

43 6pm

THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH
AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW CIVIC CHAMBERS AT QUEANBEYAN
MONDAY, 21 APRIL, 1975

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO OPEN TONIGHT QUEANBEYAN'S NEW COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND BABY HEALTH CENTRE. YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM NO STRANGER TO QUEANBEYAN HAVING ATTENDED MANY FUNCTIONS HERE AND HAVING HELD MAJOR CAMPAIGN MEETINGS HERE IN 1972 AND 1974. THIS OCCASION AFFORDS ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECALL COMMENTS AND COMMITMENTS I MADE AT THOSE CAMPAIGN MEETINGS AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE HOW MOST OF THAT PROMISED HAS BEEN ACHIEVED. I CHOSE QUEANBEYAN FOR THOSE CAMPAIGN MEETINGS AND SPOKE ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF THE CITIES AND MY GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR IMPROVING THEM BECAUSE I BELIEVED THAT QUEANBEYAN REPRESENTS, IN MICROCOSM, OUR GREAT CITIES AND THEIR PROBLEMS.

QUEANBEYAN, LIKE THE CITIES OF SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE, GROWS AT SUCH A RATE THAT ITS RESOURCES ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO MEET THE SERVICES DEMAND WHICH ITS GROWTH CREATES. YOUR GROWTH OF 5.5 PER CENT PER ANNUM IS CAUSED BY FACTORS NOT OF YOUR MAKING OR CONTROL. YOU HAVE A BACKLOG IN THE PROVISION AND EXTENSION OF SERVICES WHICH COMMUNITIES RIGHTLY EXPECT. YOUR INCOME IS BARELY SUFFICIENT FOR ALL YOUR NEEDS. LOAN SERVICING PLACES A GREAT BURDEN UPON THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR FINANCING AND AS WITH OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS IN THE CITIES OF THIS NATION, YOU MUST COMPETE WITH SISTER ORGANISATIONS IN THE SEMI-GOVERNMENT LOAN MARKET FOR THE SAME LIMITED SUPPLY OF FUNDS.

IN THE POLICY SPEECH WHICH I DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY FOR THE ELECTIONS OF 1972 I SAID:

"OUR PROGRAM HAS THREE GREAT AIMS. THEY ARE:

- . TO PROMOTE EQUALITY
- . TO INVOLVE THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF OUR LAND; AND
- . TO LIBERATE THE TALENTS AND UPLIFT THE HORIZONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE."

BUT I ALSO SAID IN SPEAKING SPECIFICALLY OF THE CITIES OF THIS NATION:

"INCREASINGLY, A CITIZEN'S REAL STANDARD OF LIVING, THE HEALTH OF HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY, HIS CHILDREN'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION AND SELF-IMPROVEMENT, HIS ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, HIS ABILITY TO ENJOY THE NATION'S RESOURCES FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, HIS ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISIONS AND ACTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE DETERMINED NOT BY HIS INCOME, NOT BY THE HOURS HE WORKS, BUT BY WHERE HE LIVES. THIS IS WHY LABOR BELIEVES THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT MUST INVOLVE ITSELF DIRECTLY IN CITIES."

BY THE PURSUIT OF THE SECOND AIM WHICH I ASSERTED IN 1972 - TO INVOLVE THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF OUR NATION - MUCH OF OUR PROGRAM FOR THE CITIES WAS DETERMINED BUT WE ALSO WANTED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY.

ALL THE PROGRAMS UNDERTAKEN BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, HAVE MEANT A GREATER DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN MATTERS LIKE SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS AND WELFARE THAN HAD HITHERTO BEEN ACCEPTED IN AUSTRALIA. THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY IS THIS: IN MODERN COMMUNITIES EVEN THE WEALTHIEST FAMILY CANNOT PROVIDE ITS MEMBERS WITH THE BEST EDUCATION, WITH THE BEST MEDICAL TREATMENT, THE BEST ENVIRONMENT, UNAIDED BY THE COMMUNITY. INCREASINGLY, THE BASIC SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES WHICH DETERMINE THE REAL STANDARD OF LIFE OF A FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL CAN ONLY BE PROVIDED BY THE COMMUNITY AND ONLY TO THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE COMMUNITY IS WILLING TO PROVIDE THEM. EITHER THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES THEM OR THEY WILL NOT BE PROVIDED AT ALL. IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT THIS MEANS THAT THE COMMUNITY, THROUGH THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, MUST FINANCE THEM OR THEY WILL NOT BE FINANCED AT ALL.

OBVIOUSLY THEN OUR PROGRAMS PROVIDE FOR, OR RATHER POSITIVELY REQUIRE, A LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT AND INITIATIVE BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND BY GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY. IN ALL OF THIS, WE HAVE FORGED A NEW PARTNERSHIP, A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES.

