CHILD CARE — STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

CHELSEA MEETING, MELBOURNE, 14 MAY 1974

The Opposition have made it brutally clear that they would do nothing of value for the care and education of young children. Child care would suffer under a Country Party-Liberal Government for the same reason that education would suffer. Mr Snedden would prefer to spend the money on wealthy sectional interests.

The Liberal record on child care demonstrates their neglect and indifference. In their last three years in office they spent $5 million a year on pre-school education and child care. They promised to spend an additional $5 million in 1972 but did not do so.

~~In the last~~ For the first six months ~~in office~~ of 1974 the Whitlam Government has spent $18 million. It has done this - and much more - by cutting back $480 million in unnecessary spending on tax lurks, concessions and subsidies for wealthy mining corporations, business interests, Collins Street farmers and category-A schools. Mr Snedden, under Country Party pressure, would restore these payments. That is why he has no real interest in child care. That is why his proposals are hollow and irrelevant.

Australians - all Australian governments - currently spend $2,000 million a year in educating, sheltering and caring for children under 12. In this context, the Snedden offer of $20 million for children under six looks pretty shabby.

That is the reality behind the official Liberal policy statement that there would be "no new expenditure until economic circumstances permit", that "current pre-school programs" would continue. They promise merely to continue something that everyone regards as inadequate.

There can be no argument about the size and reality of the challenge. The best official estimates at the government's disposal indicate a program costing $130 million in a full year. We are committed to such a program.

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