



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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WAGE PAUSE

The Commonwealth Government has welcomed the decisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and some State Tribunals that there should be a wage pause for at least six months. These decisions, following the unprecedented level of agreement between all governments at the December Premiers' Conference that there should be a pause, reflect a consensus which is developing in the Australian community.

All Australia's economic indicators, including the OECD forecast released some days ago, show that a 12 month wage pause remains desirable.

I have been concerned about the attitude which some unions have taken about the pause. Before I returned to work, Mr Anthony, as Acting Prime Minister, wrote to the President of the ACTU seeking his support in helping to give the wage pause a chance to work. I wrote to Mr Dolan last week to reinforce what Mr Anthony said.

I believe the Australian community expects the union movement to do its bit so that we will not see more jobs lost because of further wage increases following the high increases in wages and labour costs of the last two years.

Every government has taken or is taking action to implement a pause in both the public and the private sectors, as all governments agreed at the Premiers' Conference.

In its judgement in December, the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission said: "Any departure from them (the guidelines laid down by the Commission for the wage pause) could impair the viability of the pause and threaten the employment of many thousands of persons".

The wage pause must be successful if more Australians are not to lose their jobs.

We may not be able to do much to improve the international economic outlook or offset the effects of the drought. But we can control our own wages. We can improve the competitiveness of Australian industry, and hence its ability to employ. We can save jobs.

We must all get behind the pause and give it a chance to work. Those of us who have jobs owe that to our many fellow Australians who want or who are concerned that they may lose the jobs they have now.