



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH AT KOGARAH MARIST HIGH SCHOOL - 11 MARCH 1984

IT IS WITH MUCH PLEASURE THAT LAST YEAR I ACCEPTED THE INVITATION TO COME TO KOGARAH TODAY TO OPEN YOUR SCHOOL'S MAJOR EXTENSIONS AND RENOVATIONS.

I DID SO RECOGNISING THIS AS A VERY IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE LIVES OF YOUR STUDENTS, STAFF, PARENTS AND MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. I WAS ALSO MINDFUL THAT THIS YEAR, 1984, IS THE SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE SCHOOL.

AND THIS IS A GREAT SCHOOL. IT HAS EVERY REASON TO BE PROUD OF ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL AND NATIONAL LIFE. THE FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY, CARDINAL GILROY, WAS A DISTINGUISHED EX-STUDENT. YOU ALSO COUNT A NUMBER OF LEADING PARLIAMENTARIANS AMONG YOUR OLD BOYS - SENATOR GRAHAM RICHARDSON AND JIM CARLTON AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL AND BRIAN BANNON AND BRIAN LANGTON AT STATE LEVEL. THEY ARE EACH IN THEIR RESPECTIVE WAYS WORKING FOR A BETTER AUSTRALIA.

THE EXCELLENT JOB OF EXTENSION AND RENOVATION YOU HAVE NOW COMPLETED AUGERS WELL FOR THE FUTURE. THE NEW FACILITIES WILL, I AM SURE, PROVIDE AN IDEAL ENVIRONMENT FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND STAFF. THE WORK AND EFFORT PUT INTO THEIR PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION IS A CREDIT TO ALL INVOLVED.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE TOTAL COST OF THIS PROJECT WAS \$845,000 AND THAT A COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT CAPITAL WORKS GRANT OF \$545,000 WAS MADE TO HELP ALLAY THE COST. PARENTS AND FRIENDS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE BALANCE.

EDUCATION NEEDS TO BE A CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMUNITY, IN PARTICULAR PARENTS. THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO KOGARAH MARIST HIGH SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS THE GOVERNMENT'S HEAVY COMMITMENT TO THIS CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT. PARENTS OWN CONTRIBUTIONS UNDERLINE IN A QUITE UNMISTAKEABLE WAY THE HIGH VALUE THEY ALSO PLACE ON TOP QUALITY EDUCATION.

OF COURSE A SCHOOL DOES NOT RUN ON BUILDINGS ALONE. ACCORDINGLY THE COMMONWEALTH ALSO GIVES GRANTS FOR SCHOOLS' OPERATING COSTS. IN 1983 COMMONWEALTH GRANTS TO KOGARAH MARIST HIGH SCHOOL WERE CLOSE TO \$900,000. INDEED AS PART OF OUR EDUCATION POLICY THE GRANTS FOR 1984 WERE INCREASED BY 3 PER CENT IN REAL TERMS OVER AND ABOVE INCREASES IN SCHOOL COSTS.

THIS PATTERN OF SUPPORT TO KOGARAH MARIST HIGH SCHOOL IS A CONCRETE DEMONSTRATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT'S VERY STRONG COMMITMENT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VIGOROUS AND EFFECTIVE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM - A SYSTEM WITHIN WHICH NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS ARE A CRUCIAL PART.

LET ME COMMENT BRIEFLY ON THE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS MY
GOVERNMENT BRINGS TO EDUCATION POLICY.

AS A NATION WE MUST BE PREPARED TO INVEST HEAVILY IN HUMAN
SKILLS. WE NEED A COMMUNITY AND WORKFORCE THAT HAS THE
EDUCATION NECESSARY TO COPE WITH AND ADAPT TO A RAPIDLY
CHANGING WORLD.

AS A GOVERNMENT WE ARE GIVING URGENT ATTENTION TO THE
CREATION OF A BASE OF SKILLS ACROSS THE WHOLE WORKFORCE -
THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND
THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NECESSARY RETRAINING FACILITIES
FOR THE EXISTING WORKFORCE. ONLY IF WE EQUIP OUR PEOPLE
WITH THE CAPACITIES AND ATTITUDES TO COMPETE EFFECTIVELY IN
THE WORLD AT LARGE, WITH FLEXIBILITY AND WITH CONFIDENCE,
CAN WE MAKE THE MOST OF FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES. IN THE
PRESENT DAY WORLD, WITH ITS INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED
TECHNOLOGIES AND RAPID CHANGE, PEOPLE MUST HAVE THE CAPACITY
AND SKILL TO MOVE WITH THE TIMES, TO BE FLEXIBLE, TO BE
INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE.

