



## PRIME MINISTER

### SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO WOMEN'S ADVISERS - CANBERRA - 10 MAY 1984

I am happy to welcome here tonight Australia's principal advisers on the Status of Women. I particularly want to welcome those of you who have travelled from Perth, Brisbane, Hobart, Darwin, Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne to attend this two day meeting with members of the Office of the Status of Women within my Department.

This is the first time since these meetings began to be held that the Governments of Queensland and Tasmania have sent representatives and I particularly welcome this recognition by those two Governments of the importance of seeking out and heeding the views of women.

I also want to welcome here tonight the members of the Permanent Heads Task Force on the Status of Women, the Secretaries of the nine departments and the Public Service Board whose policies are most directly relevant to improving the status of women. Sir Geoffrey Yeend, the Secretary of my Department, leaders to this important and innovative Task Force. Through it the Government aims to secure the highest possible level of administrative support for implementing our policies on women.

That we have already made tremendous progress in meeting this goal is evident from the report which has been made available to the advisers attending today's meeting. This document was prepared by the Office of the Status of Women at the direction of Senator Ryan who assists me in matters to do with the status of women. It sets out in great detail the progress the Federal Government has made towards fulfilling its platform and policy speech promises on the status of women. This document will be circulated as widely as possible in order to demonstrate that the Government has taken seriously its obligations to women.

I am very pleased to see here tonight the Opposition members who have given the greatest support to constructive measures towards improving the status of women. They, I know, believe there should be a large degree of bipartisanship on such important matters as removing discrimination from the workplace, and encouraging women and girls to improve their levels of skills, and hence their ability to raise their labour market prospects.

The Government has already set in train a number of policy initiatives or reviews designed to assist us to achieve these goals. We have enacted the Sex Discrimination Act and will be in a position to proclaim it within a month or so, after we have appointed a Sex Discrimination Commissioner.

We have asked the Kirby Review of Labour Market Training Schemes to report to us specifically on how we can improve labour market training prospects for women. We have been pursuing the objective of equal participation by women in the Community Employment Program and we have set out to ensure that girls have equal access with boys to our participation and equity program and our computer awareness program - two important measures within our education policies designed to improve retention rates and levels of marketable skills.

I am also pleased to be able to state that our policy and guidelines for the appointment of women to senior administrative posts and to Government boards and authorities has become a settled part of Government appointments procedures. Since we achieved office we have appointed more than 70 women to Government boards and authorities, including as we announced last week, the important appointment of Professor Di Yerbury as General Manager of the Australia Council. Professor Yerbury's appointment makes her the highest ranking female Commonwealth Government officer.

Since we gained office we have made every effort to promote women of merit within the public service. Tonight I am pleased to be able to welcome Helen Williams, Ann Kern and Jocelyn McGirr, the first women ever to be appointed as Deputy Secretaries in Federal Departments. I am also very glad to welcome Hazel Moir and Sue Hamilton, both of whom began work today as Assistant Secretaries in the Office of the Status of Women. They join the increasing numbers of women who have moved into the ranks of the Second Division of the Public Service.

This week the Federal Government has introduced the first of its several pieces of legislation to begin reforming the Australian Public Service. Included in these reforms are the introduction of Equal Employment Opportunity Programs in each Department and Authority. There will now also be a requirement that Departments make every effort to promote women of talent to important positions within their ranks.

I plan to table the Government's Policy Discussion Paper on affirmative action in Parliament on 29 May. I know you are all looking forward to it and contributing to the Australia-wide discussion of its proposals which will ensue.

You will recall that, when we introduced our Sex Discrimination Legislation, many of the State Women's offices were deluged with public inquiries about that Federal Government initiative.

With this experience in mind, we are going to set up an affirmative action hotline staffed by members of the Women's Telephone Information Service in each State capital city. We hope that most enquiries will be effectively dealt with in this way.

I would nevertheless appreciate whatever contribution you can make to community understanding of the assumptions and expectations involved in this important policy area.

I take the view, and it is shared by my Ministers, that we ultimately will be able to have more progressive government and a better society if long lasting social reform is implemented on the basis of genuine consultation and co-operation in the development of policy. This is what we are seeking to do in our approach to affirmative action.

As we approach both the Premiers' Conference next month and the Federal Budget in August the Government is very conscious that our prime task is to pay heed to the task of governing the country well for all Australians, male Australians and female Australians (of whatever racial or ethnic origin).

