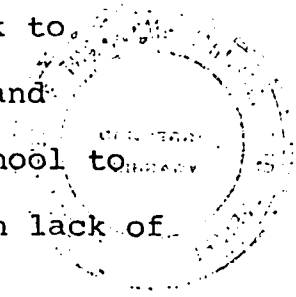


SUNDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 1979: EMBARGO 5:00 pm

ADDRESS TO THE ELECTORATE OF WANNON ON BEHALF OF THE PRIME MINISTER BY THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SENATOR CARRICK

The Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, asked me to talk to you about a very important matter -- the education and training of our young people for transition from school to work; and about our plans to help those who, through lack of basic skills, are at risk in obtaining employment.



Last Thursday I reported to Parliament on the Government's reaction to the Williams Committee report. I also described the details of a comprehensive plan to assist the transition from school to work of all those with particular needs.

These two initiatives are of great and enduring importance and interest to all Australians.

The Williams Committee report is the most detailed and comprehensive examination ever undertaken in this country. It focusses strongly upon quality. It seeks to upgrade the quality of delivery of education in schools, colleges and universities and the need to improve basic skills.

The quantity of education has increased enormously. Many people question whether that increase in quantity has been accompanied by a parallel growth in quality and relevance.

The Williams report emphasises sadly that one quarter of 14 year olds were found by sample testing to be incapable of independent learning or reading for recreation or

information. About 20 per cent of 10 year olds and 15 per cent of 14 year olds needed remedial instruction in number work. Some one half of all 14 year olds could not write a satisfactory letter for employment in terms of basic criteria.

Clearly this is not good enough. The government, in co-operation with the States, will work towards significant improvements in this vital field.

The Williams report contains 116 recommendations, touching right at the heart of qualitative improvements in the whole field of education. The government has adopted almost all recommendations.

Each year about 250,000 young people leave school. Of them 60,000 go into full-time tertiary education. A further 140,000 go into full-time employment, including 40,000 apprentices.

The remaining 50,000 are 'at risk'. They are our immediate and vital concern. Evidence shows that very many lack the skills necessary for employment. Without appropriate assistance, they will be chronically unemployed.

The Commonwealth government is convinced that much can be done to assist these young people towards personal fulfilment and employment.

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We have reached agreement with the States upon a wide range of initiatives.

The schools will be asked and assisted to identify students at risk at the earliest possible stage. The intention is to provide individual counselling, vocational testing, pastoral care and appropriate courses, including technical courses. Our aim will be to prove to these young people that we, the community, are genuinely concerned about them, that they have potential skills and that school and TAFE can be meaningful and rewarding to them.

We will seek to reduce the number of unduly early school-leavers - the 15 year olds who face a 28 per cent chance of unemployment.

We will offer work experience and link courses. We will extend the range of technical college courses, including pre-employment, pre-apprenticeship and E.P.U.Y.

Our hope is that the assistance and training will attract the great majority of juvenile unemployed.

We will not vary the present conditions of unemployment benefits.

This is not an artificial scheme to juggle with these figures and statistics of juvenile unemployment. It is a genuine attempt to provide all young people with employable skills and with a sense of adequacy and achievement. The personal factors are at least as important as the vocational.

These programmes should be eagerly welcomed by all Australians.

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