



PRIME MINISTER

74/94

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP

Tomorrow's Council of Australian Governments meeting in Darwin will concentrate on the roles and responsibilities between tiers of government, and on competition policy. The Premiers, Chief Ministers and I will discuss important reforms in electricity, gas, workers' compensation and the legal profession. We will consider reports on maritime reform, the National Strategy on Violence Against Women, regulatory reform and the Review of Commonwealth and State Service Provision.

It will be an opportunity to reach agreement on matters of profound importance to the future of this country.

Broad agreement on government roles and responsibilities will create more integrated health and community services, with better results for clients and greater value for money for taxpayers.

Implementation of a national competition policy - the principles of which we agreed to at our last meeting in Hobart - will have many enduring benefits for the Australian economy and the Australian people.

Agreement tomorrow will mean more economic growth, and more jobs. It will mean cost savings for exporters and better services for everybody. It will mean not just a more competitive and stronger Australia, but a fairer Australia.

Implementation of a national competition policy will also mean that the States and their utilities have joined Australian business and the people they employ - working Australians and their families - in opening themselves to competitive pressures in pursuit of productivity, efficiency and comparative advantage. It will mean that the States have joined the rest of Australia in adjusting to the necessities of our era.

The Commonwealth Government is determined to press on with implementation of a national competition policy - it is nothing less than our duty to Australia and Australians. It is our duty to this and future generations. The States, surely, have a similar duty.

State Premiers and Chief Ministers come to this conference knowing I seek their cooperation, knowing that in pursuit of the great gains which stand to be made both sides may need to surrender ground. It is not a question of State rights. It is a question of making the Federation work as it was intended to work - in the interests of a stronger Australia and, above all, in the interests of the Australian people.

Tomorrow we have an historic opportunity to help Australia work as one - for the benefit of all.

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