We recognise nevertheless that there are certain issues which may be raised at this meeting which are relevant both for the determination of the allocation of funds to the States in this year's Premiers' Conference and in the forthcoming Budget.

I will give careful consideration to whatever emerges from this meeting for items on the Premiers' Conference agenda.

I can also assure you, as I have done before, that when the Government comes to framing this year's Budget it will do so with full cognizance of the impact the decisions it makes could have on women. We shall ensure that within the overall economic objectives of the Government the important decisions we make this year on the budget are made with full knowledge of their impact on Australian women.

I look forward to hearing a full report on the outcome of your two-day meeting and trust the rest of your deliberations will be useful and will continue the co-operative approach to this important policy area which I know has always characterised your meetings.

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### GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WOMEN

This paper lists Government action and initiatives on the Status of Women to May 1984. It indicates the source of the commitment to action as follows: Party Platform (PL), Policy Statement The ALP and Women: Towards Equality (PS), Prime Minister's Election Speech (ES), other Government initiative (GI)

<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Present Position</u>
1. Enact Commonwealth sex discrimination legislation	PL/PS/ ES	Act prohibiting discrimination on ground of sex, marital status or pregnancy in employment, education, accommodation, provision of goods, services and facilities, disposal of land, and administration of Commonwealth laws and programs, and sexual harassment in employment and education passed on 7 March 1984 and assented to 21 March 1984. Will be proclaimed following appointment of Sex Discrimination Commissioner and making of regulations covering employment of women in Defence Forces.
2. Ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women	PL/PS	Ratified 27 July 1983. In April 1984 Justice Elizabeth Evatt elected to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women established under the convention. The Committee considers progress made in the implementation of the Convention and reports annually through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly of the United Nations.
3. Expand legal aid	PS	Additional salaried staff appointed in all legal aid agencies to expand services and reduce reliance on private practitioners. Funding for community legal aid centres was doubled in 1983/84 Budget.
4. Extend the Family Court's jurisdiction to all family law matters	PL/PS	Negotiations with State Attorney's General on reference of powers are proceeding.
5. Eliminate delays in proceedings and overcrowding in the Family Court	PL/PS	Two additional Family Court judges have been appointed; significant increases of staff (counsellors, registrars) are being sought through forward staffing estimates. New Family Court registries have been opened in Wollongong, Bendigo, Orange and Dandenong.
6. Improve maintenance enforcement procedures	PS	Report of National Maintenance Inquiry has been tabled and public submissions and comments are being received.
7. Ensure consistent treatment of people in de facto relationships	PL/PS	NSW Law Reform Commission report on de facto relationships has been referred to the Family Law Council to make recommendations to the Attorney-General about Commonwealth action. The Attorney-General is considering ways of ensuring that all Commonwealth legislation adopts a consistent approach to people in de facto relationships.
8. Reform ACT rape legislation	PL/PS	Draft ACT Crimes (Amendment) Ordinance and Evidence (Amendment) Ordinance will be presented to ACT House of Assembly for comment.
9. Encourage the training of police officers in non-sexist attitudes	PL/PS	Matters affecting women now a part of basic Australian Federal Police training.
10. Examine amending the Broadcasting and Television Act to prevent exploitation or discrimination against women	PS	Australian Broadcasting Tribunal undertaking inquiry into exploitation of women in advertising; <u>Fair Exposure: Guidelines for the constructive and positive portrayal and presentation of women in the media</u> published by the Office of the Status of Women in 1984.
11. Return Office of the Status of Women to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	PS	Implemented. Office upgraded to a Division of the Department.

