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PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 589

7 November 1975

THE BUDGET - STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

It's now more than three weeks since the Opposition in the Senate embarked on its reckless course of blocking the Budget. It must be quite clear to them by now that their attempt to subvert the elected Government has failed completely. Yet wilfully, wantonly, in the face of this knowledge, with total disregard for the nation's welfare, they persist in a course which must gravely damage the economy and damage the national interest - a course which will set back by weeks, by months, the difficult process of economic recovery which was getting underway.

It is a tragic fact - tragic but true - that damage to the economy has already been done and is already being felt. Business confidence is already suffering. A grave blow has already been struck to investment, to stability, to consumer spending, and above all to employment. The Opposition's answer to this hardship and confusion is more political crisis, another election, a campaign which, by their own invitation, could last six or seven months, with all the paralysis entailed to normal administration. I repeat: it is just not on. It is simply no answer. The Budget must pass.

I want to make it clear that the Government, mindful of its duty, is doing everything possible to minimise personal hardship and suffering among innocent victims of this crisis. Public servants, as I have already announced, will be paid in the normal way on the 13 and 27 November. Thereafter the banks - the private banks as well as the Commonwealth Bank and the State Government banks - are concerned to ensure that their customer, whose incomes are threatened, obtain credit during this difficult time. The Government welcomes the statement by the banks that they will do all they can to provide credit. We shall cooperate with them. That is the very least we could do for the loyal public servants who are sticking by their posts. And it is a duty which Mr Fraser himself acknowledged publicly on Sunday week. He was asked if the Opposition would consider giving public servants assistance with credit, and he said - I quote his words - "We certainly would. I have already said that we would not want to see any individual, Government employee, hurt or damaged as a result of what is happening." That was his attitude to the emergency measures - perfectly legal and constitutional measures - that we are now taking.

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But I have to say this: individuals are being hurt. The economy is being hurt. Nothing can flow from further delay to the Budget but disruption and economic decline. Mr Fraser must end this farce now. The nation must return to its normal steady course. The elected Government must be allowed to govern.

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