



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED AGAINST DELIVERY

LAUNCH OF THE AUSTRALIAN NUGGET BULLION COIN
SYDNEY - 23 APRIL 1987

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we launch the Australian Nugget gold bullion coins, marking the culmination of two years of co-operation between the Federal Government and the Government of Western Australia.

Many groups deserve recognition for this achievement, including the West Australian Development Corporation, trading as Goldcorp Australia, the Perth Mint, the Commonwealth Treasury and the Royal Australian Mint. While congratulating them all, I want to pay special tribute to the initiative and drive of my friend the Premier of Western Australia, Brian Burke.

Thanks to Brian and to the many other people involved with this project, a new range of gold bullion coins is entering the marketplace. Late last year, a limited edition of proof coins of the Australian Nugget series was released for the numismatic market. The oversubscription of that edition suggests a bright future awaits the Australian Nugget series on the gold bullion market.

The discovery of gold in the last century played a central role in the development of the Australian nation. Gold attracted new settlers, it generated new cities and towns, it helped forge our political traditions and was a great spur to more diversified economic growth.

It is no accident that the idea for the Australian Nugget coins should have originated in Western Australia, Australia's largest gold producing State. And the theme of these gold coins - famous Australian Nuggets - signifies the importance of the discovery of gold in the development of the Australian nation.

As these coins show, gold has been discovered in many corners of the Australian continent, from northern Western Australia to southern Victoria, by prospectors using shovels in the last century to those using metal detectors in recent years.

The 1 ounce coin depicts the Welcome Stranger, the largest nugget ever found, which was unearthed in 1869 near Dunolly, in Victoria. The Hand of Faith Nugget, depicted on the 1/2 ounce coin, was also discovered in Victoria, at Wedderburn, some 111 years later in 1980.

But the Little Hero, shown on the 1/10 ounce coin, was discovered thousands of kilometres away, at Marble Bar, in Western Australia, while the Golden Eagle on the 1/4 ounce coin was found in 1931 near Norseman.

The 1980s have seen a massive and rapid resurgence of gold production in Australia.

My Government recently decided not to remove the tax-exempt status of the gold mining industry. That decision, along with the high price of gold and the development of new mining techniques, has helped make gold again a major contributor to the nation's economic development.

In 1986, Australian gold production grew by 24 per cent to the highest level recorded since 1913. Of the 73,000 kilograms produced last year, 57,000 were exported, earning Australia \$955 million in revenue, or nearly 3 per cent of total exports. In the first three months of 1987 gold exports have already earned \$422 million - nearly 5 per cent of export revenue so far this year.

By the end of the year, some 140 gold mines will be operating in Australia, with more than 200 gold mining companies actively exploring for gold or producing it.

Australia is now the world's fastest growing gold producer.

So it makes good sense that we should be one of the world's top producers of bullion coins.

Since gold bullion coins became available in the early 1970s, they have made an important contribution to an expanding world market for gold.

Like all gold bullion coins the true value of the Australian Nugget coins will essentially be determined by the world price of their gold content. However the coins will be legal tender in Australia, so buyers can be confident of their quality and standards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My Government's policies are aimed at restoring Australia's economic performance and ensuring the future prosperity of all Australians.

I believe the gold industry - from the mining of gold ores, to the production and export of refined gold, to the development of a market for Australian gold coins - has an important part to play in achieving those goals.

The flair and entrepreneurial drive of the organisers of this project is to be commended. It is therefore with very great pleasure that I launch the Australian Nugget gold bullion coins.