<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Present Position</u>
12. Establish a Special Task Force on the Status of Women at permanent head level	PS	Implemented. Membership comprises the heads of the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (chair), Finance, Foreign Affairs, Employment and Industrial Relations, Industry and Commerce, Education and Youth Affairs, Social Security, Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Attorney-General's Department and the Chairman of the Public Service Board.
13. Establish consultation procedure with women's organisations throughout Australia	PS	Preparatory discussion with women's organisations held November 1983. Membership of new national consultative body will be announced soon.
14. Ensure equitable representation of women on Government bodies	PS	Has been given high Government priority. To April 1984, 71 women have been appointed to such bodies.
15. Introduce a new and expanded Children's Services Program	PS/ES	An additional \$10 million was provided in 1983/84 Budget for new projects with commitment for extra \$30 million in 1984/85.
16. Introduce a new national Women's Emergency Services Program	PS	\$4 million provided in 1983/84 Budget for creation of WESP.
17. Introduce Medibank	PL/PS	Medicare implemented 1 February 1984
18. Extend access to free pharmaceuticals to those beneficiaries at present excluded, and reduce fees	PS	Currently under consideration
19. Expand the Community Health Program to develop women's health services	PS	Currently being considered by a Government Members's sub-committee which is working on development of Commonwealth's Community Health policy including aspects relating to women's health
20. Expand the Family Planning Program	PS	Additional \$40,000 committed in 1983/84.
21. Establish a National Occupational Health and Safety Commission and Institute	PS	Interim Commission established to make recommendations regarding the Institute.
22. Support the Women's Film Fund and seek to increase women's arts funding	PS	Australia Council has published research report on women in the arts. Office of the Status of Women continues its membership and support of the Women's Film Fund.
23. Investigate adequacy of unemployment relief for married unemployed people	PS	Under investigation.
24. Examine ways of eliminating the inequity created by the cohabitation rule re. pensions and benefits	PS	Under examination
25. Increase family allowances for low income families and replace family income supplement with a scheme with access for a greater number of families	PS/ES	Family Income Supplement, additional pension and benefit for children and mother's/guardian's allowance all increased in 1983/84 Budget.
26. Introduce a spouse carers allowance	PS	Implemented 1 December 1983.

<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Present Position</u>
27. Extend entitlement for mother's/guardian's allowance to sole parents in receipt of unemployment benefit	PS	Implemented 1 May 1984
28. Maintain the individual as the tax unit for personal income tax purposes, emphasise the social security system for further family assistance	PS	Being considered in the 1984/85 Budget context.
29. Increase the progressivity of the personal income tax system regularly adjust the income tax schedule for inflation	PS	The personal income tax system is being considered in the 1984/85 Budget context.
30. Introduce employment-generating programs to which women will have equal access	PS	The Community Employment Program guidelines specify that projects other than Jobs on Local Roads should provide equal access to employment programs for men and women.
31. Increase training and re-training opportunities	PS	The Kirby Committee of inquiry reviewing labour market programs is considering the employment, training and re-training needs of women, and in particular the adequacy of existing programs in facilitating their training and entry or re-entry into the labour market. Sex Discrimination Act 1984 makes unlawful discrimination against women in access to training and re-training schemes.
32. Encourage improved vocational training in secondary schools	PS	See response under 43.
33. Effective programs for teaching English to migrant women	PS	Additional \$550,000 allocated in 1984/85 for child-minding in association with Adult Migrant Education Program to enable more women to attend existing English classes; these classes are being advertised on the Special Broadcasting Service. More than half of people attending AMEP classes are female. \$38.6M allocated for English classes in 1983/84.
34. Equitable conditions for part-time workers in Australian Government employment	PS	Legislation introducing permanent part-time work, with pro-rata benefits, will be introduced in the 1984 Autumn Sittings as part of the Public Service reform legislation.
35. Ratify and implement ILO Convention 156 (1981) Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: With Family Responsibilities	PS	Prime Minister announced in 1983 the Government's commitment to ratify. Ratification being considered by Commonwealth and State Ministers for Labour.
36. Introduce non-paid parental leave in Australian Government employment	PS	Under active consideration by Public Service Board.
37. Discuss with the Trade Union movement means of widening existing leave entitlements to cover parental leave to care for the needs of sick children and/or other family members	PS	Action yet to be taken.