IN QUEANBEYAN, NO LESS THAN IN OUR GREAT CITIES OF WHICH IT IS A MICROCOSM, THIS PARTNERSHIP HAS BEEN EVIDENT. THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES OF HOW WE HAVE TRIED TO ACHIEVE THIS PARTNERSHIP, THIS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION IN DECISION-MAKING AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION. SOME OF THESE ARE:

- . AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE PLAN
- . THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSION
- . THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION
- . COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAM
- . AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS
- . THE REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

IN MOST OF THESE EXAMPLES WHICH I MENTION, YOUR COMMUNITY HAS PARTICIPATED, BUT IN YOUR CASE, THERE ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATION OR ACTION BY MY GOVERNMENT WHICH ARE NOT REPEATED ON A NATIONAL SCALE. LET ME MENTION HERE THE AREAS IN WHICH WE ARE IN PARTNERSHIP, THAT IS, YOUR COMMUNITY OF QUEANBEYAN AND MY GOVERNMENT WORKING TOGETHER IN WHAT I CALL THE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM.

UNDER THE AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - A \$120,000 GRANT MADE UP OF \$70,000 FOR THE FIRST STAGE OF A COMMUNITY COMPLEX, \$32,000 FOR CLEARANCE OF THE QUEANBEYAN RIVER AND ITS BANKS, \$8,000 FOR INVESTIGATION OF CONSTRUCTION OF AN ADDITIONAL WEIR, AND \$10,000 FOR A TREE PLANTING PROGRAM.

UNDER THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSION PROGRAM - \$9,926 FOR THE HARRIS PARK PRE-SCHOOL AND \$9,449 FOR THE SOUTH QUEANBEYAN PRE-SCHOOL FOR RECURRENT EXPENDITURE DURING THE PERIOD 1.1.74 - 31.3.75.

UNDER THE MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAMS - \$67,000 THIS FINANCIAL YEAR FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN EDUCATION.

UNDER THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION PROGRAMS - \$22,870 THIS FINANCIAL YEAR AND IN ADDITION, \$9,696 TO TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS IN YOUR CITY FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS.

UNDER AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS FOR THE PERIOD 1.1.73 - 11.4.75 - \$53,620.

UNDER THE HOSPITALS PROGRAM - THE ACCELERATION OF WORK AT THE QUEANBEYAN DISTRICT HOSPITAL - BECAUSE OF THE GRANT OF \$8.83 MILLION TO NSW FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF HOSPITALS.

UNDER THE HOME NURSING SUBSIDY SCHEME - \$19,512 FOR THE QUEANBEYAN DISTRICT HOSPITAL DURING 1973 TO 1975.

FROM THE GRANTS COMMISSION - \$80,000.

FOR FLOOD RELIEF ASSISTANCE - AS PART OF THE GRANT TO THE N.S.W. GOVERNMENT QUEANBEYAN RECEIVED ASSISTANCE TO RELIEVE MAJOR FLOOD DAMAGE IN 1974.

UNDER THE RURAL ARTERIAL ROADS PROGRAM - TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF N.S.W., \$159,000 FOR THE QUEANBEYAN RIVER BRIDGE; \$130,000 FOR THE APPROACHES TO THAT BRIDGE AND \$5,000 FOR THE COMMENCEMENT OF WORK ON THE RAILWAY BRIDGE ON CANBERRA AVENUE. AS WELL, \$10,781 WAS PROVIDED TO YOUR CITY COUNCIL THIS FINANCIAL YEAR FOR RURAL LOCAL ROADS.

FOR A NEW CANBERRA-QUEANBEYAN RAILWAY BRIDGE - HALF THE COST OF CONSTRUCTION.

UNDER THE NATIONAL SEWERAGE PROGRAM - \$110,000 FOR AUGMENTATION OF THE QUEANBEYAN SEWERAGE WORKS AND PUMPING STATION.

UNDER THE AGED PERSONS WELFARE PROGRAM - \$52,000 FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE J. C. GORMAN MEMORIAL CENTRE AND \$50,112 FOR A SENIOR CITIZENS CENTRE.

AND,

UNDER THE DEPT OF TOURISM & RECREATION'S AREA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - \$80,000 FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIPTOP PARK.

BUT SUCH A LIST DOES NOT DO FULL JUSTICE TO THE EXTENSIVE RANGE OF MATTERS IN WHICH WE CO-OPERATE. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS CO-OPERATION BETWEEN US IN REGIONAL PLANNING, IN WATER SUPPLY, IN TRANSPORT TO AND THROUGH QUEANBEYAN TO CANBERRA, AND IN ASSISTANCE TO YOUR CITY BY THE N.C.D.C. IN LOCAL PLANNING. PERHAPS THE BEST EXAMPLE, HOWEVER, OF OUR PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AND OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY-MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION, IS YOUR PARTICIPATION IN 1973 IN THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM, CONCEIVED BY BOB WHAN, AND SPONSORED BY MY GOVERNMENT. THAT SYMPOSIUM CONSIDERED THE PROBLEMS OF THE REGION AND PRODUCED MATERIAL WHICH OUR PLANNERS CAN USE IN THE CONSIDERATION OF PLANS FOR THE WHOLE SOUTH-EASTERN REGION.

