

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CANBERRA

ONE OF THE REGULAR AND OFTEN UNNOTICED ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS IS ITS DESIGNATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS FOR THE PURPOSE OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO MATTERS OF HUMAN SIGNIFICANCE. FOR INSTANCE IN THE PAST DECADE THERE HAVE BEEN PROCLAIMED SUCH YEARS AS

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION YEAR (1965)
INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (1968)
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION YEAR (1970)
INTERNATIONAL YEAR TO COMBAT RACISM AND
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (1971)
WORLD POPULATION YEAR (1973)

IN THE PAST, IN AUSTRALIA, THESE YEARS HAVE BEEN CELEBRATED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ACTIVITIES OF VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS, BUT RARELY HAVE GOVERNMENTS TAKEN THESE YEARS SERIOUSLY ENOUGH TO PLAN FAR-REACHING AND IMAGINATIVE PROGRAMS AIMED AT ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE YEAR.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED THAT THERE IS MUCH MORE THAT CAN BE DONE, AT A NATIONAL LEVEL, TO ASSIST AND CO-ORDINATE THE CELEBRATION OF THESE YEARS.

THE STRUGGLE FOR UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS IS A PROTRACTED AND PERHAPS AN UNENDING STRUGGLE. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR IS CONSIDERED TO BE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED THAT ITS ACTIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES ADOPTED IN THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM BE MATCHED WITH THOSE PURSUED AT HOME. IN THE UNITED NATIONS, AUSTRALIA IS BECOMING KNOWN AS AN OUTSPOKEN CONTENDER FOR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE A CONTINUING OBLIGATION TO DO ALL IN OUR POWER TO PROMOTE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

TO MY MIND, THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT AND ENLIGHTENED ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AND IT IS FROM THIS FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO THE DIGNITY OF PEOPLE THAT 1975 WAS UNANIMOUSLY PROCLAIMED ON 18 DECEMBER 1972 BY THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO BE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR.

IT IS WORTH CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT IT WAS THOUGHT NECESSARY TO NOMINATE A YEAR FOR ALL NATIONS TO MAKE A CONCENTRATED EFFORT TOWARDS ENSURING THAT WOMEN ENJOY THE DIGNITY OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS.

THAT THEY ARE INTEGRATED INTO SOCIETY AND THAT THERE IS A RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.

IT IS WORTH CONSIDERING THIS FACT BECAUSE IT IS A SOBERING THOUGHT THAT WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD HAVE TO BE GRANTED AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD.

THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AND THIS ITS INAUGURAL MEETING, IS AN INSURANCE THAT AUSTRALIA WILL FACE THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT THIS YEAR PLACES UPON US.

IT IS MY HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MARSHALL, CO-ORDINATE AND ENCOURAGE THE DEDICATION, ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM OF ORGANISATIONS AND WOMEN WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, AND THAT IN ADDITION YOU WILL PROVIDE A NATIONAL DIRECTION TO THIS ACTIVITY SO THAT 1975 IS NOT ONLY A YEAR OF SIGNIFICANCE IN ITSELF BUT THAT IT WILL HAVE MADE A LASTING CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS REDUCING THE PREJUDICES AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY FROM WHICH WOMEN SUFFER. IT IS ALSO MY HOPE THAT THIS YEAR WILL ENSURE A LASTING RECOGNITION OF THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION THAT WOMEN HAVE MADE, AND CONTINUE TO MAKE, TO AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY.

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION CAN ONLY ACHIEVE SO MUCH AND I SHALL NOT PRETEND TO YOU THAT ANY GOVERNMENT CAN ACHIEVE IMMEDIATELY FOR AUSTRALIAN WOMEN THE REVOLUTION REQUIRED TO ALLOW THEM TO DEVELOP FULLY AS INDIVIDUALS.

FOR INSTANCE IT MUST BE SAID THAT, EVEN IF WE WERE TO REMOVE ALL THE INEQUALITIES OF OPPORTUNITY AND OF STATUS, IT STILL WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH. WE HAVE TO ATTACK THE SOCIAL INEQUALITIES, THE HIDDEN AND USUALLY UNARTICULATED ASSUMPTIONS WHICH AFFECT WOMEN NOT ONLY IN EMPLOYMENT BUT IN THE WHOLE RANGE OF THEIR OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE.