<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Present Position</u>
38. Encourage greater participation of disadvantaged groups through the provision of education, child care, interpretation and translation facilities	PS	Additional \$600,000 allocated in 1983/84 to cost-sharing arrangements with State Governments for provision of translation and interpretation services, mainly in the health and education areas. A computerised system is being introduced to allow Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Telephone Information Service staff easier access to information on interpreters and resources; new telephone equipment is being introduced to speed up the connecting of calls, allow multi-party conference lines, etc.; a consultant's report on an improved telephone network for TIS has been received.
39. Base staffing in the Australian Public on equity	PS	Legislation requiring Commonwealth Departments and prescribed statutory authorities to develop and implement equal employment opportunity programs for migrants, women, Aborigines and the disabled will be introduced in the 1984 Autumn Sitting as part of the Public Service Reform package.
40. Higher education institutions to undertake positive measures with a view to achieving equal opportunities and expanded roles for women and girls in and through higher education	PS	Chapter 3 of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's recommendations for the 1984-87 triennium contains measures to improve women's access to higher education.
41. Increase the entry of women and girls into trades and non-traditional occupation	PL/PS	Under the CRAFT scheme a tax-exempt special incentive of \$750 is being offered to employers in 1984 to encourage an increase in the number of female apprentices in trade training other than hairdressing. Employers who qualify for this incentive are also eligible for up to another \$1000, tax exempt, if they have to adapt facilities to accommodate female apprentices. An audio-visual kit, "Technically Speaking" was launched in 1983 to encourage girls to consider technical occupations. A similar kit on girls and computers is planned.
42. Ensure that programs funded through the Schools Commission analyse impact on the education of women and girls	PS	The Participation and Equity Program (PEP) established in 1984 seeks to encourage young people over the school leaving age to participate in useful and fulfilling education and training activities in schools and TAFE. Priority is to be given to the expansion of opportunities for girls, to encourage more equitable participation in all subject areas. \$45 million has been allocated to schools and \$28.5 to TAFE in 1984 under PEP. <u>The States Grants (Schools Assistance) Act 1983 and the States Grants (Education Assistance Participation and Equity) Act 1983</u> require that, where funds are provided to a co-educational school, the benefits of and opportunities created by expenditure of those funds must, as far as practicable, be made available equally to male and female students. The Schools Commission is currently reviewing programs to ensure that they meet the needs of girls.
43. Seek to direct funds for special projects to improve the education of women and girls	PS	Commonwealth Schools Commission: \$0.25 million has been set aside in 1984 to fund projects promoting equal opportunity for girls in school systems and encouraging girls to broaden their career options. See also the Participation and Equity Program (above). The Computer Education Program (on which \$6 million has been allocated in 1984) emphasises equal access for girls and for female teachers.
44. Direct funds to upgrade the teaching of science, mathematics and technological skills in primary schools	PS	The Minister for Education and Youth Affairs has announced the establishment of a portfolio Working Party to co-ordinate and improve the access of women and girls at all levels of education.



<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Present Position</u>
45. Review levels of allowances and conditions of eligibility of all education and training assistance	PS	Allowances increased in 1983/84 Budget and will be again reviewed for 1984/85 Budget. An internal review of conditions of eligibility for TEAS has made recommendations which will be considered in the 1984/85 Budget context. A major OECD review of youth policies and programs in Australia is expected to report in June.
46. Institute affirmative actions policies and programs in the Department of Education and the various Commonwealth Education Commissions.	PL/PS	DEYA equal employment management plan will be launched by Minister and form basis of consultation with employees and unions. Implementation of the plan will commence in July 1984. A.C.T. Schools Authority and Commonwealth Schools Commission have equal employment opportunity officers.
47. Increased assistance to approved first home buyers	PS	The First Home Owners Scheme (FHOS) was introduced in 1983/84. It provides up to \$7,000 for first home owners, subject to an income test, to enable them to put a deposit on a first home.
48. Aim to double the provision of public housing and ensure access by women	PS	The current Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement (CSHA) is being renegotiated.
49. National enquiry into homelessness and inadequate housing	PS	The Department of Housing and Construction has commissioned a firm of consultants to undertake a national inquiry into homelessness and inadequate housing.
50. Examine supplementary rental assistance for pensioners and beneficiaries; provide a scheme of relief assistance to private tenants in need		Proposals relating to supplementary rental assistance for pensioners and beneficiaries, including unemployment beneficiaries, will be examined in the 1984/85 Budget context. The Department of Social Security has completed a sample survey of those currently in receipt of supplementary assistance. The mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme provides relief assistance to private tenants in need on a match funding basis with the States. The Commonwealth provided \$20 million for this purpose in 1983/84.
51. Queensland Women's Information Service	GI	The service was opened on 19 April 1984 to provide information to women in Queensland on commonwealth Government policies and programs and to get feedback on what women in Queensland want or need.
52. Aboriginal Women's Task Force	GI	Established August 1983 to consult with Aboriginal women throughout Australia and report to the Government. In February 1984 eleven Aboriginal women were employed as regional co-ordinators under the Community Employment Program. A national conference was held in Canberra from 30 March to 1 April 1984.
53. Women's Telephone Information Service	GI	Thirteen women have been employed under the Community Employment Program to establish a Women's Telephone Information Service in all State capitals to answer queries from the public on Commonwealth Government programs of assistance to women.
54. Government Policy Discussion Paper on Affirmative Action for Women	PL/PS/ ES	Paper to be tabled by the Prime Minister in May 1984.