



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

20 JULY 1987

Attached is correspondence the Prime Minister is sending to parties involved in the coal industries dispute.



PRIME MINISTER

CANBERRA

Mr R. Marshall
Chairman
Australian Coal Association
C/- MIM Holdings
GPO Box 1423
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Marshall

I am deeply concerned about developments in the coal industry and propose to accept the suggestion that I convene a national tripartite conference to consider a long term strategy for the coal industry.

It is my hope to convene such a meeting of all the parties next week and that we can move constructively to find sufficient common ground on a strategy to enhance the viability of the industry and to avoid a widespread coal strike. I have made it clear that the Government is prepared to consider establishing a National Coal Authority with a central role in the implementation of that strategy. However that does not extend to vesting that Authority with direct marketing functions on the model of the various agricultural commodity boards.

I would add that it is difficult to see how such a meeting could be successful next week if over the intervening period there is a further escalation of industrial tension. Accordingly I ask that all companies refrain from further retrenchments until that meeting has been held and its results become clear. I have written in similar terms to the Coal Mining Unions National Liaison Committee asking that there also be no further industrial action in this period. A copy of that letter is attached.

Yours sincerely

R.J.L. Hawke

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PRIME MINISTER

CANBERRA

Mr J. Maitland
Chairman
Coal Mining Unions National
Liaison Committee
3rd Floor
377 Sussex Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Maitland

I am deeply concerned about developments in the coal industry and propose to accept the suggestion that I convene a national tripartite conference to consider a long term strategy for the coal industry.

I fully understand your concern about the need to enhance the viability of the industry and to maintain employment wherever practicable. While the industry's problems are complex, my Government is committed to develop a strategy that fully involves all parties to help ensure the long term viability of the industry.

The Government is willing to consider establishing a National Coal Authority to play a central role in the implementation of that strategy. We are prepared to listen to argument on any subject at the tripartite conference. However I want it to be clear that the Government believes that the coal industry would not be assisted if such an Authority were to be vested with direct marketing functions, including on the model of the various agricultural commodity board, as has been suggested.

As you will appreciate, I am in the process of setting up the Ministry and I am unable to convene a tripartite meeting this week. I propose, however, together with the new Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, to call a meeting of New South Wales and Queensland Government representatives, the coal unions and the Australian Coal Association towards the end of next week.

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It is my hope that the meeting can move constructively to find sufficient common ground to avoid a widespread coal strike. However it is difficult to see how such a meeting could be successful next week if over the intervening period there is a widespread strike. Accordingly I ask that all relevant unions refrain from further industrial action until that meeting has been held and its results become clear. I am writing in similar terms to the Australian Coal Association asking that there also be no further retrenchments in this period.

I have sent a copy of this letter to Mr Unsworth, the Premier of Queensland, and Mr Marshall of the Australian Coal Association.

Yours sincerely

R.J.L. Hawke

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