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PRIME MINISTER

HISTORIC REFERRAL OF VICTORIA'S INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS POWERS TO THE COMMONWEALTH

Today's in-principle agreement to refer Victoria's industrial relations powers to the Commonwealth is an historic first in the long history of industrial relations in Australia.

It is also a ringing endorsement of the Federal Government's industrial relations reforms.

It gives substance to the frequent calls of many to reduce the costly duplication of concurrent responsibilities in such a vital area.

This practical example of co-operative Commonwealth/State Relations will pave the way for the development of more flexible workplace arrangements focusing on the needs of individual enterprises.

It will be of very real benefit to small and medium sized businesses in Victoria.

As a result of today's decision, all Victorian employees and employers will be able to access the Federal industrial relations system without having to satisfy the requirement of an interstate dispute or any other constitutional obstacles.

Victorian employers and employees will be free to remain under existing State arrangements or to choose to become subject to a federal award or agreement.

This is a win-win for all involved.

It means Victorian businesses will no longer face the time consuming and costly exercise of working with two different industrial relations systems.

It means Victorian workers will be able to negotiate Australian Workplace Agreements and access the unfair dismissal provisions under the *Workplace Relations Bill*.

It means the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments will be saved the complexity of administering two entirely separate industrial relations systems.

I look forward to securing the support of the Federal Parliament in giving legislative effect to today's historic announcement.

11 November 1996