

PRESS CONFERENCE: WESTERN SUBURBS LEAGUES CLUB, MEETING
WITH ETHNIC PRESS.

Prime Minister

I am delighted to be here supporting Bill Vasseleou and I would like to make the point that over the last three to four years the Government has given a very great deal of attention to the needs of migrant families in Australia. We had the Galbally Inquiry, as you know, into the post-arrival services available to migrants and we have been implementing the recommendations of that particular report, which designed across a wide range of service provided by the Federal Government and by the State Government to improve what was otherwise available. It is not only a question of some of the basic services - English teaching in schools and matters of that kind - we are also moving to encourage all schools to teach history and culture of Australia's great migrant communities so that there will be a much better understanding amongst all Australians. I think the day has long gone past when it was enough to teach English history and a bit of Australian history. It is important for Australians to know the history of Italy and of Greece and of many other countries from which our migrant communities have come.

We have also, as you know, established ethnic radio. Ethnic television is moving forward. The experimental programme is now being undertaken. That will move onto its own basis a little bit further on. We are pursuing these policies because we recognise that there have been deficiencies in the past and in a multicultural society as Australia has become, it is very important to make sure that Governments respond to the change and respond to the diversity that we have amongst us.

I think one of the quite exciting things I have seen in visiting ethnic radio in both Sydney and Melbourne is when you speak to all the broadcasters and organisers, how people from say 40 different countries have come together for the first time. They are all Australians but they have come from 40 different countries. They are responsible for the programmes for their own communities, but they are recognising the common link with Australians. I think that the programmes that we've developing for Australia's great ethnic communities are better devised than ever before in our history. I believe that it is coming to be quite widely recognised. I don't think I have anything more to say at the outset. It's over to you for questions.

Question

(Inaudible). My question relates directly to ethnic broadcasting. Could you tell us please what is the current attitude of the Government regarding a possible second frequency for ethnic radio?

Prime Minister

When I visited 2EA the other day this was put to me because it's difficult to get enough time on one frequency for say, up to 40 communities. I have spoken to the Minister, Tony Staley, about this. I can only say that it is under examination. It's not necessarily an easy question. There is a question of some degree of equity in other areas where services might not be available but I can understand the reasons why that request has been put forward. It is being examined at this moment.

Question

...Ethnic television. I know it's at the moment, it's only under trial. Will it be run under the same system as ethnic radio?

Prime Minister

I think it's too early to say yet. There's a trial service on. We want everyone to say what they think of it - whether they like it or dislike it, whether it is too tame or too provocative - I don't think anyone will be saying what's been done so far is too provocative. There is the Ethnic Television Review Panel which wants to have the views of ethnic communities, and of everyone for that matter, in what the programme ought to cover; what sorts of programmes there ought to be and I think we've got to have a look at that because we really do want the programme to be one that is going to respond to the needs and to the wishes of the ethnic communities. It's not something that a few people from the centre want to dictate. I think we've got to get the views of those who are interested in watching ethnic television. I think it's very important therefore that people make sure their views do get to the Review Panel - and to make their views known. We want that involvement from the communities and from other Australians also.

Question

As with all these things, programme times as with radio, and I believe television, are going to be divided amongst the communities percentage-wise, according to the number of migrants from each group. Hence, the small groups - the minorities like the Baltic communities - always tend to get very very small time slots and very unsuitable ones as we have with radio. (Inaudible), but with T.V. I know that a lot of Australians watch the ethnic programme as do, of course, almost all the ethnic communities. I have seen that a lot of the programmes are in English or half in English and half the original language, and I was wondering whether more stress could be put not so much on time given on a percentage, but the quality of the programme or something which would provide interest for the entire community. Unless this aspect was looked at then the smaller minority communities, as I was told, might only get a quarter of an hour, a half an hour, every three months. This certainly brings about an inferiority complex.

Prime Minister

I hope it won't do that. But, I agree with you. I think the best ethnic television will be television that appeals to all Australians wherever they come and however long they have been here. It's not just a question of having Italian programmes which only Italians are going to be interested in seeing -- to give an example. So, I hope many of the programmes can be broadbased in the groups of people that they appeal to. But it is too early yet to make any judgements and it would be quite wrong for me to make any judgements about what the programmes ought to be. We want to assess the views of the communities and of Australians generally and that's the reason why the pilot programmes are in place so that people can look at them and judge them - say if they like them or say if they don't, say what they think they ought to be.

Question

(Inaudible) to raise the question of postal rates for foreign language newspapers. Up until now we didn't get any (inaudible)...lowering of the postal rates.

Prime Minister

I will chase that up for you, but it was my understanding that the postal rates for a number of newspapers were reduced a couple of months ago.

Question

(Inaudible) foreign language newspapers.

Prime Minister

There wouldn't have been any distinction. Let me check it.

Question

(Inaudible).

Prime Minister

Let me check it up and I will write to you about that, because my understanding is that there has been a reduction in postage rates for a number of periodicals.

