



## **PRIME MINISTER**

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP**

**CEREMONY TO MARK THE COMMENCEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION OF  
STAGE I OF THE ASSISI HOME FOR THE AGED**

**15 MARCH 1992**

Your Grace, Mr Valmorbida, Ladies and gentlemen

Each time we welcome to this country people who have been bold enough to move their homes, their affections and their allegiances across the world, I think we are the bolder for it.

When people start a new life here they give new life to the nation as a whole.

That is the history of this country. Migration has been our lifeblood and our strength.

The energy and initiative migrants bring is vital to our economic health.

The cultural diversity they bring makes us richer in countless ways.

They open our eyes and our minds to the rest of the world.

Quite simply migration makes Australia a better place, and better in the eyes of other nations.

Italians have been migrating to Australia for a century and a half.

There were Italians on the Australian goldfields. It was an Italian who wrote the classic account of the Eureka Stockade in 1854.

Italians were pioneers in our horticultural and agricultural industries before World War II.

Since World War II, of course, Italians have been perhaps the major players in transforming the cultural life of our cities and towns: while their hard work and

initiative in all sectors of the economy has been of inestimable value to the nation's growth and wealth.

But Italian people have been more than agents of change in Australia.

They have been important in renewing old and essential values - values which have at times shown signs of weakening.

Italian people have been models for all Australians in the community spirit they have brought, their religious values, their commitment to family values - and in their care for the aged.

The Assisi Home for the Aged bears witness to all these things - and I am therefore honoured and very grateful for your invitation to become your patron.

The government is conscious that we must do all we can for the generation which did so much for Australia.

Obviously the Italian Australian community is aware of its responsibility, and I'm pleased to say that the government has matched this by providing \$3.7 million to enable this great project to begin.

Today I can assure the Italian community and all Australians, whatever their national origin, that we remain committed to encouraging that climate of cultural diversity and freedom, tolerance and mutual respect, which are the true aims of multi-culturalism.

We also remain committed to caring for the aged - to further expanding programs already much expanded in the 1980s.

As we undertake this essential work over the next few years the Assisi home is certain to be a model of what can be done by communities, and how they can work together with government.

For their vision and dedication, I congratulate all those people who have taken on this project, and wish them well in the future stages of its development.

And thank you for inviting me here.