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EMBARGO: AGAINST DELIVERY

PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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ADDRESS TO VICTORIAN STATE COUNCIL

This is the first opportunity I have had to thank all of you for your efforts during the election campaign late last year. ~~In that election, Victorians again showed clearly the direction in which they wanted our country to move and the Government was returned with an overwhelming majority.~~

In 1975 Liberals won 19 seats in Victoria. In 1977 we won 20. ~~Only once before in our history has the Liberal Party held as many Federal seats in this State.~~

This was a wonderful result. We could not have achieved it without your help and the full support of Dick Hamer who campaigned hard for the return of the Government. I well remember Dick saying to me on election night, "People always worry about Victoria -- but in the end we always pull through."

We pull through because of the strength and loyalty that can be seen at this Council. We pull through because we are a Party that cares for people. We pull through because we are committed to effective, fair and sensible government for Australia and this State.

What a contrast this makes with the A.L.P. In Victoria, Labor is trying to assume a responsible pose: hoping to fool the people of Victoria; hoping Victorians have forgotten the old Victorian State Executive, whose members are still active in the Labor Party today; hoping Victorians will not see the dominance and extremism of the socialist left. But the A.L.P. dashes these hopes every time it has a Party Conference.

At last week's Victorian State Labor Conference, once again the Labor Party showed that they have not changed. Once again they showed that the only record they can run on is their record as the longest standing State Opposition in the Commonwealth.

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Once again the A.L.P. showed it was committed to the dead hand of socialism. Some Labor members said they only wanted to nationalise industry "where necessary". But the left wing wasn't having any of that -- they insisted that the commitment to nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange remain in its pristine form -- the same form that it had in 1921. What a way to step into the future.

Once again the A.L.P. showed their reluctance to criticise the Soviet Union. Last Saturday they rejected a motion condemning the Soviet Government's persecution of those in their country who support human rights. The successful move to defeat that motion was led by Mr. Bill Hartley. We all remember Mr. Hartley don't we -- he's the man who, we are always being told, has lost his influence in the A.L.P. But it was Mr. Bert Nolan, State Secretary of the Seamen's Union who convinced the A.L.P. to vote the way they did by saying that he preferred to believe what Russian unionists had told him.

The evidence of those persecuted by the Soviet regime, the evidence of independent impartial observers, the mountains of evidence of the suppression of civil rights in the Soviet Union are disregarded. The Victorian Labor Party counts all this evidence as nothing -- they would rather believe the official line handed down by the Soviet Government. Labor's belief in the benign nature of the Soviet authorities has about the same degree of accuracy and relevance as their socialist economic theories.

In just three years, the Labor Party brought the Australian economy to its knees: provoking roaring inflation, causing massive unemployment, stopping investment, dead in its tracks, and harming the weaker members of the community. Labor constantly pursues its disastrous dogma, condemned by the past -- promising only failure and despair for the future.

We have been getting on with the job: confident in the capacities of the Australian people; committed to a faith in our country; knowing that our policies are working.

The Australian economy is back on its feet -- inflation is down. Under Labor, inflation peaked at 19 percent -- at the moment it is running at about 8 percent and it's coming down further. Interest rates are coming down.

A fortnight ago the trading banks reduced interest rates on a wide range of loans by 1/2 percent, particularly benefitting small businesses. Interest cuts benefit all Australians.

In the housing area they will benefit home owners and home buyers. For example, on a home loan of \$25,000 being repaid over 25 years, a 1 percent reduction in interest rates means a saving in the order of \$17 a month -- \$5,000 over the period of the loan.

Lower inflation and lower interest rates are making our industry competitive again. A survey in September found that the proportion of companies reporting increased costs was the lowest since 1972.

Manufacturers are looking again to export markets. I know that at least one major motor vehicle manufacturer is rebuilding its export organisation. Another survey found that during the September Quarter Australian exporters of manufactured goods reported an increase of 5 percent in export deliveries. This was the first reported upturn since September 1972.

Mining and oil exploration and development are rising sharply. Two companies alone have committed themselves to spending \$1,000 million in Bass Strait and off Western Australia, directly because of the Government's realistic energy and oil-pricing policy.

Farmers are beginning their best year for a long time. Low inflation, good seasons and improved prices will allow farmers at long last to buy new equipment and make long deferred capital improvements, boosting country towns and Australian industries supplying the rural community.

These are all exciting and tangible signs of progress. But there are groups prepared to undermine Australia's progress in the pursuit of their own narrow self-interest.

