

RESTRICTEDOPENING OF THE HAROLD HOLT MEMORIALSWIMMING POOLMALVERN, VIC.16 MARCH 1969Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

Mr. Mayor, Sir Robert Menzies and Ladies and Gentlemen:

May I start by saying how glad I am to have the opportunity to be here today in my own electorate in which I am able to appear in all too infrequently, for reasons which I hope you will understand and forgive.

Now this piece of paper in my hand was a speech which was written to give to you, but it appears to be not much use to me now because the Mayor has said practically everything that was written in it - except for that bit about bikinis! Consequently, it has been necessary for me to make a few rough notes while listening to the Mayor. So what I have to say to you will not be as polished as it otherwise might be, but nevertheless it will be sincerely meant and felt.

I should tell you, however, that very frequently on these occasions I am so happy to reach the end of a speech - perhaps not as happy as those who listen to it! - that I sometimes forget whatever it is that I am supposed to be opening. I hope that won't happen on this occasion, but if it should the thing is open nevertheless. I am told when this happens, a gun is going to go off immediately and people are going to dive off the towers - but I am assured there will be blank shells in the gun.

Now, Sir, we have here a fine example of local government action. You mentioned, Sir, and brought back to my mind, that too many people thought of local government as being merely occupied with building roads or collecting rubbish, and it did remind me of a true story.

Many years ago, the little daughter of some friends of mine came back from a walk and said: "Yesterday when we passed the corner there was a dead dog on it, but today when we passed it had gone because Pranci Proconsul had taken it away." Now, the child's parents were a little bemused at this because the introduction of this matter with rather obscure religious overtones was not at once clear to them. But it became clear the next day when a little more investigation disclosed that Pranci Proconsul was in fact the Prahran City Council. But we know, Sir, that they do far more than that and this is visual evidence of it, because there is history repeating itself.

I was surprised at the number of hands that went up for people who had been here when the first opening took place, an opening of a pool which was then a trendsetter 42 years ago and which is now being followed by a complex of pools which I am told are the finest in the Southern Hemisphere - and if anybody wants to deny that I am quite prepared to have an argument about it. They really are a magnificent complex and they retain the trees and general park-like approach, which is so necessary for functions of this kind.

How proud the late Prime Minister, who represented the city of Malvern in the electorate of Higgins in the Federal Parliament with such distinction for so long, how proud he would be to have his name associated with this facility provided for the people of Malvern and how he would hope, as I hope, that whereas 42 years ago there were few, comparatively few, who could swim, today there is a generation, more and more of whom are able to swim. Partly, I think in this instance, this has been due to the work of the lifesaving association formed here and in other centres throughout Australia.

The nation should take this business of swimming very seriously. We are blessed in every State with some of the best ocean beaches in the world, and we have such swimming facilities as these at rivers and lakes throughout our country. Yet far too often there are reports of boating accidents in which somebody has been drowned because they could not swim. This should not happen in a country like Australia. Sir, I think in providing facilities such as this and by the work citizens are putting into teaching children to swim in facilities such as this, we are on the way to seeing that all can swim.

Harold Holt, that fine swimmer himself, a man who kept fit and encouraged others to keep fit would be pleased to have not only his name associated with this complex, but be delighted at the possibilities which this complex opens up for fitness and for teaching children to swim.

Sir, I think I have said all I would wish to say. I now declare this swimming complex to be open.

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