I would like to talk to you this week about Government assistance to Australian industry, conservation of our flora and fauna, and an employment training scheme to help married and single women.

This week the Minister for Trade and Industry and myself announced the establishment of a committee of top Australian businessmen to affect closer liaison between Government and industry on Defence production planning and equipment procurement.

This has been done to give Australian industry greater opportunities to study Defence requirements in depth, and also to allow industry to submit proposals for the supply of these requirements from local sources.

It also foreshadows a joint programme to achieve increased sales to American and other overseas defence industries. These sales would be an offset against Australian purchases of defence equipment from overseas firms.

I am determined that Australian industry should play a larger part in Defence production. Already local industry has been awarded substantial contracts, or sub-contracts, on major Defence equipment projects. These include offset orders for local industry in connection with helicopters, submarines, vehicles, ships and communications equipment.

The new committee will be chaired by Sir Ian McLennan, the Chairman of Broken Hill Proprietary Company, who led the Government sponsored mission of businessmen to the United States late last year. It will include a small standing group from the three Government Departments principally involved in Defence, Supply and Trade and Industry.

The Government will be looking to this committee for practical advice and as a liaison team for Australian industrial firms seeking increases in orders related to overseas purchases by the Government.

An important feature of the committee's work will be to encourage firms to undertake work in Australia which will help advance Australian industrial technology. I see the committee developing and carrying out a coordinated programme aimed at:

- Promoting increased overseas sales of Australian-built equipment and components.
- Encouraging cooperative research and development projects between Australia and overseas industry.
- Encouraging local firms to take on work in Australia for overseas firms wishing to build up Australian content of equipment or materiel for sale to our Armed Forces.
It is Government's policy to increase, where practicable, the proportion of defence equipment produced in Australia. It is also the Government's aim to assist in developing Australian Defence production capability, together with the upgrading of Australia's industrial technology.

However, I would like to sound one word of warning. In our approach to the matter of local production we must, as a nation, be more willing to discard the sluggish and unattractive projects. Government needs to exercise considerable responsibility in this direction.

The Government also wants to avoid creating an expansion in any particular sector of industry that could subsequently remain a continuous burden on the Defence Vote and the nation. We want to avoid, where possible, creating captive Defence industries which rely solely on the Defence Vote for their solvency.

I believe that the creation of the committee of businessmen will benefit both Government and industry in Australia. I believe its work will minimise the risks to industry I have warned of, while at the same time assisting develop a very necessary strong industrial base for Australia's national Defence capability.

Conservation is one of the key words of the emerging '70's. There is a growing public awareness of the need to guard Australia's native plants and animals and to protect them. There is also the real need to preserve our heritage if we are to keep attracting one of our largest industries....tourism.

Conservation is an old word that today has been given a new and popular meaning. Formerly, it was used in the context of the safeguarding of almost everything. It now stands by itself as the one word to express action taken to protect the natural environment.

Many of Australia's native plants and animals are unique. They are not found anywhere else in the world. Sadly, many have already become extinct or are threatened with extinction.

I know that there are a great many people in Western Victoria who are fully aware of the problems concerning preservation of our flora and fauna. These people have been fighting for the establishment of National Parks in the Glenelg Region and Little Desert in the Mallee for considerable time.

I believe the greatest threat to our wildlife is not the killing of animals but the destruction of their habitat. An example of this is seen in the declining numbers of Australian wildfowl. Their breeding grounds suffer from damming of rivers. Their dry season refuges
disappear with drainage for agriculture and flood mitigation. Land for wildlife reserves, sanctuaries, or national parks, should be acquired now. In two or three years the land needed may not be available.

The Parliament is aware of the problem and has established a Select Committee to look into Wild Life Conservation. This Committee is also taking a hard look at the effect of pesticides on wild life population.

The CSIRO Executive has formed an Environmental Quality Committee to assist with planning for future research.

These are positive measures but it is obvious to me that conservation is both a national and State problem. Importantly, there is an urgent need for coordination of efforts by governments, local bodies, industry and individuals.

We have come to the stage where quality of the environment and the unique wild life of Australia is being threatened. I believe the answer lies in a planned scheme of wild life management, an area under study by the CSIRO. Successful management of our wild life calls for adequate sanctuaries, flora and fauna reserves and national parks. I believe there is a need to investigate the adequacy of national parks and the effects of pollution and pesticides on our wildlife.

With increasing population pressure generated by man, conservation of all natural resources is becoming increasingly important.

Future generations will depend upon the foresight of this age for the material and cultural richness of their environment.

An Employment Training Scheme to assist married and single women who have been restricted by domestic responsibilities, but who have now reached a stage where they wish to enter employment, started this week.

The scheme is designed to provide opportunity for women entering, or re-entering, the work force to gain necessary vocational skills.

It should assist the woman seeking broader interests whose family has grown up.

It will obviously assist those women wishing to pick up the threads of a career which had been interrupted by marriage or the care of ageing parents. Others may need a family income supplement to raise living standards. The training scheme is broad enough to meet all these possibilities.

Leaflets, outlining details of the scheme, are available from district employment offices, municipal authorities or by writing direct to me at Parliament House, Canberra.
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Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

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