERS" OF THE HANDICAPPED AND THIS IS A CONCOMITANT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOLS FOR THE HANDICAPPED. I WOULD ALSO STRESS THAT THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION IS OBLIGED TO HAVE REGARD TO "THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND HANDICAPPED YOUNG PERSONS."

AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM OF PERSONAL FORTUNE, THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION IS CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHARTING COURSES OF ACTION WHICH WILL PROVIDE "SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR ABILITY IN A PARTICULAR FIELD OF STUDIES, INCLUDING SCIENTIFIC, LITERARY, ARTISTIC OR MUSICAL STUDIES." THE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEMES OF AUSTRALIA HAVE OFTEN AWARDED MONEY BUT NOT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENIUS OR TALENT IN SUCH AREAS TO PROCEED AT THE PACE OF THAT GENIUS AND TALENT AND THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST BAFFLING BUT FASCINATING PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION. IT REACHED ITS EXTREME IN A PRODIGY WHO, IN THE UNITED STATES, COULD LECTURE IN MATHEMATICS AT A UNIVERSITY AT THE AGE OF SEVEN, BUT WHO ALSO BELIEVED IN FATHER CHRISTMAS. THIS MAY HELP TO REMIND US THAT INTELLECTUAL BRILLIANCE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN SOCIAL MATURITY AND THAT SUCH A CHILD IS IN NEED OF SPECIAL ATTENTION.

EQUALITY AND EQUITY HAVE BEEN JUST AS MUCH THE PRINCIPAL FORCES BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES FOR THE PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA. OUR HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM IS PROOF ENOUGH OF THIS, AND I WILL HAVE MORE TO SAY ABOUT IT SHORTLY. AS MUCH PROOF CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORK OF THE HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SERVICES COMMISSION WHICH WE ESTABLISHED LAST YEAR. FOR TOO LONG THE SITING OF HOSPITALS HAS IGNORED THE POPULATION TRENDS OF OUR COUNTRY. FOR TOO LONG PEOPLE IN OUTER URBAN AREAS HAVE HAD TO PUT UP WITH TRAVELLING MILES TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE HOSPITAL TREATMENT. FOR TOO LONG NEWLY-DEVELOPED AREAS HAVE HAD TO SUFFER A SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS. MY COLLEAGUE MAX OLDMEADOW HAS TOLD ME OF ONE AREA IN HIS ELECTORATE WITH 18,000 PEOPLE AND ONLY TWO FULL-TIME GENERAL PRACTITIONERS.

THROUGH THE HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SERVICES COMMISSION WE ARE DETERMINED TO OVERCOME THIS GROTESQUELY UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF SUCH ESSENTIAL SERVICES. THE COMMISSION IS CURRENTLY EXAMINING HOSPITAL NEEDS AND WILL PRESENT A REPORT AS A BASIS FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION IN APRIL. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE INTRODUCED A MAJOR PROGRAM FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES, WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, WILL MAKE AVAILABLE DOCTORS IN AREAS WHERE THEY ARE CURRENTLY IN SHORT SUPPLY. IN VICTORIA WE EXPECT TO SPEND \$4.2 MILLION IN 1973/74 ON SUCH COMMUNITY HEALTH FACILITIES. PART OF OUR PROGRAM IS TO ASSIST THE STATES TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCY SERVICES. THE ALLOCATION OF MORE THAN \$77,000 FOR THE JANEFIELD FAMILY ASSESSMENT UNIT AT BUNDOORA - A CENTRE WHERE WHOLE FAMILIES CAN BE BROUGHT FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH MENTAL DEFICIENCIES - IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THIS PROGRAM IN ACTION IN THE EASTERN SUBURBS OF MELBOURNE.