I SHOULD, HOWEVER, ADD A WARNING. ALL THESE PROGRAMS I HAVE MENTIONED ARE NOVEL FOR AUSTRALIA AND EXPERIMENTAL IN AUSTRALIA. BECAUSE THEY ARE NEW, BECAUSE THEY ARE TENTATIVE, THEY LACK THE POLITICAL CLOUT THAT COMES FROM YEARS AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE. BECAUSE THEY SEEK OUT NEW AND NEGLECTED AREAS OF NEED, THEY MAY BE REGARDED AS POLITICALLY PERIPHERAL. THEY HAVE NOT HAD THE TIME TO BECOME SACRED COWS. BECAUSE THEY ARE DESIGNED TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE WEAKEST, OF THE LEAST ARTICULATE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND BECAUSE THEY INVOLVE COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS AT A LOCAL LEVEL, THEY MAY BE REGARDED AS POLITICALLY DISPENSABLE BY THE OPPOSITION AND BY STATE GOVERNMENTS.

-7(A)-

MY GOVERNMENT'S VIEW THOUGH IS STILL AS I STATED IT IN
MY POLICY SPEECH OF 1972:-

"WE ARE DETERMINED THAT THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE
SHALL BE RESTORED TO THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN
THEIR OWN COUNTRY - AS PARTICIPANTS AND
PARTNERS IN GOVERNMENT...".

..8/.

LET THERE BE NO MISTAKE ABOUT THIS POSSIBILITY. OUR OPPONENTS HAVE ALREADY GIVEN NOTICE OF THEIR INTENTIONS. THEY CRY "CENTRALISM", "SOCIALISM" AND "BUREAUCRATISATION" WHENEVER WE PRESS AHEAD WITH ANY OF OUR POLICY COMMITMENTS. THEY FEAR THAT UNFEELING PUBLIC SERVANTS IN CANBERRA - AND PUBLIC SERVANTS IN CANBERRA, AS WE ALL KNOW, ARE ALWAYS UNFEELING - WILL DESTROY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE. I MAINTAIN THE CONTRARY - THAT OUR NATIONAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMS WILL REPLACE THE EXISTING STATE CENTRALISM WITH GENUINE REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION.

AS PROOF OF THEIR INTENTIONS, WE NEED LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THEIR ACTIONS. THEY OPPOSED OUR REFERENDUM BY WHICH LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE GAINED REPRESENTATION ON THE LOAN COUNCIL AND, TWO OF THE PROGRAMS I HAVE MENTIONED - THE AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE PLAN AND THE REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SCHEME - ARE BEING CHALLENGED BY SOME OF THE STATE GOVERNMENTS IN THE HIGH COURT.

IF THAT CHALLENGE SHOULD SUCCEED, NO LESS THAN FIFTY-SEVEN NATIONAL WELFARE PROGRAMS, SOME OF THEM INITIATED BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, COULD BE IMPERILLED. FOR EXAMPLE, PROGRAMS FOR THE AGED AND HOMELESS, THE HANDICAPPED, ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, ISOLATED CHILDREN, HEALTH CENTRES, LEGAL AID OFFICES, NURSING HOMES AND HOME NURSING, MEALS ON WHEELS, THE FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE, AND BLOOD TRANSFUSION.

THE COMMON DISTINGUISHING FACTOR IN ALL THESE PROGRAMS IS THAT THEY ARE DESIGNED TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE WEAK AND INARTICULATE SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY. IF THESE GROUPS WERE POLITICALLY POWERFUL, IF THEY COULD MOUNT EFFECTIVE POLITICAL PRESSURE, THE GOVERNMENTS WHICH DARED TO PLACE THESE PROGRAMS IN JEOPARDY WOULD BE DESTROYED. BUT AS IT IS, THE THING PASSES OFF WITH SCARCE A MURMUR.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: YOUR CITY, YOUR COMMUNITY - ESPECIALLY THE NEEDY, WEAK AND INARTICULATE MEMBERS OF IT - HAVE BEEN MUCH ASSISTED BY OUR JOINT EFFORTS, BY OUR PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM. WE MUST ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO GOING BACK. THAT COOPERATIVE INVOLVEMENT IN, AND ASSISTANCE TO, THE COMMUNITIES OF AUSTRALIA BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT BECOMES ESTABLISHED. IT IS THE RIGHT OF EACH COMMUNITY AND OF EACH INDIVIDUAL IN IT. WE SHOULD BE SATISFIED WITH NO LESS THAN THIS.