

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.
R. G. MENZIES, AT THE SPACE AGE EXHIBITION
MELBOURNE, ON MONDAY, 16TH OCTOBER, 1961

Sir,

My colleague having said everything, I shall now proceed to say it again. That's fair enough I think.

But two things struck me very much when I came in here. The first was that this dim religious air, this cloak of darkness, seemed to me to be a sort of fitting surround for a politician (Laughter) - a sort of symbolism which I didn't expect from my somewhat matter of fact colleague, Mr. Hulme. And the second thing that struck me, rather unpleasantly, was that - you know what my opponents say about me - there was a great placard right in front of me which says "HAM". (High Altitude Measurement) (Laughter) But apart from these two incidents I am delighted to have the opportunity of opening this Exhibition.

My colleague, Mr. Hulme, is quite right when he says that the work done in research and development in Australia is really most remarkable. I am sure there were people in the world who imagined that we were not up to it - just as there have been, in my own lifetime, people in the world who thought that Australia was incapable of manufacturing goods on the grand scale and in the highest quality. It takes a while for people to realise that this country of ours is a modern community with as much capacity per head of population, as can be found anywhere else in the world; and, I sometimes think, perhaps a little more.

This is demonstrated in the field of scientific research, application of it in research and development of weapons. It is a great pity that in this world we should have to devote so much time and talent and money to the production of weapons, but we know that we are living in that kind of world, and that we can't afford to be without protection. But the work that has been done has, I believe, been of a kind of which every Australian ought to be proud. I haven't been able to peer through the gloom, so far, and see what is here, but there are one or two things that have been produced on this side of Supply, like Malkarra for example, which have become quite accepted around the world as showing the way in the production of a particular weapon of war. And the work that has been done at Woomera has, as you know, been work which has attracted the attention of the whole world, and particularly of the free world. This kind of thing isn't done except by tremendous talent and great enthusiasm. Woomera is not just a stretch of earth.

People think, perhaps, of a Rocket Range as being a place where you need to have a great deal of distance in front of you and some particular means of recovering the rocket when it comes down. Behind all this 'space' on the earth there is a tremendous concentration of talent, of tremendous research effort, of productive activity. Anybody who wanted to get a new conception of what Australia is doing in this field should take the first opportunity, if he is allowed to by my colleague, the Minister, provided the journey is not boycotted for any reason or other, of going, not only to Woomera, but to Salisbury in South Australia, and to see this project right from the first elements of research until the final testing of the finished product. It is, I think, one of the exciting things in Australia. And it has, already, in the case of at least two matters, demonstrated an inventive and original genius in this country, which marks it out among countries of the world as being a true home of thought, and of talent. It is a very good thing indeed, therefore, that we should all, those of us who are relatively stricken in years, have a look at what is here.

But it will, I believe, be particularly attractive, exciting, to the minds of younger people - those who are interested in science, those who are about to go to a University, or to a technological institute for the purposes of further scientific training. They will find here something tremendously interesting because they will see how, in this complex department of science, the concentration of skill and of effort have been able to lead to the most astonishing results. I was happy to remind myself the other day that the Department of Supply has an elaborate system for providing for what I will call cadet training along these lines. I do hope that there will be thousands of younger people who will come here and have their minds and imaginations stimulated, not for the purpose of destroying people in the world, but to pursue the search of scientific knowledge and to add their own knowledge to what we so badly need in Australia.

Now what I don't know about science is, of course, considerable. Alan Hulme has just been bold enough to say that I know nothing about science - this is completely untrue. I am extremely familiar with the first law of physics which, if I remember it correctly, is that action and re-action are equal and opposite. I'm sure this has a great deal to do with politics. (Laughter) I'm sure it has. I am also not at all sure that it hasn't got a good deal to do with projecting a rocket into space. But for a man who has the easy mastery that I have of the first principle of physics, to be accused of having no knowledge of physics is really a very, very, unkind cut. (Laughter)

Anyhow we won't keep you from this. You must peer through the gloom. You will see these things hanging in the air - I don't know whether that is the moon or the sun, or a star. But I did read in my notes for this occasion, with great envy, that my colleague, the Minister for Supply, has already conducted a conversation that was bounced off the moon. I'll try it at my next Policy Speech - it might get over the barricade of interjectors. (Laughter) Wouldn't that be a magnificent idea. Moon and back. And my opponents would then say exactly "And that's just what it sounded like". (Laughter)

Sir, I have the very greatest pleasure in declaring this exhibition open. (Applause)
