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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
THE HON. E. G. WHITLAM, Q.C., M.P.,
FOR THE OPENING OF WOOLWORTHS FAMILY CENTRE
AT PHOENIX PLAZA, LIVERPOOL,
3 SEPTEMBER 1974

I felt some apprehension when the Mayor arrived in a Roman chariot this morning. It occurred to me that a right-wing extremist might come up on a white charger to beat me to the ribbon.

This is a splendid new shopping centre with its arcades and concourses it bears a remarkable similarity to the ancient Roman forums. Of course, the modern shopping centre is not just a collection of shops - it includes offices and places of leisure, recreation and enjoyment. It even has a children's playground. Sir Theo Kelly pioneered child care facilities before governments. He doesn't have the problems of a federal system or the Treasury.

Stores have set a lead for Government and urban planners by taking their services to the people. They have followed the trends of population. Many districts lack adequate schools, hospitals, sporting and cultural facilities. Few districts lack adequate shopping facilities.

In my own electorate of Werriwa, including the two new stores in Phoenix Plaza, there are 11 Woolworths stores.

With a constituency like that it's no wonder I've got a safe seat. The biggest problem in the next redistribution will be to give every electorate the same number of Woolworths, Flemings and Safeways. If we can do that, even the Country Party would be happy with the boundaries.

There are no fewer than 17 Woolworths establishments in the suburbs now covered by my electorate or falling within its previous boundaries. Unfortunately I wasn't invited to open any of them till I became Prime Minister.

In the '50s, before I became Deputy Leader, Woolworths was one of my regular clients, as Laurie Oakes records. Every Prime Minister needs a great store behind him. The vaunted association between Menzies and the Lloyd Jones gave respectability to each.

Woolworths have shown how an efficient private enterprise, attuned to the needs of its customers and to local communities, can provide the highest standards of service and reduce retail charges to a minimum. Public enterprise must be organised on the same basis of efficiency. What we need in the battle against inflation are more "special offers" on the railways, more "discount prices" on the buses.

Woolworths are an all-Australian company - 98% of the stock is held by Australians and New Zealanders. It gives first preference to Australian industry - 93% of its goods are bought in Australia. It employs more than 30,000 Australians and gives indirect employment to thousands more in primary and secondary industry. It has aided national development by establishing stores in remote and unprofitable regions - The Snowy Mountains, Gove, Kambalda. It has brought the benefits of big-city shopping to Darwin, Mount Isa, Alice Springs, Broken Hill and Esperance.

Woolworths came to Liverpool 16 years ago and was burnt down 2 years ago. The Phoenix Plaza has risen from its ashes; Woolworths has risen from the Coles. I now declare that Woolworths Family Centre in Liverpool is open again.