

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER WHEN TABLING THE REPORT OF
THE STUDY GROUP ON YOUTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Speaker, I table a report from the Study Group on Youth Affairs and seek leave to make an accompanying statement.

In October 1976, my Government established a study group to examine services to youth and matters of co-ordination and communication.

In particular, the study group was directed to report on proposals that the Government should consider establishment of a youth bureau and a youth advisory panel.

The decision to establish the study group reflected the Government's concern with youth, and the adequacy of services for youth.

During the course of its investigations the study group met with and received submissions from representatives of Commonwealth, State and Local Governments, voluntary organisations, youth workers and young people.

The study group concluded that young people warranted consideration as a group with special needs by Governments and other organisations.

It suggested that there are a number of trends which affect youth in complex ways and deserve more careful attention.

These include smaller families, higher female work force participation rates, longer periods of formal education, the employment market's emphasis on accreditation, the increased affluence of many members of the community, and changing life styles.

The study group saw an urgent need for improving the machinery for co-ordinating and developing youth policy and co-ordinating the delivery of services to youth.

It believes that in the future greater emphasis should be placed on meeting the particular needs of youth in general community programs, rather than developing more specific youth programs and services.

The study group believes that there are important long term social and economic trends which have significant implications for young people and for the appropriateness of Government programs and services provided to them.

These trends and their implications need to be assessed more effectively. There should be improved co-ordination and consultation between Commonwealth departments and better communication and consultation with young people.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has noted the report and has taken a decision to establish an office of youth affairs within the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development.

The office will have direct access to the Minister on matters of youth policy and its functions will be to seek greater co-ordination and consultation between Commonwealth departments in relation to Commonwealth Government programs and proposals affecting youth. To seek greater co-ordination and consultation with State Governments, Local Governments and non-Government agencies in relation to Commonwealth programs or proposals affecting youth. To build up a research and information capacity to complement and increase the effectiveness of similar activities in functional departments. Advise on youth needs to assist those designing specific and general programs and services, and build up a channel for better communication with youth.

The Government has also decided to establish a standing task group on youth affairs, comprising senior officials of relevant departments and including a representative of the new office of Youth Affairs.

This task group will operate within the Cabinet committee system to ensure proper departmental consultation in the development of new policy proposals or proposed changes to existing programs which bear significantly on Government services to youth.

It will provide a link between the office, other departments, and to Ministers.

The concerns raised by young people through the office of Youth Affairs will be more readily brought under full consideration.

The Government has asked the Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development to investigate further the question of a youth advisory council or panel and report to it after the office has been operating some 6 - 12 months.

It is essential that the new office be staffed in part by young persons, or others with special experience and skills, drawn from outside the service.

Accordingly, the aim will be to seek an appropriate balance between career Public Service appointments, and staff engaged on a short-term basis from outside the service having regard to the particular requirements of the office.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Government's establishment of the Office of Youth Affairs and the standing task group demonstrates its resolve to keep in close touch with youth needs and issues and to see that its own programs serve young people more effectively.

I table the report of the study group.

Copies have been placed in the Parliamentary Library and I have arranged for copies to be sent to Honourable Members when more copies are printed.