ANOTHER IS THE PROVISION OF NEARLY \$80,000 FOR THE DANDENONG COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE AND TEACHING UNIT IN CONJUNCTION WITH MONASH UNIVERSITY.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO RECOGNISED THE NEED FOR GREATLY EXPANDED ACTIVITY IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL SECURITY. WE INCREASED PENSIONS TWICE LAST YEAR AND WILL LIFT THEM AGAIN IN THE AUTUMN. WE HAVE TAKEN THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE ABOLITION OF THE MEANS TEST. WE HAVE INTRODUCED A NUMBER OF NEW BENEFITS AND IMPROVED A NUMBER OF EXISTING ONES. THESE RANGE FROM INCREASES IN SUBSIDIES FOR AGED PERSONS HOMES TO GREATER ENCOURAGEMENT FOR HOME CARE SERVICES; FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF A SUPPORTING MOTHERS BENEFIT TO THE PROVISION OF AN ORPHAN'S PENSION. ONE OF OUR MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECTS IS TO DEVISE AN AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE PLAN TO ENABLE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO SHARE THE COST OF A WIDER RANGE OF WELFARE SERVICES. THE FIRST GRANTS UNDER THE NEW PLAN AFFECTING VICTORIA WERE ANNOUNCED BY THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY IN OCTOBER. INITIALLY THE GRANTS ARE FOR SETTING UP SECRETARIATS FOR SOCIAL PLANNING WHICH IN TURN WILL LEAD TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL COUNCILS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. OF THE SIX INITIAL GRANTS, WHICH TOTALLED \$91,000, A GRANT OF \$10,000 A YEAR HAS BEEN MADE TO THE MELBOURNE/OUTER EASTERN SUBURBS INTERIM COMMITTEE.

I MENTIONED A MOMENT AGO THE UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION AND INADEQUACY OF HEALTH SERVICES IN OUR MAJOR CITIES. THIS IS ONLY ONE ASPECT OF THE PROBLEMS THAT OUR HUGE URBAN AREAS FACE. IT IS ONLY ONE ASPECT OF PROGRAMS WHICH WE HAVE INITIATED TO OVERCOME THESE PROBLEMS



WE HAVE EMBARKED ON A LONG-RANGE PROGRAM TO MAKE AUSTRALIAN CITIES - EXISTING ONES AND NEW ONES - AND THEIR SUBURBS MORE EFFICIENT, MORE ORDERLY AND MORE BEAUTIFUL. THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT WAS CREATED LESS THAN THREE WEEKS AFTER WE CAME INTO OFFICE AS THE MAJOR POLICY ARM OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IN URBAN AFFAIRS. THE CITIES COMMISSION WAS SET UP TO PROVIDE TOWN PLANNING AND OTHER PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR DEVELOPING EXISTING CITIES AND PLANNING NEW GROWTH CENTRES. THE FIRST FRUITS OF THESE MEASURES HAVE COME WITH THE PLANNING OF A MAJOR CENTRE IN ALBURY-WODONGA. THIS AND OTHER FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS ARE AIMED AT RELIEVING OUR EXISTING CITIES, PARTICULARLY MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY, OF THE UNBEARABLE STRAINS CAUSED BY EXCESSIVE DEVELOPMENT.

IN FEBRUARY LAST YEAR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED A SCHEME TO IMPROVE URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN THE CAPITAL CITIES. I SAID IN MY POLICY SPEECH THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT "MUST NOW ACCEPT A SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS OF AUSTRALIAN CITIES." THE SCHEME WE ANNOUNCED MORE THAN LIVES UP TO THAT PLEDGE. IT IS BASED ON THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTING TWO-THIRDS OF THE COST OF IMPROVING URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND LEAVING ONLY ONE-THIRD OF THE COST TO THE STATES. SUGGESTED PROJECTS FOR A FIVE-YEAR PROGRAM HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED BY THE STATE GOVERNMENTS INCLUDING VICTORIA. WHILE MOST OF THESE PROPOSALS ARE BEING EVALUATED, WE HAVE ALREADY AGREED TO PROVIDE \$4.32 MILLION IN 1973/74 TO PROVIDE NEW TRAINS, TRAMS AND BUSES IN THIS STATE.

