



**PRIME MINISTER**

THURSDAY 21 APRIL

FOR MEDIA

SPEAKING NOTES FOR WANNON BY-ELECTION CAMPAIGN OPENING

I DOUBT IF IT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE IN FEDERAL HISTORY, THAT A NEWLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT HAS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TEST ITS STANDING WITH THE ELECTORATE SO SOON AFTER THE ELECTION.

BUT THEN, SO MANY UNPRECEDENTED THINGS HAVE HAPPENED SINCE THE FORMER MEMBER FOR WANNON ANNOUNCED THE ELECTION LESS THAN TWO MONTHS AGO, I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY THIS.

WITHOUT COMMENTING ON THE FORMER MEMBER'S RESIGNATION THREE WEEKS AFTER THE ELECTORS OF WANNON RETURNED HIM, I ONLY WANT TO SAY AT THE OUTSET THAT I WELCOME THIS EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA ON THE STEPS THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN TO SET AUSTRALIA ON THE ROAD TO NATIONAL RECOVERY, NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION; AND THROUGH THE ELECTORS OF WANNON, TO SUBMIT OUR PERFORMANCE AND OUR PLANS TO THEIR JUDGMENT.

AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT THIS OPPORTUNITY SHOULD ARISE IN AN ELECTORATE LIKE WANNON.

NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE MARK THAN ANY SUGGESTION THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO LIMIT ITS CONCERN TO THE METROPOLITAN AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS.

THE WHOLE THEME OF OUR CAMPAIGN WAS BRINGING AUSTRALIA TOGETHER.

ITS WHOLE BASIS WAS THAT FOR MOST OF THE PAST DECADE, THERE HAD BEEN TOO MUCH OF THE SETTING OF AUSTRALIAN AGAINST AUSTRALIAN, GROUP AGAINST GROUP AND REGION AGAINST REGION.

AND THAT PROCESS OF NATIONAL DIVISION INCLUDED AN ONGOING ATTEMPT TO SET CITY PEOPLE AGAINST COUNTRY PEOPLE. THERE WERE TOO MANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS BY CITY PEOPLE OF THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF COUNTRY PEOPLE AND THE VITAL CONTRIBUTION THEY MAKE TO OUR NATIONAL ECONOMY.

AND AS A PARTY, AND NOW AS A GOVERNMENT, WE REJECT COMPLETELY THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRY. WE DEPEND ON EACH OTHER AND WE NEED EACH OTHER.

AND JUST AS IN RECENT WEEKS WE HAVE BEGUN THE PROCESS OF GETTING BUSINESS AND UNIONS TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER, TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S PROBLEMS AND VIEWPOINT, AND TO WORK TOGETHER TO PROMOTE THEIR MUTUAL SELF-INTEREST, SO THE PROCESS OF ENDING THE ARTIFICIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRY WILL BE PART OF OUR ONGOING TASK OVER THE YEARS TO COME.

IT IS ONLY FIVE WEEKS TOMORROW SINCE WE WERE SWORN IN AS A GOVERNMENT. I BELIEVE I CAN REPORT TO YOU AND THROUGH YOU, TO THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA, THAT A GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED.

THE MAJOR TASK HAS BEEN TO CLEAR THE GROUND SO THAT WE CAN MAKE SURE THAT WE ARE MAKING THE RIGHT DECISIONS.

THIS HAS INVOLVED A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION-ACQUISITION AND INFORMATION-SHARING.

THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE ITSELF WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THAT PROCESS; AND IT WILL BE A CONTINUING PROCESS.

THE FIRST THING WE HAD TO DO WAS OF COURSE TO PROVIDE THE INFORMATION TO THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA TO MAKE THEM FULLY AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE INHERITED FROM THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT.

INDEED WE HAD TO TAKE FIRM AND PROMPT ACTION EVEN BEFORE WE WERE SWORN IN.