ACCORDINGLY THE GOVERNMENT SEES IT AS IMPORTANT THAT SCHOOLS
PROVIDE VOCATIONALLY RELEVANT EDUCATION. AS I HAVE SAID OUR
WORLD DEPENDS UPON INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGIES.
STUDENTS NEED TO BE GIVEN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THESE
TECHNOLOGIES.

TODAY, FOR EXAMPLE, COMPUTER LITERACY IS A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE FOR MORE AND MORE JOBS. ACCORDINGLY THIS GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED A NATIONAL COMPUTER EDUCATION PROGRAM OF \$18 MILLION OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. WE WILL BE PROVIDING FUNDS TO BOTH GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS SO THAT THEY CAN PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE USES OF THIS TECHNOLOGY, ITS IMPACT ON THE NATURE OF WORK AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES, AS WELL AS TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF BASIC COMPUTER LITERACY.

ENCOURAGING A REASONABLE DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION, BOTH IN GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS, IS ALSO AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATION POLICY APPROACH. SUCH ASSISTANCE IS BEING PROVIDED WITH DUE REGARD BOTH TO THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, AND THE PRINCIPLE OF NEED AS DEFINED IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED PARTIES.

TO PROVIDE THE EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY NECESSARY FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS TO BE ABLE TO SHARE IN OUR FUTURE, IS A MAJOR THRUST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATION POLICY. THE YOUNG ARE OUR NATION'S FUTURE. NO CHILD'S EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE PENALISED BY SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC BACKGROUND, LACK OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT OR LACK OF SUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES.

LET ME TAKE YOU BACK SOME 10 YEARS - IN 1973 THE KARMEL COMMITTEE IN ITS REPORT ON SCHOOLS IN AUSTRALIA FOUND A VERY CONSIDERABLE DISPARITY IN THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR TEACHING TO DIFFERENT SCHOOLS. SINCE THEN COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENTS OF BOTH POLITICAL PERSUASIONS HAVE PROVIDED COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE TO NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS ON THE BASIS OF THE RELATIVE NEED OF EACH SCHOOL.

THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION HAS JUST RELEASED A DISCUSSION PAPER ON COMMONWEALTH FUNDING OF SCHOOLS AND IT NOTES THAT THERE ARE STILL SIGNIFICANT DISPARITIES IN THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS.

THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATION FUNDING POLICIES ARE DIRECTED TO PROVIDING A GREATER LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE TO THOSE WITH A GREATER NEED. OUR IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE IS TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF INEQUALITY BETWEEN SCHOOLS BY RAISING THE STANDARDS OF THOSE SCHOOLS MOST IN NEED. THE GAP BETWEEN LOW RESOURCE SCHOOLS AND OTHER SCHOOLS HAS TO BE REDUCED.

IN DEVELOPING ITS POLICIES IN THE EDUCATION AREA, AS IN MOST OTHER FIELDS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD TO BALANCE COMPETING CLAIMS FOR ITS LIMITED FUNDS.

THE LIMITS IMPOSED IN 1983 BY THE VERY LARGE INHERITED BUDGET DEFICIT MEANT THAT THE LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE WE CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE FOR NEEDY SCHOOLS COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY A SLIGHT REDISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS AWAY FROM A SMALL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WHICH HAD THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF PRIVATE INCOME.

IN DOING THIS WE SHIFTED SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT FROM THOSE WITH A LOT OF PRIVATE INCOME TO THOSE WITH VERY LITTLE.

THE EXTENT OF THE SHIFT INVOLVED HAS SOMETIMES BEEN EXAGGERATED. THE REDUCTION FOR THE FEW WEALTHY SCHOOLS AFFECTED AMOUNTED TO ABOUT \$28 A TERM FOR A PRIMARY STUDENT AND \$45 A TERM FOR A SECONDARY STUDENT. AT THE SAME TIME WE INCREASED GRANTS FOR OVER 90 PER CENT OF ALL NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS. THAT, AS IS OVERWHELMINGLY ACKNOWLEDGED IN THIS COUNTRY, IS AN EQUITABLE AND DECENT APPROACH.

BECAUSE OF OUR POLICY OF DIRECTING ASSISTANCE TO THOSE IN NEED, OVER 90 PER CENT OF NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS WILL RECEIVE A HIGHER REAL LEVEL OF GRANT IN 1984 THAN BEFORE. THIS YEAR WE WILL INCREASE OUR ASSISTANCE BY \$9.5 MILLION IN REAL TERMS TO \$627 MILLION, INCLUDING \$540 MILLION IN RECURRENT GRANTS. THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT IS GIVING MORE MONEY TO NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS THAN ANY GOVERNMENT BEFORE IT.

