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PRIME MINISTER

TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE REGENCY PARK CENTRE

I was very happy to be able to accept Dr Paterson's invitation to attend the opening ceremony of this multi-diagnostic treatment and training centre.

Both Mrs Fraser and I are delighted to be here to share with the members of the Crippled Children's association of South Australia their pleasure and pride in their achievement. Because principally, this centre has been built as the result of the efforts of the Association.

Australia is a better country because people are willing to work with each other through voluntary organizations to assist those who are in some way disadvantaged.

The quality of provision for special groups in Australia is greatly dependent on the work of voluntary organizations such as the Crippled Children's Association. This is as it should be. Government simply cannot arouse the concern or mobilise the energies of people as effectively as can voluntary organizations.

Any attempt to provide effective assistance for those in need must rely heavily on the good will and co-operation of the community, voluntary associations and the Government. This centre is a major example of that.

The Commonwealth Government has contributed 3.5 million dollars under the Handicapped Persons Assistance Act. The Government considers such money very well spent when it supplements the dedicated work so many people have put into this centre.

The Government's policy in the social welfare field places an emphasis on co-operative effort. We believe that individual, group and Government participation and consultation is necessary for the planning and implementation of a co-ordinated and effective social welfare policy.

It is through the efforts of individuals and groups in co-operation with Government, that diversity and choice, innovation, community participation and a spirit of voluntary association and self-help enhance growth and development, not only with regard to welfare organisations themselves, but in respect of the persons they assist.

The efforts of highly committed and dedicated people in the field of voluntary welfare services are able to give even more of their best where the organisations which they support are allowed to follow broadly their own paths with the least amount of Governmental oversighting.

The Government has placed an emphasis on the role in society of the private sector and we are moving away from a trend towards too much Government direction.

We will continue to encourage the concept of self-help which has been exemplified in the building of the Regency Park Centre.

We believe that welfare programs are most effective where Government contributions are combined with community self-help.

The Commonwealth Government is providing assistance to the Centre at the rate of about \$450,000 a year towards the cost of the salaries of the staff employed there.

It is also quite likely that some of the children who pass through the Centre may also receive further assistance through the Commonwealth Government's rehabilitation service and others through assistance provided in respect of sheltered employment.

The Government is also considering ways of assisting voluntary organisations not only financially but, for example, by placing public service resources at their disposal through improving opportunities for transferability of staff between the Government and the non-Government sector.