



PRIME MINISTER

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ELECTORATE TALK

This Parliamentary year has been notable in many respects. First, it has been characterised by an Opposition preoccupied with personalities. They have failed to make realistic attempts to present and argue alternate policies -- as an Opposition should. In this they are led by a man who talks gloom at every possible opportunity, both inside and outside the Parliament.

Australians expect the Opposition in the Federal Parliament to present reasoned argument on important national issues and to offer costed alternatives. Australians are bored with the peripheral politics now a hallmark of the Labor Party under its present leadership.

Although the Opposition sought to distract the nation and the Parliament from the business of good administration, the Government has been getting on with the job.

In Parliament this year 211 Bills were passed. The range of Bills demonstrates in the plainest terms the Government's desire to act in the interests of all Australians.

Legislation has been passed against tax avoidance in a number of areas. The Treasurer is continuing to act swiftly and forcefully against tax avoidance schemes. Your Government has shown its determination to stamp out abuse of the taxation laws.

Australian industry has been supported. Legislation to give greater incentive to industrial research and development has been passed. An Export Expansion Grant Scheme has been introduced and the Export Market Development Grant Scheme has been revitalised.

Perhaps the most significant Bill passed this year was the legislation providing for the development of Australia's great uranium resources. This legislation demonstrated -- in the starkest way -- the Government's determination to protect the environment and the rights of our Aboriginal people. It also demonstrated the Government's awareness of its international obligation to provide a key energy source for an energy-short world.

Decisions were taken that protect Australians against disruption caused by industrial unrest.

Farmers, experiencing their best seasons for up to 15 years, now have the facilities of the Primary Industry Bank for long-term funds at attractive interest rates. Since opening for business early last month, the Bank has approved loans totalling more than \$10 million.

This year, the setting up of the Australian Science and Technology Council and implementation of a number of important new policy decisions in relation to the CSIRO reaffirms our commitment to the development of scientific research.

The Bills arising out of this year's Budget give effect to the Government's economic management. We have maintained control on Government expenditure. At the same time, our commitment to helping those Australians not able to help themselves remains a continuing high priority for the Government.

In many areas of specific need Government payments were substantially increased. We raised spending on aged, invalid and widow's pension and supporting parents benefits by 11 1/2 percent and increased spending on pensioner housing by 40 percent. Assistance to organisations providing facilities for the handicapped increased by 37 percent and the handicapped child's allowance was extended to students under 25 who did not receive an invalid pension.

In the case of home care for the aged -- even though the subsidy rate was varied to meet greatly increased demand -- total spending will increase 14 percent to over \$10 million. That makes a rise of 83 percent in home care for the aged in the last three Budgets.

So despite the Opposition's attempt to immerse the Parliament in personality politics, the Government has pressed ahead with reforms that provide increased opportunities for migrants, for Aborigines, for the handicapped, the aged and the infirm, and has further protected the rights of individual Australians.

The Government will not be distracted from these great programmes. We have a vision of growth and development for Australia -- a vision of stability, security, concern for effective help for those in need.

By building on the foundations already set down that vision will be realised.