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before 7.30 p.m. EST on 18th December, 1962.

OPENING OF A.B.C. TELEVISION
CHANNEL 3 AT CANBERRA

on 18th December, 1962

Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies

Well, I would like to say to my Parliamentary colleagues and to you who are looking at us and listening to us that I regard this as a very, very happy occasion. Man and boy, as you might say, I have been coming up here to Canberra on Parliamentary affairs since 1934 and in 1934, if I remember correctly, we had about 6,000 people in Canberra. It was a village. You could walk around it comfortably in an afternoon. Today it has the better part of 60,000 people and the wise men who understand these things and advise Governments and Oppositions tell us there will be 100,000 in 1970 and, getting bolder and bolder, they tell us there will be a quarter of a million by the turn of the century.

Now that means that Canberra is not only the capital of Australia but increasingly becomes more like a capital, with a weight of population and a quality of citizenship that will make it a very, very important place. And therefore it's a very happy event that we should be celebrating the opening of a national television station here. We have a commercial one at present, which has been seen by many people in this city. We will now have two. Now, I am very pleased about that and perhaps for two reasons.

First of all, it gives you a nice, pleasant feeling of mastery, doesn't it, if you are sitting in front of a television screen and you can turn it off and get on to another station. This is the highest exercise of citizenship and indeed they make it easy for you now because you can do it by remote control, by pressing a button.

And the other thing, of course, is that a national television station operating to the standards that we expect from the Australian Broadcasting Commission and what it does in this country, will, I think, make a powerful contribution to our amusement and also to our intellectual life and that is a very important thing in the capital city of Australia - a university city, a diplomatic city, a Parliamentary city, a seat of Government.

It's tremendously important that we should have those things that we regard as almost the special responsibility of a Government station - accurate reporting, objective interpretation and comment, music, drama of the highest quality, a general presentation which, in the broad sense, in a human sense, represents a contribution to the educational standards of the country and will, I believe, strive more and more, year by year to achieve that ideal. This, after all, is the great object of a national television station. I don't mean by that that it is to be dull. It's quite possible to be amusing, they tell me, without being dull. It's quite possible to be instructive without being dull. The record of the A.B.C. already, right round Australia, indicates a high level of capacity for providing what the people want. And so, from tonight on, we will have in this city and in this territory, indeed in the whole area that is covered by the Station, the opportunity of a choice, the opportunity of following our own fancy, of pursuing our own mood, according to the kind of thing that we want to look at and listen to.

This, I think, is a notable day in the history of Canberra. I declare this Station open and I wish it great success.