



PRIME MINISTER

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**PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF A SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
AT THE LAUNCH OF "PERSONAL ACTION GUIDE FOR THE EARTH"
PARLIAMENT HOUSE - 5 JULY 1989**

For anyone concerned about the future wellbeing of the environment, the roll call of contemporary environmental problems is daunting: Chernobyl, the Exxon Valdez, the Amazon basin, acid rain, the depletion of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect.

In our own country, land degradation, soil erosion, the loss of tree cover, salinisation, the pollution of our harbours and bays loom as issues that demand our attention and action.

Our ancestors on this planet may have thought the earth and sky were limitless in what they could give and take. We know that the truth is a good deal harsher.

But however complex and deepseated may be the causes of these environmental threats we face, despair is not the answer.

We need to recognise that we have a common responsibility for resolving these issues.

If we work together in a sensible way, we still have ample time to achieve an ecologically sustainable world economy, in which legitimate demands for growth and conservation can both be met.

If one nation pollutes the air or the oceans, or squanders its irreplaceable legacy of plants and animals, that represents a loss not just for that nation, but for all of us.

We can't solve these problems by ourselves - but we must solve them together.

It's a responsibility that Governments, industries and individuals must shoulder together.

This policy of environmentally sustainable development was first addressed comprehensively by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development, known also as the Brundtland Commission. Established in 1983, the Commission was asked to address the question of how such development could be achieved by both the developing and the developed world.

The main thrust of its final report, published as Our Common Future, was that environmentally sound development does not mean no development, and that environmentally destructive development can only undermine the future of an economy.

My Government strongly supports these arguments.

The Federal Government already has a proud record of action to save the Australian environment from economically inappropriate development.

We ensured the Franklin Dam was not built so that the grandeur of the Tasmanian wild rivers was not sacrificed to an unnecessary hydro-electricity project.

We decided the Wesley Vale pulp mill should not go ahead as proposed - not because we didn't want to see the economic advantages it promised, but because we were not prepared to achieve those advantages at the cost of unacceptable environmental damage.

We have extended the Kakadu National Park and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and achieved World Heritage Listing for Kakadu Stage II, Queensland rainforests and Tasmanian forests, ensuring their natural qualities will be preserved for all time.

We have recently provided nearly \$8 million for research into the Greenhouse Effect.

We are now engaged on a new effort to save the last wilderness continent - Antarctica.

Australia has refused to sign the Antarctic Minerals Convention because we did not believe that mining or oil drilling is consistent with protection of the Antarctic environment.

We are seeking instead a comprehensive Antarctic environment protection convention and the creation of an International Antarctic Wilderness Reserve.

On my recent overseas trip I secured the support of France in this endeavour. Germany and Hungary said they will consider our proposal carefully. India has already expressed its support. There are indications of a favourable response from Stockholm, Brussels and Rome. It is my profound belief that there is going to be an acceleration of world opinion on this issue which will come in behind the position that the Australian Government is adopting.

Later this month I will be releasing a statement on the environment which will announce new initiatives to harness Government action to save the environment.

So this Government has every reason to be proud of its environmental achievements.

But change cannot be achieved by governments alone.

Governments need the support of the community - of individuals who, by their myriad separate actions, are also doing what they can to protect our environmental heritage.

That is where this Guide comes in. Its title tells it all: it is a guide for personal action to save the earth.

The suggestions for action made in the Guide range from small changes to our habits at home and at work; through using our powers as consumers to alter the practices of manufacturers; to lobbying governments to take measures to combat bad planning and pollution.

All of these actions are important for achieving the goal of an ecologically sustainable future. Not everyone will find all the suggestions appropriate, but most of us will find many that are. Many will save money as well as helping to save the environment.

The booklet also lists an extensive range of organisations that can give more practical advice on what is suggested.

I pay tribute to the Commission for the Future for producing this booklet.

When my Government established the Commission for the Future in 1986, we gave it a charter to act as a focus for raising the community's understanding of science and technology and how they affect our lives.

Its aim was to inform all Australians about the options available for us to choose for the future.

By producing the "Personal Action Guide for the Earth" the Commission is fulfilling that charter by showing us what we as individuals can do to create a future which is environmentally sustainable.

I note with pleasure that the booklet practises what it preaches - it is printed on 100% recycled paper. The Government is already looking at ways in which we, as a Government, can move to greater use of recycled paper.

There is no doubt that this booklet will generate a great deal of comment in the media and in the community generally.

The issues that are involved now in the consideration of the environment are, I believe, becoming increasingly apparent to all people in our community. No longer can it be said that concern about the environment is the preserve of those who have in the past been described as the fanatics, those who are way out of the mainstream.

It's increasingly obvious, in this country and overseas, that concern with these issues now crosses political boundaries; it crosses age boundaries; it crosses socio-economic boundaries. Because, very simply, what people increasingly understand is that we are talking about whether we are going to be able to pass on to our children, and to their children, a world which is safe and sustainable.

And when we understand that those are the issues, then of course it becomes quite apparent that the concern for these matters crosses all boundaries. It's in that sense that I think everyone is increasingly coming to the understanding that this is a matter not just for governments - it is for governments - not just for industries - it certainly is for industries - but it is also a matter for each and every one of us.

If we all just do two or three little things to help protect our environment - things that we hadn't done before - and if that impact is multiplied by the millions of people in this country, and if we get the same concept going around the world, then we will have done something that we should do: we will be creating and passing on a better and a safer world.
