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EMBARGO: 7.00 p.m.

## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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### ELECTORATE TALK

The Government has shown a concern and a commitment to help those Australians who cannot find jobs. Latest official figures show that although unemployment is now starting to fall, it is still unacceptably high. The needs of the unemployed are of singular concern to us. While we have been setting the conditions for a return to full economic health, we have responded to this need in a sensitive way.

The Government has significantly expanded and improved Commonwealth training and employment schemes with emphasis on the problems faced by young people. The special training programmes are working well. However, I do not believe the effects of these initiatives are fully appreciated throughout the community.

Almost 200,000 people - mainly young Australians - have already benefitted from these programmes. Given our pledge that finance will not be a limiting factor, we expect they will continue to help more Australians.

The National Employment and Training Scheme has been particularly effective in training and retraining to meet the changing demands of the labour market. More than 94,000 Australians have benefitted from this scheme over the last two years. An important part of NEAT is the Special Youth Employment Training Programme which has helped more than 40,000 young Australians since its inception 18 months ago. The Community Youth Support Scheme - which seeks to encourage communities to provide programmes and services to the young unemployed - has assisted 45,000 young men and women.

In apprenticeship, the Commonwealth rebate for apprenticeship full-time training - the CRAFT Scheme - has gone a long way to lifting apprentice intake. Last year the intake was 42,000 an increase of 8.5 percent on the previous year.

These employment and training programmes however are not designed to help young people who have low motivation and self esteem. Many children leave school with a low level of literacy. This lack of success is often followed up by failure to find or hold work - and the outcome of frequently a negative attitude towards work or self improvement. The education programme for unemployed youth - initiated by this Government - was conceived specifically to break

this vicious circle and meet the very special needs of such young unemployed people.

It is the first time any Australian Government has tackled this very real problem. This programme has enjoyed remarkable success. Originally set up to help people under 21 years, it has now been extended to the 21 to 24 age group and is now an on-going programme in all States. During the pilot stage, which ended last December, 57 courses were completed at 30 colleges and institutions catering for some 800 students. In this current six months, 109 courses are planned, 54 institutions will be involved, and 2,000 students are expected to be enrolled. More than \$1 million is likely to be spent on this programme in the current period. All States are enthusiastic about the programme, particularly as some of the young people who complete the course are returning to formal education on either a full-time or part-time basis. This is an exciting development in education as it offers new hope and promise for many young Australians. It deserves wholehearted community support.

While all of these programmes are designed to meet an immediate social need, they are not a substitute for sound economic policies. We seek complete economic recovery with satisfying and lasting employment opportunities for all. Our economic policies are pulling Australia out of the economic ruin we faced at the end of 1975.

Inflation is falling, interest rates are falling, taxes have been dramatically cut, investment is increasing, and confidence is returning throughout the community. These are the pre-conditions to any sustained and lasting reduction in the levels of unemployment - and not irresponsible government spending.

The Government will continue to demonstrate our concern for the unemployed through the imaginative development of our training schemes and through firm economic policy. But in looking at unemployment, it needs to be clearly understood that Australia has still not recovered from the wage policies of the Labor years. We are still paying the price and counting the cost of the wages explosion of 1974.

Business and industry are reluctant to pay excessively high wages when they can invest their money in labour saving machines and equipment. Business has shown it has the confidence to invest - but it will not invest in new jobs that it cannot afford. For this reason the Government will continue to preach wage restraint wherever it can and argue strongly before the Arbitration Commission for less than full wage indexation. If we do not, we would not be fulfilling our obligation to every Australian.

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