Question

...expand on the newspaper situation. I have noticed that some ethnic newspapers carry quite a few Commonwealth and State Government advertisements, whereas some don't. I was wondering whether this again is - these advertisements are placed on a percentage basis depending on the circulation of newspapers, or whether they should be placed in all ethnic newspapers to let all communities know about Government decisions, especially regarding social security rules and if that is so, then there is a communications gap because some of the smaller papers have them, some haven't and for some of them I know no advertisements have been sent.

Prime Minister

I will get a report on that and see how the placing of advertisements in ethnic newspapers is judged. The Government's objective is to have the newspapers placed in such a way that we get to all communities and to as many people as possible. But, let me make some inquiries and I will write to you about that also.

Prime Minister

One or two of you might be interested in a statement that I think has been issued in Canberra a short while ago in the names of myself, Doug Anthony, Sir Charles Court, and Mr. Petersen. The statement I think speaks for itself but it is an important one. It indicates an agreement in relation to export guidelines. I will be in touch with other Premiers who are also involved in the export of minerals and N.S.W. of course will be involved in that. The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory is involved in exports from the Northern Territory. Other states are concerned but to a lesser extent. But it is an important statement because -- last night we came to an agreement that has resolved the differences between State and Commonwealth and the agreement was referred to my Government this morning and to the Queensland and Western Australian Governments during the course of the day. In each case the Governments have ratified the agreement.

Question

Can you tell us the essence of the agreement?

Prime Minister

The essence of the agreement really is that there will be full consultation between the States and the Commonwealth on a continuing basis. We will want to keep in touch on market circumstances in any particular industry - any particular export. Nobody wants to be using export controls in commercial circumstances, but I think everyone recognised there can be occasions when Governments need to be involved. That is not denied by the States. The Commonwealth's power is accepted and admitted, but I think the main thing that the States want - and it is reasonable - is that if that power is to be used it should be used in consultation and desirably, obviously, with the agreement of the State and with the agreement of the industry. The Commonwealth has a reserve position, clearly, but we will be seeking to act in agreement and in concert with the States. We announced some time ago that in the present marketing circumstances there is no need for the export guidelines as such to remain in relation to iron ore and if there is to be any introduction or introduction of controls of some kind in that particular industry that will be in consultation with the Government of Western Australia. In relation to coal, aluminium and bauxite, where the export guidelines remain in force, we will have consultations with the States concerned about current market circumstances and the continued application of the guidelines. We will be having those consultations against the background of the whole (inaudible) agreement that was reached last night and which will have been published in the press statement today. Basically, it I think represents a very sensible

Prime Minister (continued)

arrangement between Governments. It will resolve differences, establish a basis for consultation and principles which will govern that consultation and therefore give very great security of course to investors in great development projects in different parts of Australia. I think therefore it's certainly something the Commonwealth welcomes very greatly and something that I am sure the States also will welcome.

The document speaks for itself. The details of it are all there.

Question

Mr. Fraser, has Mr. Bjelke Petersen reacted yet about- on your decision, the Government's decision, on the Great Barrier Reef?

Prime Minister

I was with him for hours last night and I don't see any problems in that area.

Question

Did he mention it?

Prime Minister

No. I think he publicly said that Queensland accepts or lives with, or whatever, the decision. I don't see differences there.

Prime Minister

Prime Minister, from what you've just said (inaudible) does that mean there is no need for consultation on iron ore?

Prime Minister

No, if there was to be any application of export controls of one kind or another in the iron ore industry of course there will be consultation.

Question

(Inaudible)

Prime Minister

No, it's not envisaged at the moment. I think the marketing situation is improving. The market is much stronger than it was. Generally, the market situation in a number of minerals is improving. Mr. Anthony is also issuing a statement shortly which will indicate that a very large number of commodities of lesser importance than the ones I mentioned will be completely de-controlled. In other words, a large part of the fabric of control is disappearing.

Prime Minister (continued)

That is an examination that he set in train -- as a result of an examination he set in train many many months ago - during the course of last year.

Question

Prime Minister, basically that means that coal and iron ore...

Prime Minister

No, the guidelines remain in place at the present time on coal; alumina and bauxite and there will be discussions with the Governments concerned about the continuing need for application of guidelines judged against current market circumstances and future prospects.

Question

You said that the Government will always retain reserve power (inaudible).

Prime Minister

I didn't have to say it, that was accepted; that the constitutional power is the Commonwealth's and that's not challenged. But the States do press and that is not unreasonable, because they are involved in development projects. They want them to go ahead, they want them to maximise investment, development, for export earnings, just as we, and they have got a constitutional position in relation to a number of aspects as we have in relation to others. It's only reasonable therefore that Governments should act in consultation and to the maximum extent possible by agreement.

Question

Are you aware of a situation in Canberra - amongst the Hungarians living there - and are being harrassed by the Hungarian Ambassador. The Canberra Times had reported this some months ago when the Hungarian Ambassador refused to (inaudible) for a Hungarian woman who receives the same (inaudible)... but since he is a member of the Committee of the Australian-Hungarian Club, (inaudible)...

Prime Minister

I haven't heard of problems in that area. I would be happy to make some inquiries for you if I can. I haven't heard of the problems. I don't think I have had any representations in relation to it. I will check with my office. I can't guarantee -- I have about 2,000 or 3,000 letters into my office a week.