



# PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE  
TENTH CONFERENCE OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC LABOUR MINISTERS  
MELBOURNE, 1 OCTOBER 1985

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## DELEGATES

BOTH PERSONALLY, AND ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA I WELCOME ALL PARTICIPANTS TO THIS, THE 10th BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC LABOUR MINISTERS. I WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE A PERSONAL WELCOME TO MY LONGSTANDING FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION, FRANCIS BLANCHARD, AND TO THANK HIM FOR HIS ATTENDANCE AND ADDRESS TO THIS CONFERENCE.

IT IS FITTING TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF THE ILO, WHICH HAS OBSERVER STATUS AT THIS CONFERENCE. AS MANY OF YOU ARE AWARE, THE PRIMARY TASK OF THE ILO IS TO SET INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS OF UNIVERSAL CHARACTER, AND TO PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS FOR ALL WORKERS. TO THIS END, THE ILO NOT ONLY ADOPTS CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, BUT ACTIVELY ASSISTS COUNTRIES TO FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT NATIONAL LABOUR POLICIES IN THE LIGHT OF THOSE CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

I AM PROUD OF THE LONG HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY'S CLOSE LINKS WITH THE ILO. AS MR BLANCHARD HAS NOTED AUSTRALIA WAS ONE OF THE ILO'S FOUNDING MEMBER COUNTRIES IN 1919. IN ADDITION, AUSTRALIA IS CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF THE ILO'S GOVERNING BODY.

PERSONALLY, I HAVE LONG BEEN COMMITTED TO THE TRIPARTITE APPROACH WHICH IS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF THE I.L.O. SUCH AN APPROACH IS CENTRAL TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S CONSIDERATION OF PROBLEMS AND ISSUES. AND THIS APPROACH - ONE OF TRIPARTISM - IS PROVING REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL.

THE RECENT OECD EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR SEPTEMBER 1985 CONFIRMS THE SOUNDNESS OF MY GOVERNMENT'S PRICES AND INCOMES ACCORD AND OUR GENERAL ECONOMIC POLICIES. THE REPORT'S PROJECTIONS SHOW AUSTRALIA'S LABOUR MARKET WILL BE THE MOST BUOYANT IN THE OECD IN 1985 AND 1986. AFTER SOME SEVEN YEARS OF VIRTUALLY STAGNANT JOB GROWTH PRIOR TO 1983, THIS IS A TREMENDOUS TURNAROUND. EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN AUSTRALIA IS FORECAST, BY THE OECD, TO RISE BY 2 3/4 PER CENT IN 1985 AND 2 PER CENT IN 1986. THIS COMPARES WITH JOB GROWTH IN THE OECD AS A WHOLE OF 1 1/4 PER CENT IN 1985 AND 1 PER CENT IN 1986.

AUSTRALIA IS CLEARLY OUTSTRIPPING EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN OTHER COUNTRIES, AND WE ARE DOING IT UNDER POLICIES BASED ON THE PRICES AND INCOMES ACCORD - AN ACCORD WHICH REPRESENTS OUR CONSENSUS APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT.

I AM AWARE THAT THE PRINCIPAL ITEMS ON THE CAPLM 10 AGENDA ARE THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL LABOUR POLICIES ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE REGION AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION IN THE LABOUR FIELD.

IN THIS ADDRESS I SHOULD LIKE, AMONGST OTHER THINGS, TO HIGHLIGHT THE CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE OF THE ILO IN FOCUSING ATTENTION ON YOUNG PEOPLE.

THE 1983 INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE ADOPTED A RESOLUTION ON YOUNG PEOPLE REQUESTING THE ILO TO UNDERTAKE A SURVEY ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORK AS PART OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR - IYY. THE 72ND INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE IN 1986 WILL INCLUDE A GENERAL DISCUSSION ON YOUNG PEOPLE. SUCH ACTIVITIES WILL PROVIDE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBER COUNTRIES TO DISCUSS A VAST RANGE OF POLICY OPTIONS AND TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION.

