



## PRIME MINISTER

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### ELECTORATE TALK

Since coming to office, your Government has followed policies consistently designed to sustain economic growth and thus provide employment opportunities.

There is no easy way. We have not been seduced by demands for politically expedient, short-term palliatives. Such policies would do no more than fuel the fires of inflation without curing the problem.

Our policies are long-term ones that will put Australian industry and commerce once more back on a sound base, and from that base will come a resurgence of job opportunities. It won't happen overnight, but already there are encouraging signs: inflation is down substantially, interest rates are coming down, investment is picking up, order books are filling up, and once more some major Australian companies are gearing up their export divisions.

Despite the progress we have made there is still much to be done. The Government is not sitting idly by waiting for a magic solution. Over the past few days we have taken major new steps to up-date our policies, to meet the changing needs of our time.

The creation of the new Commonwealth Department of Employment and Youth Affairs is a positive example of the great importance your Government places on giving attention to employment, particularly employment opportunities for young people.

More recently, we have taken initiatives to underline the Government's determination to gain every possible benefit from technical innovation, both here and overseas, and acquire a better understanding of the labour market.

Your Government has decided to set up a Committee of Inquiry to examine, report and make recommendations on the process of technological change in Australian industry. The Union Movement will have representation on the Inquiry.

Much work in the field of technological change -- the so-called 'computer revolution' -- has been pioneered by the Department of Productivity, established by the Government just on two years ago. However, the new Inquiry will place emphasis on maximising the economic and social benefits of the technological revolution and minimising any adverse consequences.

The second initiative will involve the Government in joining with industry and the unions in a wide ranging study of labour market problems posed by such things as penalty rates, weekend and part-time work, juniors, job-sharing and trade skills. This Inquiry, agreed to by the National Labour Consultative Committee, will be headed by the Chairman of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, Mr Trethowan.

Both moves demonstrate the Government's real concern for problems forced on an established workforce by a changing technology. But this is not a job for the Commonwealth, industry and unions. The States too have an important role to play. I have therefore written to the Premiers, asking them to co-operate in a review of all areas of State responsibility which may contribute to unemployment or which may reveal scope for encouraging employment.

It may well be that some State legislative or institutional arrangements are having an adverse effect on employment. For example, there are inconsistencies between States in such matters as standards and regulations. This is particularly true in the construction industry, where undoubtedly it has an adverse effect on employment opportunities.

There is also no doubt that some State taxes and charges provide a financial burden on industry and discourage increased job opportunities. In the same general area, employment conditions which result in increased costs for industry, such as high standards of long service leave, also restrict employment opportunities.

I have asked the State Premiers to give serious consideration to these questions, and I believe that considerable benefits for employment could flow from such an examination.