



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

TUESDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 1982

A PROGRAM FOR JOBS

Normally I would not be making a statement at this time especially since recuperation from this operation takes some weeks. But the proposal for a special Premiers' Conference which Mr. Anthony has announced is vital to our economic future. It is vital to creating more jobs. I simply want to emphasise how important it is for people in jobs to be willing to give up something to help those people who cannot get jobs or who are in danger of losing them.

Very large sums will be provided for constructive capital works to provide jobs for the unemployed as a result of a total wage pause across the nation. Such actions would provide a massive blow against inflation - and a great help to Australians in difficulty.

What fairer way to redress the ills of Australia? Many people in this nation are being hurt. Inflation is high, unemployment is high, there are worse dangers ahead, and the Government is determined that they be avoided.

There has been deepening of world recession, a recession which has gone on longer than anyone expected. This recession has hurt more people than anyone would have believed possible even a few years ago. In many countries, unemployment is much higher than in Australia. It is over 12% in Canada, nearly 13% in the U.K. Under the pressures of recession and of massive unemployment overseas wage increases have been very low, and as a result their inflation rates are in many cases falling and much below Australia's.

Up to the best part of a year ago, many Australians thought we had it made - and hundreds of thousands of new jobs had been created. But world recession was starting to hit Australia hard even then - and the wage settlements and reductions in hours that were forced or negotiated through last year proved a certain kind of madness.

Average weekly earnings for males have risen at an annual rate of nearly 17% in the year to the September quarter. Yet profits were down, our export incomes were down, our income as a nation was down. Too many felt that they could pay themselves more and work even less. It is not possible to have high, rising incomes with national productivity falling.

Our own madness came at the worst possible time. Last year's wage decisions and shorter hours came at the very time when the cold hard world of trade and of recession was making it harder than ever to sell Australian goods, to enlarge Australian markets. If our industries can't sell, they can't employ.

The nation is now divided - between the great majority who have jobs, and the growing minority who do not. Those working have generally higher wages and better conditions than ever before.

The cost, however, is high unemployment. The wages that are paid to those in work are paid partly at the expense of those out of work. The inequality, the unfairness is obvious. This is a time when those Australians in work need to give up something to assist those out of work, or who may become out of work if nothing is done. Reasons of common humanity demand it.

There are critical and challenging problems ahead of us. We must shake off the attitudes, the prejudices that have led to too much division in the past. We must reunite this nation in one cause based on the dignity and on the rights of all Australians, based on our feelings and our duties to each other as Australians.

The plan of action and assistance which Mr. Anthony has announced will be asking for some sacrifices from all Australians who are in work, to assist those who are out of work. This plan will strengthen and greatly enlarge the impact of the decisions already taken through this year, especially in the budget, to improve the position of families and taxpayers, to help home buyers and needy groups, to increase capital works, and to encourage Australian industry to be modern and efficient so it can compete and provide jobs in a difficult world.

Many of the budget measures are starting to take effect in this month of November, because that is when they become operative, but more is required.

In this plan of action which has been announced, we are asking for the co-operation of all Governments, of all States, of local government, of industry, of the great body of the union movement. There is a role for each

and every Australian in what we propose, in what we intend. And much more obviously can and will be done if the States are prepared to join with us in a full-blooded partnership.

If all governments divert the funds that would otherwise go into wage increases into constructive capital works, much additional employment will be created. We would be suggesting the funds should go into employment-creating programs that could be started as soon as possible, and would achieve a permanent benefit to the nation.

I place the highest possible importance on the implementation of this program of action. I place the highest importance on other people following this lead from the Commonwealth.

The wage pause would assist industry to restore its profitability and thus help renew employment growth - for while government can ease the problem temporarily the great bulk of new jobs must be provided by private enterprise.

We must get our costs back into line, we must make ourselves competitive, we must enter the real world again, we must sell Australian goods no matter how hard and how difficult the competitive world outside may be. We must help ourselves.

In Australia we have the best country in the world. We have the best people. We have more resources than most. With wrong and foolish policies it is possible to fritter them all away. If that happens the world will sit by and wonder. We cannot reach for shallow and false solutions. None of that is Australia's way. It is not the Government's way.

I ask you all to rise to support this program. I ask you all to work for Australian recovery. I ask you all to be prepared to forego future wage increases to help other people and to help this nation. I call on management and labour to produce efficiently and economically, and to preserve jobs.

By pulling together Australians have beaten depressions and won wars.

There is no doubt that using the funds that would otherwise go to paying increased wages for constructive capital works for the provision of more jobs, will be a vital step in reversing the trend towards more and more people being out of work.

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It is time we remembered that no one owes us a living. It is our own effort, as Australians, our own work, our own determination that will decide Australia's future. By recognising that we are all part of one nation, we can build and rebuild the kind of Australia that our hearts desire.

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