



# PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGOED UNTIL 5.30 PM

## PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO THE NATION - 18 AUGUST 1985

Tonight I want to speak to you about the Australia we live in today.

And the kind of Australia I believe we should be living in, in the future.

There's not a country on the face of this earth that doesn't have problems of one kind or another.

In Australia we have fewer than most, but problems nevertheless.

We still have unemployment.

It is improving. As you will have seen in the figures released last week unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in three years. Our employment programmes are working. It's very gratifying to me as I'm sure it is to you.

But there is still a great deal for all of us to do.

I guess it's a cliché, but the world we live in is one of rapid change.

And the problems that this change presents are not something that can be fixed overnight.

Not today, not tomorrow.

But they will be fixed.

And I'd like to address myself tonight to the people who are going to play a major role in coming to grips with the challenges of change.

The young people of our country. Young Australia.

It's this generation of young Australians that's now coming into the workforce - their brains, their energy, their enthusiasm - that will lift this country to the front line of the world's industrial powers. We must settle for nothing less.

We can nurture the talent, the energy, the vigor, the creativity of young Australia ...

Or we can let it wither on the vine.

I don't believe there is one among us who would contemplate the latter.

We must nurture, not squander, the talents of young Australians.

What a tragic waste it would be if they became the second class inhabitants of a second rate nation.

We must all ask ourselves what we can do. My Government has spent a lot of time and a lot of effort addressing that question - what can we do as a Federal Government.

We have spoken to youth groups - to young people - throughout the country.

I have been touched by the genuine will of young Australians to give it a go - to do their very best.

All they want is a chance.

I understand their sense of frustration - their anger - when they're not given that chance.

Tonight I will briefly outline my Government's resolution to help provide those opportunities.

I would like to speak about the Government's role in a wide ranging programme designed to assist and develop young Australia.

The core of this programme is education and training. Preparation for employment.

Your first job, if it is a worthwhile job, means independence, self respect, dignity, self confidence.

To get it requires training. The development of skills that are of value to the employer and to the community.

To help you acquire these skills, my Government will establish a system of traineeships.

They mean you can undertake training while you get on-the-job experience.

It's like an apprenticeship, except that it will apply to a wider range of jobs and industries.

In both private enterprise, and in the public sector.

As well as some positions that we'll be making available in various Government bodies and departments, we have identified a number of areas in private enterprise where traineeship schemes can be introduced immediately.

In the coming year, 10,000 traineeships will be made available. That means 10,000 more young Australians will start their working life knowing they have a chance to get the qualifications for a rewarding future.

If we all co-operate, our aim of 75,000 young people in traineeships will be achieved in the bicentennial year, 1988.

You can imagine the impact that this will have both on the lives of the young people themselves and on the quality of our society as a whole.

I believe that whatever our occupation, as Australians we all need to be proud of the things that we do and the things that we make.

I want us to be able to hold our head up in the company of the world and point to the best quality goods at the best price and know they have a label that reads "Made in Australia".

We're not going to achieve this by taking the backward step of cutting youth wages.

Training, education, the development of skills, is the way for us to go.

And the way for us to grow, as a nation and as individuals.

A commitment to education is a further aspect of my Government's commitment to Australia.

It will come as no surprise to learn that the worst area of youth unemployment is among those young people who drop out early.

Not only do we have to make education more interesting, more relevant - so that these young people will want to stay at school longer.

But we have to provide the economic means for them to do so.

To this end, we have developed a system of youth allowances that are designed to help you remain at school if you wish - to resist the economic need to find a job - or, indeed, to seek unemployment benefits:

To enable you to obtain better qualifications and find, in the future, a decent job.

As well, the number of positions that will be available at universities and TAFE colleges will be increased.

The details of these and the other aspects of the Government's youth programme will be released in Tuesday's Budget.

This is not just another Government support scheme.

There are already a number of such schemes for young people.

What I am announcing tonight is a total approach to the problems faced by young Australians.

It is a means of bringing all of the Government's resources - all of them - every facet of Government activity - to bear on our single most important priority.

But it is only a start. Right now we're looking at what else we can do, as a Government.

And I'd like to ask the young people of Australia to give that question some serious thought.

Because at the end of this year we'll review where we stand. And I'll be inviting all young Australians to participate in that review.

You can tell us where we got it right and where we got it wrong.

In the meantime, let's all make a start.

The Government can't do it alone.

So tonight, I make an appeal to all Australians.

To our business people ... when you're setting your plans for the future ... make it your first priority to find jobs, and to create training opportunities for young Australians.

The Government will back you in ways that are both specific and concrete.

Tuesday's Budget will provide you with the details.

To the trade unions ... make it your priority to find opportunities for young people, to give encouragement, and support, to the various training schemes.

And to all Australians ... take pride in young Australia. It is our future.

The welfare and the encouragement of young Australians is our first priority as a Government.

It is my first priority as Prime Minister.

And it is our collective priority as a nation.

Thank you.