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PRIME MINISTER

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EXCERPT FROM JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE - THE PRIME MINISTER, MR R J L HAWKE AND THE MINISTER FOR SPORT, TOURISM AND RECREATION, MR JOHN BROWN - 13 September 1984

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, Mr Brown has talked about the lead your Government has given in financing sport, what does it say about your Government's priorities, at the same time, to effectively cut back on scientific research in the CSIRO?

PM: Well, unfortunately the premise of your question is wrong because we haven't done that. We haven't matched the expectations of some people at this stage. But let me make the point that in respect of CSIRO in particular when you take account of the rundown of capital works that were being completed, there is still a significant increase in funding. Let me make this fundamental point, which I really don't want to be intruding here, it's a question that's more appropriate for later, but it's been raised, I'll answer it. What I have been saying, and others have been saying for some time that the basic problem in Australia is not so much one of pure research because all commentators including Professor Slatyer, the Chairman of ASTEC, has said we rate very well really with the rest of the world. Our great problem has been in the area of applying research, and in that area the Government has been extremely productive and generous in the initiatives that it has taken and without being exhaustive you know what we have done in regard to management investment companies to allow very considerable tax deductions for venture capital in that area. What we have done to revamp the AIDC and what we have done in other areas of fiscal policy which are relevant there. What we have done in respect of the whole incentives to industry. Those are the areas where Australia has been lacking. And in so far as the balance in Australia has been concerned the deficiency has been in the initiatives by Government and the taking up by industry of the responsibility to apply the research that has been undertaken here and elsewhere. So I don't accept that there has been any perversion of priorities. The evidence refutes that.

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JOURNALIST: Prime Minister. could I follow up my question on priorities. John Brown is happy, Barry Jones is whinging. Doesn't that say something about the Government's priorities. Do you believe there are more votes in sport than science and has that influenced your Government?

PM: The answer to the last question is no it hasn't. For a long time, in public life, I have been saying that I thought successive governments, and that criticism has been true of both sides of politics, have not realised the importance of sport. It's not to be seen simply as something through which we get a vicarious thrill when our athletes do better than anyone else in the world. Although, I must say in that respect, that if the community does derive, as it manifestly did, as you saw in the Olympics, satisfaction out of the achievement of excellence, then it has always seemed to me that there is a responsibility in the community. If it derives that vicarious satisfaction to accept some responsibility for it. But as I say I have historically taken the view that the politicians of both sides the fence haven't realised the importance of sport. We live in a world in which leisure is going to be more widespread, in which the pressures of the working environment increase in a number of ways. So it is important that as many people as possible have the opportunity of participating, I believe, in sport. And it is the case that Government should have a role, the sort of role that we have developed, whereby we accept a certain financial responsibility but also where we assume the role of catalyst which is going to be done with the establishment of the Sports Aid Foundation. So I would have thought that my long record of public exposition on these matters shows that there is not some question of electoral priority taking over as far as I am concerned. There is also the consideration that, it seems fairly obvious, that the more Australians, who are more actively participating in sports, associated leisure activities, the more likely you are to have a healthier community. And in that respect, I would remind you that the estimate per annum of the costs of industrial accidents and illnesses is about \$6 billion. That's the estimate. Now, if you can get a healthier, more vibrant community then it is likely that you are going to be saving in those areas. So for all those reasons that I have put, I don't believe that any government has any reason to apologise for taking initiatives in these areas, which for too long, have been neglected by governments of varying political persuasions. Now, that's that part of the question, what we're doing about sport. In regard to the area of technology and research, you attempt to bring Mr Jones into it. Now Mr Jones has said that he recognises the constraints that apply but he also has made the point correctly that if you are going to look at what the government has done in respect of the areas of science and technology, it's just not a question of looking at his direct budget allocations. He has made the point that I have made, that you have got to look at what we have done in these other areas. I repeat then what we have done in regard to management investment companies. What we have done in regard to the AIDC. What we have done in regard to the Commonwealth Development Bank. And our whole approach in the fiscal area to make it easier for the cash flow of companies to be available to undertake

PM cont: the sort of applied research that is necessary if we are translate the existing fairly high levels of research into effective, commercial and economic action. So, I say that we have taken initiatives and given priorities where they should be given in the area of science and research. At the same time we have picked up an area of government involvement which has for far too long been too much neglected.
