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PRIME MINISTER

CANBERRA

His Excellency the Right Honourable
Sir Ninian Stephen, AK, GCMG, GCVO, KBE
Governor-General of the Commonwealth
of Australia
Government House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

- 8 OCT 1984

Your Excellency

I write to advise you that the House of Representatives be dissolved and the necessary action for Senate elections be taken in time for elections for both Houses to be held on 1 December 1984. I also advise that referendums on the Constitution Alteration (Terms of Senators) Bill 1984 and the Constitution Alteration (Interchange of Powers) Bill 1984 recently passed by the Parliament be held on that date (copies of the bills are attached).

The details of the election and referendum timetable I propose are:

Issue of writs	26 October 1984
Close of electoral rolls	2 November 1984
Close of nominations	6 November 1984
Polling day	1 December 1984
Return of writs (latest date)	24 January 1985

The term of the current House of Representatives expires on 20 April 1986. Section 28 of the Constitution, however, provides you with the discretion to dissolve the House of Representatives before that date.

The double dissolution of February 1983 meant that this Government was faced with choosing between:

- bringing forward the House of Representatives election to coincide with the half-Senate election required to be held in time for new Senators to take their places by 1 July 1985; or

- . having two national elections - a half Senate election and a House of Representatives election - in a period of a year or a little more, with the prospect of further unnecessary elections in the future.

The timing considerations for the half Senate election caused by the 1983 double dissolution are governed by section 13 of the Constitution which allows an election to fill Senate places to be held within one year before they become vacant on 30 June 1985 and by the realities of carrying out a Senate election. The Australian Electoral Commission has advised that in order for the count to be completed in time for the new Senators to take their seats on 1 July 1985, the election needs to be held by April 1985.

It has been the pattern over many years for elections for half the Senate to be held in the latter months of the preceding calendar year. Since 1949, and leaving aside double dissolution elections, 8 out of 10 such elections have been held in November or December and one was held in October.

The Government has always advocated simultaneous elections and it has made clear to the electorate on a number of occasions since March 1983 why it was likely that the present Parliament would not run its full term. Separate Senate elections increase the total number of elections, disrupt the orderly processes of administration and generally are not in the public interest.

A measure of the consequences for the community of not having the simultaneous election the Government has now determined upon is the cost of separate elections. The Australian Electoral Commission estimates that holding a simultaneous election will cost \$30m as compared with \$49m if separate Senate and House elections were held as they became due.

It is notable that early elections have been held after double dissolutions in the past - albeit after one round of separate elections following the 1951 Menzies double dissolution. The most recent example, is, of course, the December 1977 election obtained by Mr Fraser after the double dissolution of 1975.

Another determinant of timing is the concern of the business community that if there is an election in the offing, it should be held as early as possible.

Finally, legislation has been passed to increase the size of the Parliament. The extra two Senators for each State will take their seats at the first meeting of the next House of

Representatives. If the elections are held together now, the first meeting will be next February. However, if the elections are not held together, it will be unclear when the first meeting will be - it could be anything up to 16 months after their election - and it is undesirable that the voters should be asked to elect Senators without it being made clear when their term will commence.

In accordance with past practice the Governors of the States issue writs for the election of Senators for the States, pursuant to section 12 of the Constitution. State legislation provides for proclamations fixing the election dates to be published in the State Gazettes. In the case of Western Australia, 7 days notice is required for the issue of writs. Accordingly I invite you to suggest to the Governor of each State that the dates proposed earlier in this letter be adopted for the purpose of the election of Senators in the States and that the writs be issued on 26 October 1984.

You might remind the Governors that, as mentioned above, these elections will be the first for the enlarged Parliament. Under the Representation Act 1983 the number of Senators to be elected on this occasion is 7 - an additional 2 Senators for each State. Although 5 of those elected will assume office on 1 July 1985 as usual, the first two non-sitting Senators elected will take their seats on the first day of meeting of the House of Representatives.

I shall be writing to you again proposing a date for dissolving the House of Representatives but I currently have it in mind to advise 26 October 1984. I fully expect that by that date the Parliament will have appropriated sufficient funds to enable the work of the administration to be carried on through the election period.

I would propose to make a statement to the Parliament later today, subject to your agreement with what I have proposed, announcing the election.

If you agree I propose to table this letter and your reply in the Parliament at an appropriate time.

Yours sincerely

BOB HAWKE

R.J.L. Hawke

RECEIVED

9 OCT 84

THE SECRETARY



Government House,
Canberra 2600.

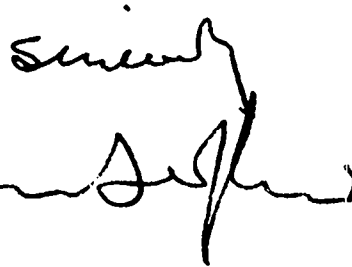
8 October 1984

My dear Prime Minister

I refer to your letter of today's date which you handed to me when you called on me earlier this afternoon.

