

4.00 p.m.



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

28 JULY 1977

PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF DOWELL'S FACTORY, HAMILTON

It is a great pleasure to be here today to open Dowell's new factory and warehouse on the Hamilton Industrial Estate. I understand that Dowell is a company of great initiative. Indeed, such is their initiative that although I am opening this factory today it has in fact been in operation since April. So I suppose these few words should be called my re-opening remarks.

This is a very impressive factory - costing around \$200,000. It will be involved mainly in the assembly and sales of aluminium building products for Western Victoria and South East South Australia. The factory is a positive expression of confidence in the future of the Australian economy and in the future of the city of Hamilton.

The Government has actively contributed to the creation of an attractive climate for investment through our economic policies and our encouragement of soundly based developments in the manufacturing industry.

Two years ago, the economy was at a standstill. Today, considerable progress has been made in establishing the conditions necessary for sustained economic growth. Notable achievements have been made in the fight against prosperity's main enemy - inflation.

The CPI increase for June was 2.4%, the lowest June CPI increase for five years. Overall, this brings the inflation rate to 10.2% excluding Medibank compared with 15.4% over the previous year. Our growth rate has picked up again; investment has increased; and company profitability has improved.

A profitable private sector is in the interest of all sections of the community. It benefits everyone. It is the key to Australia's economic prosperity and to improved job opportunities. The Government has taken direct action to assist and promote the private sector's recovery. We have introduced a generous 40% investment allowance and other tax reforms for industry. Controls on capital inflows have been relaxed and this should assist many companies to raise overseas capital. We have acted to ensure that Australian industries are not subject to unreasonable disruptive change and that high levels of imports do not exacerbate unemployment in industries sensitive to import competition.

/A number

A number of innovative schemes have been introduced to alleviate unemployment - and the results have been encouraging. The Community Youth Support Scheme now involves some 15,000 young people. The NEAT scheme has been expanded to cover 18,000 people, three quarters of whom have found a job at the end of their term under the scheme. NEAT's special youth employment training programme is particularly successful. It subsidises employers to hire young people who have been unemployed for a lengthy period of time. Over 70% of them retain their job when the subsidy expires.

The CRAFT scheme for promoting apprenticeships has also been a significant success. The figures for the financial year just ended are now available. They show that this scheme now covers over 41,500 apprentices, and apprenticeships throughout Australia are up 9% on last year. This scheme is still in its early developmental stage, and even further increases can be expected this year.

There is also the Relocation Assistance Scheme to help those who have to move to another area to find employment. These schemes are having an impact on this plant. I understand that four of the first six employees to be taken on by Dowell in Hamilton get assistance from them. Two junior employees get assistance under the Special Youth Training Programme, and two adult employees are receiving assistance under the NEAT scheme.

All Governments - Commonwealth, State and Local - have an important part to play in encouraging the productive private sector. In building this factory Dowell has received assistance from the Victorian Department of Decentralisation.

The City of Hamilton is also to be commended for assisting financially, helping with the design and supervising construction, and I understand that one of the important factors leading to Dowell's decision to locate a new plant in Hamilton was the positive attitude of local government.

But while two governments can do a great deal to provide the environment in which the private sector can prosper, business must be willing to grasp the opportunities. Dowell is one of the increasing number of companies that is doing so. It has promoted a very successful decentralisation strategy, locating its new branches principally in country areas in Victoria and New South Wales. The success of this policy is due to the energy and capacity of people in country areas, and to the efforts of the company and its employees to become aware of the community in which they establish themselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, this new factory is the latest instance of a successful pattern of expansion by Dowell in recent years. I am confident that the company will make a significant contribution to the future of the City of Hamilton and that Hamilton will make a significant contribution to the company.

It gives me great pleasure to declare the factory open.
