

FOUNDATION STONE CEREMONY AT TOWNSVILLE
UNIVERSITY, TOWNSVILLE, Q'LD.

29TH JULY, 1966.

Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

Mr Chancellor, Mr Premier, Mr Vice-Chancellor, Members of the Advisory Council, Dr Back, and Members of the Staff, Mr Mayor, Other Distinguished Guests - Mr Priestly comes into this at some stage of the address - and Ladies and Gentlemen;

I feel very appreciative and indeed moved, Mr Chancellor and Mr Vice-Chancellor, by the kind things you have said about me personally and my participation in this very happy function. It could hardly fall to the lot of a Prime Minister of Australia to have a happier day for his official tasks than I am experiencing here in Townsville on this particular day. This morning I have the opportunity to lay a foundation stone for the first university in the tropical north of Australia, then I go on this afternoon and help to launch the establishment of a great military base here which will add to the security, strength and the diversity of life in this part of the world. This combination is for me a very felicitous one and made the more so by the fact that we meet in typically Australian surroundings on a glorious sunny day quite up to the travel brochure which so rarely lives up to expectations. Here in Townsville you have delivered the goods, and with Mrs Holt I am delighted to be here for the purpose of this function.

I start with something of a disadvantage. It is quite obvious to any of you looking at the platform that I am a very new Prime Minister and therefore I am underdressed for the occasion. (Laughter) When I look at the Premier, this resplendent creature, I am only grateful that he didn't bring this out for the last Premiers' Conference. I would have found him quite irresistible had he done so.

But the Mayor has shown his consideration for me rather than leave me isolated in civic uniform. He has foregone his own robes of office and sat with me here in this rather dreary outfit which marks the normal attire of the man of affairs in these quickly moving times.

But what a wonderful thing to see growing around us not just a university but one which by its distinction of architecture, its modernity, its appropriateness in the glorious setting in which it finds itself will be a show-place in the life of Australia in the future. It is a proud thing for Townsville, it is a proud thing for all of us to be able to share the experience of today, and the contribution which this university will make to the life of the northern part of Australia, and then reaching out to Australia as a whole, can only be speculated upon at this stage. But no-one doubts that it will be a significant contribution for Australia, and I personally do not doubt that it will be making a valuable contribution to the well-being of the people in Asia and South-East Asia generally.

Here we have a seat of learning that will be facing problems that possess some novelty in academic circles. There are problems which are special and peculiar to a tropical area. There is a proximity here to our northern neighbours which will make this university a focus of interest for them. There is the close

association you will be having here with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and I understand a School of Advanced Studies is to be established here alongside you also. Now this combination of activities cannot fail to contribute notably to the well-being, to the advancement of the north of Australia, and having put our hands to the job, it is well it should be done so handsomely as the planning of the university would indicate to you.

It is not, of course, so very long ago that the Commonwealth Government was almost a stranger to activities of this sort. Under the Constitution, education has been a matter in the province of the State Government, but as the years have gone on, the electorate which has proved so demanding in other directions has also turned its attention to education. Indeed, I suppose education is one of the most sensitive areas of government at the present time, both in the Federal and the State sphere. Certainly it is a subject matter which we cannot ignore if for no other reason that the burden on government budgets these days has become heavy indeed. As I said in Melbourne only a week ago, we are almost at our wits' end - which is perhaps the right sort of phrase to use in relation to a problem of education - at our wits' end to know how we are going to finance the programme recommended to us in the next triennium.

But what has been called the education explosion has manifested itself as far as we are concerned in expenditure in this last Budget year of \$130M and that is just about double what the bill was three years ago. From what we see of developments ahead, it is quite clear that the Commonwealth will be making a very large contribution in the future as will the States. Indeed when you mentioned, Mr Vice-Chancellor, that in a not so very remote point of time you could get your education for fourpence a week, I wondered whether progress had been entirely advantageous from the point of view of governments.

We have a small population in this vast continent of ours. We are building it as rapidly as we can with our immigration programme and with such encouragement as we can offer to those capable of forming families to go about that task in an enterprising way, but we still have by standards of our neighbours to the north a very small population in a very large area of land. And yet increasing responsibilities are being requested of us and we face up to those in a spirit of acceptance. We feel Australia can make a contribution to a better world order in this area of the world in which we find ourselves.

One of the consequences flowing necessarily from this is a need to have people of quality. If we have a few people, then they must be good people, they must be well trained people, people with a sense of responsibility, people who possess the characteristics which we regard as the high-water marks of the Australian temperament. It is through institutions such as these that we can lead our people on to better standards, that we can encourage them to make a more valuable and far-reaching contribution to the area in which we have our being.

And so, Mr Chancellor and Mr Vice-Chancellor, you have the good wishes of us all in the future development, the future success of this institution. I couldn't feel happier that it has been placed in a town which is making its own presence felt significantly in the growth of Australia. Townsville

epitomises Australian growth at its best - diversity of activity in a splendid Australian setting; it has almost all the assets a community could hope to find around it in climate, in charm of appearance, in diversity of activity. And now to enrich and further diversify the life of the community, you will have a large university population, you will have an added Service population which contributes its own measure of colour and ceremony to the life of the community.

You, Mr Mayor, I think, can look forward with satisfaction to the Townsville of the future, and all here feel confident that in the better Australia of the years ahead, institutions such as this University of Townsville will be making for the more notable Australia of the future.

And so we wish you well. We from the Commonwealth - and I am sure you, Mr Nicklin for your part - will be doing our best year by year to meet the increasing financial demands you will be making upon us. At least we will know that our funds have been spent in a cause which will produce for us richer dividends than almost anything else that Commonwealth and State funds could be devoted to. You will find in us a willingness to help. For your part, if you make the most of the opportunities which arise here, you will be providing residential accommodation and servicing students from this whole northern area. The very demands for these services have already far exceeded the projections contemplated for them when these were made in 1963, and we can anticipate that with the general growth of prosperity in this area and greater industrialisation in so many directions, population will grow and the requirements for university education will grow. A successful future, therefore, for this university, and in order that the building can proceed without any danger of falling around us, I have to lay a stone which apparently is going to enable further construction to proceed.

And so, Mr Chancellor, if you will lead me to my task, I will perform this important duty.