WE ARE THE FIRST GOVERNMENT TO RECOGNISE THAT ONE OF THE MOST APPALLING EFFECTS OF THE RAPID GROWTH OF OUR CITIES HAS BEEN THE INADEQUACY OF SEWERAGE SERVICES IN NEW SUBURBS. WE ARE THE FIRST NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT A DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS PROBLEM. THE BUDGET PROVIDED FOR AN ADVANCE OF \$30 MILLION TO HELP CATCH UP ON THE BACKLOG OF SEWERAGE. THIS INCLUDES \$9.3 MILLION FOR VICTORIA. THE MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS HAS ADVISED US THAT \$7.3 MILLION OF THIS IS EXPECTED TO BE ALLOCATED FOR MAJOR AND MINOR SEWERAGE WORKS IN THE EASTERN SUBURBS OF MELBOURNE IN 1973/74. A LONG-TERM NATIONAL SEWERAGE PROGRAM IS AT PRESENT UNDERGOING DETAILED NEGOTIATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS STATE AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THE PROGRAM TO BE DEVELOPED IN VICTORIA IS EXPECTED TO ELIMINATE THE SEWERAGE BACKLOG IN MAJOR URBAN AREAS BY 1982.

OUR CITIES HAVE ALSO SUFFERED MIGHTILY FROM THE SHORTAGE OF HOUSING. AGAIN WE HAVE MOVED TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM. THE TOTAL AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PROVISION FOR HOUSING HAS GONE UP BY 34 PER CENT THIS FINANCIAL YEAR - FROM \$370 MILLION TO \$495 MILLION. ADVANCES TO THE STATES INCREASED BY 29 PER CENT TO \$219 MILLION; VICTORIA RECEIVED \$53.5 MILLION, COMPARED TO ONLY \$39 MILLION IN THE PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR. VICTORIA IS ADVANCED \$16 MILLION IN THE AGREEMENT UNDER THE HOME BUILDERS' ACCOUNT, WHICH IS USED FOR TERMINATING BUILDING SOCIETY LOANS; THIS IS NEARLY \$5 MILLION MORE THAN IN THE PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR, AND WILL BE SPENT FOR HOMES FOR SALE, NOT FOR RENTAL, AS STATE AUTHORITIES HAVE TRIED TO CLAIM.

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ADVANCE FOR USE IN BUILDING HOUSING COMMISSION HOMES FOR RENTAL AND PURCHASE ROSE IN 1973/74 TO \$37.5 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF NEARLY \$10 MILLION ON THE PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR. I WOULD EMPHASISE THAT THESE LARGE INCREASES WERE THE AMOUNTS THE VICTORIAN STATE GOVERNMENT SOUGHT, LIMITED ONLY BY THE CAPACITY OF THE BUILDING INDUSTRY.

THESE GENEROUS ADVANCES WILL ENABLE VICTORIA TO BUILD 3,000 HOUSING COMMISSION DWELLINGS THIS FINANCIAL YEAR - A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT ON THE NUMBERS BUILT WITH MONEY HANDED OUT BY OUR PREDECESSORS. THE GREAT BULK OF THIS MONEY IS PROVIDED AT THE HIGHLY CONCESSIONAL INTEREST RATE OF FOUR PER CENT FOR THE FIVE YEARS OF THE AGREEMENT - SURELY A SIGNIFICANT FIGURE WHEN THE BOND RATE IS AROUND 8.5 PER CENT. THE HOME BUILDERS' ACCOUNT FUNDS ALLOCATED TO EACH STATE WILL BE LOANED OUT TO HOMESEEKERS AT INTEREST RATES NOT EXCEEDING FIVE AND THREE-QUARTER PER CENT. HOUSING COMMISSION DWELLINGS ALSO MUST BE SOLD WITHIN THIS INTEREST RATE LIMIT, SO IT CAN BE READILY SEEN THAT THE NEW AGREEMENT GIVES SUBSTANTIAL FINANCIAL AID TO THOSE WHO HAVE TO BUY THEIR HOMES WITHIN THE PUBLIC HOUSING SECTOR.

WE HAVE TAKEN SEVERAL OTHER IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE HOUSING FIELD. WE ARE WORKING ON A UNIFORM BUILDING REGULATIONS CODE WHICH MAY EVENTUALLY REDUCE HOUSING COSTS BY AS MUCH AS SIX PER CENT. A TASK FORCE INVESTIGATING SYSTEMS OF FACTORY PRODUCED HOUSING HAS ALREADY PRODUCED AN INTERIM REPORT, AND IT MAY PROVE POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE SAVINGS AS HIGH AS 20 PER CENT FOR A COTTAGE IF THESE NEW HOUSING TECHNIQUES CAN EFFECTIVELY BE UTILISED IN THE FUTURE.