The community has just been subjected to another damaging and unnecessary strike by the T.W.U. over the last two weeks: a wasteful strike causing great inconvenience to the public and losses in business activity. A selfish strike, not called because of any principle, but because one section of a union set its interests above those of the community and of their fellow unionists. A hypocritical strike which makes a mockery of the union's professed concern for the unemployed.

The community utterly rejects strikes of this nature and the policies this Government has adopted have led to a significant fall in industrial disputes.

In 1974 under Labor there were 6.3 million man days lost due to strikes. Last year, this had fallen to 1.6 million -- one quarter of the man days lost under Labor just three years earlier.

An equal threat to our economic progress is that of unreasonable and excessive wage rises. The Government is committed to Australian employees receiving a fair return for their efforts and to participating fully in Australia's growth and development.

In present economic circumstances, Australia needs wage restraint. Otherwise our recovery will be slowed and employment opportunities will suffer. We look to the Arbitration Commission in the current six-monthly national wage case to bring down a responsible decision. With restraint, with the community working together, Australia's economic recovery will continue and strengthen.

I note that the fundamental principles of this Government's economic policies are increasingly being endorsed and adopted overseas -- in the United States, Canada and even by the British socialist government. These countries have seen the dangers of accelerating inflation. They are taking the only responsible course of action; the very course which we have pursued for the past three years to reduce the galloping inflation of the Labor years.

It is because of the progress we have made that it has been possible for us to take a number of new initiatives to secure Australia's future growth and development. In the true spirit of co-operative Federalism, showing a common commitment and a common purpose, the Commonwealth and the Australian States are working together in many areas to realise Australia's unrivalled future.

Ten days ago the Commonwealth and all six State Premiers agreed that for the first time State authorities can, over eight years, borrow \$1,767 million overseas to develop such essential facilities as railways, ports, power projects, water supplies and pipelines.

For Victoria this will mean expansion for the crucial Loy Yang Power Project and a new world trade centre which will bring business and capital to the State.

The private investment encouraged by these projects going hand in hand with the work of the Australian Governments will help us to forge ahead with the development and growth of our country.

The 1980's will not be a decade of despair as Mr. Hayden has tried to label them. It will be a period of renewed investment; a period of success for Australia and Australians.

Our objectives for the 1980's go far beyond economics. The Government has a clear and wide-ranging vision of where Australia is going. It is a vision we will achieve. It is a vision which is based on the needs, the interests, and the hopes of the Australian people.

Our vision is of an Australia of growth and development; of prosperity and enlightenment; of stability and security; of compassion and effective help for those in need. It rejects the sterile dogma of the Labor Party -- which denies people their individuality, their personal hopes, their aspirations. It is based on a concern for people -- whatever their occupations, whatever their origins. We are determined to provide effective help to the handicapped, to sole parents, to pensioners, to war veterans -- to all those in real need.

We have made major social reforms, such as the introduction of family allowances; the indexation of pensions; a major expansion in assistance to the handicapped and the Galbally Report, which heralds a new deal for migrants. All of these have made an enormous difference to hundreds of thousands of Australians.

We will continue with our social reforms. We will build on the foundation we have laid in the past three years by working together in a common cause as Australians. Through a unity of purpose and faith in our future, all Australians will gain from our achievements and increasing prosperity.

It is our commitment to Liberal ideals which is reversing the disasters wrought on our economy by three years of Labor rule. It is our commitment to Liberal ideals which has brought Victoria 23 years of effective, moderate and sensible government.

Of course, all political parties have difficult patches in their terms in office. What makes the Liberal Party different is that we have always been able to come through them united and determined to win, determined to serve this State and our nation to the best of our abilities.

The last twenty-three years have been enormously creative ones for this State. They have been creative because Victoria has been governed by Liberals, and under Dick Hamer as Premier, Victoria has enjoyed effective and moderate government.

It is time that we all got behind Dick and exerted ourselves to the utmost to make sure that this message gets across to the people about what the Liberal Government in Victoria has meant and will mean to Victoria's future. It means stability, progress. It means a better life for the people of Victoria.

When the time comes I am certain that Victorians will choose Liberalism. They will not turn the politics of this State over to the extremists of the Labor Party. They will not hand over this State to the socialist left - to the Hartleys and their like - to the deadening dogma and dead hand of socialism.

The eighties will be exciting years for all Australia.

Our country will achieve its potential through positive government; through a balanced and realistic assessment of Australia's potential, unclouded by the distortions of socialist dogma; by encouraging Australians to use their individual initiative and enterprise; and by restoring incentive for work and achievement.

In the weeks and months ahead we must all work together to see that they will be exciting for Victoria, by seeing that Dick Hamer and the Victorian Liberal Government is returned for another three years of sound government for Victoria.

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