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## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 1981

### ELECTORATE TALK

(The weekly Prime Ministerial electorate talk is today given by the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, Mr Neil Brown).

I wish to talk to you today about the positive action that is being taken by the Government to help young people. Let me say at the outset - and there should be no doubt about this - that the Government is committed to increasing education, training and work experience opportunities for the young. By increasing these opportunities we will ensure that young people can share in the prosperity of Australia, take advantage of the expanding labour market and obtain stable and rewarding employment.

The challenges have been to get the economy moving; to increase the number of permanent jobs available; to make the education system more responsive to the needs of the young; to ensure young people acquire the skills and experience which they need and which employers seek; and to provide better guidance on careers.

The responsible policies pursued by the Government on the economic front have been successful in expanding activity and confidence in the private sector and producing higher employment growth. Full-time employment has grown by 5.3% over the last two years. The growth in full-time employment for 15 to 19 year olds was over 6%. The Government's achievements to date are encouraging, but more needs to be done. I can assure you the Government will vigorously pursue its efforts to build on this success.

During this year, substantial funds will be expended on manpower and training programmes by the Government with particular emphasis on young people.

#### School to Work Transition

The Government's School to Work Transition policy provides education and training opportunities within schools and TAFE colleges. We have committed ourselves to expend \$150 million over five years and in 1981/82 a total of 16,000 young people will be assisted to attend educational programmes, pre-vocational courses, pre-employment courses and pre-apprenticeship courses. To encourage young people to enter such courses the Government pays a transition allowance which is higher than the unemployment benefit.

### Skill Training

A number of new initiatives to provide skill training have been taken by the Government. We have substantially increased grants to TAFE colleges for this purpose - \$206.8 million in 1981/82, we will pay \$72 million to employers under CRAFT this year in respect of 95,000 apprentices, we have allocated \$8 million to the Skills in Demand Programme - under which almost 70% of the training places approved to date have involved people under 25 years of age - and, \$5.3 million is available to aid and stimulate the development of training programmes through all sectors of industry and commerce.

### Work Experience and Training

The Government has taken action to ensure young people acquire the skills and experience which they need and which employers seek by establishing the Special Youth Employment Training Programme. This programme will provide nearly 70,000 new places this year.

### Counselling and Job Placement

The Commonwealth Employment Service in 1980/81 increased the number of people under 21 years referred for job interviews by 20% and increased the placement of these young people by 18%. Also, the CES has expanded its programmes on occupational information and has developed career reference centres and work information centres.

### The Government's Record

If you want confirmation of the real commitment of the Government in work experience and training, you should look at the Government's record over recent years. Expenditure in 1979/80 was \$112 million; 1980/81 was \$165 million; and 1981/82 will be \$203 million. Whilst expenditure figures alone do not tell the full story it should be recognised that these are expenditure on targetted programmes to help young people who need work experience and training to obtain permanent employment. They exclude educational expenditure on the school to work transition programme and the education programme for unemployed youth. Under our programmes, over 210,000 young persons will be assisted this financial year - higher than at any other time.

If it emerges that some young people are unable to use the expanded opportunities provided by our extensive range of programmes because of their geographic location or because of their personal unsuitability to the present programmes, the Government will, of course, look very closely at the need for different or new forms of assistance or special programmes. This demonstrates that the Government has a firm commitment to assist the youth of Australia and help them to take an active and constructive role in society.

### National Youth Advisory Group

A further illustration of the Government's interest in young people is the National Youth Advisory Group. The group provides the Government with advice on young people's needs and concerns; informs the Government of the impact of its programmes

affecting young people; and suggests ways of improving communication links between young people and the Government.

The success of the group shows that the Government has here an influential body which can provide a very valuable link between the youth community of Australia and the Government.

Before leaving you this evening, I would like to refer to the latest monthly labour force survey which illustrates the positive contribution the Government is making to youth employment. Over the year to August 1981, the level of teenage full-time unemployment fell by 17.6%; the number of teenagers seeking full-time employment fell by 19,600 ; the number of teenagers looking for their first full-time job fell by 15,700; and the number of 15-19 year olds seeking other than their first job fell by 3,900.

Whilst some young people are experiencing problems in finding employment, we are determined to help them in their endeavours to find suitable employment by strong and positive action. As Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs I am particularly concerned to ensure the needs of young people are considered by the Government and that programmes of assistance are instituted to meet those needs where necessary. It is important for Australia that the young people be given every assistance and encouragement as they are our hope for the future.

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