



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

30. OCTOBER 1977

ELECTORATE TALK

Australians go to the polls this December to vote for a Government to lead Australia in the years ahead.

Voters face a clear choice. It is a choice between the kind of Government and the kind of economic management that Australia requires to keep Australia's steady recovery on course. It is not just a choice between two different policy documents. It is a very real and fundamental choice about the kind of Australia we want.

Do we want big Government control and socialist policies - or do we want a Government that cherishes and understands the place of the individual in the community? What I am saying is that ultimately, this election is all about deciding on the kind of Australia we want to live in in the years ahead.

During the coming weeks, Australians will hear and read a great deal about unemployment, inflation, other economic matters, and industrial relations. There is no doubt that the management of Australia's economy will be a key issue in the weeks leading up to December 10. I and the Government team face the electorate squarely in the face. We have an outstanding record of achievement in our fight against inflation.

Australia's inflation rate is now at around 9% - and is continuing to steadily fall. Let us never forget that we have reduced inflation to this level from Labor's disastrous peak of 19.3% just three years ago. We have more than halved Labor's rate. As inflation comes down - and it is not coincidental - there are clear and positive signs of a major lift in private investment plans just ahead. This is good news for Australia. It is good news for those seeking jobs. On top of that, we have been seeing for several weeks now the early stages of what could be a substantial and sustained fall in interest rates.

In short, in two years we have laid the foundation from which long-term prosperity will develop. It is absolutely vital for Australia that current policies are continued. It is vital that Australian and overseas businesses know that for at least several years ahead we will have stable Government and continuing sound economic management.

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It is important that inflation should keep falling, that interest rates keep coming down, that consumption rises, and that investment spending continues in a climate of certainty. The reason these conditions are required is that it is the only way to have higher employment, and lower unemployment.

Unemployment is a severe problem. Too many Australians who want to work cannot get jobs. The reasons are complex. What is clear, however, is that Governments need to develop a sympathetic and sensitive response to the problem. Money alone - the 'cash to splash' disease - will not solve the problem. Look what happened when Labor increased Government expenditure by 46% in one year - unemployment went up by almost 200,000.

We have shown sensitivity and concern for unemployed Australians. Not only have we dramatically reduced Australia's annual rate of inflation and given business an incentive to employ, but we have also set up or expanded a number of imaginative manpower training programmes. All told, the Budget provides \$102.7 million for employment training programmes this year, which is an increase of 33% over last year. More will be spent if necessary, because no eligible unemployed person will be refused assistance under these programmes. Already over 122,000 people - mainly young Australians - have benefitted from these programmes.

We have faced up to our responsibilities. We will continue to show concern for Australians who cannot find jobs. We will continue with practical policies that demonstrate that concern. At the same time we will continue to develop policies that encourage Australian industry and business to create new jobs. There is no doubt our policies will create conditions where more Australians who want to work will find jobs. From February onwards, unemployment in Australia will fall in a steady and sustained way.

I am certain that Australians do prefer the path of sound economic management, the path of steady progress. That is what we have given. That is what we offer. We have demonstrated our ability to come to grips with the economic problems that were a tragic legacy of the Labor experiment.

Labor's so-called economic management brought Australia to the brink of bankruptcy. It split city and country with repercussions that will take years to mend. It eroded the fabric of our society.

Australians will never again risk the Government of their country to the men in the Labor Party who almost wrecked it.

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