

NOTES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,  
AT THE OPENING OF THE HENTY ELECTORATE OFFICE OF MRS. JOAN  
CHILD, M.P., OAKLEIGH, MELBOURNE, VIC.

FRIDAY, 16 AUGUST 1974

1. THE PEOPLE OF HENTY MADE HISTORY THIS YEAR BY ELECTING MRS. JOAN CHILD AS THE FIRST WOMEN TO REPRESENT THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME HENTY HAD ELECTED A WOMEN TO THE PARLIAMENT. THE 1968 RE-DISTRIBUTION CHANGED THE ELECTORATE IN A WAY WHICH STRENGTHENED THE LIBERAL PARTY'S PROSPECTS OF HOLDING THE SEAT. BUT AT HER SECOND ATTEMPT, MRS. CHILD WON IT. IT IS SOMETHING OF A LABOR OASIS IN A LIBERAL DESERT. AS IT IS SURROUNDED BY FIVE LIBERAL SEATS - HOTHAM, BRUCE, CHISHOLM, BALACLAVA AND HIGGINS.

2. MRS. CHILD DELIVERED HER MAIDEN SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON 16 JULY. SHE DEVOTED MOST OF HER SPEECH TO ARGUING THE NEED FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO DO MORE FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE. THIS IS AN AREA IN WHICH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS DONE MUCH IN THE LAST 20 MONTHS. WE ARE DETERMINED TO ENSURE ADEQUATE HELP FOR THE HANDICAPPED, BOTH YOUNG AND OLD. IN LAST YEAR'S BUDGET THE HANDICAPPED CHILDRENS BENEFIT WAS DOUBLED FROM \$1.50 A DAY TO \$3.00 A DAY. THIS BENEFIT, WHICH IS PAID UNDER THE NATIONAL HEALTH ACT, WAS INTRODUCED IN 1969. IT HAS TWO PURPOSES:

TO ASSIST PARENTS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND TO HELP ORGANISATIONS MEET THE RUNNING COSTS OF HOMES. THE BUDGET CONTAINED FOUR SPECIFIC BENEFITS FOR THE REHABILITATION OF HANDICAPPED PEOPLE. IT REMOVED THE THREE-YEAR LIMIT FOR ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE WELFARE REHABILITATION SERVICE. PREVIOUSLY PEOPLE WERE ACCEPTED FOR REHABILITATION ONLY IF THEY WERE CONSIDERED TO HAVE REASONABLE PROSPECTS OF BEING ENGAGED IN A SUITABLE VOCATION WITHIN THREE YEARS. THE TRAINING ALLOWANCE FOR PEOPLE UNDERGOING FULL-TIME VOCATIONAL TRAINING THROUGH THE WELFARE REHABILITATION SERVICE WAS INCREASED FROM \$4.00 A WEEK TO \$8.00 A WEEK. THE LIVING-AWAY-FROM-HOME ALLOWANCE WAS DOUBLED AND SET AT \$10.00 A WEEK FOR UNMARRIED TRAINEES UNDERGOING FULL-TIME TRAINING THROUGH THE REHABILITATION TRAINING SCHEME AND AT \$16.00 A WEEK FOR MARRIED TRAINEES. THESE ALLOWANCES ARE DESIGNED TO ASSIST HANDICAPPED PEOPLE WHO MUST LIVE AWAY FROM THEIR USUAL PLACE OF RESIDENCE IN ORDER TO UNDERGO VOCATIONAL TRAINING. IN ADDITION THE BUDGET PROVIDED A \$2 FOR \$1 GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY ON MONEY BORROWED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES FOR PROJECTS UNDER THE SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT (ASSISTANCE) ACT AND THE HANDICAPPED CHILDREN (ASSISTANCE) ACT. THIS MEASURE IS AIMED AT ENCOURAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES TO SPONSOR SHELTERED WORKSHOPS, TRAINING CENTRES AND HOSTELS FOR HANDICAPPED ADULTS AND CHILDREN. PREVIOUSLY, LEGISLATION HAD PREVENTED THESE FUNDS FROM ATTRACTING A SUBSIDY.

