



PRIME MINISTER

49/92

**JOINT STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
AND THE MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER
FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, THE HON ROSS FREE, MP**

THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SCIENCE COUNCIL

The Prime Minister's Science Council met today for the sixth time. The Prime Minister, who chaired the Science Council for the first time, recognised it as an important peak body for considering science and technology issues of national significance.

The Prime Minister announced the retirement of the Chief Scientist, Professor Ralph Slatyer AO FAA FRS, at the end of his three year term. This will become effective after the completion of the White Paper on Science and Technology in August this year. On behalf of the Government, the Prime Minister expressed appreciation for Professor Slatyer's role in the establishment of the science and technology policy and coordination mechanisms which were announced in the May 1989 Science and Technology Statement.

The Prime Minister also acknowledged Professor Slatyer's reputation as one of Australia's outstanding scientists. The importance of Professor Slatyer's standing in both the international and national scientific communities has been reflected in his provision of high quality and objective advice to Government. The Government wishes to continue to draw upon Professor Slatyer's expertise and has asked him to chair the Cooperative Research Centres Committee until the completion of the third round of the Program.

The Prime Minister welcomed two new members to the Science Council - Mr Mal Bryce, Chairman of the Western Australian Technology and Industry Advisory Council and Professor Michael Birt, recently appointed Chairman of the Australian Science and Technology Council.

The first major item considered by the Science Council was a presentation on the manufacturing technology industry in Australia given by Mr Jac Nasser, President of the Ford Motor Company in Australia, and Dr Peter Robinson, Chief of the CSIRO Division of Manufacturing Technology. The paper was

prepared by an independent working group consisting of senior people from industry, research organisations, higher education institutions and Government. It notes that if Australian manufacturing is to become internationally competitive, it needs to focus increasingly on value-adding - on elaborately transformed manufacturers. It argues that to do this, industry must focus on product differentiation and will require appropriate highly skilled teams and a well coordinated national research and development and education and training infrastructure.

The second major presentation focused on the information technology and telecommunications industry. This paper was also prepared by an independent working group, and was unusual in that it considered the information technology and telecommunications industries under one umbrella. The Report found that both industries formed the essential infrastructure of modern economies and were vital for increasing productivity across all industry sectors. The presenters were Mr Roger Allen, Science Council member and the Managing Director of Computer Power Group, Dr Greg Clark, Director of Science and Technology for IBM Australia and Mr Bill Page-Hanify, Managing Director of Alcatel Australia.

Reports from both these working groups will be released today.

The final major presentation examined the scientific aspects of major environmental topics. There were three presentations prepared and presented by Australian scientific experts in these fields. Dr Graeme Pearman, Assistant Chief of the CSIRO Division of Atmospheric Science spoke about the status of scientific knowledge on climate change, and Dr Brian Walker, Chief of the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology and Dr Peter Bridgewater, Executive Officer for the Australian National Parks and Wildlife service, spoke about aspects of biodiversity.

The Science Council discussions ended with consideration of issues relating to the White Paper on Science and Technology being developed and presented by Mr Free in his capacity as Minister for Science and Technology and Minister Assisting, in the context of the 1992-93 Budget.

CANBERRA
May 18 1992

Attached:

- . Current membership of the Prime Minister's Science Council
- . Reports considered by the Science Council (available from the Office of the Chief Scientist - 271 5462)

"The Changing Role of Manufacturing Technology"

"Information Technology and Telecommunications
Looking to the Year 2000"

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SCIENCE COUNCIL

The Prime Minister (Chair)

The Hon Ross Free, MP (Deputy Chair)
Minister for Science and Technology
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister

The Hon Kim C Beazley, MP
Minister for Employment, Education and Training

Senator the Hon John Button,
Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce

The Hon Simon Crean, MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Energy

The Hon Brian Howe, MP
Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services

The Hon Ros Kelly, MP
Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment
and Territories

The Hon John Kerin, MP
Minister for Trade and Overseas Development

Mr Roger Allen, Managing Director, Computer Power Group Ltd

Professor Brian Anderson, FAA, FTS, FRS
Head of the Department of Systems Engineering, Research School of Physical
Sciences, Australian National University

Professor L M (Michael) Birt, AO, CBE
Chairman, Australian Science and Technology Council

Mr Mal Bryce, AO, Chairperson,
Western Australian Technology and Industry Advisory Council

Professor David Craig, AO, FAA, FRS
President, Australian Academy of Science

Mr Trevor Eastwood, Managing Director, Wesfarmers Limited

Mr Denis Hanley, Chairman, Memtec Limited

Mr Keith Harvey, National Research Officer,
Federated Clerks' Union of Australia

Professor Ken McKinnon
President, Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee

Sir Rupert Myers, KBE, FTS
President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering

Sir Gustav Nossal, AC, CBE, FAA, FTS, FRS
Director, The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute
of Medical Research

Professor Cheryl Praeger
Professor of Pure Mathematics, University of Western Australia

Mr John Ralph, AO
Managing Director and Chief Executive, CRA Limited

Dr John Stocker, FTS
Chief Executive, CSIRO

Professor Ralph Slatyer, AO, FAA, FRS
Chief Scientist (Executive Officer)

30 April 1992