THE UNITED NATIONS ALSO IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECLARING 1985 INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR. HOWEVER, WE ALL RECOGNISE THAT WHILE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR IS A USEFUL AND A NECESSARY MEANS OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS, ASPIRATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE, WHAT IS NEEDED ABOVE ALL ELSE ARE SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES AND POLICIES, RATHER THAN JUST ONE YEAR OF CONCENTRATED EFFORT.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AMONG OUR GREATEST RESOURCES. THEY MAKE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO OUR NATIONS' WELL-BEING - WHETHER THAT BE THROUGH THEIR STUDIES, THEIR LEISURE AND SPORTING PURSUITS, THEIR PART IN FAMILY LIFE, OR AS MEMBERS OF OUR RESPECTIVE LABOUR FORCES. COLLECTIVELY THEY ARE OUR NATIONS' FUTURE.

COUNTRIES WITHIN OUR REGION HAVE EXPERIENCED A SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN POPULATION WHICH HAS LED TO LARGE NUMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE COMING ONTO THE LABOUR MARKET.

IN ADDITION, RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, SLOW ECONOMIC GROWTH RATES AND DECLINING AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE LEADING TO ACCELERATED URBANISATION AND TO HIGH LEVELS OF UNEMPLOYMENT, BORNE DISPROPORTIONATELY BY YOUNG PEOPLE.

THUS, THERE IS KEEN INTEREST IN THE ASIA/PACIFIC REGION, SUPPORTING AS IT DOES APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, FOR A CONFERENCE WHICH DEALS WITH THE IMPACT OF LABOUR MARKET POLICIES ON YOUNG PEOPLE.

MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR ENTRY INTO WORKING LIFE. UNFORTUNATELY TOO MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE LACK THE NECESSARY BASIC SKILLS TO CONTRIBUTE IMMEDIATELY TO THE LABOUR MARKET.

TOO MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE AN ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE OF OCCUPATIONS, THE ORGANISATION OF WORK, HOW TO FIND A JOB, HOW TO PRESENT THEMSELVES TO EMPLOYERS.

AND TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ILL-EQUIPPED TO SURVIVE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS.

IN THE DECADE TO 1983, UNEMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA ROSE TO LEVELS UNPARALLELED SINCE THE 1930S. THE IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE OF DEPRESSED CONDITIONS IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND THE ECONOMY IN THIS PERIOD WAS PARTICULARLY SEVERE. THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS NOW IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY, THOUGH REGRETABLY SOME 216,300 YOUNG PEOPLE OR 14.4% OF THE LABOUR FORCE WERE STILL RECORDED AS UNEMPLOYED AND SEEKING FULL-TIME WORK IN JULY 1985.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS IN THE PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS INITIATED A RANGE OF INQUIRIES WHICH HAVE PROVIDED THE BASIS FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEMS FACING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS.

IN PARTICULAR, WE HAVE THIS YEAR, ANNOUNCED A STRATEGY - PRIORITY ONE - FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS WHICH WILL BRING INTO HARMONY A NUMBER OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS AIMED AT NOT ONLY REDUCING STILL FURTHER THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE UNEMPLOYMENT BUT ALSO IMPROVING THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES ONCE THEY HAVE REACHED POST-COMPULSORY SCHOOLING AGE.

THERE ARE FOUR PRINCIPAL PARTS OF MY GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

FIRST, WE ARE MAKING IT POSSIBLE, FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO DO SO, TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING BEYOND POST-COMPULSORY YEARS. WE ARE OFFERING MORE PLACES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, AND REMOVING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN EDUCATION ALLOWANCES AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS.

SECOND, WE ARE INTRODUCING (AND THIS WILL DOUBTLESS BE OF MOST INTEREST TO YOU HERE TODAY) A NEW COMBINATION OF TRAINING AND WORK, CALLED TRAINEESHIPS.

WITH TRAINEESHIPS, OUR GOAL IS TO GREATLY IMPROVE THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF THOSE NUMEROUS YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DO NOT ASPIRE TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND WHO FIND DIFFICULTIES ENTERING THE LABOUR MARKET BECAUSE OF THEIR LACK OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE.

TRAINEESHIPS WILL LAST FOR A YEAR, WILL PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT, A WAGE, AND TRAINING BOTH ON-AND-OFF-THE-JOB. WE WANT 10,000 YOUNG PEOPLE TO BENEFIT FROM TRAINEESHIPS IN THE FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION AND FOR THAT NUMBER TO INCREASE TO 75,000 IN 1988.

THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY ALSO INCLUDES A RATIONALISATION OF THE VARIOUS INCOME SUPPORT SCHEMES THAT WE ARE ABLE TO OFFER DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE. THE MAIN SCHEMES WILL BECOME AGE-RELATED, AND INDEXED TO ENSURE THEY KEEP THEIR REAL VALUE.

THE FOURTH PART OF OUR STRATEGY RECOGNISES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE NEED OTHER SUPPORT PROVISIONS BEYOND THOSE THAT I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED, PARTICULARLY IF THEY ARE TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD.

THESE OTHER ARRANGEMENTS RELATE TO SUPPORT IN SUCH AREAS AS ACCOMMODATION, TRAINING IN FUNDAMENTAL LIVING SKILLS, HEALTH, AND DRUG EDUCATION.

ALTHOUGH THE REDUCTION OF YOUTH WAGES HAS BEEN ADVOCATED BY SOME AS AN ANSWER TO YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, THE GOVERNMENT REJECTS THIS SIMPLISTIC VIEW AND ACCEPTS THE NEED FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE, MULTI-PRONGED AND POSITIVE APPROACH WHICH RAISES THE PRODUCTIVITY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. SUCH AN APPROACH WILL ENHANCE THEIR EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS AND INCREASE THEIR FLEXIBILITY IN THE LABOUR FORCE.

THE SOLUTIONS TO HIGH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT ARE NOT SIMPLE, OR CHEAP, OR EASY, OR SWIFT AND THEY NEED THE FULL COOPERATION OF ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ALL SECTIONS IS THE VERY BASIS OF OUR POLICIES. INDEED THE NINTH CONFERENCE OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC LABOUR MINISTERS CONCLUDED THAT PROBLEMS FACING PARTICULAR COUNTRIES IN THE REGION COULD NOT BE OVERCOME THROUGH LONE EFFORTS, BUT REQUIRED THE CLOSE CO-OPERATION AND EFFORT OF ALL COUNTRIES ACTING TOGETHER. A FURTHER ASPECT OF THIS CO-OPERATIVE PROCESS, ON WHICH THE 9TH CAPLM CONFERENCE PLACED GREAT STRESS, IS THE NEED FOR PROMOTION OF TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION IN EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR FORCE DEVELOPMENT. SUCH PROMOTION PRESENTS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF ASSISTING COUNTRIES IN THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF WORKING CONDITIONS.

IN THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW, AUSTRALIA HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS ARENA, PARTICULARLY AS WE ARE PART OF THE MOST ECONOMICALLY DYNAMIC REGION IN THE WORLD.

IN THIS CONTEXT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT CONSTRUCTIVE STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO BRIDGE GAPS REMAINING IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND ITS PACIFIC AND ASIAN NEIGHBOURS.

AT THE RECENT SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION AGREEMENT (SPARTECA), I ANNOUNCED THAT AS FROM THE BEGINNING OF 1987, ALL GOODS FROM THE FORUM ISLAND COUNTRIES AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA WILL ENTER AUSTRALIA ON A DUTY FREE UNRESTRICTED BASIS EXCEPT FOR THOSE COVERED BY AUSTRALIAN SECTORAL POLICIES. SUCH LIBERALISED MARKET ACCESS SHOULD REMOVE MANY DIFFICULTIES THESE COUNTRIES MAY HAVE ENCOUNTERED EXPORTING TO AUSTRALIA, AS WELL AS INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THOSE COUNTRIES.

AT THE FORUM BOTH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND ALSO OFFERED TO ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES ABOUT WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ADVANTAGE TO THEM IN ENTERING A BROADENED AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS AGREEMENT. THIS OFFER - WHICH CARRIES IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR LONG-TERM TRADE RELATIONS WITHIN THE REGION - WAS INTRODUCED BY THE FORUM AND WILL BE FURTHER CONSIDERED AT NEXT YEAR'S MEETING OF THE REGIONAL TRADE COMMITTEE.

WE HAVE ALSO ESTABLISHED A SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL TEAM TO PROVIDE SPECIALISED ADVICE TO THE AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE BUREAU ON THE PARTICULAR DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF SMALL ISLAND COUNTRIES.