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3. DRAMATIC ADVANCES HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE BY OTHER AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED WITH HANDICAPPED PEOPLE, SUCH AS THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH. FOLLOWING THE REPORT OF THE INTERIM COMMITTEE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS COMMISSION, THE GOVERNMENT IS MOUNTING A MAJOR ATTACK ON THE PRESENT DEFICIENCIES IN THE EDUCATION OF MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN. IN 1974 AND 1975 THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL PROVIDE THE STATES WITH A GRANT OF \$43.5 MILLION FOR SPECIAL AND REMEDIAL EDUCATION. THIS WILL ENABLE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROGRAM CONSISTING OF CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SCHOOLS AND THE REPLACEMENT AND UPGRADING OF EXISTING SUB-STANDARD ONES, THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL MATERIALS, AN INCREASE IN SUPPORT AND SPECIALIST STAFF AND A REDUCTION IN CLASS SIZES. IN THE SAME PERIOD WE WILL PROVIDE A TOTAL OF \$3.63 MILLION FOR THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN. THE FUNDS WE ARE PROVIDING WILL REPRESENT THE FIRST SUBSTANTIAL RECOGNITION BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OF THE NEED OF STATE EDUCATION AUTHORITIES FOR SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE EDUCATION OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN. PROVISION HAS ALSO BEEN MADE FOR HANDICAPPED PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAM, WHICH HAS BEEN INITIATED BY THE AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR HEALTH, DR. EVERINGHAM, AND THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSION.

4. THE GOVERNMENT'S OVERALL AIM IS TO REPLACE THE PREVIOUS AD HOC APPROACH TO WELFARE WITH A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH WHICH TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE NEEDS OF PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY AND FINANCIALLY DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE ACROSS THE NATION. WE WANT TO SEE THE NATION'S WELFARE RESOURCES CO-ORDINATED FOR THE FIRST TIME. THE MAJOR EFFORT DIRECTED TO THIS END IS IN THE HANDS OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE COMMISSION. IT WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT LAST YEAR TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON COMMUNITY NEEDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WELFARE PROGRAMS, TO DETERMINE PRIORITIES AND EVALUATE PROGRAMS, TO ESTIMATE COSTS AND TO ENCOURAGE THE CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF ALL WELFARE SERVICES. THE COMMISSION HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR INITIATING THE AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE PLAN AS THE VEHICLE FOR CO-ORDINATING AND INTEGRATING ALL WELFARE RESOURCES IN A WAY THAT WILL BEST MEET THE NEEDS OF AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES. THE ASSISTANCE PLAN HAS AS ITS MAIN PURPOSE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL PLANNING UNITS. THEIR JOB IS TO INCREASE LOCAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL WELFARE ACTIVITY. ALTHOUGH THE PLAN HAS BEEN IN OPERATION FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS, THE FIRST OF THESE PLANNING UNITS KNOWN AS REGIONAL COUNCILS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ARE TAKING SHAPE.

5. IN HER MAIDEN SPEECH JOAN CHILD SAID:

"A NATION'S WEALTH IS MEASURED BY THE CARE AND COMPASSION IT IS PREPARED TO EXTEND TO THE OLD AND LONELY, THE DEPENDENT, THE DISABLED AND THE YOUNG WHO ARE IN THE SCHOOLS."

THAT VERY PRINCIPLE HAS GUIDED MUCH OF OUR ENDEAVOURS IN THE LAST 20 MONTHS. I HAVE ALREADY OUTLINED WHAT WE HAVE DONE FOR THE DISABLED AND FOR OTHERS IN NEED OF WELFARE SERVICES. IN THE CASE OF THE OLD, WE HAVE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THE BIGGEST PENSION INCREASE EVER GIVEN TO PENSIONERS. WE HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE FOR A WIDE RANGE OF SERVICES FOR THE AGED, SUCH AS AGED PERSONS HOUSING, DOMICILIARY CARE AND SENIOR CITIZENS CENTRES. FOR THE YOUNG WE HAVE INTRODUCED A NEW CHARTER FOR THEIR EDUCATION. WE HAVE ALMOST DOUBLED COMMONWEALTH EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION; WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A PERMANENT SCHOOLS COMMISSION TO GIVE AID TO ALL SCHOOLS, WITHOUT DISTINCTION, ON A 'NEEDS' BASIS; 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 ARE GIVING MUCH MORE GENEROUS ALLOWANCES TO STUDENTS AND HAVE MORE THAN TREBLED THE NUMBER OF TEACHING SCHOLARSHIPS.

*Aged Persons*

6. THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO HELP THE DISADVANTAGED. THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, IN HIS SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE PARLIAMENT ON 9 JULY, SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROVIDE "FOR INCREASED ASSISTANCE FOR THE HANDICAPPED AND DISABLED, FURTHER ASSISTANCE FOR ORGANISATIONS CONDUCTING AGED PERSONS' HOMES AND NURSING HOMES AND HELP FOR THE HOMELESS."

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