



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OPENING OF THE MUNICIPAL OFFICES ANNEXE
COBURG - 15 APRIL 1984

Mr Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am again delighted to be here in Coburg - the very heart of my constituency. It is not so long since I was last with the Council here in Coburg. In February Hazel and I attended a special Council meeting, followed by dinner as part of the celebration of the 125th anniversary of local government in Coburg - an evening with our good friends which we particularly enjoyed.

It gives me particular pleasure to be here again for the opening of these impressive, new council offices, this time as part of the Heritage Week celebrations organized by the National Trust of Australia.

The original Town Hall offices were established in the 1920's and, apart from a few minor modifications over the years. These are largely unchanged. This annexe has been made necessary by the continuing growth of the municipality. Its functional character should greatly improve the working conditions of Coburg's Council staff.

The vacated old offices will be used to centrally locate the Council's Human Services staff who have until now been housed at separate locations. Additionally, meeting rooms and a reference library for the use of Councillors have been provided.

These welcome developments will improve the cohesion of the resources devoted to community welfare services and contribute overall to the greater efficiency of the Council's work.

The citizens of Coburg will also benefit from the improved services that will assuredly flow from the centralising of the council's departments, made possible by the establishment of this annexe.

I must commend the people responsible for the construction and design of these offices. They have matched the old with the new and provided a harmony of old world charm, with contemporary, modern structures. Their work and the efforts of the Mayor and Councillors have given the municipality of Coburg one of its most attractive features.

The establishment of this annexe is an obvious testament to the growth and dynamism of local Government in Coburg. Since its incorporation as the Coburg District Roads Board in 1859 this Council has evolved and increased its functions from that of a limited authority - responsible only for roads - to a multi-purpose community Government committed to the continued service of the people and to further growth and prosperity of the Coburg area.

The Government is committed to recognising local government as a genuine partner in our governmental system and to encouraging worthwhile interaction between the three spheres of Government - Federal, State and Local. In implementing our policies we have already made some important changes:

- . Established the first National Local Government Ministry to co-ordinate activities in areas of relevance to Local Governments.
- . Increased the funds for general and special purposes to flow from the Commonwealth Government this year to local government by well over 40% from the previous year - this includes money for local roads, child care services, health, welfare and housing. Coburg has benefitted directly from this increase - with the city's allocation of general purpose revenue grants rising from \$1,285,000 in 1982/83 to \$1,400,000 in 1983/84.
- . Finally, we have initiated a significant National Inquiry into the financial relations and capacities of local Governments.

In short, the Federal Labor Government attaches considerable importance to successful implementation by Local Governments of their responsibilities. The immediate, grass-roots needs of our communities are frequently the most pressing. Very often they are also best understood and best met by those engaged in local government.

Accordingly, it is with a great deal of pride and pleasure that I now declare the Coburg Offices Annexe officially open.
