



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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NEW YEAR'S DAY MESSAGE

Much has been said in recent times about the '70s. A lot of it has been dominated by an unfounded sense of negativism and gloom which we must not allow to settle upon Australia - especially as we begin a new decade.

I want to speak to you about some of the positive forces at work, because I believe Australians are rightly interested in the prospects that the '80s hold.

As we know, the world experienced great problems in the '70s. Our biggest scourge was inflation, fuelling further rises in costs and prices; further wage demands; and inevitably, further unemployment.

In the last four years, Australians have come to see that when we contain inflation, business activity increases and employment prospects are improved. To achieve this, difficult decisions have been required of the Government. Indeed, all Australians have been confronted by difficult choices.

But often the most difficult decisions contain the most responsible solutions; often the most difficult choices have the most rewarding outcomes. Now I believe, we are in a position where our economic stability and strength allow us to be justifiably optimistic for the '80s; and together we have earned this feeling of optimism.

Here we are at the gateway of a new decade with our inflation rate below that of many of our major trading partners. We are internationally competitive; our costs are down; exports are up; factory output has increased; business investment is strengthening; farmers and pastoralists are enjoying better returns for their production; and while unemployment is still too high, new jobs are being created. Civilian employment, over the last year, has started to grow again.

To add to all of this, we have abundant raw materials and energy resources in a world greatly in need of both. So surely we are justified in feeling a sense of pride, now that a great programme of national development is at hand. This will be the basis of our economic growth in the '80s.

But it does not mean that we can be complacent about the future. We can never escape challenge. It is how we respond to challenge that decides Australia's future. We must never allow ourselves to be driven into pessimism and panic; defeatism and gloom.

These are corroding factors. If allowed to enter our daily lives, they can beat the spirit out of the best of us. Let us beat them by acknowledging that the '80s will be rich in opportunity. Success in taking advantage of these opportunities will depend on us.

In the past, the partnership between all Australians has produced great progress; significant achievements - achievements of Australian men and women in all walks of life - achievements of Australia as a community and as a nation.

Now, we are all heirs apparent to the '80s. But, we cannot afford to just stand - waiting in the wings. We must strive to get our act on stage; to go out and further our successes; to do so with purpose, confidence and conviction.

It is often said that the future of a country depends on the quality of its youth. This is true. Because it is true, those of us who are parents, must accept our responsibilities. As we learnt from our parents, so the young learn their standards and values from us. These will remain with them throughout life. No schoolteacher, however concerned, can replace a parent. No school, however fine, can replace the home.

It is at this time of the year that our awareness of the value of home and family life is increased. It is through the strengthening of family life, that life itself gains its quality. It provides a reservoir of compassion and concern enabling us to contribute to those who need our help.

Such quality, harnessed in every individual, gives this nation its character. Because of this, we must accept more seriously our responsibility to encourage young people through the times that lie ahead.

This encouragement will be strengthened by the confidence we demonstrate in ourselves; and by the confidence we reveal in the future we shape for ourselves. As we look to this future our optimism is well justified. Our economic policies have won international acclaim. Our natural resources, now being properly harnessed, have given us a powerful export base. We have large reserves of energy. And above all, we are a nation of people renowned for their enterprise and creativity. This catalogue of advantages is unique to Australia.

We have a lot to look forward to. So let us be enthusiastic about building a greater nation. Let us communicate this enthusiasm to one another. New stories are about to be written into Australia's history. Let us confirm together our determination to make a significant contribution to the emerging story of the '80s.

Wherever you are today, Tamie and I wish you and your family good health and a happy New Year - at the beginning of this decade of opportunity.