

FOR PRESS:



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THE MOON LANDING: PRIME MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton, visited Honeysuckle Creek early this morning to watch the Tracking Station making its final preparations to take over a key phase of communications with the Apollo astronauts.

He spent about 45 minutes at the Station, during which he was taken on a tour of inspection by the Director, Mr. Tom Reid. He was later briefed on aspects of the Mission by Mr. Reid, Mr. Willson H. Hunter, NASA's Senior Scientific Representative in Australia, Mr. A. S. Cooley, the Secretary of the Department of Supply and Mr. L. F. Bott, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Supply.

Before leaving Honeysuckle Creek to return to his office at Parliament House, Mr. Gorton paid tribute to the United States and the astronauts:-

"THIS, THE FIRST LANDING OF MAN ON THE MOON, IS A SUCCESS WHICH EXCITES THE WONDER AND ADMIRATION OF US ALL. THE UNITED STATES HAS ACHIEVED A GREAT AND PEACEFUL TRIUMPH FOR MANKIND GENERALLY.

ALL AUSTRALIANS CONGRATULATE THE UNITED STATES, THE THREE ASTRONAUTS, NEIL ARMSTRONG, EDWIN ALDRIN AND MICHAEL COLLINS, THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION AND THOSE PEOPLE ALL AROUND THE WORLD WHO HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THIS APOLLO MISSION. AUSTRALIA IS PROUD TO BE PLAYING A PART IN THIS ADVENTURE THROUGH ITS TRACKING STATIONS, THROUGH THE PARKES RADIO TELESCOPE AND THROUGH OTHER FACILITIES. THIS MOON LANDING WILL BEGIN A NEW ERA IN SPACE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IT DEMONSTRATES IN THE MOST DRAMATIC WAY WHAT MAN CAN DO BY THE APPLICATION OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY FOR PEACEFUL USES.

WE MARVEL AT THE HIGH COURAGE AND THE SKILL OF THE ASTRONAUTS AND AT THE SCIENTIFIC GENIUS WHICH MADE THIS ADVENTURE POSSIBLE. THESE ASTRONAUTS HAVE DARED DANGEROUSLY AND SUCCESSFULLY AND THEY HAVE CARRIED OUT MAN'S URGE TO GO ALWAYS A LITTLE FURTHER, TO EXPLORE AND KNOW THE PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN, TO STRIVE, TO SEEK, TO FIND AND NOT TO YIELD.

THERE IS NO TIME MORE MEMORABLE THAN A FIRST TIME, NO TRIUMPH GREATER THAN ONE SOUGHT AND ACHIEVED IN PEACE AND THE WORLD IS THE RICHER BECAUSE OF THIS EPIC JOURNEY.

TO THESE MEN ON THE MOON, WE SAY:-

'THANK YOU.....GODSPEED.....

AND A SAFE RETURN HOME.' "

Following is the transcript of a brief interview with the Prime Minister at Honeysuckle Creek:-

Q. Prime Minister, as a former fighter pilot yourself, only twenty-five years ago you were flying Hurricanes - what did they do..... 350 miles an hour?

PM. Well, that's what they used to say in the papers but in point of fact they used to cruise at about 180. They would do 350 for about 30 seconds before the engines blew up!

Q. Could you possibly imagine at that time that you would see a man on the moon in 25 years' time?

PM. I suppose that I could have imagined it myself but this was because I was a devotee of science fiction and it didn't seem impossible that man would go further and further into space. But one couldn't do other than have faith that it would happen.

Q. We were not allowed to take a sound camera into the tracking station for technical reasons. What did you say to the staff of the tracking station here at Honeysuckle Creek?

PM. Well, I asked them what all the wriggly green lines were and what the various noises coming out of bits and pieces of the equipment were, and got answers which I wouldn't pretend thoroughly to understand. I think perhaps the best way of saying what I felt when I was in there was that I was blinded by science!

The Prime Minister has sent this personal message to President Nixon (via our Ambassador in Washington):-

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"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA HAS  
TODAY MADE HISTORY.

I SEND YOU, ON BEHALF OF THE  
AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE, OUR WARM CONGRATULATIONS  
ON THE SUCCESSFUL FIRST LANDING OF MEN ON THE  
MOON. WE HAVE GREAT ADMIRATION FOR THE  
COURAGE, SELF-DISCIPLINE AND SKILLS OF YOUR  
ASTRONAUTS AND SALUTE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE  
CONTRIBUTED TO THIS GREAT, PEACEFUL ACHIEVEMENT.

A NEW ERA HAS BEGUN IN SPACE SCIENCE  
AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY AND WE WISH YOU EVERY  
SUCCESS WITH THE NEXT STAGE.

TO NEIL ARMSTRONG, EDWIN ALDRIN AND  
MICHAEL COLLINS WE SAY:-

'GODSPEED AND A SAFE JOURNEY HOME.' "

Mr. Gorton, who spent the day preparing for the  
pre-Budget Cabinet meetings beginning tomorrow, watched the historic  
first step on to the moon on a television set in his office.

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CANBERRA  
21 July 1969