



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

MONDAY, 7 JUNE 1982

COUNTRY-LIBERAL PARTY DINNER, DARWIN

It is a great pleasure for Tamie and me to be with you here in Darwin tonight. Already in the two or three days I have been in the Territory, I have been vastly impressed with the drive and progressive approach that are developing the Territory's potential so strongly and rapidly.

Yesterday, at Alice Springs, Ayers Rock and Tennant Creek, I saw something of the exciting plans and initiatives that are being developed in those places. The new Connellan Airport at Ayers Rock with the \$100 million Yulara Tourist Village and the Uluru National Park will obviously give a major boost to that whole area. And I am delighted, as I am sure you are, that Wal Fife was able today to release plans concerning proposals for the relocation of civil aviation activities at Darwin Airport, details of this project will be presented for consideration in the forthcoming Budget, and I am sure that everyone is looking forward to this project moving ahead.

This morning I opened the new Headquarters at Kakadu. As you know, Kakadu is now included on the World Heritage List, both for its natural and its cultural significance, with its fragile and unique beauty, and its sacred sites and places, it really is one of the wonders of the world; and it is a cause for real pride that Kakadu is being managed and looked after in a way that allows everyone to enjoy it and make proper use of it.

There is great progress in the Territory, Paul Everingham and his Government are giving a tremendous lead with their energy and their sound policies, and there is no doubt that self-government to the Territory was the vital step in getting the present level of achievement here. We see signs of the drive of Territorians here in Darwin, where private sector development is proceeding at a pace which indicates great confidence in the continued growth of prosperity in Darwin and the Territory as a whole. We see it reflected in the fact that the Territory has about double the major projects which would be expected on the basis of its share of employment in Australia as a whole, and we see it reflected in the fact that employment growth in the Territory in the year to April was faster than in any of the States, even those which pride themselves as being in the forefront of Australia's development.

As a Party and as a Government, we believe very strongly that encouraging people to manage their own affairs unleashes their talents and creativity, it leads to a dynamism that cannot be achieved in any other way. This applies whether we are talking about states or local communities or individuals managing their own affairs, and it marks us off more clearly from socialists than almost anything else. By unleashing the talents of people, we also build up our community and our nation, and here again our Liberal approach is vastly different from Labor's, because Labor doesn't really believe in building Australia up, but only in distributing what already exists.

Whenever Labor has had a chance to govern, whether in Canberra from 1972-75, or in South Australia, or in New South Wales or until very recently in Tasmania. They have caused immense damage and destruction to the economy, and the same thing would happen again, if they ever got a chance. It is Liberal Governments which believe in building Australia up, and nothing makes this plainer than the achievements of the last three decades, when living standards have doubled in Australia under Liberal governments. We will always stick to this great objective of building Australia up. Our policies for Australia as a whole, and also for the special requirements of the Territory, make this very plain, and I would like to say that Bernie Kilgariff and Grant Tambling are strong advocates in Canberra for the cause and interests of the Territory.

I want to say something tonight about where Australia is going, about the way we see the economy, and also about two other major policy areas, communications and defence. In recent years, we have had significant economic success, for in terms of growth, investment and employment, we have swum strongly against the international tide. Indeed, on currently available statistics, in 1981 Australia's growth rate of 5% was about four times the average growth rate in the industrialised Western economies, and was the highest growth rate of any of the OECD countries.

Our success against world trends has not come about by chance, it has come from policies designed to give Australians the confidence and the capacity to build up our economic strength. Those policies have particularly emphasised restraint in the demands of government on the community's resources, not because restraint is valued for its own sake, but because through those policies of restraint the conditions are created in which people and businesses have the resources they need to build up Australia's prosperity.

Let there be no mistake about it, our ultimate objective is to keep real incomes growing, to keep real living standards rising, to create the capacity to keep giving help where help is needed, and we have already had substantial success in meeting these objectives.

The biggest threats to our ability to keep moving ahead come from, on the one hand, the continued recession in the world's major economies, and on the other, the damage that can be done by inappropriate or irresponsible behaviour by Australians themselves.

As Territorians, with your great sources of income derived from mining, from tourism, and from cattle raising you will be acutely aware of how world economic conditions affect us in Australia, of how continued world recession has depressed demand for and the prices of many of our major export commodities.

As our economic performance of recent years has shown we are not totally captive to overseas economic influences, but it is clear that the longer the world remains in recession, the more it will impact on us.

I am sure you are all aware by now of the nature of the world's economic problems, that in six of the seven major economies there has been negative growth in industrial production, that the value of world trade actually fell in 1981 for the first time in over 20 years, that unemployment will pass 30 million in the O.E.C.D. countries during this year and that protectionism is being intensified and extended in many places. The potentially damaging implications of all this for Australia, as well as for the rest of the Western economies led the Cabinet to agree to Australia putting forward a proposal to the world leaders who met over last weekend in Versailles a proposal which focussed on the importance of trade in generating sustainable economic recovery, and sought to get growth restarted in the major economies by proposing a standstill, and a subsequent winding back of protection devices as well as of export incentives and subsidies.

We shall be continuing to press for positive action by all industrialised countries in co-operation because the economic prospects and prosperity of people throughout the world, and of people throughout Australia depend on action being taken.

