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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. E.G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P., AT
A PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON FOR HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN, PARLIAMENT
HOUSE, CANBERRA, 18.10.73

The head of Government, and the head of the Opposition to the Government, will now be able to join in a welcome to our Head of State - I welcome Her Majesty as Queen of Australia. From tomorrow that title will, in this country, take precedence over all our other titles.

I, of course, am still rather new to hobnobbing with Royalty. You will forgive me, therefore, if I drop a name occasionally. (laughter) It was at Windsor (laughter) on Good Friday, that Her Majesty was gracious enough to say how gladly she welcomed the suggestion for the change in her title - her Royal Style and Title. The new title expressly, directly, clearly the role of the monarchy in Australia. (applause)

It is the Queen herself who, under the Constitution, under the two Houses, makes up the Australian Parliament. It is in the Queen that the executive power of this nation is vested. It is to the Queen that the salaries of the ministers are to be paid. It is in the Queen's name that the Governor-General assents to a bill passed by the Houses.

Tomorrow, in fact, the Queen will assent to a Bill passed by both Houses. There is no difficulty in getting this Bill through both Houses - it is the Royal Style and Titles Bill. But the Queen, tomorrow, will discharge further of her functions as Head of State. For the first time, I believe, the Queen herself will swear and administer the oath of office to a minister. The Queen for the first time, in Australia, will sign letters of credence. They will be for her Australian ambassadors to Japan, the Soviet Union and the United States, and a letter of commission for her High Commissioner to India. She will complete the formalities for the ratification of treaties with our nearest and greatest neighbour, Indonesia, and with another of her realms, Canada. She will apply laws to the Coral Sea Islands territories. I don't want to raise questions of off-shore waters or seabeds - there are too many distinguished visitors from some of the Australian provinces for me to do that.

And tomorrow, in assenting to the Royal Style and Titles Act Her Majesty will appoint the new Great Seal.

Now, on this occasion, Her Majesty comes to Australia to perform and celebrate a very great occasion for Australia, at home and abroad - the opening of the Sydney Opera House. It is an event which has been long awaited and long deferred.

I think on each of your recent visits Your Majesty will have been told that the Sydney Opera House would be opened soon. You live in the midst of the monuments of history so Your Majesty will realise that these things do take a little time. This has taken 14 years; the Parthenon took 15 years; the Royal Church at Westminster took five centuries. This building will stand in our region with buildings as great as Borobodur, Ankor Wat. And they will say - the Sydney Opera House. It will be used as long and probably by even more people than Westminster Abbey or the cathedrals of equal age or the Pantheon itself. This building is in Sydney. The earth has not anything to show more fair than Sydney harbour. (faint laughter) I would have expected a greater manifestation of national spirit in the National Capital. I will say it again: the earth has not anything to show more fair than Sydney harbour. I'm really only warming the audience up for Mr. Snedden and Her Majesty. (laughter and applause)

Now there are indeed sermons in these stones as well as songs. The course of the planning and erection of the Sydney Opera House was not always plain sailing. While it took time in the courage and initiative and the enterprise and inventiveness to bring about this great building, we must also acknowledge some of the timidities and frustrations and jealousies and compromises which played their part in its story. But it is a magnificent building. Our civilisations are known by their buildings and future generations will honour the people of this generation - the people of this kingdom by this building. (applause)

Any occasion that brings you here Ma'am is very much a family occasion. Last time you brought Prince Charles and Princess Anne. I am sure it would be the wish of this gathering that you should hear at first hand the pleasure it brings to all your people in this country that Princess Anne is about to be married. We look forward to welcoming her and her husband when you come here next year.

And next year, of course, Your Majesty will also be visiting Papua New Guinea - a self-governing part of Your Majesty's realms. And you will be illustrating at first hand the opportunity which is afforded to the people of Papua New Guinea through the free exercise of choice of their people to serve an independent nation and to be a member of the Commonwealth of which you are head.

I must express, also, on behalf of this gathering our pleasure that you have brought your husband with you. Indeed I think I can say it is with some relief that he has come again. I'm speaking not only of the fact that when he was last here in March there were no ladies other than Senatrices at the gathering. That was an uproarious occasion and the Speaker and the President well remember the afternoon which followed. This is a very much more decorous - more demure occasion; the Parliament will be better for it. I am not only expressing relief on behalf of the Presiding Officers for the good name of the Parliament, I am also expressing relief in a very more self-interested way. I am the first Prime Minister since Sir Robert Menzies who during his term of office has been able to survive a second visit from Prince Philip. And indeed I read in the papers that a couple of weeks ago some of my colleagues were about to urge me to cable him "come quickly". At last the jinx has been broken. Prince Philip has abandoned his role as the Nemesis

of Australian Prime Ministers. We have long ago got over our misgivings.

When you Ma'am as heiress presumptive took as your consort another Philip we had misgivings because the last Philip who was a consort to the Queen of England did play rather too strong a political role - as we still read. Now, of course, Prince Philip has eschewed all forms of political activity. He has devoted himself to many good causes in this nation. One perhaps might pick out, in particular, the issue of conservation. It is the field which is so free of petty jealousies and frictions and pressure groups. There is an automatic consensus on the public good on any conservation issue. And while all around are losing their positions, at least Prince Philip is able to survive.

In welcoming you once again to Australia and to the Australian Parliament on behalf of the Australian people, let me adapt the words of the first Elizabeth when she addressed her Parliament: "You will find in all your realms a better and a stronger people but never will you find better friends than in your Parliament of Australia".