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PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
LAUNCH OF "DREAMING OF LORDS"
PARLIAMENT HOUSE - 7 DECEMBER 1988**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the presence of this distinguished company, which includes some of the finest cricketers in the world - indeed, some of the greatest of all time - it gives me great pleasure to launch "Dreaming of Lords", the film which tells the story of the National Aboriginal Cricket team's tour of England earlier this year.

We are here today to celebrate the achievements of the 1988 team but we should not forget their predecessors.

On earlier occasions I have discussed in detail the outstanding achievements of the 1868 Aboriginal team, the first Australian team to tour England.

Let me mention now one or two aspects.

We may imagine the difficult adjustment these Aboriginal sportsmen had to make, in travelling from the rural quietness of Western Victoria to industrial England. On top of that, their playing conditions were frequently very tough. As John Mulvaney and Rex Harcourt have written:

"While matches normally lasted only two days, there were more of them, which added to the time spent travelling, often in uncomfortable vehicles and delays were prolonged while waiting for transport connections. The hours of play were longer also than at present. Play began at 11 am or noon and usually continued until 7 pm or later. The addition of sporting exhibitions to the Aborigines' programme must have involved even longer hours. There were no tea breaks and the only interval was for lunch, a 35 minute period at some time between 2 and 3 pm. Most grounds did not provide special catering facilities for the players who had to take their chance with the crowd which thronged refreshment tents. If he was lucky, a player emerged with beer and sandwiches."

I understand the ACB manages these things somewhat differently these days.

Notwithstanding these and similar difficulties, they performed with great skill and, with the benefit of hindsight, we can say that in Johnny Mullagh, they produced one of the greatest Australian cricketers to tour England.

While preparing for the tour, the 1988 tourists came face to face with the spirit of the men of 1868. Playing in Western Victoria, at Harrow last Easter, they met Mrs Esther Burchett, a member of the Aboriginal community. Mrs Burchett had, in her youth, known Jimmy Tarpot, one of the stars of 1868. She is now 102 years old and it is marvellous that she provided a living bridge between these two fine teams.

It was a great initiative on the part of the National Aboriginal Cricket Association to organise a tour of England in 1988. The results of the tour fully justify the high hopes of those who conceived and organised it, and, of course, those companies, such as Qantas, who sponsored it.

On the field, they played with distinction, winning 16 of their 28 fixtures. The opposition they met was frequently formidable and I am afraid I should probably acknowledge some responsibility for this.

In January at Manly, I captained a team against John McGuire's team. My side included some of the great names in Australian cricket - Lillee, Marsh, Chappell and others. We were soundly defeated.

The news of this result preceded the Aboriginal team in England, with the consequence that their opposing teams were frequently stacked with players of international and first class experience. This makes their for and against record even more meritorious.

Incidentally, my own contribution at Manly was an innings of some 20 minutes which was described afterwards by a young aficionado of the game as "a very solid duck, Mr Hawke". I am sure that the film makers would not have had the disrespect to include this batting effort in "Dreaming of Lords".

There were some outstanding individual performances on the tour of England. The experienced players like John McGuire, Michael Mainhardt and Neil Bulger performed with the consistency and quality expected of them. Young players like Sean Appo, Bert Pearce and Joe Marsh, who averaged 52 with the bat, all made significant progress. And I am very happy to say that the performances of Michael Williams behind the stumps have earned him a place in the Prime Minister's XI to play against Viv Richards and the West Indies team tomorrow.

All the participants benefitted enormously from the tour, in a playing and a personal sense.

The team were great sporting ambassadors for Australia on and off the field. Doug McClelland, our High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, sent me very favourable reports of their progress. And there was considerable press reporting in Britain on the tour, all of it very positive. This reflects enormous credit on Mark Ella the manager, Ian King, the coach, John McGuire, the captain, and every individual player.

"Dreaming of Lords" is their story. It puts their tour in its historical context. It tells of the 17 players on this unique odyssey, the rigours of their training, how they coped, as individuals and as a team, with instant celebrity, and the adventures and social situations they encountered in typical English conditions.

The film has been made with great warmth, humour and imagination. In the short term, it will provide great entertainment. In the longer term, it will be a valuable historical record. And, at both levels, I hope it will be an inspiration to the Aboriginal community and to all Australians.

The highlights of the Aboriginal tour are recorded, including their match at Lords, which was unfortunately curtailed by rain - let's not mention that word again for a day or two - but not before the team had taken the field for a couple of hours. I am also delighted that their match against Clive Lloyd's XI is included. And may I take this opportunity, Clive, to say what a tremendous privilege and pleasure it is to have you back in Australia with this magnificent West Indian side. I am really looking forward to having you in my side to play the Aboriginal team in January at Manly.

I want to congratulate Mark Manion and Contagious Films for making the film and to Bob Ellis for writing it, and writing so entertainingly about the tour. Thanks are due to the Australian Film Commission and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for their support and encouragement.

The film has taken over two years to make and was shot throughout Australia and Britain. It has been bought by Channel 4 in Britain and I am very much looking forward to seeing it on Channel 9 here in the new year.

I hope that the 1988 tour will provide a stimulus to Aboriginal cricket and that in due course we will see an Aboriginal test player for Australia.

This film record could not be launched in more auspicious circumstances, on the eve of what I trust will be a great day's cricket tomorrow between the Prime Minister's XI and the West Indies. I wish "Dreaming of Lords" every success and now invite everybody to sit back and enjoy the highlights of this extraordinary Aboriginal cricket tour of England.
