



PRIME MINISTER

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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

The General Assembly of the United Nations has proclaimed 1979 as International Year of the Child. In the past we have had international Years devoted to geophysical research and to the problems and the position of women.

In these "Years" world nations seek to focus international effort in an area where advances can or should be made in the interests of mankind generally. The International Year of the Child will direct attention throughout the world to the needs and problems of children, their welfare and their opportunities.

Australia is a land of sunshine and prosperity, of beaches and playing fields, traditionally "a great place to bring up kids." But even in this fortunate country, there are still some children who cannot make the most of these opportunities. Some live in isolated areas. Others have severe handicaps or difficulty in settling into Australia because of cultural or language differences. There are also those children who despite our efforts, still live in poor family or community circumstances. The International Year of the Child will focus attention particularly on these children.

1979 has been designated Year of the Child at a time when society throughout the world is undergoing new strains. We should see 1979 as a time to reinforce and support the family in its central role in the development of children.

As pressures and problems develop in our society, we all have a responsibility to face them with courage and honesty. It is essential that our education provides children with the confidence and the ability to develop and mature in an often uncaring and intolerant world. We must constantly make sure that our child care services are directed with a real feeling of compassion and respect for the special needs of individual children.

In Australia the role of voluntary organisations has been a significant one for they can provide the kind of compassion and concern that Governments can never match. Parents, voluntary organisations, governments, must direct our efforts to dealing with problems quickly as they become identified.

The theme of the International Year of the Child in Australia is "Care." Through our own individual actions, through Governments, voluntary organisations, private enterprise, trade unions and other community groups we can all join together to ensure the theme of 'care' is fulfilled.

As a specific measure of support at the launching of this International Year of the Child, the Federal Government has decided to allocate \$1 million to assist in the establishment of the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia. This is a trust being established by surgeons, businessmen, and community leaders to assist in the coordination of research into child accidents and their prevention and to educate the community on child accident prevention.

I believe such a Foundation can do a great deal to focus national attention on our alarmingly high rate of child accidents, with their high costs in human and financial terms. Accidents cause untold misery to children and their families.

My Government will assist with the establishment of the Foundation by allocating \$1 million on the understanding that the first \$500,000 will be paid immediately and the second \$500,000 at a later date, and subject to the Foundation gaining State Government support.

I am sure that this Foundation will receive the wholehearted support of all Governments and the community. To prevent some of the human suffering and the cost to the family and community caused by childhood accidents is, I believe, a most worthy cause to pursue in the International Year of the Child.
