



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

16 SEPTEMBER, 1978

Reports of a disagreement within the Ministry over the appointment of a Ministerial Committee on industrial relations, and over a statement on employment, are completely untrue.

One major newspaper has a story this morning which I have discussed with the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Tony Street.

As far as we are both concerned there is no element of truth in the story whatsoever. I have total confidence in Tony Street. He is one of the best Ministers for Industrial Relations that Australia has ever had.

Tony Street will chair the new Committee. As we know, industrial relations and industrial law are a complex area.

The Minister and the Committee will be concerned with achieving a better industrial climate, a greater measure of support for the conciliation and arbitration system and a greater understanding of the importance of good industrial relations to all Australians for our economic well-being, and for growth in employment. It will review industrial law as well as the processes of consultation and understanding.

Industrial relations is an important area, not only to the participants, but to the nation as a whole.

It affects the economy, overseas and domestic investment, business confidence, and employment opportunities.

The Government's policies under Tony Street have achieved a marked improvement over the past few years.

But, because the area is so important, the Government wants to review what has been done, and to see what further steps it ought to take.

To suggest that such a review implies any criticism of Tony Street is the grossest distortion.

.../2

Mr. Street's statement to the Parliament on employment was fully agreed to by both the Treasurer and myself. The Minister had suggested it some considerable time ago and received support for his suggestions.

It was necessary to lay out the position plainly so that all Australians could understand the nature of the tasks in front of us. That is what the Minister has done.

Let me say in the plainest terms, that I have never had a significant difference with Tony Street over the conduct of his portfolio.

I am advised that the author of the story that appeared in one morning newspaper did not check with my office. I am also advised that the same author did not check with Mr. Street's office.

Whatever his sources might have been, they can only be misinformed and mischievous.

The business of Government is complex, especially in our modern society. It is made all the more difficult, and quite unnecessarily so, when stories are written without foundation, without truth, and are mischievous and damaging in their content.

Australia is entitled to better reporting, to a more constructive press.