



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
AT THE LAUNCH OF BOOKLET 'HOME SAFETY FOR SENIOR CITIZENS'
PERTH - 6 FEBRUARY 1987

THIS BOOKLET, 'HOME SAFETY FOR SENIOR CITIZENS', IS A VALUABLE PUBLICATION AND I WANT FIRST OF ALL TO PRAISE GEORGE GEAR, THE ARTICULATE AND DOGGED MEMBER FOR CANNING, FOR PUTTING IT TOGETHER.

IT WAS WHILE HE WAS VISITING THE UNITED STATES THAT GEORGE CAME ACROSS THE IDEA OF A BOOKLET TO HELP ELDERLY PEOPLE LIVE SAFELY AT HOME.

HE ADAPTED IT TO AUSTRALIAN CONDITIONS AND HAS ENSURED THAT IT IS DISTRIBUTED TO THE ELDERLY AUSTRALIANS FOR WHOM IT IS INTENDED.

WHEN I SAY THIS BOOKLET WILL BE USEFUL, I AM NOT JUST INVENTING THAT CLAIM. WE KNOW IT WILL BE USEFUL, BECAUSE OF THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF ELDERLY PEOPLE CONDUCTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL ON THE AGEING.

ACCORDING TO THIS SURVEY, FEWER THAN THREE OUT OF TEN AMONG THOSE ON NURSING HOME WAITING LISTS ACTUALLY WANTED TO ENTER A NURSING HOME.

MORE THAN HALF STATED THAT THEY WOULD RATHER NOT MOVE AT ALL - IT SEEMS THAT FOR OLD PEOPLE, BEING ON A WAITING LIST IS A KIND OF INSURANCE POLICY FOR FUTURE CARE.

WHEN ASKED WHY THEY HAD PUT THEIR NAMES DOWN FOR A NURSING HOME, LESS THAN ONE IN TEN SAID THEIR REASON HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH HEALTH. MOST WANTED TO AVOID LIVING ALONE, SAYING THEY FELT UNABLE TO COPE WITH RUNNING A HOUSE, OR FEARED LONELINESS, OR WERE RELUCTANT TO IMPOSE ON THEIR FAMILIES.

THIS BOOKLET WILL HELP ELIMINATE SOME OF THOSE PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO STAYING AT HOME AND WILL HELP REDUCE THE PRESSURES ON PEOPLE WHO FEEL THEY MUST MAKE THE MOVE INTO AN INSTITUTION.

IT IS A PRACTICAL AND COMMONSENSE GUIDE TO LIVING SAFELY IN THE HOME.

AS SUCH IT FITS IN PERFECTLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S VERY SIGNIFICANT RETHINK OF POLICIES DIRECTED AT AGED CARE.

UNDER PAST GOVERNMENTS THESE POLICIES HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT IMBALANCED AND TENDED TO BE TARGETTED AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF ELDERLY PEOPLE WHO STILL LIVE AT HOME.

ONLY A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE - ABOUT SEVEN PER CENT - OF ELDERLY AUSTRALIANS LIVE IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE. THE OTHER NINETY THREE PER CENT LIVE IN HOUSES, UNITS OR FLATS, WITH NEARLY A QUARTER OF THEM LIVING BY THEMSELVES.

BUT GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON NURSING HOMES IS APPROACHING \$1000 MILLION, WHILE SPENDING ON HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES, TO HELP MAINTAIN PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN HOMES, IS ONLY \$100 MILLION - ABOUT ONE-TENTH OF THE BUDGET FOR NURSING HOMES.

THE GOVERNMENT'S CENTRAL OBJECTIVE, THEREFORE, IS TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF RELATIVELY REDISTRIBUTING RESOURCES FOR CARE OF AGED PEOPLE AWAY FROM NURSING HOMES TO ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF RESIDENTIAL CARE AND COMMUNITY CARE. THIS WILL INVOLVE A SIGNIFICANT BOOST TO THE HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM WHICH WE ESTABLISHED IN 1985.

THIS WILL INCREASE THE RANGE OF AGED CARE SERVICES AND MEAN BETTER QUALITY CARE FOR OUR ELDERLY CITIZENS.

AS EVIDENCE OF OUR COMMITMENT, THIS STRATEGY WILL THIS YEAR INVOLVE THE COMMONWEALTH IN SPENDING AN ADDITIONAL \$32 MILLION ON HOME CARE SERVICES AND AN ADDITIONAL \$24 MILLION ON PROMOTING THE HOSTEL SECTOR AND IN INCREASING ACCESS TO RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS.

THESE EXTRA COSTS WILL BE INCREASINGLY OFFSET BY THE LOWER COSTS OF REDUCED GROWTH IN NURSING HOME BEDS.

I SHOULD EMPHASISE THAT CHANGES TO RESIDENTIAL CARE PROGRAMS WILL NOT AFFECT PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY RESIDENTS IN A NURSING HOME OR HOSTEL. THERE WILL BE NO REDUCTION IN THE NUMBERS OF NURSING HOMES AND HOSTELS IN ANY STATE AND THEREFORE THERE IS NO REASON WHY ANY RESIDENTS OR THEIR FAMILIES SHOULD FEEL INSECURE ABOUT ANY ARRANGEMENTS THEY HAVE ALREADY MADE.

ALL THIS MEANS THAT WE AS A GOVERNMENT ARE DISPLAYING OUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURE THAT AUSTRALIA'S ELDERLY CITIZENS ARE WELL CARED FOR.

THE WISHES OF ELDERLY PEOPLE THEMSELVES TO BE SUPPORTED IN THEIR OWN HOMES ARE AT LAST BEING ADDRESSED.

EVEN THOUGH WE ARE GOING THROUGH TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, WHICH HAVE FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO SPEND LESS THAN WE WOULD HAVE LIKED ON MANY PROJECTS, WE ARE MAKING SURE THAT COMMONWEALTH SPENDING IS ADEQUATELY AND EFFICIENTLY DIRECTED TO THOSE IN REAL NEED.

THE BOOKLET IS A CREDIT TO GEORGE GEAR AND I HOPE IT WILL BE WIDELY READ AND USED BY ELDERLY PEOPLE, AND THEIR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS. FOR IT CONTAINS WITHIN ITS PAGES SOME PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARDS ENSURING A LONGER AND HAPPIER LIFE - AT HOME.
