

PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH, ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL, MOOREBANK, N.S.W.  
13.4.1975

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It's true that the parish priest revealed that I was looking up the article on Thomas Moore, not the one that is usually referred to in this circle, not the saint but the land-owner. He was a very good citizen. In 1810 he was declared a magistrate for Liverpool, and he accompanied Macquarie when Macquarie later in December 1810 surveyed the whole of this area and declared Liverpool one of the original Macquarie towns.

So in Australian terms, the terms of settlement, European settlement in Australia, Liverpool and Moorebank, are significant indeed. But while I must concede, and of course I am a separated brother too, it might be embarrassing to refer to the fact that Thomas Moore, the Australian one, had left his property to the Church of England, and had thus endowed Moore Theological College, and I must confess that some of the priests who come from there, are just as tough on me as some of those who come from the Catholic Centre.

But I did notice, this is why I brought it here, he did in this district, contribute towards the building of a two-storey church school and a court house opened in 1813, a Catholic Chapel in 1821 and a Presbyterian Church in 1826, a very early but significant ecumenical attitude. But how this district has grown. I've represented it now for well over 20 years and one of the great joys one has is coming to the opening of new buildings and it's now possible to an extent that one would never have dreamed when I first became the Member to get a good education, to have the whole range of recreation, occupation, education close at hand in areas like this.

This is a very beautiful use of this site. A high site, and from here, one can look over the buildings which are over a century and a half old, and yet one can be quite close to some occupations which are as old as that and others which are quite new. We are living in an area and the children who come to this school will be living in an area which is old, but which is perennially new. And I think they're very fortunate to live in an area which is still being developed with a good regard to the environment, preserving the old and making the new fit in with it.

I notice on the program, and immensely flattering, that I am to declare the school open. I think we've been beaten to it a bit. I think the children have been using it to very good purpose for some time. But nevertheless, I can't help saying that there have been times in my career and not going back twenty years or so ago when it would have been utterly unthinkable for a person of my politics to be asked to declare open a Catholic School, and I hope you'll forgive me for saying that I think now by our deeds you can judge us.

You can see that a very great number of the things which were said about us were not factual as well as not being particularly charitable, and it is true enough as Father Duncan said that there is inflation and so on; but quite apart from inflation, the amount of money which is being spent on education is incomparably greater than would be required by any compulsion of population or migration.

Three years ago, the amount of money being spent by the Federal Government on Catholic education throughout Australia was barely \$30 million. This year it is three and a half times as much. It is over \$100 million. Now that is certainly very much more than would be required by an increase in enrollment or an increase in inflation during that period, and the principle that we have adhered to throughout is that it should be possible for children wherever they live, whatever their parents' means, whatever their parents' beliefs, whatever their parents' occupation, it should be possible for their children to have as good an education as this country can provide.

And the basis upon which we make that provision is perfectly open. It's under an Act of Parliament. It is administered by a Commission, whose membership is appointed by the government of the day. I've never heard any criticism of the people, the men and women, both lay and religious who have been appointed to that Commission. It is a very diligent Commission. It's had a very serious job to do, and we are shortly to receive the recommendations that it makes for the school years 1976 and 1977, but the ones that it made for 1974 and 1975 have, I believe, transformed education in Australia, and I would be able to say that if I went to any State school, if I went to any Catholic school, or if I went to any non-government, non-Catholic school.

The fact is we are wanting to see the children, irrespective of any of their faith or means are able to get a good education where they live. If they're isolated and can't have it where they live, then there is assistance for them to have it as boarders where the proper form of education will be available for them. There are a very great number of other programs, disadvantaged schools, handicapped children, migrant children, children who don't speak English at home, where additional special assistance is being made.

Ladies and Gentlemen, three years ago, if I'd come along and said that there would have been a very great number of doubting Thomases among you, and what I said would have been received with scepticism if not disbelief, and it is a very great pleasure on this occasion, after seeing what has been done, what we've put through the Parliament, not without difficulty, not without a very great deal of criticism of "Where's the money coming from, doesn't Government expenditure produce inflation?", all this sort of argument.

We'll have it still more when the next recommendations come in this year's budget, from the Schools Commission for the school years 1976 and 1977. I think I can say with complete conviction, we will not be deterred from government expenditure on things such as education.

The very best investment that a country can have is in the rising generation, and having represented areas like this for a long time, I'm determined to see that areas like this which didn't have all the schools or as good schools as were needed in the government or Catholic sectors that they will get as good as any other areas.

But I can say that at any school. I can say that at any area. The pattern is open. It is unremitting. It gives me very great pleasure indeed to see that the young children of this area, this historic area, this still beautiful area will be able to come to a good useful, youthful school. A good staff, good equipment, good grounds, good building. But always I trust getting better. It is a very great pleasure to have been asked here and it is an immense compliment to have been asked to declare St. Joseph's Primary School, Moorebank, officially open. I do so with the greatest pleasure, and I am sure that all the staff and the parents will be proud of this school and the children will have a very much more useful life as a result of going to such a good school.