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## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, 22 NOVEMBER, 1981

### 25th ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE OPENING OF THE MELBOURNE OLYMPICS

Gold medallists, Mr. Premier, Dame Pattie Menzies, Lady Kent-Hughes, Ministers and Parliamentary colleagues, ladies and gentlemen: Kevin Gosper, thank you very much for that introduction and for what you have said about the value and the future of sport, as well as the increasing Government support for sport. Sport is something we all believe in. It offers something to everyone. It develops many of the finest human qualities, and it draws Australians together.

We are celebrating tonight one of the greatest events in Australia's sporting history, and we are also paying tribute to some of the greatest sportsmen and sportswomen in Australia's history.

I wish I could pay tribute to every one of them by name, for all their successes deserve citation. And while I don't have the time to do that, I do want to say how delighted we are that Betty Cuthbert is here tonight. We are also delighted that Dame Pattie Menzies and Lady Kent-Hughes are here, and it is worth remembering that it was Wilfred Kent-Hughes, as Chairman of the Olympic Organizing Committee, who signed the invitations which brought the three and a half thousand athletes from sixty seven countries to Melbourne twenty five years ago today.

My mind goes back to that moment when Ron Clark ran down the race onto the M.C.G. carrying aloft the Olympic torch, because it was a great moment for everyone here and it was a great moment for Australia.

I know that while most of us could see no fault in that torch as it circled around the M.C.G. it was giving Ron's arm some nasty burns. No doubt Ron cursed the design of the torch, but it was obvious from the way he moved that the pain did nothing to diminish his pride in what he had been chosen to do. At that moment, Ron symbolised the pride which all of us felt that the Melbourne Games were a reality, just as the flame he was carrying symbolized the high ideals of the Olympic movement.

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The Melbourne Games meant a lot to Australia in terms of helping us to become more outward looking as a nation, and in terms of demonstrating to the world the value of the Australian way of life.

Melbourne has been Australia's front window to the world on many occasions, and the people of Melbourne never fail to discharge their responsibility with the highest distinction.

The Melbourne Olympics were an overall triumph in terms of sportsmanship, and also in terms of the achievement of so many people here tonight whose names were household words throughout Australia at that time. I am particularly pleased to be here tonight not only because I was an onlooker at the Melbourne Games, but also because I value the kind of contact this makes possible.

There are obviously several reasons why Australia places such value on sportsmen and women and one of them comes out in a story about Bob Menzies which Norman Strange used to tell, and I am sure that Bob would have enjoyed the story because it illustrates the kind of respect and deference that Prime Ministers can expect from sportsmen. As everyone here knows, Bob was a great lover of sport, and he went to the tennis one day with Norman Strange when Lew Hoad was playing. After Lew's match was finished, and I do not know whether he won or lost though being Lew I suppose he won, Norman Strange took Menzies down to the dressing room to give Lew a chance to meet him. Lew was sitting down trying to get a shoelace undone, and Norman Strange said "Lew; I've brought the Prime Minister down here to introduce you to him". Hoad seemed not to have heard, so Strange raised his voice a bit, and repeated his words - "Lew, the Prime Minister is here and I would to introduce you to him". Still no response. Hoad just kept fiddling with his shoelace, and said nothing. Strange was starting to feel a bit awkward, but he raised his voice a bit more and had a third try - "Lew, here is the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Menzies, and I want to introduce you to him". Hoad finally looked up, looked at both of them, and said "Yes, I know." How many of you would have yearned for the opportunity to say that to me last year. One of the greatest things about sportsmen and women is that they are achievers. They get out and do things, and they keep looking ahead. Sport provides a challenge to achieve success and I believe that it is because Australians have always wanted to go out to meet that kind of challenge wherever it arises, not just in sport but in every field of achievement that Australia has made the sort of progress it has.

Everyone here knows in one way or another how much better it is to win than to lose, and in international sport in particular the challenge to success becomes even more demanding with higher standards being set all the time. If training on Tuesdays and Thursdays after work was not enough in 1956, and everyone here knows that it wasn't, it certainly is not enough in the 1980s. It was partly in recognition of this that the Australian Institute of Sport was established in Canberra at the start of this year. The Institute is providing world-class training facilities and top level specialist coaching, backed up by sports science and sports medicine, to talented and promising young Australian athletes.

The A.I.S. has been successfully launched in its initial year using facilities at the National Sports Centre in Canberra, which comprises at the moment the National Athletic Stadium which incorporates sports science laboratories, and the National Indoor Sports Centre as well as tennis and netball courts. A specialist gymnasium centre is due to be completed next March, a throwing area ~~for athletes is being developed~~, and the Government has recently approved the construction of an indoor swimming and tennis training centre on which work will begin shortly.

A major objective behind the Institute of Sport is to give these young people the opportunity to pursue their sport to the highest level without interrupting their education or placing their careers at risk. Australia has needed this Institute, and its inception this year is timely. It should give a massive boost in the years ahead to top-class competitive sport in Australia and I am hopeful that this concept will be taken up around Australia.

The Government is keen to listen to the many voices of sport in Australia and ~~is responding with a variety of important initiatives to the changing requirements of sport.~~ The Government has wide-ranging programs which are aimed both at assisting those sportsmen and women who have the capacity to scale the heights of sporting achievement.

In financial terms, the total allocation for sport and recreation in the 1981-82 Commonwealth Budget is almost \$16 million and this is more than double the 1980-81 expenditure.

We all have high hopes for the athletes of tomorrow, and we need to be looking ahead to the challenge of next year's Commonwealth Games in Brisbane and to the 1984 Olympics. I want to say in relation to the 1984 Games that I believe the bonds between the A.O.F. and the Commonwealth Government have never been stronger, and the Government will be giving early consideration to a formal request for assistance in Australia's preparations and participation in the 1984 Olympics. But we need to be looking even further ahead than 1984. ~~We need to be looking to Australia's Bicentenary in 1988 because right around Australia, in every sport, people will be wanting special events to be at the centre in the celebrations which will take place in that year.~~ I am sure you will not mind me looking ahead like this even though we are here tonight to celebrate a great event from the past.

The memories of the Melbourne Olympics, which are so strong in the minds of everyone here tonight, form a great page - a great chapter - in Australian history, and Australia salutes again those athletes and organisers who wrote the story in that chapter. We also salute Ron Delaney, just as John Landy saluted him 25 years ago after Ron had won the 1500 metres.

There is just one more thing for me to say. This is only the Silver Jubilee, and in the proper Olympic tradition, we must aspire to the gold, and I hope you will again invite me to join you when that occasion comes around.