But it is equally important and most obviously so while overseas developments remain unfavourable, that Australians should not damage their own prospects and prosperity. There has been an unfortunate tendency for some groups of Australians to act in a way that damages themselves and others in our community.

We have seen that all too clearly in the effects on activity and employment that have come about because of the excessive wage claims and the unreasonable levels of industrial disputes and strikes that occurred in the second half of 1981 and early 1982.

The recent decision in the national wage case has given us time to digest the effects of wage increases; there are now real prospects of greater harmony and co-operation in industrial relations; and we must capitalise on these opportunities to re-build the sense of confidence that we should all have in Australia's prospects.

We are entitled to have that confidence because Australia has real strengths in its strong manufacturing base, in its efficient primary producers, in its abundant natural resources, in the investment which has surged ahead in recent years, and is still continuing at high levels, and in the initiative and enterprise of the Australian people.

It is important that we continue to develop these strengths, because a strong and growing economy is essential for so many of our other objectives.

Defence is equally a matter of fundamental and essential concern and I want to discuss it particularly tonight because we live in a troubled and difficult world, in which it is more important than ever for the western nations to display strength and resolve as well as a willingness to enter into meaningful discussions about issues such as arms limitations.

The Falklands crisis has showed very plainly how quickly trouble spots can emerge. It is now 40 years since Darwin was bombed - we recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, and while Australia's circumstances today are very different from those we faced in 1942, we must be prepared for any threats and challenges which could emerge.

As a Government and party, we have an unswerving commitment to a secure Australia, a strong defence force and close co-operation with our allies and friends.

The Government's defence spending has been increasing substantially; outlays this financial year are up by nearly 20% on last year, well above the general price increases of between 10 and 11 percent; we are in the middle of a \$6 billion defence re-equipment programme and in the words of the recently retired Chief of the Defence Force staff, we have now the best-equipped and best-trained force we have ever had in peace time.

The Government is enlarging our defence deployment in northern and north-west Australia through an expansion of the RAAF base here to support the tactical fighter force, including the new FA/18s through the creation of NORFORCE to expand strategic surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities; through increased surveillance over the Indian Ocean; through progressively modernised communications and through the base for six patrol boats which has been constructed and which the first defence personnel actually moved into today.

Defence co-operation with allies and neighbours is also growing in depth and importance. There is the deployment of the B52's, co-operation in exercises with the United States, and also with Malaysia, Singapore, N.Z. and the U.K. under the Five Power Defence arrangements.

I would like to comment about access to our ports of naval ships, belonging to our allies and friends, which may be nuclear-armed even if conventionally powered because this issue is a matter for the gravest concern. The facts are that in the three years of Labor office in Canberra, some 135 naval ships of the United States, the United Kingdom and France visited Australian ports, including the port of Melbourne. Since then, some 390 visits have taken place. These visits could not have taken place without the established policies. British naval ships would not be allowed into Australia's ports without them.

In 1976 Mr Whitlam drew attention to the considerable confusion about nuclear ships and his statement made it plain that it was impossible to expect our allies to specify for public consumption which of their ships were nuclear-armed and which were not. For them to do so would be to give important military information to possible enemies. Mr Whitlam's arguments were impeccable. They parallel those of the Government policy exactly. The Labor Government practised this policy when it was in office in Canberra. Our policy since 1975 has been the same. It is an essential policy if we are to be able to co-operate with our allies on vital defence matters and it plays a significant part in the effective operation of a policy of nuclear deterrence. For these reasons, the policy must continue - and it will continue. Australia's defences are strong and relevant to today, and under this Government, that position will be maintained.

I also want to say something about communications which are important to people in the Territory in ways which many Australians would find it hard to grasp or understand. The next few years will see great improvements in a number of areas of communications. The satellite is going ahead, with a projected launch in 1985. It will not only bring T.V. and radio services to a number of remote areas for the first time, but will also have a major impact on Australia's whole communications network through to the end of this century.

There are several additional communications developments in train. A new terrestrial system for remote telephone subscribers has been designed and new exchange equipment for Darwin is planned, 4 remote area television program stations have been opened this year, and the Government is active in promoting a number of other initiatives and improvements in broadcasting services for Darwin and other parts of the Territory. Communications has always been a great challenge for Australia but a great deal is being achieved, and some of the current initiatives really will be historic advances.

In focussing tonight on the economy, defence and communications, I have not only been dealing with policy areas which are important in their own right, but also with ones which characterise the fundamental strengths of Liberalism. For it is our Government which seeks to build up a strong and prosperous Australia in which people have the incentive and confidence to live their own lives in their own way.

Australia in the 1980's is one of the most vibrant and vital countries in the world in a cultural sense; one of the most harmonious, free and stable countries in a political sense; it is one of the best managed and luckiest countries in an economic sense; one of the most concerned and energetic countries in humanitarian terms; one of the most realistic, responsible and far-sighted countries in the part it plays in international affairs; and it is one of the most self-confident and friendly countries in terms of the way in which other people view us. By working together as one people and one nation and by the continuation of policies which unleash people's energy and initiative, we can keep Australia ahead in the interests of our families and our children.

---00000000---