POLICY IN THIS AREA IS OF CRITICAL INTEREST TO ALL OF US -- AFTER ALL OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE AND THROUGH THEM OUR OWN FUTURE IS AT STAKE. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT I CONSIDER IT AXIOMATIC THAT NO CHILD SHOULD BE PENALISED OR DEPRIVED OF ACCESS TO AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDUCATION.

THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT MANY PARENTS CHOOSE TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN OUTSIDE A GOVERNMENT SCHOOL SYSTEM. IT ALSO RECOGNISES THE HIGH STANDARD WHICH A NUMBER OF NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS HAVE ATTAINED. BUT IN SUBSIDISING THE CHOICE BY PARENTS OF A PARTICULAR SYSTEM OF EDUCATION THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT ACCEPT THAT IT MUST SUBSIDISE ALL CHOICES EQUALLY. IN THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW THE SUBSIDY LEVEL SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY NEED - BY THE SCHOOLS' NEED FOR ADEQUATE RESOURCES SO THAT ALL SCHOOLS CAN OPERATE AT LEAST AT AN ACCEPTABLE COMMUNITY STANDARD.

THE GOVERNMENT IS STRONGLY OF THE VIEW THAT A NEW EDUCATION FUNDING SCHEME THAT IS BASED ON BETTER AND FAIRER MEASURES OF NEED SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED.

THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOOLS COMMISSION HAS RECENTLY PRODUCED A PUBLIC DISCUSSION PAPER THAT OUTLINES OPTIONS THAT IT SEES FOR COMMONWEALTH FUNDING FOR 1985 AND BEYOND.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION HAVE COMMENCED AN EXTENSIVE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS AND STATE GOVERNMENTS REGARDING THE EDUCATION FUNDING ISSUES RAISED BY THIS PAPER. THIS EXTENSIVE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION IS AIMED AT ENSURING THAT THE VIEWS OF ALL THE INTERESTED PARTIES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. ONCE THESE CONSULTATIONS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION WILL PUT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ON FUTURE FUNDING TO THE GOVERNMENT.

I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT WHILE THE PRECISE DETAILS OF THE FUNDING FORMULA HAVE NOT YET BEEN RESOLVED, NO NEEDY SCHOOL WILL RECEIVE LESS REAL ASSISTANCE THAN IT DOES TODAY.

THE GOVERNMENT AIMS, THROUGH A FULL PROCESS OF CONSULTATION, TO ESTABLISH A CLIMATE FOR EDUCATION THAT WILL BE HARMONIOUS, PRODUCTIVE AND LASTING. THIS WILL BE THE PURPOSE OF MY OWN INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CONSULTATIONS NOW TAKING PLACE. WITH SENATOR SUSAN RYAN I AIM TO ENSURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES IN THIS AREA ARE CARRIED FORWARD IN SUCH A MANNER AS TO ENSURE THEY HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

AS WE DEVELOP THE FUNDING PROCESSES FOR NEXT YEAR AND LATER, THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE MUST BE PARAMOUNT. THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIA DEPENDS ON ITS MAIN RESOURCE - ITS YOUTH. THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT IS

WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE COMMUNITY TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GIVEN EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EQUIP THEMSELVES FOR THE DIFFICULTIES AND CHANGING WORLD THAT IS AHEAD OF THEM.

THIS PROCESS OF CONSULTATION AND CONSENSUS - THE REMOVAL OF CONFLICT - IS THE MAINSPRING OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S WHOLE APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT.

ONLY BY SUCH AN APPROACH CAN WE TRULY HARNESS OUR RESOURCES FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.

I AM PROUD TO HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED IN THE PAST WITH EFFORTS TO ERODE AND, HOPEFULLY, TO REMOVE THE STATE AID ISSUE AS A DIVISIVE FEATURE OF POLITICS IN THIS COUNTRY.

STATE AID WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO BECOME AN ISSUE UNDER MY GOVERNMENT.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THIS LONG STRUGGLE TO BRING EQUITY AND FAIRNESS TO OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM. I HAVE WELCOMED YOUR CO-OPERATION WITH US IN THIS FUNDAMENTALLY IMPORTANT AREA OF OUR NATION'S AFFAIRS.

I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING CLOSE CONSULTATIONS WITH CHURCH LEADERS IN THE NECESSARY ONGOING DISCUSSIONS ON EDUCATION FUNDING.

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO DECLARE THESE NEW FACILITIES OPEN AND TO WISH THE STUDENTS, STAFF AND SUPPORTERS OF THE SCHOOL WELL FOR THE FUTURE.