AMONG THE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED IN RESPECT OF TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AT CAPLM 9 WERE THE NEED FOR PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO BE PAID TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND THE AGREEMENT TO PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OR IMPROVEMENT OF RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND REHABILITATION FACILITIES.

AUSTRALIA COMMENDS THESE FIELDS OF ENDEAVOUR TO CAPLM 10 FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION.

I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT WHILE TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION IS A STANDING AGENDA ITEM AT CAPLM, THE MATCHING OF RHETORIC WITH ACTIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE.

THIS DIFFICULTY ARISES IN PART BECAUSE LABOUR AFFAIRS ARE NOT ALWAYS GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY BY AID CO-ORDINATING BODIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. IT IS ALSO OFTEN DIFFICULT FOR MULTILATERAL PROGRAMS TO FOCUS ADEQUATELY

ON THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES AND APPROPRIATE MEANS OF SATISFYING THOSE NEEDS, ESPECIALLY AS MULTILATERAL AGENCIES TYPICALLY ARE FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED.

WE THEREFORE WELCOME THE PROPOSALS FOR GREATER EMPHASIS ON REGIONAL CO-OPERATION AND COLLECTIVE SELF RELIANCE THROUGH SCHEMES SUCH AS THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC SKILLS DEVELOPING PROGRAM.

SUCH PROPOSALS ARE A POSITIVE STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF ENCOURAGING GREATER SELF SUFFICIENCY WHILST AT THE SAME TIME INVOLVING MORE INTERACTION AMONG INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OF THE REGION. I WISH DELEGATES EVERY SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING THESE DESIRABLE AIMS.

AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES OF THE ILO WHICH SUPPORT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN FORMULATING EFFECTIVE LABOUR POLICIES.

MY GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT - TO WHICH TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION - IS AN IMPORTANT AREA WHICH PLACES STRONG PRESSURES ON LABOUR ADMINISTRATIONS. AS A MEMBER OF THE ILO AND ITS GOVERNING BODY, MY COUNTRY IS CONCERNED THAT THE LIMITED RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO AREAS OF GREATEST NEED AND BELIEVES THAT GREATER EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON MEASURES DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS.

AGAINST THAT BACKGROUND, AUSTRALIA IS PLEASED TO INFORM THE MEETING THAT IT RATIFIED ILO CONVENTIONS NO 142 ON HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND NO 150 ON LABOUR ADMINISTRATION ON 10 SEPTEMBER 1985.

THROUGH ITS AID PROGRAMS, AUSTRALIA PROVIDES A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE REGION. SPECIFICALLY, WE SPENT OVER \$137 MILLION DOLLARS IN 1984-85 ON TRAINING PROGRAMS. IN ADDITION WE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT LABOR RELATED PROJECTS SUCH AS THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROJECT FOR INDONESIA.

DELEGATES, I HAVE SPOKEN OF THE PROBLEMS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN OUR REGION AND MY GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITY ONE STRATEGY. IN THIS TIME OF DOUBT AND UNCERTAINTY IN WHICH WE LIVE, MANY OF OUR YOUNG MAY COME TO REJECT THE VALUES OF THE COMMUNITY IF THE COMMUNITY IN TURN DOES NOT ACCEPT ITS OBLIGATIONS TO THEM. WE NEED TO KNOW AND TO RESPOND TO THE CONCERNS OF THE YOUNG. MY GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH - DRAWING ON THE PRINCIPLES OF TRIPARTISM WHICH ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE WORK OF THE I.L.O. - IS AIMED AT MEETING THE CONCERNS AND NEEDS OF OUR YOUNG. I COMMEND THIS APPROACH AND OUR POLICIES TO THE CONFERENCE.

IN CLOSING I WOULD EMPHASISE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THIS, INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR, FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE THEMES OF THIS CONFERENCE OF YOUTH AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION. THESE ARE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES THAT, ADDRESSED IN A CO-OPERATIVE SPIRIT, OFFER THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSISTING ALL PEOPLE OF THE WORLD PARTICULARLY THE YOUNG, TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND THAT OF THEIR NATIONS.

THANK YOU.

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