



EMBARGO: 5:00PM

*Wong (2)*

## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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### ELECTORATE TALK

A groundswell of opinion is building up throughout the community that Australians need to work together in the face of world recession which is now hitting Australia hard. Industry and trade unions as well as governments are recognising that the path of co-operation and moderation is the best way to achieve our common objectives as a nation, the best way to help insulate all Australians from the impact of world recession, and the best way to be ready to take advantage of world economic recovery when it finally comes.

The growing recognition that we need to co-operate and work together as one people is a hopeful development indeed. It provides a foundation for increasing moderation in wage demands, for restoring Australia's ability to compete in overseas markets, for improving our reputation as a reliable supplier, and it will help in the continuing fight against inflation.

The signs of a greater willingness to work together can be seen in several areas. There has been a substantial fall in the number of working days lost through strikes and industrial disputes. In the three months to May 1981, 640,000 days were lost in industrial disputes; in the three months to May of this year, 380,000 working days were lost - a fall of about forty per cent against last year.

Another recent sign of willingness to work together is the co-operation between unions, management and governments, based on the Crawford Report to make shipping flow more smoothly through our ports. Governments, both State and Federal, have also been getting together with the coal industry to find ways out of the very great difficulties which have plagued this major export industry - and which were at the same time jeopardising vital future contracts, particularly in Asia, because supply has been too unreliable.

The recent meeting between the CAI, the ACTU and the Commonwealth to analyse our economic problems and to see to what extent there is a common understanding about them, is a further important example of how we have begun to work together. At that meeting, all parties agreed that Australia was facing serious economic problems, and with varying emphasis, there was agreement that there is a link between excessive wage increases and a loss of jobs.

In the last few days, the Government has accepted salary recommendations well below the current inflation rate for Parliamentarians and senior public servants, and I have been pleased to note that the Academic Salaries Tribunal has also recommended a salary increase substantially below the rate of inflation. An important example to the community has been set by these actions and I have written to a number of companies, to State Premiers and to the ACTU and the CAI explaining the importance of these decisions. Several notable companies have announced a freeze or very small salary increases, and a number of leading figures in the trade union movement including the President and the Secretary of the ACTU have both spoken out strongly in support of wage moderation. Mr Dolan, the President of the ACTU, was reported last week as saying that more people would have to accept less pay to keep their jobs.

These are examples of Australians recognising that we have to work together and that if we act in this way rather than pursuing sectional interests in a selfish and shortsighted way, then we will be able to work our way through the present difficulties and continue to build the kind of economic strength and prosperity that we all want for Australia.

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