



NATIONAL COMPETITION COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Level 12, Casselden Place
2 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

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Adapting to change - towards a fair and efficient Australia

'The challenge for Governments is to devise and implement policies to ensure a fair and efficient Australia in the future, rather than focusing on what may or may not have worked in the past,' Graeme Samuel, President of the National Competition Council said today.

In a speech to the West Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Leaders Forum in Perth, Samuel said that Australia, and indeed the world, was changing dramatically in economic and social terms. 'The changes are driven primarily by the new technologies of the information age, which provide the potential for substantial increases in the productivity and wealth of the Australian community.

'But the new technologies also reduce the relative value of some current skills, assets and activities in Australia, while substantially increasing the value of others. These economic changes challenge traditional community values in some areas, especially in rural communities. There are substantial adjustment costs for many people. Some people are strongly opposed to any changes, in part because the forces behind those changes are difficult to understand.

'Australia needs to help people who suffer from social and economic change. The help should be designed to assist these people perform a valuable role in the new economic environment: thus, any help should be focused on adjustment, rather than seeking to maintain the status quo.

'Australia also needs to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of the benefits of the new economy, without undermining those benefits.

'But first and foremost, governments should adopt policies to ensure Australia is well placed to reap the benefits available from the new economy. Usually, this will mean reviewing policies and legislation which impede the use of new technologies. Business can help in this process by understanding the impacts that the new technologies have on society, and considering the best ways to ensure that they win acceptance.

'Well designed economic and social policy reform are essential ingredients to achieving these things. The National Competition Policy Reform program, implemented by governments with a focus on the public interest, is an important part of well designed policy reform.'

The full text of this speech is available from the Council's website <http://www.ncc.gov.au>. If you require a faxed copy of the speech please contact Cindy Barker on 03-9285 7493.

For further comment contact:

Graeme Samuel on 03-9285 7489 or 0414 335555

Ed Willett on 03-9285 7499 or 0414 559999

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