



## PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP**

**LAUNCH OF LIFE BE IN IT PROGRAM - "ACTIVATE"  
MELBOURNE, 23 JUNE 1992**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very glad to be here today to launch this Life Be In It program called "Activate".

Life Be In It is an Australian phenomenon. I doubt if many who were there when the organisation was founded in 1975 imagined it would still be going strong today.

Alex Stitt who drew the original Norm - and continues to draw him - and who is here today, might know the answer to that.

It has lasted because it is a great idea, and a self-sustaining one. It includes people, it works on the idea of partnership with the community - and for this reason it has been able to consistently come up with more ideas along the way.

This idea - "Activate" - is surely one of the best, and the Government is delighted to be a part of it.

Dr Ian Bennett has explained the details of the program, but I do want to say this:

This program draws its strength from the strength of Australia itself.

It draws on the energy, ideas and skills - the force if you like - of strategic partnerships between government, industry and the community itself.

That is the beauty of the idea. That's what will see this program succeed. And that's why I hope and believe that the same principle will be brought to other programs for the unemployed in coming months.

It will most certainly be brought to next month's national meeting on youth employment and training in Canberra.

Recovery from the recession, the problem of long term unemployment, the need to re-structure our industry and seize the opportunities which await us in the world - all these things critically depend on forming these national partnerships, in substance and in spirit.

In the 1980s we unleashed an enormous amount of economic energy, not all of it well focussed.

This must be the decade when we re-direct that energy toward productive investment in competitive industries. We will do that - the incentives are there.

Ultimately this is what will solve the problem of unemployment - this and our determination to train Australians for the jobs of the future.

Because there is nothing more important to most Australians than the right to a job.

It is the principal means by which our self-esteem is built. It is the way we advance ourselves. It is the way we advance Australia.

For those who have nothing to sell but their labour, it is the only means of security.

The right to work has always been central to our idea of what constitutes a fair go.

That is why the Government is making such an effort to secure jobs for the long term by transforming TAFE into an education system of status and quality.

It is why "Activate", which is funded under our Jobskills program, has our unqualified support - it provides both work and training, which means that the people who emerge from it will have valuable, transferable skills - and that means they will have a future in the modern world.

These are the essentials of any useful response to the problem of unemployment - industries with a future, training for the future.

As I said, we can do those things. We can do what is necessary to encourage productive investment. We can renovate our vocational training system.

It will take time and it will not be without difficulty, but we can do it.

But, even as we do these things, I believe we must do one thing more.

We have to restore faith in Australia.

I think we have to invest the nation with the same degree of hope and meaning it had for my generation and the ones before it.

The generation before mine lived in much harder times than these, and they had, on the face of it much less reason for hope.

But they did believe in this country. They believed it had a destiny to fulfil.

That faith played no small part in seeing them through. And in seeing Australia through.

I'm not sure that this country has quite that meaning for Australians today.

I don't think for a moment that we will re-ignite faith and hope by looking backwards, or by standing still.

We won't do it either by paying old obeisances or talking about the good old days of dead end jobs.

Nor will we do it, incidentally, by cutting into the advanced and comprehensive social programs we have built and maintained over a century, and which are today the hallmark of Australian civilisation.

I think we will best restore that faith and confidence - in fact we will only restore it - by confronting the future.

Confronting the future means finding solutions now.

Solutions like this one - which do what we in the Government have been trying to do since we began the national program called One Nation.

Get the directions right. Address the imperatives. Consolidate our strengths. And as we develop ideas and get them working, keep building that regimen of care for each other and the nation, which is always the best measure of a successful society.

I believe we have to make a truly national effort, and that is truly what we have been doing these past six months.

The national meeting we will hold on 22 July will be a major step along that path.

That meeting, I believe, will deliver new hope and opportunities to Australians, particularly young Australians.

We can do much to solve our problems if we have the will to do it.

In Australia we have much in our favour. Among all our human and material resources there is one as valuable as any other - that is our belief in fairness, in the "fair go", of individual opportunity tempered only by social justice - this is an ethic as old as the nation itself.

We should call on that belief now - and in the future. It will serve us well.

It has served Life Be In It well in this program.

I want to congratulate everyone associated with "Activate" and thank them, and wish them success.

Thank you.