



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

29 JULY 1987

The Prime Minister today chaired a meeting of representatives of the coal industry workforce, coal mining companies, the Queensland and NSW State Governments and the Commonwealth Government.

Following a constructive discussion, during which there was a positive contribution from all parties, it was agreed that there would be an acceleration of negotiations at the enterprise level about changes to improve mine viability and secure the future of Australia's largest export industry.

To give effect to this shared commitment it was agreed that for a period of at least one month:

- . employers will seek to achieve a moratorium on retrenchments where there is discretion to avoid retrenchments (and where there is disagreement between the parties in NSW about the scope for discretion in particular cases, the Joint Coal Board shall be the point of reference for determining the facts); and
- . the unions will cease industrial action, including overtime bans.

This agreement will be reviewed by the two parties within the one month period, to assess progress achieved.

An extraordinary meeting of the Australian Coal Consultative Council will be convened by the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Mr John Kerin, at the earliest opportunity. This meeting will supplement the negotiations which will be occurring at the enterprise level. In particular, the meeting will consider elements of the overall strategy which are more effectively dealt with at the aggregate level rather than at the enterprise level.

In this regard the Commonwealth will consider enlarging forms of assistance currently available under the Relocation Assistance Scheme and the Labour Adjustment Training Arrangement to facilitate relocation and retraining of coal industry employees.

For their part, the NSW and Queensland Governments, further to the concessions they have already given, will examine how they might assist the coal industry by way of reductions in State charges affecting the coal mining industry. This examination will depend on progress achieved by the employees and the mining unions in their negotiations.

It was further agreed that if the parties considered it desirable, the Prime Minister would convene a further meeting of the various parties at a later date.

The Prime Minister indicated that, in regard to marketing, while the Commonwealth adhered to its view that there would be no centralised authority, the Government was open to representations from unions and employers on how the existing reserve power in the export control arrangements should be utilised. However, the exercise of the reserve power ultimately will remain the responsibility of the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy.

Finally, the Commonwealth Government is available at the request of the unions or the employers to facilitate progress in negotiations.
