



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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DOUBLE DISSOLUTION

The Governor General has agreed to a double dissolution of the Parliament, and a general election will be held on 5 March, 1983.

This week we have seen clear evidence of a concerted attempt by the trade union movement, with the full support of the Australian Labor Party, to break the wages pause and wreck the hopes of Australia's workers for job security. This attempt to break the wage pause ignores the fact that excessive wage increases have been a major cause of our economic difficulties, particularly unemployment, and the wage pause is a key policy to remedy this.

This selfish and greedy action is taken at the expense of all the young Australians wanting jobs. It ignores the importance of doing everything possible to save jobs. It cannot be tolerated.

Right around Australia there has been a national consensus behind the wages pause - a consensus broken only by the divisive and destructive actions of the union leadership and the Federal Labor Party. The pause was put in place with the agreement of the seven State Governments as well as the Commonwealth, it has been endorsed by the Arbitration Commission and other wage tribunals, and it has the backing of the great majority of the Australian people. The attitudes and actions of the union leadership and the Labor Party can only breed uncertainty and insecurity at a time when firm policies and a clear sense of direction are more important than ever.

It is the wages pause which makes possible the direct expenditure of \$300m., saved from Commonwealth wages, on the constructive job-creating projects which have recently been announced. These projects, together with the programme of major national projects recently adopted by the Government, will encourage private enterprise to provide jobs, and to show the potential this country has.

Because of the Government's policies Australia was one of the last countries to be hit by the world recession. The Government's programme, set out in the family budget, in the wages pause, in the national and bicentennial projects and in assistance to industry, will help Australia to be one of the first countries out of the recession. We don't need to sit back and wait for the rest of the world. There are many things we can do to help ourselves, and we cannot afford to be prevented from doing these things.

Because of the attitude of the unions, because of the attitude of the Labor Party, because of the importance of carrying through the wage pause and the other Government policies which will help Australia to move onto an upward path, it is imperative that an election be held at this time.

I do not want Australia to be racked by enormous industrial strife. If the union movement and the ACTU cannot accept a decision backed by all eight governments, Labor as well as Liberal and National Party; if they cannot accept the decision of the Arbitration Commission; if they cannot accept the decisions of wage tribunals right around Australia; then let us ask them one very simple question.

Will they accept the verdict of all the people of Australia?

Because if they will not, they are challenging the very foundation of Australian democracy.

And if that is the case it will be a good thing for the Australian people to know just where they stand.

I therefore call upon the Trade Union Movement to withdraw all bans, to end all strikes, and to accept the verdict of the Australian people. I'm prepared to accept their verdict. I challenge the union movement to accept their verdict also.

The choice before people in this election is whether they want security based on continuity and the stable policies which the Government has in place, or whether they want the total uncertainty and subservience to union pressures which is all that the Labor Party can offer.

I had previously arranged to travel to the United States at this time for official discussion with President Reagan in advance of the Williamsburg economic summit. But events in Australia obviously take total priority.

The basis for the double dissolution is the rejection on two occasions by the Senate of 13 bills relating to sales tax, tertiary fees and unemployment benefit payments to the spouses of strikers. The technical grounds are only one aspect of the reasons I have sought a double dissolution.

I ask for full support to continue the work of building Australia. We need a continuation of the wage pause not just for six months but for a full twelve months. We need a continuation of stable policies. We need a continuation of the longer term programmes which will secure Australia's future.