



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**LAUNCH OF KEITH MURDOCH SOUND ARCHIVE
OF AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR OF 1939-45
CANBERRA - 17 FEBRUARY 1989**

Dame Beryl Beaurepaire,
Les Hollings,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Here in this commemorative courtyard we are reminded forcefully of the enormous sacrifice Australia has paid in time of war.

The Roll of Honour lists the names of Australian men and women who died in the service of our country - an awesome list outlining in stark human terms the magnitude of Australia's contribution to the defence of liberty and democracy.

Australia, and possibly New Zealand and Canada, are remarkable among nations in that we know, by name, every individual who has died on a battlefield for the nation.

And of course the records held here at the Australian War Memorial tell us a great deal more about Australia's war time experiences.

But there has always been an imbalance in the Memorial's archival holdings.

There is a rich vein of letters, diaries and other documents about Australians in the First World War.

But for the Second World War, a combination of a decline in letter writing and more strictly enforced secrecy rules means that fewer first hand records exist.

It's simply much harder to document what it was like to be an Australian serviceman or woman in the Second World War.

It is that problem which the Keith Murdoch Sound Archive is designed to rectify.

This Archive will capture for posterity the tales of hundreds of ordinary men and women caught up in the extraordinary events of war.

The Archive will be made up of some 500 interviews drawn from all the services, all ranks and the many theatres in which Australians served.

It will record in individual ways the personalities, the experiences, and the feelings of those who served their country so well.

I believe that many of the people already approached for these interviews had to be coaxed into relating their experiences.

Some of them have said that in recording these interviews for the archive they told their stories for the first time.

Their reticence is understandable but I think they too modestly underestimate how important it is that their stories are told.

If their memories are not recorded now we risk losing them forever - and that would indeed be an irreplaceable and tragic loss.

This Sound Archive will be housed in the Memorial's Research Centre which is already well-known for its magnificent archives of documents and photographs.

It will be invaluable to historians, film-makers, researchers and members of the public who want to learn more about those who served their country.

It will also provide material for incorporation in the Memorial's galleries to give a special personal insight into those displays.

I congratulate you, Dame Beryl, and your Council for your foresight in pursuing this worthy objective. The War Memorial has long sought to fill the gaps in the records of the Second World War and you can rightly be satisfied that that task is now being achieved.

I also congratulate and express my gratitude to News Limited for its generosity in making possible the creation of the Archive.

It is most appropriate that News Limited, through Rupert Murdoch, should provide sponsorship for the Keith Murdoch Sound Archive.

Sir Keith Murdoch, as a journalist and as a newspaper proprietor, was a man of great influence in Australian history, including in two world wars.

As a war correspondent during the First World War, he was severely critical of the Dardanelles campaign which eventually led to the recall of the British commander from the war zone.

As Director-General of Information during the Second World War he also made an important contribution to Australia.

I hope News Limited's generous support will be matched by others in the private sector to help ensure that the Australian War Memorial maintains its reputation for excellence and innovation.

In opening the Sound Archive now, and accepting it on behalf of the Australian people, I want finally to thank those people whose voices have been and will be recorded for posterity. Some of them are here today. Let me express my thanks to you, and through you to your fellow archivists, for your participation in this vital national project.
