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MEETING WITH STEELWORKERS

UNION DELEGATES - NEWCASTLE

This morning I met a delegation of Newcastle steelworker union representatives to discuss BHP's announcement regarding the Newcastle steelworks.

The delegation was led by Maurie Rudd, the Australian Workers Union Branch Secretary for Newcastle and Northern Regions.

It was an opportunity for me to hear at first hand of the social and economic impact of BHP's announcement on the Hunter Region. I appreciated the forthrightness of the delegates in describing the effects on families and the local community generally.

I have agreed to the suggestion by Maurie Rudd that a high level Prime Ministerial Taskforce be established consisting of local community representatives to advise the Federal Government on the implications of any closure for the local community. The Taskforce will report directly to me and will provide the Federal Government with direct feedback from the community in a non-party political way on issues affecting the region. Further details of the composition of the Taskforce will be announced shortly.

I told the delegation that I will be visiting the Newcastle steelworks site as part of my visit to the Hunter region in the near future.

29 May 1997

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