



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

FRIDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 1980

ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE WARRNAMBOOL JOB CENTRE

Thank you for the invitation to be with you today. My pleasure in being here is two-fold. In the first place, it is always good to be in Wannon and Warrnambool. Secondly, I am delighted that the reason for my being here is to open this job centre, for it represents further evidence of the important work being done by the Commonwealth Employment Service.

This Centre is one of a new breed of offices equipped to meet the employment needs of employers and job seekers in the 80s. It is spacious, attractive and functional, designed to provide the best possible environment for all those who use the Commonwealth Employment Service.

The Warrnambool Job Centre is part of an ongoing modernisation programme for the C.E.S.; a programme which was approved by the Commonwealth Government in 1977 following the Norgard Report.

We are now in the third year of our modernisation and improvement plan. And in the past three years, more than 120 offices have been equipped to meet new standards. Some of the offices are new; others, like this one, have been moved to an improved location. Some have been upgraded on an existing site.

In this financial year, it is proposed to open another 12 new offices and to relocate another 40. To meet all the objectives of the C.E.S., the Government has allocated more than \$82 million in this financial year. But the improved facilities we see here are only part of the Government's commitment to upgrading the C.E.S. into a modern manpower organisation.

An equally important part is that we are providing better, faster and more effective service to employers and job seekers alike, through, improved management structures and systems, an increase in staffing and a high priority for staff training, innovations in methods such as "job self service", and, extensive promotional exercises.

This is even more important when one considers that today the Commonwealth Employment Service is a far flung operation with around 400 outlets, not only in the metropolitan centres, but also in some of the most isolated areas in Australia. It is the Government's belief that these improvements will add immeasurably to the success of the operations of the C.E.S.

Figures establish the role of the C.E.S. as a provider of important services. In 1978/79, it placed more than 507,000 job seekers throughout Australia; and last financial year this increased to almost 530,000. Indeed, the C.E.S. now fills 75 per cent of vacancies notified. But it is much more than an agency that finds jobs and people to fill them. It is also a vital cog in the delivery of the Government's manpower programmes which are readily available to those who need them.

These programmes have an essential role to play in Australia's future both at a local and national level. Their aim is to provide Australians, especially young Australians, with the skills needed to secure employment; and to make sure that there are enough people with the right skills available to meet the industrial expansion and development that is now underway in Australia. For there is no doubt that, throughout the country, we can see signs of a new appreciation of Australia's potential. And the immense development programme which is already underway is testimony to the confidence that domestic and overseas investors have in Australia and its future. But the realisation of our vast resource potential will require a skilled labour force; and our manpower programmes are a direct investment by the Government in providing these skills, especially for young Australians.

The Government is determined that its initiatives should assist as many Australians as possible to play a significant and rewarding role in Australia's future. As proof of our increased commitment, in the current financial year, we have provided over \$138 million for our manpower, training and youth support programmes - an increase of 22 per cent on last year's expenditure. This brings to over \$600 million the amount spent on these schemes since we came to office.

The scope of the programmes is indicated by the fact that over 570,000 Australians have been assisted by them in the past four years; and, during this financial year, 236,000 are expected to be assisted. They are designed to meet a variety of needs, from those of individuals and special groups, to those directed to industry as a whole. "Craft", the Commonwealth rebate for apprentices' full-time training, has boosted the intake and retention of apprentices.

This year expenditure under this programme will be increased through a number of special trade training schemes designed to train skilled labour for areas where the need now exists; and to meet the demands of Australia's future industrial development. For levels of skill other than those regarded as trades, the "NEAT" scheme enables unemployed people to train in occupations where there is an unsatisfied demand. "NEAT" also provides specific training assistance to disadvantaged groups such as aboriginals and the handicapped.

The national Aboriginal employment strategy has been successful and next year, in support of the international year of the disabled person, a national employment strategy for the handicapped will be mounted. Many employers already train or want to train their present workforce.

The "training in industry and commerce programme" aids and stimulates the development of training programmes through all sections of industry and commerce including small business. The Government is also concerned that, because of a lack of qualifications or experience, a significant number of people face considerable problems in gaining employment. As a result, the "Special Youth Employment Programme" provides assistance for employers to take on young people and give them the experience needed to compete more successfully on the open labour market. Other young people are hampered by illiteracy and numeracy problems and have been helped by courses funded under the "Employment Programme for Unemployed Youth".

Many unemployed young people have taken advantage of the community Youth Support Scheme which enables young people to maintain an orientation towards work in an environment of community service which is helpful and supportive. The Government has also recognised the importance of a comprehensive approach to the particular needs of young people. This is the essence of the school-to-work transition programme which we announced last year and to which we have committed \$150 million for the next five years.

The Scheme recognises the importance of appropriate education, training and work experience in enabling young people to make a smooth transition from school to work. A key element in the programme is to make sure young people receive occupational information and guidance while they are still at school. And in 1980/81, the Government will provide over \$1.6 million on careers information; and careers libraries will be supplied to all secondary schools throughout Australia together with special careers information for migrants. And this new Job Centre, with its Work Information Centre and its improved facilities for counselling, will add to the information and opportunities available to young people and school leavers in this area.

