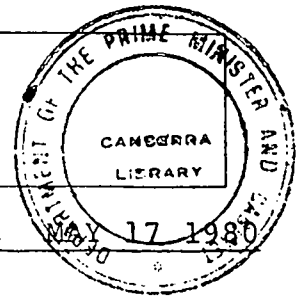




PRIME MINISTER



FOR MEDIA

SATURDAY,

OPENING OF THE FIRST STAGE OF THE AUSTRALIAN
MARITIME COLLEGE, BEAUTY POINT, LAUNCESTON

Thank you for inviting me to open the "Practical Seamanship and Fisheries Training Centre", the first stage of the Australian Maritime College.

The College, of which this Centre is a part, is a further step in a series of initiatives which may result in Tasmania becoming known as the maritime centre of Australia. After all, such a reputation is what one might expect of a State named after that famous seafaring explorer, Abel Tasman.

In fact, Tasman's seafaring exploits are fine examples of practical seamanship, and no doubt will be a source of inspiration for the Centre's first contingent of 120 officer trainees.

The Government is proud to be associated with this College, and is confident that the \$25.6 million in Commonwealth capital funds to be spend on the College by 1984 will be amply repaid by the quality of College graduates.

Until now, Australia has relied, to a large extent, on officers who have received their training, and often their qualifications, in overseas countries, particularly the United Kingdom. This College will redress that imbalance by providing a wide range of courses designed to ensure that the training received by Australian seafarers is equal to any in the world.

By 1984, the full-time student population will be about 600, and it is anticipated that by the same year, about 900 experienced personnel will be undertaking short specialist courses. Thus, not only will the College meet the needs of budding deck officers, engineers, radio officers and the like, but also it will enable serving marine officers to keep informed of the latest developments in their field.

The skills the students obtain here, at this national institution, will fit them for the positions they occupy, or intend to occupy, in the fishing and shipping industries, and in so doing, will strengthen these important Australian industries.

This decade promises to be exciting and challenging, and those associated with our off-shore areas will benefit from a new period of research, development and investment opening

up in our off-shore waters.

We have recently declared a 200 nautical mile fishing zone around Australia, giving us control over, and access to, a marine resource area approximately equal to the land mass of the continent itself.

Most of our oil and gas has been found off-shore: the Gippsland Basin in Bass Strait accounts for about 90% of our local production of oil and that is about 60% of our total consumption; the planned North-West Shelf project will produce four times the quantity of natural gas that the Bass Strait fields are presently producing.

The Great Barrier Reef, one of the wonders of the world, is a priceless and irreplaceable part of our off-shore heritage which this Government will not allow to be damaged by any drilling or mining on or near it.

It is of vital importance that the abundant marine resources which exist off-shore are managed, carefully; are harvested, not plundered; are conserved, not destroyed.

Our off-shore area is the new frontier, a new world to be mastered. As with all things new and untried, it has demanded a fresh approach by governments, Commonwealth and State.

Old, inappropriate policies have been discarded and replaced by policies and initiatives which reflect the importance of this zone to Australia.

These policies could not be adequately developed until the vexed question of Commonwealth/State jurisdiction over the off-shore areas had been resolved.

For over a decade, Commonwealth and State governments had wrestled with what appeared to be irreconcilable State and Commonwealth interests in off-shore areas. The debate was sometimes heated, often acrimonious. But always, until the advent of this government, inconclusive.

It represented a sorry and depressing catalogue of Commonwealth and State distrust and resentment.

Finally in 1975, the High Court ruled that the Commonwealth has exclusive power over the surrounding seas up to the low water mark. Armed with this decision, the Commonwealth could have asserted total control from the low water mark, seaward. We could have excluded the States completely from the control, management, and a share, of the off-shore resources.

That would have been very unfortunate for Tasmania, and for all the States and the Northern Territory.

We chose not to do so.

Instead, we embarked on a process of shared power.

We have just introduced into the Federal Parliament a historic package of bills which give practical expression to our policy

of co-operative Federalism; to our commitment to co-operation, not confrontation.

These bills provide the legal basis for States' rights and activities in the off-shore area.

We believe that the "Three Mile" territorial sea is an area best left for local State jurisdiction, except on matters of over-riding national or international importance.

Also, we believe that a State's legislative powers should extend to fisheries in Australian waters beyond the "Three Mile" territorial sea, provided there is an arrangement between the Commonwealth and the State that the fisheries are to be managed in accordance with the laws of the State.

Other bills in the package will, briefly speaking, vest in each State proprietary rights and title in respect of the seabed of the adjacent territorial sea; give to the States control of off-shore petroleum mining in the adjacent territorial sea; and no doubt, of vital interest to this College, establish arrangements which lay the basis for a complete resolution of shipping and navigation problems that have existed in Australia since federation.

I am pleased to say that all State governments, of both political persuasion, including Tasmania, have joined in a spirit of co-operation, to enable the States and the Commonwealth to share powers and resources in the seas surrounding Australia.

The package of bills will enable the Commonwealth and the States to develop, in a co-operative way, the resources of the sea, and of the land beneath. This is of special importance to Tasmania, as an island State with a great fishing industry.

