



PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
FOR THE OPENING OF CAREERS EXPO '85
SYDNEY - 3 OCTOBER 1985

May I say at the outset that AISEC is to be congratulated on initiating, on organising and on undertaking this Careers Expo '85. They have brought together employers and young people about to enter the workforce in what is the largest ever pre-recruitment exhibition in Australia. This Expo is a marvellous example of a students organisation - AISEC - helping other students. AISEC, I commend your efforts.

My Government, in addressing the problems of young people in this, International Youth Year, has had a particular interest in establishing long term policies for Australia's youth. Unfortunately, the concerns and needs of young people have been ignored for all too long by previous Governments. But not by this Government.

It is widely recognised that the point at which young people leave educational and training institutions to enter the workforce is highly significant. This transition period is of great importance to young peoples' individual development.

It is also an occasion of great significance for the whole workforce as new workers with new skills, vigour and enthusiasm take their places in the productive enterprises of our economy.

It is most important that young people be given every opportunity to learn about the employment possibilities that exist in the Labour Market. Young people increasingly need assistance in coming to grips with our dynamic world, preparing themselves for work in rapidly changing environments, and in making worthwhile career choices.

A situation of great concern to my Government has been the long-term deterioration in full-time employment opportunities for teenagers.

Between 1966 and 1983, there was a decline of almost a third in the number of full-time jobs held by teenagers, with more experienced, better-trained adult workers taking an increasing share of available jobs in a competitive labour market.

The increased availability of part-time work over this period has not offered any real compensation, since it has largely been taken up by young people still in education. Currently, for example, teenage school students account for between 50 and 60 percent of all part-time jobs held by teenagers.

These trends have been exacerbated by the lack of opportunities for structured vocational training available for school leavers once they are in the labour market.

Those young school leavers who are able to obtain jobs are increasingly finding themselves in what is commonly known as the "secondary" labour market - that is, in low-paid, unskilled, often casual work, offering few prospects for skill acquisition or long-term career advancement.

And yet these raw figures and labour market trends do not reveal what youth unemployment means in terms of the loss of human dignity and self respect - or what it means in terms of the breakup of families and social alienation of a large number of the best and proudest generation we have ever produced - or what it means in terms of the defeat of human hope and the defeat of human spirit. Youth unemployment is the new poverty within our midst and we are determined to redress this lamentable situation.

Our policies are resulting in jobs, jobs and more jobs. Remember that in the year before we came to Government 160,000 jobs disappeared and unemployment increased by over a quarter of a million. Under Labor, in just 28 months, 430,000 jobs have been created.

I do not believe that there has been a comparably important socio-economic achievement in Australia for over three decades - and young people are getting jobs as a result of our policies.

In terms of youth, the Government has been concerned to tackle their situation in an appropriately comprehensive manner, and has announced "PRIORITY ONE" as our Strategy

for the Young People of Australia.

Our major priorities in this strategy are to increase the general availability of jobs and to improve the skill levels and competitiveness of young people.

We have placed particular emphasis on education and training as key factors in improving youth's employment prospects.

We are acutely aware of the fact that the rate of unemployment amongst people who have not completed secondary school or gained any post-school qualification is twice as high as that amongst those who have better educational achievements.

Education and training are the key to broadening the labour market prospects and earning capacity of individuals, and ensuring equity in access to employment opportunities.

Our strategy covers the primary areas of:

- . education and training,
- . employment,
- . income support, and
- . community based support for the disadvantaged.

Today I want to highlight particularly our traineeship proposals, given that so many of Australia's leading employers are participating in this Expo.

The Government is committed to developing an Australian traineeship system as a major alternative form of vocational training for young people who, for whatever reason, do not complete their secondary schooling, proceed to higher education or go into a technical or trade training position.

Unquestionably, traineeships offer a structured program of work-based training and experience, integrated with broad-based off-the-job training, mainly provided through TAFE.

The minimum duration of traineeships will be 12 months, with an off-the-job training component equivalent to at least 13 weeks.

Employers will enter into contractual arrangements which specify the type of training to be provided, together

with other employment-related aspects of the traineeship, and appropriate accreditation will be available for the trainee on completion of the traineeship.

Trainees will be paid a trainee wage by the employer in relation to time spent on the job. This wage is to be negotiated between employers and unions on an industry or award basis through existing industrial processes, but is to be no lower than \$90 per week.

Attention has focussed initially on the likely scope for the development of traineeship arrangements in three major private sector industries - the retail, finance and tourism/hospitality industries.

As you are aware these are growth industries which currently employ a large number of young people but offer little in the way of structured training opportunities.

The objective for this financial year is to generate 10,000 traineeships with plans for a progressive expansion to an annual target of 75,000 traineeship opportunities by 1988-89.

The Commonwealth is making a substantial contribution to the development of the new traineeship system.

We will be looking to develop up to 20% of initial traineeship positions in our own fields of employment.

We are talking about a substantial Government commitment to nothing less than a radical transformation of the existing avenues of transition from school to work.

Such a fundamental transformation will not be achieved, however, unless employers, unions, Governments, training bodies and the community work together in a constructive manner. We must all share the responsibility to generate training and opportunities for our nation's young.

There is much more that I could say about our strategy for young people- about other labour market initiatives, income support arrangements and other community based support programs.

But they will all be receiving publicity, and I would prefer not to take up time here now which can be put to good use in forging links between those of you who are in the work force and have information and work to offer and those of you who still face the daunting task of finding your way into a useful and satisfying career.

Once again I commend AISEC for their initiative in organising this Expo and for highlighting the importance of pre-recruitment and in bringing employers and young job seekers together.

It is with pleasure, that I now declare Careers Expo '85 open.
