



10

PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

16 FEBRUARY 1990

This morning I called upon the Governor-General and recommended that the House of Representatives be dissolved with a view to an election for the House of Representatives and half the Senate being held on Saturday, 24 March 1990.

The Governor-General has accepted my recommendation.

This election comes after the expiry of a full term of the current Parliament. With the exception of the 1984 election which restored the necessary synchronisation of the two Houses of Parliament, the elections I have called as Prime Minister have been at full term.

Elections are the key to our democratic system. They perform the vital task of choosing a Government for the future.

So I call upon all Australians to participate fully in the forthcoming campaign, both by thinking carefully about the issues that are at stake for the nation, and by exercising your democratic right to vote.

The election on 24 March will resolve a basic question of vital importance to us all - as individuals, as families and as a nation - as we enter the 1990s.

That question is, whether we continue forward as a community, creating a fair society, an efficient and productive economy and a healthy environment for ourselves and our children - or whether we turn the clock back to the days of entrenched privilege, lost opportunities and environmental degradation.

At the outset of the 1990s, Australians face a very clear choice. The comparisons between Labor and the conservatives are stark.

Australians can decide to continue along the path of steady reform, so our country can be equipped to take full advantage of the exciting challenges of the twenty-first century.

Or we can choose, under the conservatives, to sacrifice the opportunities and squib the challenges of the future, in a self-destructive and traumatic re-run of the failures of the early 1980s.

It is my most profound conviction that Australia's Government must continue to be a Government for all Australians - a Government that will defend and enhance the real interests of the Australian nation.

I seek re-election for a full fourth term as Prime Minister because I know that only Labor can provide such a Government.

As the campaign progresses, my Ministers and I will be announcing a range of initiatives that will demonstrate our capacity to build such an Australia through the 1990s.

These initiatives will be progressive and practical, they will be relevant to the needs of Australians in the 1990s, and they will be fully funded.

Next week the Treasurer, Mr Keating, will be revealing details of the next round of wage increases and any tax cuts negotiated between this Government and the trade union movement.

This announcement will demonstrate anew our capacity to secure the long term interests of Australian families and individuals, and to do so in a way that best ensures the well-being of the national economy.

Our political opponents have hastily cobbled together an industrial relations platform that would remove from the hand of the Federal Government the means to achieve such an outcome.

That policy failure, and the essentially unfair commitment to abolish the capital gains tax, coming on top of their health fiasco and their \$6 billion in unfunded pledges, demonstrate comprehensively that the Opposition has no legitimate claim to exercise the responsibility of national Government. So, too, does their philosophy of development at any price, which would bequeath to our children a barren legacy of a degraded environment.

After seven years of Opposition, they still have failed to develop workable and effective alternative policies.

That failure of course reflects their failure at the level of leadership.

They remain the disunited band that was defeated in 1987. Their fatal flaws, if translated to Government, would cost the Australian people dearly.

I believe that Australians, when they look closely at the records and qualifications of the two main political parties, will conclude that Australia needs a continuation of the stability and commonsense policies Labor has delivered so far.

Even those who wish to exercise their right to support independent candidates still have the responsibility, under our preferential system, of choosing a Government.

They should recall that only a Labor Government - united, stable - has the breadth of concern that can truly encompass the aspirations of all Australians.

Labor has proven that, for all the economic difficulties we face, it is possible to harness the skills and commitment of the whole community so as to advance our collective well-being.

And we have shown we will stand firm against those who would harm or undermine that collective well-being.

On the international stage, through the Cairns Group and our new forum for Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation, through our initiatives to protect Antarctica and to eliminate chemical weapons, and through our efforts to find a solution to the tragic conflict in Cambodia, Australia under Labor has been a creative and responsible leader in economic and political causes of profound importance for the 1990s.

We simply cannot afford to slip back to the inflexibility and short-sightedness that still characterises the outmoded mindset of the Coalition parties.

We know that these have been difficult times for many Australians, and we acknowledge the hardship that is being experienced.

But there are no easy solutions - just the promise that with a continuation of sensible policies and of committed hard work, national and individual economic conditions will gradually improve.

As they improve, we will have the knowledge that they will be permanent improvements, because we will have made the right choices and done the hard work to guarantee sustainable prosperity for the future.

And in the meantime, the Australian people know that Labor will not sacrifice for short-term political gain the values that are essential to our national interest - stability; national self-confidence, growth that is ecologically sustainable, prosperity that is fairly shared.

For the 1990s, Australians need and deserve no less.