



PRIME MINISTER

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The Prime Minister announced today two initiatives which are significant in the Government's determination to gain for Australia the positive benefits of technological innovation and the better understanding of labour market questions.

The Prime Minister said that he particularly welcomed the initiatives which industry and the unions with Government had taken through the NLCC through the establishment of a Tripartite Committee to examine labour market questions under the Chairmanship of Mr. B. Trethowan; Chairman of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. He noted that the Committee's terms of reference would be to examine the effects on employment, particularly of young people, of the following factors:

- (a) the effect of particular aspects of labour costs on employment such as penalty rates, rates of pay for juniors and other labour costs affecting the employment of young people;
- (b) the effect of working patterns on employment -- factors such as weekend work, part time work and possible new arrangements such as job sharing;
- (c) the importance and utilisation of qualifications, especially trade skills, obtained through migration;
- (d) the labour relations aspects of technological change; and
- (e) the effect on job opportunities of different sectors of the labour force of changes in participation rates of other sectors.

He emphasized that if there was to be better understanding and action on these issues the Committee would need to consult widely. For that reason arrangements would be made for State Government representatives to be co-opted to the Committee, and for experts from industry, unions and Government to be drawn on as appropriate.

The Prime Minister said that the second initiative related to the Government's belief that it is essential for a country such as Australia to take full advantage of the benefits of new technology.

The Government had therefore decided to establish a Committee of Inquiry to examine, report and make recommendations on the process of technological change in Australian industry in order to maximise economic, social and other benefits and minimise any possible adverse consequences.

In particular the Committee would:

- (a) identify:
 - (i) technological change which is occurring or is likely to occur in Australia; and
 - (ii) new technologies which have the potential for substantial impact in Australia;and to conduct detailed studies of those areas identified as the most important in order to evaluate the likely effects;
- (b) examine relevant overseas experience and studies of technological change, and to assess mechanisms used to introduce and evaluate new technologies;
- (c) review the effectiveness of Government policies and programs in facilitating the introduction of new technology.

The Prime Minister said that the Committee of Inquiry would include union representation; that the Government would make \$750,000 available for the conduct of the Inquiry and that a high quality Secretariat to the Inquiry would be established in the Department of Productivity.

The Prime Minister said that these two initiatives demonstrated the Government's concern for the difficult issues involved in responding to technological change as seen against the whole range of aspects affecting the labour market.