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PRIME MINISTER

5 June 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. JOHN HOWARD MP
SPEECH AT THE LAUNCH OF THE
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST VIOLENCE AND CRIME**

E. & OE.....

To first of all the South Australian Attorney General, Trevor Griffin - I particularly thank him for his attendance and his cooperation with the launch of this national strategy. To my other Parliamentary colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. Our Coalition Law and Justice Policy for the last election stated quite emphatically that every Australian was entitled to feel safe in their own homes and on the streets. We all know that Australians are very concerned about violent crime and we know that although the overall picture is not totally discouraging, there are pockets of increasing incidents of crime. The dominant image we've had to date and when we think of addressing the scourge of violence and crime in our community is of the blue line, is of policing and can I take the opportunity of saying at the outset of these remarks of mine, words of strong praise for the men and women of the police services of Australia. They have an immensely difficult job. It in fact is a despicable, they are a placed in despicable circumstances by the behaviour of people who break the law and they have copped through the agencies of royal commissions and so forth in recent years a very heavy battery and undoubtedly there are areas of corruption and malfeasance in parts of the police services.

But overall we should never, ever lose sight of the tremendous role that they play in a particular community and I wouldn't want the opportunity of this launch to go by without sticking up for the men and women of the police services of Australia. I think they do a terrific job.

But addressing violence in crime is not just about policing. Police and policing are of course primarily and properly so the responsibilities of the state and territory authorities. The Commonwealth has an important role to provide in offering a co-operative framework to assist the states and the territories and to ensure that our strategies and actions reflect world's best practice. Today we're taking that responsibility in the experience of Australia to a new and unprecedented level and before detailing the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime, let me outline work already being done which reflects our broad approach to supporting our

communities, addressing violence and crime and making our nation a safer place in which to live.

Since March 1996 the Government has undertaken and supported a range of substantial initiatives aimed directly at reducing the incidence of crime and violence in Australia. We've had the national implementation of the firearms control resolutions from the special Australasian Police Ministers' Council meeting of May 1996. We've had the National Register of Convicted Paedophiles. We've had the convening of the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Summit set down for later this year. We've had family violence intervention projects, domestic violence database and the domestic violence summit to be convened later this year and to which my Government is very strongly committed. We've had the National Women's Safety Survey, we've had strengthening family strategy to help prevent child abuse, the National Youth Suicide Strategy, the youth homelessness pilot programme, the rural and remote domestic violence initiative and firearms safety information - these programmes right across the broad spectrum of Government activities.

But what is being launched today takes this kind of commonwealth leadership involvement in standard setting and strong commitment to new levels. The National Campaign Against Violence and Crime reflects the Federal Government's commitment to building stronger communities, reducing the level and fear of crime in our communities and protecting the vulnerable - the aged, the young, minorities who may be subject to unfair and unacceptable abuse and discrimination.

In broad terms the campaign is going to compile the best known tactics for preventing and addressing violence and crime, help put them in place in Australian communities to test those tactics and programmes, ensure their effectiveness and then ensure that all Australians are empowered to take the best possible means to tackle violence and crime in our society.

The first year priorities will be very important. They will be residential burglary, domestic violence, fear of crime and young people. This is a wide range of crime prevention strategies, national research and implementation projects. This is the first time there has been a truly national strategic approach to violence and crime, the Commonwealth in partnership with the states and territories and tapping into the expertise which already abounds and exists at those levels. The national campaign is all about knowing the best approaches, testing those approaches and then implementing them across the country. The aim is not just best practice, this is practical applications for Australian society.

Surveys constantly show that there is a major concern about violence and crime in our communities. According to McNair in 1994, 72% of Australians viewed violence in crime as the number one issue of concern. 77% were concerned about violent crime and residents in the ACT, New South Wales and South Australia perceive burglary as the number one problem in their neighbourhoods. The campaign's national initiatives will address the need to research, develop, evaluate and implement national crime prevention projects. These projects will focus on crime prevention, fear of crime, residential burglary, domestic violence perpetrator programmes, early intervention with

children, young people's use of public space and homeless youth and preventing violence at public events.

In implementing the campaign and in addressing violence and crime generally, there is a large contribution from state and territories. We believe it's time that all governments worked together to crack down on crime in our community. Australians all want to feel safer in their homes, in public places, on the streets, on the playing fields and watching sport. The Campaign Against Crime and Violence will make Australia a safer place in which to live and in concluding my remarks, could I also acknowledge the presence here today of Shane Stone, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. Ladies and gentlemen, this is one of those occasions and this is one of those issues which draws together all of the governments of Australia across party lines and putting other divides aside. This strategy of ours cannot work unless it is done cooperatively. We are working with the states. We don't adopt a "Commonwealth knows best" approach to this. I recognise that the reservoirs of expertise and understanding about crime and violence in our community are very much at a state and territorial level. And the purpose of this campaign is to demonstrate the strong commitment of my Government to tackling the problem, our willingness to help devise a national strategy and our very strong desire to work in partnership with the states and territories.

There is a lot written and said about the responsibilities of Government in a modern society. I can't think of a more solemn responsibility than to give to the citizens of that society a greater sense of personal and physical security and safety and to the extent that this campaign can contribute to that, then it will be successful.

Thank you.