

SPEECH NOTES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE OPENING OF
MURWILLUMBAH CIVIC AND CULTURAL CENTRE, 29 AUGUST, 1975.

1. IT GIVES ME VERY GREAT PLEASURE TO BE WITH YOU TODAY FOR THE OPENING OF THIS MAGNIFICENT CIVIC AND CULTURAL CENTRE FOR MURWILLUMBAH. IT'S MY SECOND VISIT TO DOUG ANTHONY'S ELECTORATE IN TWO MONTHS, SO YOU COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR THINKING THERE'S A NEW COALITION IN THE OFFING. WE ARE CERTAINLY UNITED IN OUR CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE AND PROGRESS OF COUNTRY REGIONS LIKE THIS NORTHERN RIVERS AREA OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

2. WHEN I WAS IN LISMORE EARLY IN JUNE FOR THE OPENING OF OZANAM VILLA HOSTEL FOR THE AGED, DOUG ANTHONY TOLD ME THAT THIS CENTRE IN MURWILLUMBAH WAS CLOSE TO COMPLETION AND THAT I REALLY SHOULD ACCEPT ANY INVITATION TO COME AND SEE IT FOR MYSELF. I AM DELIGHTED TO OBSERVE THAT THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR RICHMOND DIDN'T EXAGGERATE ITS VIRTUES.

3. MIND YOU, I HAVE A SNEAKING SUSPICION THAT HE WANTED ME TO NOTE THE PROGRESS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE AND THE SPENDID RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL IN SUCH A SHORT TIME. I BELIEVE THAT THE ARCHITECT WAS APPOINTED IN 1973 AND TODAY WE HAVE THIS SUPERB COMPLEX SO ATTUNED TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY OF MURWILLUMBAH AND SO COMPLEMENTARY TO THE TWEED HEADS CIVIC AND CULTURAL CENTRE OPENED A FEW MONTHS AGO.

4. THE DEBATE - NON-PARTY, OF COURSE - ON A NEW AND PERMANENT PARLIAMENT HOUSE IN CANBERRA HAS TAKEN MUCH LONGER. MANY A FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARIAN WOULD HAVE TO SMILE WANLY ON READING ABOUT THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY LOCAL COUNCILLORS BEFORE THIS NEW EDIFICE CAME INTO BEING:

"THE LARGEST SINGLE ENTERPRISE IN THE SHIRE AND THE BIGGEST EMPLOYER OF LABOUR, NAMELY THE SHIRE COUNCIL, HAS CONDUCTED ITS BUSINESS IN A CHAMBER THAT IS NOISY AND ALMOST DEVOID OF COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO MAKE DECISIONS INVOLVING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS EVERY YEAR, AND WHICH AFFECT EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN THE DISTRICT. MOREOVER THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, WHICH HAS INCREASED IN NUMBERS TO MEET THE COMPLEXITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN A DEVELOPMENT AREA, HAS BEEN WORKING UNDER CONDITIONS WHICH MITIGATED AGAINST A HIGH STANDARD OF SERVICE."

3.

I THINK YOU SHOULD PREPARE FOR A LARGE INFLUX FROM CANBERRA AS NEWS OF THIS CENTRE GETS AROUND.

5. BUT THE BEAUTY OF THIS CENTRE LIES NOT ONLY IN THE ELEGANCE OF THE FORMAL MEETING ROOMS AND THE EXCELLENCE OF THE FACILITIES PROVIDED FOR ELECTED COUNCILLORS AND COUNCIL OFFICERS IN DEALING WITH THEIR BUSINESS OF SERVING THE COMMUNITY, BUT ALSO IN THE BREADTH OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES ENVISAGED IN THE TOTAL CONCEPT OF THE CENTRE.

LIKE THE IPSWICH CIVIC CENTRE WHICH I HAD THE PLEASURE OF OPENING LAST MONTH, THIS CENTRE INCORPORATES A SPENDID AUDITORIUM SUITABLE FOR ALL KINDS OF MUSICAL OR THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES AND EXHIBITIONS, AND IS ABLE TO DOUBLE AS A VENUE SUITABLE FOR BALLS, CABARETS, SCHOOL DANCES AND THE LIKE. IN OTHER WORDS, THE WHOLE COMMUNITY WILL BE SERVED BY THIS CENTRE, THE LIFE OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, FROM SCHOOL CHILDREN TO ELDERLY CITIZENS, WILL BE IMPROVED THROUGH ACCESS TO THIS CENTRE.

6. IT SPEAKS VOLUMES FOR THE INITIATIVE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES THAT SO MANY OF THEM HAVE SEEN THE NEED TO CATER FOR CULTURAL PURSUITS WHEN PLANNING NEW CIVIC BUILDINGS.

SINCE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS THE LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT CLOSEST TO THE PEOPLE, IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT THIS CULTURAL INITIATIVE SHOULD STEM FROM THIS GRASS ROOTS LEVEL.

I CONGRATULATE PAST AND PRESENT COUNCILLORS AND THEIR ADVISERS ON THEIR VISION AND PERSISTENCE IN GETTING THIS PROJECT OFF THE GROUND. GENERATIONS OF MURWILLUMBAH RESIDENTS, NOT TO MENTION VISITORS, WILL HAVE CAUSE TO BE GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR GIVING THEM THE OPPORTUNITY OF DEVELOPING THEIR OWN TALENTS AND TO APPRECIATE THE TALENT OF OTHERS.

