



# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER, 1981

## LAUNCHING OF DEAFNESS AWARENESS WEEK

1981 is the International Year of Disabled Persons - and this gives an added significance to Deafness Awareness Week.

Eight hundred thousand people in Australia have impaired hearing, and I believe there is a growing awareness of the difficulties which deaf people face in everyday living.

The community has a responsibility to understand the special needs of all groups of disabled persons and so far as possible, to make the kinds of arrangements which enable disabled persons to live normal lives.

The Australian Caption Centre, which will give deaf people access to television programmes by means of sub-titles is a good example of the kind of initiatives we need.

The Caption Centre will become operational during next year and it will open to people with impaired hearing a dimension on life that most of us take for granted.

The Commonwealth Government is providing over \$620,000 this year for the Caption Centre - and this grant is a good example of the Government's commitment to do everything it can to assist disabled persons with the opportunities and services they require.

This year's Commonwealth Budget in fact allocates more than \$1.1 billion for various programmes and projects to assist disabled and handicapped people throughout Australia and I am sure that all Australians would agree that disabled and handicapped persons deserve this level of support.

The purpose of National Deafness Awareness Week is not to raise money, but to raise our level of care and understanding for people who cannot hear.

I hope that the community will take advantage of this week to learn more about the nature of deafness, and how certain aspects of deafness may be cured, prevented or alleviated.