These agreements, painstakingly reached after two years of detailed negotiations, have set the framework within which the Commonwealth and States can come together in co-operation to safeguard Australia's off-shore interests.

The groundwork has been laid, but much more is needed. Increased research, bringing with it increased knowledge and understanding of this vast new world, is vital if we are to ensure optimum utilisation and proper conservation of the available resources.

To this end, we have already established the Australian Institute of Marine Science and located it in Townsville in close proximity to the Great Barrier Reef. It presently engages in valuable research work on the Reef, and recent decisions will boost its role even further.

Scientists from overseas already have undertaken research at the Institute. We want it to become world-renowned, engaging in research of the highest calibre, and internationally admired for its scientific and professional expertise.

In addition, we have created an expert scientific advisory body, "ASTEAC" (The Australian Science and Technology Council) which has a specialised sub-committee, "AMSTAC" (The Australian Marine Sciences and Technologies Advisory Committee).

Advice from these bodies assists us to make the best and wisest decisions in relation to marine science and research.

As a result of ASTEC's report last year, additional research funds were made available and we are currently examining a second ASTEC report, to determine the future funding of marine science programmes.

Also, as you are no doubt aware, we have decided to re-locate in Tasmania the CSIRO division of Fisheries and Oceanography.

This \$25 million decision will involve the transfer of the CSIRO division of Fisheries and Oceanography at present headquartered at Cronulla, N.S.W.

It will include acquisition of a suitable site in Hobart and construction of the CSIRO Marine Science laboratories; and it will implement construction of a \$9 million multi-purpose oceanographic research vessel which will be able to range around the Australian continent. This vessel will be in addition to three other research and training vessels the Commonwealth has commissioned to be built, purchased, or refitted at a total cost of over \$6 million.

The funds to commence this total package will be committed next year thereby establishing in Tasmania, with CSIRO facilities a first-class marine science centre.

The centre, together with the transfer of the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science and the Environment will constitute a research establishment of international standing.

It is not by accident that we have chosen Tasmania as a home for many of these activities.

As our closest point to the Antarctic, it was an obvious choice for the Antarctic Division of the Department of Science and the Environment.

The Commonwealth has expended over \$8 million on facilities for this division. It will have a core staff of 100, with up to 150 additional specialists recruited for varying periods.

By bringing together these research and related activities, Tasmania will become the hub of Australia's Antarctic endeavours, and an important centre for marine science and research for all Australia.

We also hope that Hobart will be selected as the headquarters of the commission proposed under the "Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources".

Delegates from 15 countries are currently meeting in Canberra and are expected to reach a decision on this matter next week.

No doubt, the examination of various Hobart sites they made with the Federal Minister for Productivity and Member for Bass, Mr. Kevin Newman, will assist them in their deliberations.

Tasmania's significant fishing industry makes it a logical choice for the CSIRO's Marine Science Centre and the Australian Maritime College.

Tasmania is going to play an increasingly important role in advancing Australia's knowledge of, and capacity to develop, the resources of the sea.

Major facilities are being established here; facilities that will place Tasmania, and therefore, Australia, at the forefront of marine science and technology.

Already, a number of foreign fishing interests are making a close study of Tasmania's fishing resources.

Some members of the Tasmanian fishing industry have voiced their concern about the foreign fishing operations in and around Tasmanian waters. Our position is clear. To ensure effective exploitation and preservation of Australian marine resources, we have to determine the total allowable catches; the amount that can be taken by Australians; and the allocation that can be made to foreign countries, if any surplus is available.

Guidelines administered by the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry deny foreign fishing interests access to fisheries fully exploited by Australians or likely to be so in the near future.

Our policy of giving preference to Australians will ensure that as they develop the capacity to harvest more resources, foreign operations will be reduced accordingly.

A pleasing development, is the co-operation that has been displayed between Australian, Japanese and Polish interests in carrying out feasibility studies in and around Tasmanian waters. The Commonwealth Government has supported in the past, and will continue to support in the future, these types of studies, for we believe all Australians benefit from a healthy, viable, fishing industry.

We are committed to the exploration of fish resources in the 200 mile zone, and have made additional moneys available for research and development. For example, new fishing grounds have been identified off north west Tasmania.

Knowing that the fish are there, is one thing; finding them, as every fisherman knows, is another.

Consequently, in 1980-81, the "Tasmanian Fisheries Development Authority" will receive a Commonwealth grant for a feasibility study of the application of "satellite remote sensing" to fisheries investigations.

I have no doubt this will be extremely helpful to commercial fishermen. However, when space-age technology catches up with amateur fishermen like me, I think it will take all the fun out of fishing.

Ladies and gentlemen, Australia stands poised to embark on a programme of maritime activity and marine research which, for Australia, as the world's only island continent, is long overdue.

As I mentioned earlier, Tasmania has all the portents of becoming Australia's maritime centre. And I am sure the Australian Maritime College will go a long way towards enhancing such a reputation. So, to the staff who will serve here, and to the students who will study here, I wish "bon voyage".

I have great pleasure in declaring open the first stage of the Australian Maritime College, the "Practical Seamanship and Fisheries Training Centre".

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