THE SCOPE OF THE DEFENCE SERVICES HOMES SCHEME HAS BEEN GREATLY WIDENED, AND THE MAXIMUM LOAN LIMIT RAISED FROM \$9,000 TO \$12,000. SPENDING ON DEFENCE SERVICE HOMES THIS FINANCIAL YEAR HAS INCREASED BY 37 PER CENT TO \$102 MILLION. ABORIGINAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS HAVE INCREASED THIS FINANCIAL YEAR BY 123 PER CENT TO \$32.4 MILLION. WE ARE PHASING OUT THE INEQUITABLE HOME SAVINGS GRANT SCHEME, AND THIS SESSION OF PARLIAMENT WILL SEE THE INTRODUCTION OF A MUCH FAIRER AND WIDER SCHEME OF LIMITED TAX DEDUCTIBILITY ON MORTGAGE INTEREST.

WE CONCEDE THAT AUSTRALIA FACES AN AWESOME PROBLEM IN OVERCOMING OUR ENDEMIC HOUSING CRISIS; BUT THIS GOVERNMENT IS EVOLVING POLICIES DESIGNED TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM FROM MANY SIDES. A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IS ALREADY OCCURRING IN THE WELFARE HOUSING FIELD, AND OUR EFFORTS IN THE OTHER SECTORS WILL SOON SHOW SIMILAR GAINS.

DESPITE ALL WE ARE DOING IN THESE AREAS, WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF OUR CITIES AND OTHER PROBLEMS AS EFFECTIVELY AS WE MUST, IF WE DO NOT ALLOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO ASSUME A GREATER ROLE IN AUSTRALIA. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS THE ORGAN OF GOVERNMENT WHICH IS CLOSEST TO THE PEOPLE, WHICH KNOWS BEST THEIR DETAILED NEEDS AND WHICH CAN BE MOST RESPONSIVE TO THOSE NEEDS. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA FOR TOO LONG HAS BEEN DENIED A PROPER ROLE, PROPER RESPONSIBILITY AND PROPER FINANCES. IT ALSO PROVIDES A VIVID DEMONSTRATION OF INEQUALITY IN OUR SOCIETY. LONG-ESTABLISHED AREAS BENEFIT FROM SERVICES WHICH HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED OVER DECADES. NEWLY-ESTABLISHED AREAS SUFFER FROM THE FACT THAT LOCAL COUNCILS CANNOT KEEP UP WITH THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO ENABLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO PLAY A FULL AND PROPER ROLE IN THE AFFAIRS OF OUR NATION. LAST YEAR WE TOOK A MAJOR STEP IN THIS DIRECTION BY BRINGING IN THE GRANTS COMMISSION ACT. THIS RECONSTITUTES THE GRANTS COMMISSION TO GIVE IT POWER TO MAKE FUNDS AVAILABLE TO LOCAL AS WELL AS STATE GOVERNMENTS. THIS RECOGNISES THAT THERE ARE GREAT DISPARITIES BETWEEN DIFFERENT AREAS WITHIN ONE STATE JUST AS THERE HAVE BEEN DISPARITIES BETWEEN DIFFERENT STATES. THE GRANTS COMMISSION IS NOW ABLE TO PROVIDE FUNDS TO REDUCE THESE REGIONAL DISPARITIES. IN THE LAST FORTNIGHT IT BEGAN ITS FIRST HEARINGS UNDER THE NEW ACT. IT HEARD AN APPLICATION FROM COUNCILS IN REGION 16 OF VICTORIA FOR SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO OVERCOME THE BACKLOG OF SERVICES IN THAT REGION. REGION 16 COVERS SOME OF THE EASTERN SUBURBS OF MELBOURNE, INCLUDING PART OF THIS ELECTORATE OF CASEY. THIS WILL BE THE FIRST OF MANY HEARINGS WHICH I TRUST WILL RESULT IN A PROPER MEASURE OF COMMONWEALTH AID FOR AREAS, PARTICULARLY NEWLY-DEVELOPED AREAS, WHICH ARE INADEQUATELY SERVICED AT PRESENT.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT LAST YEAR TRIED TO PERSUADE THE STATES TO ALLOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIRECT ACCESS TO THE LOAN COUNCIL. THE STATES REFUSED TO AGREE TO THIS PROPOSAL AND SO DEPRIVED, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE SURE ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FUNDS. MY GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE ATTITUDE OF THE STATES ON THIS QUESTION AND WE WILL TAKE THIS MATTER TO THE PEOPLE IN A REFERENDUM TO BE CONDUCTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SENATE ELECTIONS THIS YEAR.

