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PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
OPENING OF THE EAST PERTH REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT -
CLAISEBROOK COVE, PERTH 10 OCTOBER 1995**

****** (CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY) ******

We all tend to take our urban environments for granted, and as they change, we bend our minds to accommodate them.

It is not usual for Governments to encourage protest and opposition to the status quo.

But when it comes to the environments in which we live, we have a duty to stand up and be counted - a duty and a perfect right.

Just as Australians have grown fiercely protective of the natural environment, they must protect the best of the urban environment and insist on having a say in the direction of development.

"Protect and direct" might not be a bad slogan. We have done some awful things to our cities and we are still doing them. We are doing them to our suburbs and to country towns.

We live in an era in which protection of the natural environment is paramount in almost every Australian mind. I think we need to marry that with a concern for what we build on it, for what will reflect the sense of place which by now we have developed.

I think the time has come to recognise that what we build on this landscape, what we build for other Australians to live in and look upon is an essential measure of our care and responsibility, a measure of how we feel about Australia and the sort of country we want it to be.

I think it is vital that we preserve our built heritage. Vital that we build living and working environments which are functional, aesthetically pleasing and compatible with the Australian natural habitat.

Environments which will last - and age gracefully. Environments not only for now, but for future generations of Australians.

And I think this is the responsibility of every government, every city and municipal council, every authority with a say in urban development and town planning, and of course every developer and every architect.

And as I said, it is up to every one of us to demand it.

That is why we began the Better Cities program and why I am so happy to be here today and to open the Claisebrook Cove Development.

It's a pleasure to be here today to open the Claisebrook Cove development - perhaps the most scenic element of the East Perth Better Cities Area Strategy.

Not so long ago, the Claisebrook inlet was unsightly, unused and unloved. I'm told this was pretty much Perth's main drain - contaminated and fairly unpleasant.

Today, of course, it's an urban waterway on a Venetian scale - one of Perth's most important public spaces. The inlet and cove has been reconstructed, power lines and fibre optic cables placed underground, a new pedestrian and cycle bridge built and the whole area landscaped.

It hasn't looked this nice for a century or more. Some very attractive housing has already begun on Constitution Hill which will eventually flow down to the rim of the Cove. This is now an area of Perth crying out to be displayed - rather than one demanding to be hidden.

Through the East Perth Better Cities Area Strategy, this part of inner Perth next to the Swan is being rejuvenated. The Federal Government has invested \$32 million of Better Cities funds to transform East Perth from disused industrial land into a lively urban village.

The Strategy includes the rehabilitation of the old gas works, the establishment of several parks and the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centre, the building of a new railway station and river jetties, and the construction of medium density housing and a commercial district.

I am especially pleased to confirm that this redevelopment project will be accessible to Australians of varying incomes. The Commonwealth Minister for Housing and Urban Development Brian Howe, and the State Minister for Planning Richard Lewis, are finalising the Heads of Agreement on 'Affordable Housing'. Significant public funds have gone into East Perth and it would be unfair if lower income Australians were excluded from living here.

Claisebrook Cove and East Perth are good examples of what is being achieved around Australia under the rubric of the Better Cities program.

Better Cities was initially an \$816 million scheme - and with the extra funds from the last Budget, the Federal Government investment is more than \$1 billion.

The Government has allocated \$78 million for Better Cities in Western Australia - to projects in Bunbury, Stirling, Fremantle and throughout Perth.

Better Cities is about regenerating urban areas - unlocking them and making them more pleasant, livable and efficient. The quality of Australia's cities is one of our great comparative advantages. It feeds into our international competitiveness - as well as the happiness of our people.

The Federal Government believes that investing in our people and the cities in which they live is a good idea. I am very pleased that all governments have had the wit to work together to renovate East Perth - and I congratulate everyone involved.

I'm very happy to open Claisebrook Cove.