

OPENING OF BUILDING CENTRENEWCASTLE, N.S.W.1st September, 1967Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Holt

Mr. Pinfold, President of the Newcastle Master
Builders' Association,
My Lord Mayor,
Mr. President of the Senate,
Parliamentary Colleagues, I see them around me, and
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel it a very happy coincidence that my visit here for the opening of your Festival should also have enabled me to join with you in this very significant function here this afternoon. It is typical of the enterprise which has brought Newcastle to the position of being sixth largest urban area in Australia, only surpassed by five of the capital cities of the Commonwealth, that you've again demonstrated a sign of your enterprise in this fine building and the admirable community purpose that it will assist in serving.

Home-building for Australia is, of course, one of our most vital activities, not only because we are a home-loving people but there is no community in the world which can point to a higher percentage of home ownership than is to be found here in Australia. Seventy per cent of the dwelling units occupied in Australia are occupied by people who are either owners of them or are in process of acquiring them as they pay off what is due on them. And that puts us in the forefront of all the countries of the world in this connection.

We also enjoy the highest standard of availability of accommodation of any country for which records can be ascertained and we have a rather higher rate of population growth than most of the other industrialised communities of the world. Indeed, if the United States or the United Kingdom were to be required to build houses on the scale that our population rate growth makes necessary, it would be found necessary in the United States to build another half million homes a year and in the United Kingdom another 180,000 homes a year. This will be an indication, I am sure, to us all that we do require a great proportion of our national resources, our manpower, our skills in order to carry out our home-building programme required by our growing population.

Currently homes are being built at an annual rate of 115,000 homes. Now it is not merely desirable that homes should be built, it is no less desirable that they should be built to serve those who occupy them with comfort and convenience in pleasant surroundings at economic cost and with good standards of materials and construction. This, of course, is where your own Home-Building Information Centre can make such an important contribution.

I am sure that many citizens of this growing city of Newcastle, one of the most rapidly growing urban communities of the Commonwealth, will take value and assistance from the service which this Building Centre can provide. I hope that the achievements of the building industry already well exemplified in this city will be added to usefully by the service that this centre can provide. In the knowledge that it will bring an important amenity, an important

additional information service to the people of this city I congratulate you, Mr. President, and your colleagues on what you are doing in the way of a public-spirited contribution of this kind and I hope that for many years this information centre on building will serve the citizens of Newcastle, as indeed it serves the larger interest of the Australian nation.

And so, Sir, it is with pleasure that I have accepted your invitation to be here formally to declare this building open and I hope that I shall successfully execute my formal undertaking of unveiling the plaque and of opening the door to the building, opening the door to the centre.

I now formally declare the building centre of Newcastle, New South Wales, officially open and congratulate the Master Builders' Association on its construction.
