



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP
LAUNCH OF THE 'EVALUATION OF ACCESS AND EQUITY' REPORT
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA, 10 NOVEMBER 1992**

E & OE PROOF COPY

Thank you Neil (Edwards), Gerry (Hand), Robert (Tickner), other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to launch this excellent evaluation of the Commonwealth's Access and Equity Strategy and the new access and equity regime.

A week or so ago I spoke of extending the multicultural agenda to take advantage of Australia's huge national economic asset represented by our linguistic and cultural diversity, our so-called productive diversity. It is true that while for many years we have been very proud of ourselves about the way in which we have created something new in Australia, something different to other countries in the world, we have settled quite diverse communities into one nation. There is as well as the great social achievement of that, a very clearly emerging and strong economic benefit, and that is the capacity to do things around the world by virtue of the fact that we have a very strong multicultural community in this country. Our skills, our linguistic skills and our cultural diversity, mean that whenever Australia, which is now an open trading economy, seeks to approach particular markets or sections of particular markets there are people in this country familiar with those markets, those places, those customs, those mores, those languages. We can take advantage of our productive diversity and build again further on our multicultural achievement.

As far as the Government is concerned, I said a week or so ago that we are continuing to build on the firm foundation of multicultural policies based on assuring access and equity to programs regardless of ethnic origin. Of course all of

us who are interested in this room know that without fair access to programs we can't expect all Australians to be able to contribute their best.

The new regime I'm launching today shows our determination to strengthen access and equity. I must say that while we may be talking in these terms - access and equity - I am delighted to see that just a week ago we had the American President elect speaking in their national debate in these terms about access and equity so that the people of that country can share in its wealth, have access to what the United States offers and have equity in terms of the approaches people can take to it and expect from it.

We have been developing these themes over all of the 1980s, and what I can say for this Government is in the early part of the 1980s we were standing against the wind in terms of the prevailing northern hemisphere ideological breeze; that was, all that mattered was private initiative and private reward. But now where the breeze has changed and the wind has warmed up, one finds that Australia's view about such things as fairness and equity in society and programs of government which govern for everybody and seek to help everybody equitably are becoming the vogue world wide. So all the more reason and all the more appropriate that we should be evaluating what we are doing ourselves and strengthening our determination to do things equitably and to demonstrate full access.

The new regime will demonstrate our firm belief that the programs must be fully available to all Australians regardless of language, race, culture and religion. The evaluation shows that there has been real progress, but a lot more can be done. This Government has endorsed the evaluation's recommendations and expects that all Government agencies will implement them with vigour. The new regime will be practical and participatory, it will address the real barriers and make sure that Commonwealth agencies do reach out to all Australians.

These are not just programs in name, but they are programs in reality that actually do what we say they will do. The agencies of the Commonwealth, many of you here today who administer them, are fervently taking the view that they will reach to where they are designed to reach and that they'll meet their program objectives.

It gives me very great pleasure to launch both the evaluation and the new regime and now my colleagues Gerry Hand and Robert Ticker will address you about the details.

Thank you.