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PRIME MINISTER

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

ELECTION CAMPAIGN POLICY LAUNCH
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE - 23 JUNE 1987

Fellow Australians,

Never in peace-time has Australia's future depended so much on a single decision - your decision on the 11th of July.

Never have you, the Australian people, been called upon to make a more fundamental decision for yourselves, your families - your children - about the way you want your country to go - about what kind of a country you want Australia to be.

It is a decision about what kind of a people we are.

It is a decision about what kind of a nation we are going to be.

Are we to continue to unite together in the great task of national renewal, reconstruction and revitalisation, for which we have been working so hard together, and on which the success of our country depends?

Are we to go forward with strength and stability - stability in government, stability in our society?

Or are we to take the other course, the path of our opponents - inflicting upon the nation itself all their own divisions, all their own disunity, all their own instability?

On behalf of the Australian Labor Party I ask for a resounding decision, a decision that will show the world just what kind of a people we are -

- a strong, united, stable, confident, forward-looking people
- responding to the leadership of a strong, united, stable, confident, forward-looking government.

We come before you as one, united team.

We come before you with one pledge - that as one, united team, we will continue and intensify our undivided efforts in the task of national renewal and revitalisation of our economy, our industry, our society.

Fellow Australians,

This election is about our faith in Australia's future. It is about our faith in ourselves.

And it is about our belief and faith - my faith, our government's faith in the character and calibre of the Australian people. And it is a belief and faith based firmly upon experience.

Four and a half years ago I pledged a Labor government to seek national reconciliation instead of confrontation and division - to create 500,000 new jobs in three years.

Our opponents said it couldn't be done. That was their judgement about the Australian people.

But together we did much better. We easily exceeded our target.

In four years, we have created 800,000 new jobs - and in the past six months alone - 100,000 new jobs.

Two and a half years ago we called for a continuation of the economic restraint so necessary for the reconstruction of our economy and industry, which is the key to our future.

Our opponents mocked the concept of co-operation and restraint. They wanted - as they still want - a return to confrontation in industry. That was their judgement on the working men and women of Australia and the business community of Australia.

But, building on the basis of restraint and responsibility, we have saved the steel industry, transformed the motor vehicle industry, set about the reconstruction of Australia's entire manufacturing and services base.

Exactly one year ago I put to the people of Australia the greatest challenge of all.

I told you of the disastrous drop in the prices of our exports - a collapse in world trade that has now cost every Australian family \$2,000.

I said then that this meant a year of the toughest decisions imposed in peace-time.

Our opponents said that the Australian people would never cop it.

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They said the Australian people would never understand why the loss of \$9 billion in our national income meant that we all had to adjust - that it was not just for the farmers and the other exporters to carry the loss - we all had to shoulder the burden.

We said we would not shirk the hard decisions needed to ensure a bright future for us in this generation and for our children in theirs.

I told you I would rather risk electoral defeat than take the soft options that would mean we mortgage our great future.

And it is because we backed our judgement of the Australian people - took the tough decisions, made the hard choices - that we can now stand before you, confident and proud of what we have achieved together, but more important, confident and proud of the great things we can achieve together, for our families, our children, for our country, in the years ahead.

Yet our opponents, who are incapable of governing themselves, now seek to govern Australia on a grab-bag of contradictory proposals drummed up on the run - proposals which could only have one result: They would wreck utterly the efforts we, the Australian people, have made together over the last four years and in particular over the past year.

They have not only got their sums wrong.

They have got Australians wrong.

Friends,

The real danger from our political opponents is this:

All that has been achieved by your restraint and responsibility would be wasted. The benefits you have foregone and the sacrifices you have been called upon to make would have been in vain.

It is only because we have made the tough decisions, and put them in place in the last Budget, the May Statement, and two successive Premiers' Conferences, that we can now give these undertakings:

Interest rates are again falling and under Labor will continue to fall.

Inflation is again falling and under Labor will continue to fall.

Employment is growing - at twice the rate of the rest of the Western world - under a government which has created 800,000 new jobs in four years; and under Labor, employment will continue to grow.

In the completed Budget in September there will be no new taxes and no tax increases.

But we shall never jeopardise Australia's future by irresponsible promises.

We make our future undertakings on the firm basis of the achievable, the credible, the responsible.

And let me emphasise:

Everything in our program is affordable, achievable and economically responsible.

This Labor Government has achieved the most significant reform of the taxation system since Federation.

And the fundamental reason why our our opponents could never achieve any tax reform in all their years in office is that they never had the courage to act against tax avoidance. And they let it become Australia's biggest growth industry - and that's the description given by their own Royal Commissioner.

We have smashed the tax avoidance industry.

We have cut out wasteful privileges and windfalls for the few.

That is why we are able further to reduce income tax. Following the first round of tax cuts in December, new tax scales will operate from 1 July, 1987. They will bring the top marginal rate down from the Liberal legacy of 60 per cent to 49 per cent.

And the rate for taxpayers on average earnings will have been brought down from 46 per cent to 40 per cent.

And it is because of our tax reforms that we are able to undertake that the September Budget will continue the full indexation of pensions.

This is what a Labor Government means for the next three years: genuine reductions in taxation, lower inflation, lower interest rates, higher pensions, more jobs.

Yet our opponents invite you to throw all this away, for a tax bribe nobody believes in - least of all, its discredited authors - and something which, if ever seriously attempted, would destroy the economy and rip apart the social fabric - the basis of the Australian ideal of a fair go for all.

They invite you to turn your backs on the meaning of everything we have been able to achieve together over the past four years.

They invite you to turn your backs on the real meaning of Australia's future -

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- a future founded on the great ideals of fairness and justice in our society - a fair go for all.

Indeed, my friends, it is almost impossible to judge which is the more dangerous -

- their economic vandalism,
- or the wholesale vandalism they propose against the social framework of this nation.

They have long been the parties of social division.

Now they stand as the parties of social devastation.

The whole basis of our call to the Australian people at the election in 1983 and again in 1984 was an appeal to this great truth about the Australian community - the truth that the legitimate aspirations of the diverse groups and interests which go to make up the nation can best be achieved, not by fighting each other, not by setting group against group, Australians against Australians, but by working together, recognising and respecting each other's rights, fair expectations and fair hopes and aspirations.

That was the basis on which we sought a mandate and that was the basis on which the mandate has been twice given.

And it is on that basis - the people's response - the recognition of this great truth about Australia - that we have been able to fight back together against the huge difficulties imposed upon us by events abroad.

The toughness with fairness we have applied to the affairs of this nation and the response of the Australian people now enable us to set new goals - realistic, responsible achievable goals for Australia's future.

We seek to create an Australia where there are no second class citizens.

And we will achieve that only by refusing to accept - as a Government, as a society, as a people - second rate policies.

In this highly competitive world we cannot settle for the second rate in industry, in technology, in education.

We must continue - now as a matter of urgency - the work of modernising and revitalising our economy and industry, so that we can compete with the world - on the world's terms.

That is the only way we can restore and improve living standards for all.