I now confirm my oral acceptance of the advice contained in your letter that, for the reasons you advanced in that letter, the House of Representatives should be dissolved and that I should invite State Governors to take the action necessary for the holding of Senate elections, so that elections for both Houses may be held on 1 December 1984; and that in addition referendums on two measures for alteration of the Constitution be also held on that date.

I note that you at present contemplate that you will be advising a dissolution of the House on 26 October, it being your expectation that by that date Parliament will have appropriated sufficient funds to enable the work of the administration to be carried on through the election period.

Sincerely


The Honourable R.J.L. Hawke, AC, MP,
Prime Minister,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600

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STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER
TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - 8 OCTOBER 1984

Mr Speaker

I wish to advise the House that today I called upon His Excellency the Governor-General and recommended to him that the House of Representatives be dissolved, and that a general election for the Members of the House of Representatives be held on Saturday, the first of December 1984. His excellency has accepted my recommendation.

I have also asked the Governor-General to take the necessary action to enable an election to be held for half the Senate conjointly with the election for the House of Representatives. His Excellency has agreed to take this action.

The details of the election timetable are:

-	issue of writs	26 October 1984
-	close of electoral rolls	2 November 1984
-	close of nominations	6 November 1984
-	polling day	1 December 1984
-	return of writs	24 January 1985

Referendums on the Constitution Alteration (Terms of Senators) Bill 1984 and the Constitution Alteration (Interchange of Powers) Bill 1984 will also be held on the first of December.

The Parliament still has significant and essential Government legislation before it. The Government wishes this legislation to pass the House by the 11th October to enable it to rise then. The Senate will clearly need to sit at least an extra week to deal with the essential legislation before it. I then propose to advise the Governor-General to dissolve the House of Representatives, probably on 26 October.

Mr Speaker

When my predecessor as Prime Minister advised the double dissolution of the 32nd Parliament on the ever memorable 3rd of February 1983, he set in train a certain inevitability of events.

The chief of those was, of course, the election of my Government on the 5th of March 1983.

But his decision to advise a double dissolution also significantly affected the electoral timetable of this, the 33rd parliament of the Commonwealth.

As a result of that decision, the timetable for simultaneous elections for the House of Representatives and half the Senate - which had been temporarily restored by the premature election of 1977 - was once again disrupted.

The consequence is that under the Constitution, there must be an election for half the Senate in time to enable the newly elected Senators to take their places on the 1st of July 1985. In practical terms - involving considerations of the time required by the Australian Electoral Commission to complete the counting of votes - this means that the half Senate election could be held no later than April next year.

It has, however, been the pattern over many years for elections for half the Senate to be held in the latter months of the preceding calendar year. Since 1949 - leaving aside the three double dissolution elections - eight out of ten such elections have been held in November or December and one other was held in October. The three separate half Senate elections, of 1964, 1967 and 1970, were all held in November or December.

It is therefore absolutely clear, Mr Speaker, that the decision to hold the election for half the Senate on the first of December conforms entirely with well-established custom, proper procedure and clear precedents.

Mr Speaker

Virtually from the outset of my Prime Ministership, I have made it very clear to the Parliament and public that I intended, if possible, and if consistent with the higher national interest, to re-align the elections for the two Houses - that is to say, that there would be an election for the House of Representatives on the same day as the constitutionally inevitable election for half the Senate.

Mr Speaker

That is now possible. It is highly desirable. And it is certainly in the best interests of Australia.

I do not believe that the wisdom and propriety of this course - my publicly declared intention - has been seriously questioned over the past eighteen months.

It was of course, the reason my predecessor gave for the early election of 1977.

But Mr Speaker, there is one very significant difference between 1977 and now - and that is that unlike 1977, the course we are now taking has been publicly canvassed and I believe generally accepted as proper and correct, virtually throughout the lifetime of this present Parliament.

Indeed Mr Speaker, in no quarter has it been more generally acknowledged as inevitable than on the part of our opponents opposite - who have already committed and spent literally millions of dollars on an advertising campaign targetted on a November or December general election.

And speaking of dollars, I should point out, Mr Speaker, that I am informed that the cost of two separate elections would be of the order of \$49 million, against \$30 million for simultaneous elections.

There are, I believe, two other reasons of considerable importance why the elections for the two Houses should be held simultaneously and why the simultaneous election should be sooner rather than later - in December rather than March or April.

Firstly, the business community, upon whom rests so much of the effort for national economic recovery, has widely urged the need for a prompt end to the electioneering atmosphere, as a means of sustaining the confidence which together we have been able to generate. They also share our concern over the frequency of election campaigns in Australia, as a factor militating against confidence and stability. In particular, the retail trade is anxious to have the election over as long as possible before Christmas.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, by the decision of both Houses, the next Parliament is to be enlarged by 23 Members in the House of Representatives; and consequent upon the Constitution, by two additional Senators from each State.

But those additional Senators could not take their places until after the new and enlarged House of Representatives had been elected and had met.