7. I FEEL SURE THAT THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL, WHICH ADMINISTERS THE ARTS PROGRAMS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, WILL DO WHAT IT CAN TO HELP DEVELOP STANDARDS AND NURTURE TALENT IN THIS AREA. ALREADY A SUBSTANTIAL GRANT HAS BEEN MADE TO THE ART CENTRE IN MURWILLUMBAH FOR DEVELOPING PROGRAMS INVOLVING BOTH YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS IN THE ARTS, WITH EMPHASIS ON SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES IN LITERATURE, FILM AND DRAMA, AS WELL AS A SMALL ORCHESTRAL ENSEMBLE. ANOTHER GRANT WILL ENABLE THE CURIOUSLY TITLED YELLOW BRICK ROADSHOW TO TOUR THE NORTHERN RIVERS AREA, SO YOU CAN SEE THAT ALL TASTES ARE CATERED FOR.

8. IN THE END, HOWEVER, THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE ELEMENT OF THIS NEW CENTRE MAY PROVE TO BE THE NEW REGIONAL LIBRARY, WHOSE ESTABLISHMENT WILL FILL AN IMMENSE GAP IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF MURWILLUMBAH FOR YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE.

IT IS SOBERING TO REALISE THAT BEFORE THIS, MURWILLUMBAH NEVER HAD THE BENEFIT AND STIMULUS OF A FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT AS SEAT OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE TWEED SHIRE, IT WAS THE CENTRE OF THE MOST DENSELY POPULATED RURAL SHIRE IN AUSTRALIA. WHAT A SAD REFLECTION ON THE INEQUALITIES BETWEEN REGIONS WHICH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO SEE RECTIFIED.

9. I AM GLAD TO SAY THAT IN THIS, AS IN SO MANY OTHER QUALITY OF LIFE AREAS, THERE IS A BELATED RECOGNITION OF THE INJUSTICE INHERENT IN THOSE PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED INEQUALITIES. ONLY LAST WEEKEND I OPENED THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, WHICH WAS BEING HELD IN MELBOURNE, AND THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW LIBRARY SERVICES COULD BE BEST UTILISED IN RURAL AREAS IN ORDER TO REDRESS THIS OBVIOUS INJUSTICE.

AS I SAID IN MY SPEECH TO THAT CONFERENCE,
"CERTAINLY THE TASK OF PROVIDING EFFICIENT PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT IN THINLY POPULATED RURAL AREAS THAN IT IS IN COMPACT CENTRES OF POPULATION IN CITIES AND TOWNS. BUT THERE IS NO REASON WHY THE CITIZENS OF MELBOURNE SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO BETTER LIBRARY SERVICES - GREATER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION - THAN THE CITIZENS OF ECHUCA OR GEELONG." I COULD AS EASILY HAVE SAID SYDNEY AND ORANGE OR MURWILLUMBAH.

10. I WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE IS A LONG TERM NEED TO CO-ORDINATE AND RATIONALISE ALL LIBRARY SERVICES: AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE. THE RICHMOND TWEED REGIONAL LIBRARY WAS FORMED IN 1974 BY THE TWEED SHIRE COMBINING WITH LISMORE CITY AND BALLINA MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, THUS ENSURING THE CIRCULATION OF BOOKS BETWEEN LIBRARIES AT LISMORE, BALLINA, TWEED HEADS, AND NOW MURWILLUMBAH. AND THAT HAS THE EFFECT OF VASTLY INCREASING YOUR INITIAL BOOK STOCK OF 8,000 VOLUMES TO BETTER SERVE ALL YOUR BORROWERS. IMPROVED SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE SHIRE WILL BE A FURTHER ADJUNCT TO THIS EXCITING DEVELOPMENT.

11. FINALLY I PAY TRIBUTE TO EVERYONE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROJECT, FROM THE TWEED SHIRE COUNCILLORS AND EMPLOYEES THROUGH TO THE ARCHITECT AND BUILDERS AND SUPPLIERS AND EVERYONE WHO HAS HAD A HAND IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR TODAY'S OFFICIAL OPENING. I PAY PARTICULAR TRIBUTE TO THE CRAFTSMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXQUISITE TIMBER PANELLING AND COPPER INLAYS THAT ARE SUCH AN ATTRACTIVE FEATURE OF THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ITSELF.

Hegarty

I MUST SAY THAT WHEN JOHN GORTON ONCE ACCUSED ME OF SOUNDING LIKE A SHIRE PRESIDENT, THERE WERE THOSE WHO CHOSE TO CONSIDER IT AN INSULT. I CONSIDERED IT A COMPLIMENT AT THE TIME. AND I WOULD FIND IT A PRIVILEGE INDEED TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL ON A DAY LIKE TODAY WITH THIS MAGNIFICENT PROJECT A REALITY.

I HAVE VERY MUCH PLEASURE IN DECLARING OPEN THE MURWILLUMBAH CIVIC AND CULTURAL CENTRE. TO BORROW YOUR OWN WORDS "MAY IT SERVE THE CITIZENS OF THE TWEED SHIRE UNTIL WELL INTO THE 21ST CENTURY. MAY IT ENCOURAGE THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN CULTURAL PURSUITS AND ADD TO THEIR ENJOYMENT OF LIFE."

Greenbank - not speculators but developers
most densely populated rural shire
Tweed Heads*****

Old Shire Chambers
brigit bldg since P.O.