THIS LEADS ME TO THE QUESTION OF THE SENATE. I HAVE OUTLINED TO YOU TONIGHT THE PRINCIPLES WHICH HAVE GUIDED THE POLICIES WHICH WE HAVE TRIED TO IMPLEMENT IN THE LAST 15 MONTHS. IN 1972 WE WON A MANDATE FOR THOSE POLICIES AND AN ENDORSEMENT OF THOSE PRINCIPLES. YET CONTINUALLY IN THE LAST 15 MONTHS MEN WHO WERE ELECTED TO THE SENATE AS LONG AGO AS 1967 AND 1970 HAVE TRIED TO THWART THOSE POLICIES AND PERVERT THOSE PRINCIPLES. WHERE IS THEIR MANDATE FOR THE 1970'S? THEY DO NOT HAVE ONE.

YET LOOK AT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS. LAST YEAR THE SENATE REJECTED 13 BILLS, DEFERRED ANOTHER 10 AND AMENDED 21. I HAVE MENTIONED IN PASSING OUR HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM, A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL PROTECTION AGAINST THE COST OF ILLNESS FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS, INCLUDING THE ONE AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO SUCH PROTECTION AT PRESENT; A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO PROVIDE THAT PROTECTION BY THE FAIREST METHOD OF CONTRIBUTION. THIS WAS PROBABLY THE MOST THOROUGHLY DISCUSSED POLICY PROPOSED BY THE LABOR PARTY WHILE IT WAS IN OPPOSITION. ITS POPULAR ACCEPTANCE PLAYED A LARGE PART IN THE GREAT LIFT IN OUR ELECTORAL FORTUNES IN 1969 AND THE FULFILMENT OF THOSE FORTUNES IN 1972. YET THESE MEN, ELECTED AS MUCH AS SIX YEARS AGO, HAVE REJECTED OUR LEGISLATION FOR THAT PROGRAM; THEY HAVE REJECTED THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY AND UNIVERSALITY WHICH ARE ITS CORNERSTONES.

IN THE FACE OF OUR MANDATE, THEY HAVE SHELVED THE TRADE PRACTICES BILL AND, IN SO DOING, THEY LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO MONOPOLIES AND BIG CORPORATIONS TO FIX PRICES, ORGANISE CARTELS AND EXPLOIT THE AUSTRALIAN CONSUMER. AGAIN, THEY HAVE DENIED AUSTRALIANS FAIRNESS. THEY HAVE SHELVED THE AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL AND THUS BLOCKED THE MOST EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT FOR ENSURING AUSTRALIAN CONTROL OF OUR INDUSTRIES AND FOR DEVELOPING NEW INDUSTRIES. THEY HAVE LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO FOREIGN TAKEOVERS AND FOREIGN EXPLOITATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY.

THESE SAME MEN HAVE REJECTED THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL ELECTORATES. THESE MEN, WHO ARE SO QUICK TO COMPLAIN OF STRIKES, HAVE BLOCKED ATTEMPTS TO DEMOCRATISE AND MODERNISE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. THEY HAVE PRESERVED FOR FOREIGN MINING INTERESTS THE RIGHT TO EXPLOIT OUR OFF-SHORE RESOURCES. LIKE THE STATES, THEY HAVE SOUGHT TO DENY TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIRECT ACCESS TO NATIONAL REVENUES AND BORROWINGS.

I TRUST THEIR ACTIONS WILL BE REMEMBERED WHEN THE SENATE ELECTIONS ARE HELD THIS YEAR. I TRUST THAT THE MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS WHO SUPPORTED OUR POLICIES IN 1972 WILL REMEMBER HOW SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THOSE POLICIES HAVE BEEN FRUSTRATED BY A HOSTILE AND REACTIONARY OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE.

THE VOTERS OF AUSTRALIA GAVE US THE SUPPORT WE NEEDED TO INITIATE THOSE POLICIES IN 1972. I TRUST THAT IN 1974 THEY WILL GIVE US THE POWER TO ENSURE THEIR FULL IMPLEMENTATION.

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