Accordingly, Mr Speaker, if an election were to be held for half the Senate alone, the additional Senators would be, as it were, in a state of limbo for a period of anything up to sixteen months after their election.

Clearly Mr Speaker, for this and every other reason, if the will and mandate of the people is to be as fresh and contemporary as possible under the Constitution, then the elections for the two Houses should be held simultaneously.

That of course, is one of the reasons why we are resubmitting to the people, by way of referendum, the proposal to alter the terms of Senators so that they are linked to the term for the House of Representatives - to enshrine into the Constitution itself the principle of simultaneous elections. Its passage is necessary to restore stability and electoral predictability to our Parliamentary system.

Mr Speaker

The decision I have announced today restores that stability, simultaneity and contemporaneity for the next Parliament. By adopting the referendum proposal, the people of Australia can establish it for all future parliaments and for all time.

Mr Speaker

I have set out in some detail the more specific reasons for my recommendation today to the Governor-General - the technical, the practical, the legal and constitutional reasons.

But Mr Speaker, over and above these, there are reasons of profound national importance why the people of Australia should now have the opportunity to pass their judgement upon their Government and to renew its mandate.

Mr Speaker

This Government was elected to revive and revitalise an economy which was in the grip of the worst recession Australia had known for fifty years.

We have done that.

We were elected to restore economic growth.

We have achieved that to the extent that Australia now has the fastest-growing economy of any of the OECD countries.

We were elected to do what our predecessors had notoriously failed to do in their seven years - to fight unemployment and inflation simultaneously.

We have created a quarter of a million new jobs in eighteen months - against the loss of almost a quarter of a million jobs under our predecessors.

We were elected to implement a wide-ranging but highly responsible program of social reform.

That we have done.

Above all- the very foundation of all that we have been able to achieve so far - we were elected to undertake our pledge to bring about a national reconciliation, as the path to national recovery and national reconstruction.

We have ended at last the needless confrontation and division which disfigured Australian society for a decade.

But Mr Speaker, if all the great gains and achievements of the past twenty months are to be maintained and built upon, then it is absolutely essential that there should be a period - a long period - of consolidation, co-operation and creativity - creativity not just in Government, but in business and industry and in the Australian community as a whole.

The foundation of all this must be a period of political and economic stability and predictability - which only this Government can provide, and which this Government can best provide if it is granted, at the earliest possible opportunity, a new and re-invigorated mandate from the people of Australia.

We are now at the very crucial stage of the national recovery. Even more than in the past twenty months, the need now is for firm, effective Government to carry through and consolidate the gains made so far.

The Prices and Incomes Accord - the basis of non-inflationary recovery - has been spectacularly successful, and its continued acceptance and success is absolutely vital.

Yet we know our opponents are pledged to the destruction of the Accord, the dismantling of all the machinery which underpins it, and the dissipation of the spirit of co-operation and consensus which binds it together - and indeed, Mr Speaker, in a very real and profound sense, the spirit which now binds this nation together in a way we have not experienced before in peacetime.

Here then, Mr Speaker, is the overwhelming reason why we believe we are not merely entitled, but indeed bound, to seek a new mandate at the earliest opportunity.

Yet, for all that has been achieved so far, there are still pressing problems facing the Government and the nation.

There is - for this Government at least - the totally unacceptable level of unemployment and particularly youth unemployment. This we will continue to make one of our most urgent challenges.

There is the urgent need - in human terms, nothing could be more urgent - to end the needless and absolutely groundless anxiety which has been created amongst our pensioners by an irresponsible and indeed, thoroughly wicked and cruel campaign of fear and misrepresentation by our opponents. That alone would constitute an irrefutable justification for this election.

There is the need for people once again to declare their determination that Medicare should endure.

There is the need to deal the final blows to the tax avoidance industry in this country.

There is the need, not only to strengthen the unrelenting fight against organised crime, not just by laws and machinery - as we are doing - but to fight it in the only way by which it can ultimately be won - by a nation and a Parliament genuinely united in that fight.

Here then Mr Speaker, are constituted overriding reasons of the highest national importance, why we today are asking the people of Australia for a renewal of our mandate on the first of December.

A new spirit of confidence and self-confidence has emerged in this nation. In the final analysis, everything we hope for in this great country of ours depends upon maintaining and fostering that spirit.

Yet Mr Speaker, we have seen in recent months that there are persons in Australia - and I regret to say, there are persons in this House - who believe, however misguidedly, that they have some kind of vested interest in undermining that new spirit of national confidence and self-confidence.

I believe the people of Australia have already realised the nature and purpose of this campaign of denigration. I believe they will not easily or quickly forgive its perpetrators.

Mr Speaker

On the first of December, I shall not be merely seeking from the people of Australia a verdict of faith and confidence in this Government.

Much more importantly, I shall be asking the people of Australia to proclaim once again their faith and confidence in themselves, their faith and confidence in the future of this great nation.