AS SOON AS WE WERE ELECTED WE WERE FACED WITH AN URGENT NEED TO END THE DAMAGING AND DESTABILISING EFFECTS OF SPECULATION AGAINST THE AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR WHICH HAD BEEN DELIBERATELY AND IRRESPONSIBLY CREATED BY LEADING MEMBERS OF THE OUTGOING GOVERNMENT.

MR ANTHONY, FOR EXAMPLE, MADE REPEATED STATEMENTS ALLEGING THAT THE ELECTION OF A LABOR GOVERNMENT WOULD RESULT IN A DEVALUATION OF THE DOLLAR.

THE NEW LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WENT TO THE EXTREMES OF IRRESPONSIBILITY BY PUTTING AN ACTUAL FIGURE OF 15 PERCENT ON A LABOR DEVALUATION.

NOW OF COURSE THESE IRRESPONSIBLE STATEMENTS BECAME SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY, BY CREATING FURIOUS SPECULATION ON THE DOLLAR.

IN THE TWO WEEKS AFTER MR PEACOCK'S DEVALUATION STATEMENT, AUSTRALIA'S CASH RESERVES FELL BY NEARLY \$3 BILLION.

SO WE HAD TO ACT FIRMLY; AND WE DID.

AND THE 10 PERCENT DEVALUATION HAS MORE THAN REVERSED THE DAMAGE DONE BY THE SPECULATION SO IRRESPONSIBLY FUELLED BY OUR OPPONENTS DURING THE CAMPAIGN.

THE MONEY HAS FLOWED BACK. THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED. STABILITY HAS BEEN RESTORED TO THE DOLLAR.

THAT WAS AN IMMEDIATE AND TEMPORARY PROBLEM WE INHERITED FROM THE DELIBERATE ACTIONS OF OUR PREDECESSORS.

BUT THE ONGOING PROBLEMS WE HAVE INHERITED ARE OF A MUCH MORE DIFFICULT AND INTRACTABLE KIND.

IN THE TWELVE MONTHS FROM MARCH 1982, UNEMPLOYMENT GREW FROM 6.6 PERCENT TO 10.4 PERCENT OF THE WORKFORCE. UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG FIFTEEN TO NINETEEN YEAR OLDS IN THE WORKFORCE ROSE ABOVE 29 PERCENT.

SO IT MEANS THAT AMONG CERTAIN GROUPS OF OUR SOCIETY - AMONG THE YOUNG PEOPLE, AMONG WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE, AMONG MIGRANTS - UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS MATCH THOSE EXPERIENCED IN THE DEPTHS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION ITSELF.

LAST YEAR, AUSTRALIA'S DOMESTIC PRODUCT FELL BY 1.6 PERCENT. THAT'S THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1961 THAT OUTPUT HAS FALLEN.

SO THE BASIC TASK AHEAD IS VERY CLEAR. WE HAVE GOT TO GET GROWTH BACK INTO THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY.

WE HAVE GOT TO GET THIS ECONOMY MOVING.

WE HAVE GOT TO ARREST THE EXPLOSION IN UNEMPLOYMENT.

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AND EVERYTHING WE HAVE BEEN DOING IN THE PAST FIVE WEEKS HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO ADDRESS OURSELVES TO THIS GIGANTIC TASK.

TODAY, THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OPENED THE PARLIAMENT IN CANBERRA. AND IN HIS SPEECH, HE OUTLINED THE MEASURES WE PROPOSE TO SET IN TRAIN.

AND WHILE OUR GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC MEASURES DOMINATED THE SPEECH, REFLECTING THE SERIOUSNESS OF AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC SITUATION, IT IS NONE THE LESS A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR REFORM.

AND LET IT NEVER BE FORGOTTEN - WHILE GETTING AUSTRALIA OUT OF THE ECONOMIC MESS WE INHERITED, THIS IS A REFORMING LABOR GOVERNMENT, COMMITTED TO THE GOAL OF CREATING A MORE EQUAL, AND A MORE JUST, AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY.