



PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OPENING OF MERRI CREEK PATHWAY
6 OCTOBER 1985

It is great to be here today to officially open, as part of Victoria's 150th Anniversary celebrations, the Merri Creek Pathway amid such magnificent surroundings.

This is a most welcome initiative by the Cain Government in association with local councils and I am pleased that my Government through the Community Employment Program have made a significant financial contribution of some \$400,000 to such an important project, which has provided jobs for 35 unemployed people.

I might add that in terms of improving the overall Merri Creek environs, the Australian Government has contributed over \$1.0 million under the CEP which has created 70 jobs for unemployed people.

Such assistance recognises the great need for parks and recreation areas in Melbourne's northern suburbs. But not only does this Merri Creek development provide a recreational area, it also provides an excellent example of the three levels of government working together for the benefit of the local community.

While I applaud the enterprise and efforts of the Victorian Government and local councils, it is the involvement and contribution to the project of the local community - the Merri Creek Coordinating Committee - which has been a factor of key importance.

I would urge the continued participation of communities such as yours in the planning and preservation of additional recreation areas under the Victorian Government's Waterways Program to make them truly community projects.

This is an imaginative program opening up recreational resources which educate and provide welcome space for all of us here today to breathe, walk, ride a bike or just appreciate the natural surroundings.

There is no doubt that many of Melbourne's creeks and rivers will be transformed with the creation and beautification of parks and landscaping of existing open space areas.

For those reasons the future development of the program should be warmly welcomed.

As I mentioned earlier, the opening up of this area for community use and enjoyment, serves to remind us that recreational activities are a necessary and important part of our everyday lives - especially and particularly for people who live in large cities and towns.

Increasingly, we are becoming aware of the substantial contribution that recreation, whether of an active or passive nature, can make towards a healthier, a happier and a more productive society. This is especially the case as economic and social changes are challenging the traditional views of the relationship between 'work' and 'leisure'.

Since our election in 1983 my Government has committed itself to establishing a significant role in recreation development in Australia.

Accordingly we have introduced and funded recreation assistance programs which include support for national recreation bodies and upgrading of the level of their administration.

We have assisted in developing projects - such as this - with State and Territory Governments, which encourage increased community participation in recreation activities.

A key element in the program is the provision of assistance for recreational opportunities for the disabled and those in our community who are disadvantaged in terms of access to recreation opportunities.

We have also funded the publication of reference works on recreation in Australia to assist those involved in recreation planning and development, and to let the public know what we are doing in this area.

These initiatives are a first step in developing a comprehensive Commonwealth recreation policy which - as my colleague, John Brown, the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism announced only a few days ago - aims to improve the quality of life of all Australians by encouraging them to participate in healthy and satisfying leisure and recreation activities of their choosing. Our intention is to:

- . make Australians more aware of the wide range of opportunities offered;
- . provide facilities for leisure time recreation, and encourage maximum use of existing facilities; and
- . make available suitably trained personnel and information resources.

We have taken the first steps and with the help and cooperation of State and local governments, local communities, voluntary organisations, and the private sector, we are confident of fulfilling those objectives in the years ahead for the benefit of all Australians.

It now gives me much pleasure to officially open the Merri Creek Pathway.

Thank you.
