



PRIME MINISTER

OPENING OF DHUPUMA COLLEGE

GOVE, N.T.

1 JULY, 1972.

Speech by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. William McMahon

C.H., M.P.

Ladies and Gentlemen, and most importantly, boys and girls:

Thanks for the invitation to come here today to open this school. Down south, we hear a lot about this very fast-growing and developing part of the Northern Territory, but not enough Australians get the chance to come up here personally to see for themselves what is going on.

On Australia day - five months ago, I made a statement about my Government's policies for aboriginal citizens. It covered important questions relating to the future progress of the aborigines themselves. Some of my comments may not be known to you, so I shall try to tell you what I said in that statement.

We had five changes to make in our programmes and policies for aborigines. First we wanted to ensure that aborigines have free and unimpeded access to the rights and privileges of our society. We want to encourage and assist them to keep and develop their own culture as a worthwhile and wholesome part of Australian life. We want to emphasise that every aborigine has the right to say how closely and how soon he will become integrated into the mainstream of Australian society.

This is more likely to happen when aborigines retain their own identity, traditions and their own culture.

The third point of my statement on Australia Day was that our objectives must be based on plans which recognise the wishes and the aspirations of the aborigines themselves; and which provides the opportunities to develop their own personalities and abilities: And which involve the aboriginal people themselves in the working out of those plans.

The fourth objective is for government programmes to ensure that aboriginal citizens manage their own affairs as much as this is practicable in order to improve their potential and ensure their fullest participation in the national progress: And further so that handicaps in health, housing, education and vocational training can be reduced.

We also want to remove the few remaining laws which discriminate against aborigines.

I cannot emphasise enough that this statement of policy objectives means in effect that Australian as a people, through the Federal Government, recognise that aborigines have many problems and difficulties not faced by other Australians. It means that we will do everything possible to see that our aboriginal citizens have the opportunities to reach at least the same standards of living and education as are enjoyed by all other Australians.

The opening of a new school is, I believe, a big event in any community; But the opening of a new school to meet the needs of aboriginal communities is an even bigger event. Soon in these buildings there will be new, young, fresh minds who will play their part in the future of our country.

May I speak now to the older people here, and particularly to the parents. You have, and you will see many changes - changes which have brought and will bring you and your families benefits as well as problems. Your children are now growing up in a very different world - to yours, and for that matter even to mine. School will fire their minds. They will ask questions and perhaps question the authority of their parents.

Seeing these changes might influence parents to take their children away from school. You must not let this happen: It is better to accept that our children will want to change the world.

Some of you may feel that knowledge will loosen the bonds between children and their parents, and lead them to neglect their old ways. We must try and help them enjoy both the new and the old.

Schooling should teach children to respect both old and new ways, and should foster a child's love and respect for his parents, his home and his culture.

To you students I say:- Work hard at school because every bit of knowledge will make you better equipped to face the outside world when you have grown into young men and women.

Dhupuma College is the second residential school in the Northern Territory for aboriginal children. Kormilda, in Darwin, was the first. A third college is now being built at Alice Springs. It will cost a lot of money, but money is not important. What is important is the opportunity which these colleges provide for young people.

Kormilda means "tomorrow" and Dhupuma, as you know, means "looking up". These names are well chosen, and will encourage you to look up to your life of tomorrow. Twenty-eight of you young people come from Kormilda. I want you to help Dhupuma develop in the same way. You should think of it, not so much as another school, but rather as a place of opportunity and rewarding association.

Having said this, it now gives me very great pleasure to officially declare this College open.
