



## PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
LAUNCH OF 'THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE'  
CANBERRA - 14 SEPTEMBER 1988**

Any scholarly project which draws on the work of dozens of academics working in different fields, and which coordinates their research - in many cases their new research - into a single publication ranging across historical and contemporary issues must by definition be a important event.

This book does all that, and it is a credit to its editor, Dr James Jupp, to all its contributors, and to its publishers Angus and Robertson.

But what makes this book a real tour de force is its subject matter: nothing less complex, fascinating and significant than the Australian people themselves.

With the publication of "The Encyclopedia of the Australian People", a glaring gap in our understanding of ourselves has been filled.

Now it can at last be said that the Australian community in all its diversity and richness has received the comprehensive and sympathetic scholarly attention it deserves.

In our Bicentennial year, when Australians are giving renewed consideration to the question of what it means to be an Australian, this publication is especially welcome - because it provides part of the answer. It helps us to understand ourselves, our past and the identity we carry into the future. I commend the Australian Bicentennial Authority for its financial support of this book; it is a work of real excellence, which adds great distinction to our Bicentennial year.

"The Encyclopedia of the Australian People" is a work of great scholarship. It is an encyclopedia of our current knowledge of the Australian population and of contemporary relationships within our society. It is not merely a catalogue of the cultural and national groups that make up Australia. It is a history of the Australian people, the story of a community.

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James Jupp was extremely well qualified to undertake the daunting task of compiling this book - a task on which he embarked in 1984.

Like almost a quarter of the Australian population, Dr Jupp was an immigrant. He came originally from Britain, and since coming to Australia has held a number of academic posts concentrating on the study of Australian immigration and multiculturalism. His expertise is manifest in the Encyclopedia's detailed study of the regional cultures of the English people who formed such a large proportion of Australian immigrants.

He is also well known as the Chairman of the Committee which examined Government services in a multicultural society and indeed which laid down those principles of multiculturalism which formed the basis of Government policies in this field.

These included the establishment of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. James Jupp has worked closely with that Office and his advice is well respected. So it gives me great pleasure to announce today that he has agreed to formalise his relationship by becoming a member of the Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs. Dr Jupp will join the other members for an important meeting this Friday - a meeting at which I will receive from the Advisory Council their discussion paper on the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia.

What this book spells out in compelling and extraordinary detail is the fact of Australia's ethnic diversity. And may I say how pleasing it is to see, in a Bicentennial publication, Australia's Aboriginal and Islander communities given appropriate and detailed recognition in the encyclopedia. The scholarship and research brought together here will be a major information resource, which will be relevant and valuable for years to come.

There are those today, including some unfortunately who are based here in Parliament House, who pretend that Australians can in some way choose whether or not we should be a multicultural nation. The truth is of course we cannot choose - Australia's multicultural identity is an indelible part of our social make-up today.

Just as importantly, this ethnic diversity has been a fact of Australian life for the last two hundred years.

Australians are not really multicultural by choice. In fact, after reading in this book about the convicts who came here from Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Mauritius, Russia, the West Indies, Egypt, Persia - as well as from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland - you could conclude, from all these enforced settlers, that in a real and literal sense Australia became multicultural by conviction.

This book details Australians of more than 100 different cultural or national backgrounds: the British, the Irish, the Greeks, the Italians, the Yugoslavs, the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Lebanese - as well as some of the lesser known and smaller groups such as the Kurds, the Manx, the Seychellois, the Tibetans.

Today, four out of ten Australians are immigrants or their children - half of them from non-English speaking backgrounds. As James Jupp says in his introduction, "Most Australians tracing their descent will very quickly come across ancestors who never lived in Australia and who possibly had no idea where it was."

In my own case, great-grandparents on both sides of my family came from Cornwall. I was impressed to see in "The Encyclopedia of the Australian People" such a lengthy and informative section devoted to the Cornish men and women who came to Australia - and especially those who created the mining industries in South Australia. May I say I am proud to be a descendant of those Cornish miners.

Because what was true of the Cornish experience is true of dozens of other Australians from other lands and cultures. As this book describes, they were motivated to uproot themselves and their families and to embark on the hazardous journey to Australia where, upon arrival, through hard work, they secured the foundation of their own prosperity and the prosperity of their new land Australia.

And they did this without losing contact with or pride in their own traditions and ways of life.

That is the Australian achievement - that people of different backgrounds can become Australians if they possess this sole requirement: commitment to Australia, to its interests and to its future. That commitment is what unites this nation of many cultures and many traditions.

The openness of Australians, our willingness and preparedness to accept people as individuals, to give everyone a fair go, our tolerance, acceptance and respect - these are not attributes of which to be afraid but attributes in which we can all take pride.

They are attributes that can't be confected or imposed with conformist, repressive enjoiners like "One Australia". That way lies insecurity, friction and division.

We are one Australia because we all have the common commitment to our country - Australia - and that Australia is the stronger, the richer because of the diversity of our backgrounds and the total absence of any semblance or suggestion of discrimination in our immigration policies. And, ladies and gentlemen, I pledge to you that as far as this Prime Minister and this Government are concerned that is the way it will remain and unequivocally remain.

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This book will be a valuable resource and reference for many Australians. It is one of those books that should be read, by all Australians. It is something which I personally am very proud to be associated with. I have great pleasure in launching it.

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