



PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
GREEK FESTIVAL OF COBURG
MELBOURNE - 8 FEBRUARY 1987**

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO BE ABLE TO RETURN THIS YEAR TO THE GREEK FESTIVAL OF COBURG. FEW OF THE EVENTS I ATTEND COULD MAKE ME FEEL MORE AT HOME THAN THIS FESTIVAL IN MELBOURNE. I PARTICULARLY WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND A FUNCTION WHICH HAS BEEN ORGANISED BY YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX DIOCESE FOR THE REST OF THEIR COMMUNITY.

AS WE APPROACH THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR IT IS PARTICULARLY GRATIFYING TO NOTE THE GATHERING STRENGTH OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. FESTIVALS SUCH AS THIS PROVIDE AN OCCASION FOR PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE THEIR CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS AND TO COME TO A GREATER AWARENESS OF THEIR OWN IDENTITY.

MY GOVERNMENT WANTS TO ENCOURAGE ALL CITIZENS TO GAIN MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM THE RICHNESS OF THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY AND TO PARTICIPATE TO THE FULL IN AUSTRALIA'S CIVIC LIFE. ACCORDINGLY WE HAVE RECENTLY SET UP AN OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS IN MY DEPARTMENT.

FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW, MULTICULTURALISM MEANS EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY, WHATEVER THEIR BACKGROUND, RACE, COLOUR OR CREED MAY BE, TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS DEVELOPING COUNTRY AND TO CONTRIBUTE TO ITS DEVELOPING IDENTITY.

ALONG WITH THAT, MULTICULTURALISM MEANS EQUALITY OF TREATMENT FOR ALL PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY, WHATEVER THEIR BACKGROUND, WHEN IT COMES TO THE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF GOVERNMENT. A MAJOR PRIORITY FOR THE OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS WILL BE THE TRANSLATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF MULTICULTURALISM INTO PRACTICAL TERMS. THIS MEANS INJECTING THOSE PRINCIPLES INTO DECISION MAKING PROCESSES AND INTO POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES NATION-WIDE.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS A FEW WORDS TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF MY OWN ELECTORATE ABOUT MY GOVERNMENT'S YOUTH STRATEGY.

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT CAME TO OFFICE WE WERE FACED WITH SERIOUS CRISES FOR MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, INCOME SUPPORT, DRUG ABUSE AND GENERAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES.

THE MAJOR THRUSTS OF OUR YOUTH STRATEGY ARE TO ENSURE

. THAT ALL YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAXIMISE THEIR LIFE CHANCES BY PARTICIPATING IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE

. THAT SUPPORT ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO THOSE MOST IN NEED

TO THIS END MY GOVERNMENT HAS DEVELOPED AN INTEGRATED PACKAGE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE. THE PACKAGE INCLUDES A NUMBER OF MAJOR INITIATIVES SUCH AS

. EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROVISIONS

DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE RATIONAL SYSTEM OF INCOME SUPPORT AIMED PARTICULARLY AT ENCOURAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO CONTINUE IN EDUCATION

THE NATIONAL DRUG OFFENSIVE, CREATING GREATER AWARENESS AND MORE EFFECTIVE ACTION TO COMBAT THIS PROBLEM

DEVELOPING A PROGRAM TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE BY THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WOULD OTHERWISE BE UNABLE TO FIND A MEANINGFUL ROLE IN OUR COMMUNITY.

IN EACH ELEMENT OF THE STRATEGY, PARTICULAR ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF THOSE MOST IN NEED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, INCLUDING MIGRANTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS. IN 1986 THE GOVERNMENT DEVELOPED GUIDELINES ON 'ACCESS AND EQUITY' FOR MIGRANTS IN THE DELIVERY OF ALL ITS SERVICES AND PROGRAMS. THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ENSURING THAT THESE GUIDELINES ARE OBSERVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS YOUTH STRATEGY.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THROUGH THE OFFICE OF YOUTH AFFAIRS, THE FEDERATION OF ETHNIC COMMUNITY COUNCILS OF AUSTRALIA HAS AGAIN BEEN FUNDED THIS FINANCIAL YEAR TO SUPPORT A YOUTH WORKER TO RUN ITS NATIONAL ETHNIC YOUTH PROGRAM.

THESE KINDS OF INITIATIVES BY GOVERNMENT ONLY MAKE SENSE IF THEY ARE FOUNDED UPON THE REALITY OF STRONG AND VIABLE COMMUNITIES AND CULTURAL GROUPS. I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO OFFICIATE HERE AS YOUR GUEST OF HONOUR BECAUSE I RECOGNISE THAT EVENTS SUCH AS THESE PROVIDE THE LIFE BLOOD OF AUSTRALIA'S SOCIAL FABRIC.