Overriding the importance of these initiatives is the Government's determination, through its economic strategy, to provide the foundation for long term and continuing improvement in employment. This strategy is already working. In July 1980 there were 212,000 more people in work than was the case 12 months ago. The Government's policy will continue to stress the encouragement of productive employment through, building the fundamental strength of the economy, assistance under the transition from school-to-work programme, and further assistance to those in need through the Government's manpower and training schemes.

But it cannot be overstated that no long term benefit can be achieved by those who pretend that "make-work" schemes are the answer to the unemployment problem. They have failed in Australia before; and they have failed overseas. They add to the size of Government and to the size of deficits and both of these have been shown to damage the economy and jeopardise employment opportunity. Indeed, they have been the source of higher inflation from which many of our unemployment problems originate.

But it cannot be stressed too strongly that the Government's initiatives need the support of the whole community and, in particular, the union movement, employers and the education system.

The union movement in Australia has a poor record of concern for the unemployed. There is no-one in our community so forgotten by the union movement as the person without a job. In the present campaign seeking higher and higher wages and fewer hours at work, the union leadership is making the prospects of employment for those out of a job even more remote.

The selfish pursuit of excessive benefits for those who have jobs contributes nothing to the problems faced by those who are out of employment.

Indeed, the unemployed are forgotten and unrepresented by militant union leadership. Employers too must be encouraged to respond to the Government's initiatives, by offering vacancies and training opportunities to young Australians, by making the best use of their talents, and encouraging them through their difficulties, and, in these ways, assisting young people to play their role in Australia's development.

In other words, Government initiatives need to be supported by constructive attitudes of people and groups within the community and this is especially so of the education system itself. Too many young people have been disappointed and disadvantaged by Australia's education system. For too long, in periods of high employment, the education system existed in something of a vacuum. Those who were no good at school left and got a job; those who were good at school stayed on and got a better job. In this way, education was independent of the workforce. Rarely was it placed under a microscope. Now, many people in the community are doing just this. And, in many instances, what they see they do not like.

Today, more money is being spent on education than ever before. Pupil/teacher ratios are lower than they have ever been. Yet the value, the direction and competence of the education system is being increasingly questioned. And the questioning is coming from all sections of the community. Students are themselves sensing the irrelevance of much that is happening in education, with the result that a declining proportion are completing high school. For too long there has been too much emphasis on academic structures; too little emphasis on practical skills; too much disregard for the attitudes and values that will enable young people to play a productive role in the adult world. In other instances, courses lack content, discipline and evaluation.

Times are changing. A new and more demanding reality confronts young people today. Education has an obligation to prepare young people for that reality. If it does that successfully, it will contribute significantly to the initiatives that are needed from all sections of the community to equip young people for the future role they are to play in Australia's future. The Government's manpower and training initiatives are designed to see that this role is productive and rewarding for all young Australians. And this new Centre, along with many of its kind throughout Australia, will improve the services and the opportunities that are available for job seekers. Of course, ultimately, the effectiveness of the C.E.S. as a national manpower agency depends upon its support at local level.

•However well located and appointed the Job Centre may be, what it needs most is the confidence of its local community, employers and job seekers, schools, civic leaders, State and local government agencies and community groups. I know that the Warrnambool office enjoys this support and its success in the past is evidence of this. For example, the \$1,000 rebate payable under the Craft Scheme for training of additional apprentices has been well accepted by Warrnambool firms, leading to 110 employers in this area increasing their intake of apprentices during 1979/80. In addition, the Special Youth Employment Training Programme has been a contributing factor in assisting young people to improve their skills.

And in the past 12 months, over 250 young people in this area have received employment skills by training through this scheme. Among the innovations offered to this Job Centre is the concept of "job self service". The concept is quite simple. Job vacancies are posted on the self service boards after they are notified to the Warrnambool Job Centre by local employers. Jobs notified to C.E.S. officers for surrounding districts, such as Hamilton, Portland and other western district centres, are also listed on the boards along with selected vacancies from the Melbourne metropolitan area.

This concept is designed to bring suitable job seekers and employers together as quickly and as effectively as possible. It allows individuals to check the full range of vacancies available at any one time. When a person feels suitably qualified for a listed job, the C.E.S. officer can make the appropriate arrangements for an interview with the employer. Through job self service and its placement action, the Warrnambool Job Centre found employment for 1,750 job seekers in Warrnambool and surrounding areas in the past 12 months. And the response by major employers in the area to the facilities provided by the Job Centre is encouraging and commendable. I point out, in passing, that the Warrnambool Regional Office of the Department of Social Security, which I opened in 1971, will now be co-located with this C.E.S. job centre.

This will enable the Social Security Office to become fully decentralised, administering a full range of benefits, pensions and allowances for those who are eligible in the electorates of Wannon, Warrnambool and western province. Both these facilities are designed to increase the efficiency with which necessary government services are administered. And this efficiency is greatly increased by the localised and personal service that these offices will now be able to provide.

I have no doubt that the Job Centre, like many of its kind throughout Australia, will assist significantly those in our community who are actively seeking employment. These facilities demonstrate the Government's determination to play its part.

I am sure that this new facility will be a valuable asset for the people and the industry in this district. And I have much pleasure in declaring it officially open.