THIS IS NOT JUST A MATTER FOR GOVERNMENTS AND FOR ACTION BY GOVERNMENTS - IT IS A MATTER OF CHANGING COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND UPROOTING COMMUNITY PREJUDICES. AND INsofar AS THIS REQUIRES A RE-EDUCATION OF THE COMMUNITY THEN CLEARLY GOVERNMENTS ALONE CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO DO THE WHOLE JOB. YOU ARE PROBABLY AWARE OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE. ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS BILL WAS TO PERMIT AUSTRALIA TO RATIFY THE CONVENTION ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN, WHICH WAS ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS IN 1952 AND CAME INTO FORCE IN JULY 1954. AUSTRALIA IS NOT A PARTY TO THE CONVENTION ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN AS THERE IS STILL LEGISLATION IN TWO STATES, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AND TASMANIA, THAT DOES NOT YET FULLY CONFORM WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THAT CONVENTION. THIS CONVENTION PROVIDES THAT WOMEN SHALL BE ENTITLED TO HOLD PUBLIC OFFICE AT AUSTRALIAN AND STATE LEVEL ON EQUAL TERMS WITH MEN, WITHOUT ANY DISCRIMINATION. ACTION HAS ALREADY BEEN TAKEN TO AMEND AUSTRALIAN LEGISLATION RELATING TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE TO REMOVE PROVISIONS THAT OFFEND AGAINST THIS CONVENTION. IT IS EXPECTED THAT AUSTRALIA WILL RATIFY OR ACCEDE TO THAT CONVENTION AFTER THESE DEFECTS HAVE BEEN OVERCOME, EITHER AS A RESULT OF THE PROPOSED HUMAN RIGHTS ACT OR BY THE ENACTMENT OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATION ON THE SUBJECT.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY ESTABLISHED A NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATION. OTHER ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE AREA OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT INCLUDE:

- . SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION IN DECEMBER 1972 IN PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE AUSTRALIAN CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION COMMISSION TO HAVE ESTABLISHED THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE. CONSULTATIONS WITH STATE GOVERNMENTS HAVE LED TO MOST STATES AGREEING TO THIS PRINCIPLE.

- . THE PROVISION OF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN WISHING TO ENTER OR RE-ENTER THE LABOUR FORCE AFTER A PERIOD OF DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITY.

THIS COMING YEAR WILL ALSO SEE THE BEGINNING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW PROGRAM FOR THE CARE AND EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN. IN NO OTHER COUNTRY IN THE WORLD HAS SUCH AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAM BEEN ATTEMPTED. THIS PROGRAM RECOGNISES THE NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL, HEALTH AND WELFARE COMPONENTS IN CHILD CARE; IT RECOGNISES THE NEED FOR THESE SAME SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WHETHER THEY BE LOOKED AFTER AT HOME OR ELSEWHERE. IT WILL BREAK DOWN THE TRADITIONAL DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN OCCASIONAL CARE AND REGULAR CARE, BETWEEN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND CHILD MINDING. ALL CHILDREN WHETHER THEY BE LOOKED AFTER AT HOME OR ELSEWHERE WILL HAVE ACCESS TO LOCAL CENTRES DESIGNED TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL, HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND OTHER NEEDS. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROGRAM WILL PLACE AUSTRALIA AMONGST THOSE COUNTRIES MOST GENUINELY CONCERNED WITH WELFARE OF THE YOUNG.

FURTHERMORE, THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION HAS ESTABLISHED A COMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO THE RELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS COMMITTEE

WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE REPORT TO BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT IN THE COURSE OF NEXT YEAR. ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE ARE FAR-REACHING AND ITS TASK A DIFFICULT ONE, FOR NOT ONLY MUST IT PINPOINT THOSE AREAS OF EDUCATION WITHIN WHICH WOMEN ARE DISADVANTAGED, BUT IT MUST ALSO MAKE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION.

