



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

30 September 1985

I am pleased to announce that the Government has accepted the recommendations of the Working Party on Affirmative Action Legislation. As a result, the Government will legislate in the autumn session of Parliament in 1986 for affirmative action for women in higher education institutions and in private sector organisations employing more than 100 people.

Senator Ryan, who assists me on issues concerning the status of women, and who convened the Working Party, conveyed the recommendations to the Government today.

I am pleased that the Working Party was able to agree on a recommended approach to this important issue. Although some of its members expressed reservations, which will be published in the Working Party's report, all members were prepared to endorse the approach, given the Government's commitment to legislation. The Opposition did not agree with the need for legislation but it has supported other aspects of the package.

The legislation will be proclaimed in stages. Higher education institutions will be required to comply from 1987. Private sector compliance will begin early in 1988.

The Government welcomes the proposal by business to establish a Council for Equal Employment Opportunity to encourage companies to begin immediately to introduce affirmative action. The Working Party noted this proposal, which is compatible with our approach. The Government will explore ways of co-operating with the Business Council in its efforts to encourage greater awareness within the private sector of the need to improve job opportunities for women.

Further information may be obtained from Senator Ryan.