

1985 was a difficult year in many social areas, as a result of the abolition of the wage-price freeze, and the consequent full wage round. The Government expects 1986 to be a year of consolidation in health, where spending has increased rapidly, in education, where class sizes are being reduced, and in housing, where some new forms of building, as well as tenure, are being introduced.

With housing, new approaches to assistance will continue. In order to provide the greatest good for the greatest number, subsidised assistance will be carefully directed and adjusted progressively as particular needs alter. The funds so released will be used for others. Legislation on residential tenancies will come into effect this year, designed to produce greater fairness and better tenancy relationships.

In the field of education, the Government will introduce an Education Bill which, among other things, will provide a scheme for the registration and discipline of teachers.

In health, efforts will continue to relieve staffing shortages in many parts of the public hospital sector. Legislation reviewing the law relating to mental health will be introduced this year. It will reflect current social attitudes to human rights for the mentally ill.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, the Government will continue to implement policies which affirm Maori culture. It will introduce legislation recognising Maori as an official language.

The Government has already established a Ministry of Women's Affairs for the specific purpose of working towards equal opportunity and equal treatment for women in our society. It will work towards the ideal of women's participation on an equal basis in decision-making, as well as policy development.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, the changing nature of society has placed significant stresses on our police force. The Government's swift moves to introduce the early retirement scheme resulted in a revitalisation of the service. An injection of fit, new, frontline staff has substantially benefited the police, and that benefit will be reflected in service to the public.

A parallel and equally positive development, which is fully supported by the Government, is a significant resurgence of the community's desire to help the police. Nationally, thousands of neighbourhood support groups have been established, and are already proving their effectiveness.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, peace, economic security and social justice are three vital elements in establishing a high quality of life. A fourth element is the environment in which we live.

The Government will effect wide-ranging reforms in environmental administration, which were the subject of public consultation during 1985. Legislation will be introduced to make provision for the appointment by this House of a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. The same Bill will also provide for the establishment of a Ministry for the Environment.