MANY OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAVE PROGRAMS PLANNED FOR THE COMING YEAR.

IN THE FIELD OF WOMEN'S HEALTH, THE FIRST, AND BASIC, INITIATIVE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEICHHARDT WOMEN'S COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE IN SYDNEY. THE AIM OF THIS CENTRE IS TO MEET A NEED EXPRESSED BY WOMEN FOR A HEALTH SERVICE STAFFED BY WOMEN DIRECTED SOLELY TOWARDS THE SPECIAL HEALTH NEEDS OF WOMEN. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVE OF A COMPLETELY NEW DIMENSION DERIVING DIRECTLY FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S BROAD POLICY PERSPECTIVES AND THE COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAM WILL BE ACTIVELY DEVELOPED TO GIVE IT PRIORITY.

GREATER PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS OF HEALTH CARE PLANNING, DELIVERY AND ADMINISTRATION IS BEING ACTIVELY PROMOTED AND THIS POLICY IS PROVIDING WOMEN WITH INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES OF INFLUENCING THE DIRECTION WHICH HEALTH CARE IS TAKING IN THE COMMUNITY.

IN THE FIELD OF ABORIGINAL HEALTH, ABORIGINAL WOMEN ARE BEING INVOLVED TO AN INCREASING DEGREE IN THE DELIVERY OF HEALTH CARE TO THEIR OWN PEOPLE.

THE INITIATIVE OF MY GOVERNMENT WHICH MAY HAVE THE MOST FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A ROYAL COMMISSION INTO HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS. IT IS THE TASK OF THIS COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE STRESSES THAT SOCIETY PLACES UPON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE, IN WHAT WAYS INADEQUATE HOUSING, INSUFFICIENT MONEY, TOO MANY OR TOO FEW CHILDREN, THE AVAILABILITY OR OTHERWISE OF CONTRACEPTIVE COUNSELLING AND THE ADEQUACY OF MEDICAL CARE AFFECT PEOPLE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS. THIS COMMISSION HAS BEEN ASKED TO PRESENT REGULAR INTERIM REPORTS AND HENCE WILL ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE COMING YEAR.

WE MUST HOWEVER ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE INEQUALITY OF WOMEN'S POSITION IN SOCIETY IS DEEPLY EMBEDDED NOT JUST IN THE INSTITUTIONS BUT ALSO IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SOCIETY. IN THIS RESPECT THOSE WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS ARE CORRECT WHICH SAY THAT THE FIRST AND FUNDAMENTAL STEP TOWARDS FREEDOM IS AWARENESS BY WOMEN THEMSELVES OF THEIR REAL INEQUALITY, OF THE EXTENT OF THEIR SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION AND DEPRIVATION.

I HAVE MENTIONED THE GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY THAT THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAS FOR DEVELOPING THEMES AND PROGRAMS FOR THE YEAR WHICH WILL BE OF BENEFIT TO ALL WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA, WHATEVER THEIR EDUCATION, THEIR CULTURAL BACKGROUND, THEIR ECONOMIC STATUS, THEIR OCCUPATION, THEIR BELIEFS OR THEIR WAY OF LIFE. IN SO DOING YOU ALSO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TACKLE THIS BASIC PROBLEM OF EMBEDDED ATTITUDES NOT ONLY BY ENCOURAGING THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITY ACTIVITY IN AREAS AFFECTING WOMEN BUT ALSO BY GIVING A SIGNIFICANT BOOST TO THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS AMONGST WOMEN AND MEN OF THE EXTENT OF THESE PROBLEMS.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON AND BECAUSE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO CHANGE IN THIS AREA THAT MY GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED THAT SUFFICIENT TIME AND FUNDS BE AVAILABLE TO ACHIEVE THESE ENDS AND IT IS ALSO FOR THIS REASON THAT MUCH TIME AND THOUGHT WENT INTO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE. WE WANTED, AND WE HAVE, A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHOSE UNIQUE EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE IS DEEPLY GROUNDED IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF AND DEMONSTRATED COMMITMENT TO AUSTRALIAN WOMEN, THEIR PRESENT AND THEIR FUTURE.