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PRIME MINISTER

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OPENING OF THE WINDSOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL CENTRE

I am very pleased to be with you today for the opening of this magnificent community and cultural centre.

The re-enactment we have just seen recalls one of the most outstanding of the colonial Governors, Lachlan Macquarie.

It is a remarkable testimony to the quality of Lachlan Macquarie that after a century and a half he is still remembered for his contribution to the building of Australia.

It is perhaps a measure of Australia that the two qualities of Macquarie most often recalled are his tireless work in developing the colony and his deep humanity. In these qualities he embodied two aspects of Australian life which we value greatly. We feel a sense of pride when we see the potential of Australia being realised. We all value deeply the respect and concern for others which has produced so much worthwhile social reform.

Macquarie had great faith in the future of the colony of New South Wales. When he left Port Jackson in 1822, he had entirely rebuilt Sydney's main public buildings. He had done the same at Parramatta and had created many townships, most of them out of wilderness. He had put up something like 200 main buildings and left New South Wales with three hundred miles of roadway.

No Government in any colony of similar size and remoteness has ever come close to this achievement. Macquarie also sought to improve the quality of life in the colony for all its citizens. He organised the colony's first agricultural fairs and even the first horse races. He developed education to a point at which one fifth of the colonial revenue was spent on education. His policy towards the Aborigines was one of conciliation. He opened the first Aboriginal school for children. The major social matter for which his administration was distinguished however was his humanitarian policy towards convicts.

Perhaps most important in the context of today's activities Macquarie firmly believed in the importance of encouraging strong local communities. He believed that towns and their amenities must take shape if life was to survive and develop in the outlying areas. With a centre in each district

providing a local market, justice, medicine, religion, education, and fellowship, settlement would have something to which to anchor.

This continent possessed only three towns prior to the founding of the five Macquarie towns. The historical links with the past are preserved by the many buildings of the period still in existence in this district. Windsor retains much of its old-world atmosphere and charm.

The council has a role in contributing to the preservation of these buildings as part of the national heritage.

In recognition of the place of the Windsor district in our history, I am today placing in the trust of the council - for one month - a national treasure which will generally be displayed in Canberra - the sword and dirk of Governor Macquarie.

I am especially pleased to perform this opening ceremony today because of the important role the Liberal/National Country Party Government sees local government playing in the delivery of services to the community.

We have adopted a policy which will greatly strengthen the independence of state and local government, and this policy is now being implemented.

Local government around Australia is struggling to offset the impact of inflation.

As inflation is progressively brought under control local government will find itself in a greatly strengthened position under the Federalism policy.

Under the new policy, local government will have an annual entitlement to a share of personal income tax collected by the Commonwealth. An amount of \$140 million will be provided in 1976/77 - an increase of 75% over last year.

Personal income tax will be shared between all three spheres of Government. Local government will be made a partner in the Commonwealth's reforms - a fixed percentage of personal income tax will be earmarked for distribution through states to local government.

The establishment of an Advisory Council for Inter-Government Relations is seen by the Government as a vital institution of co-operation and one for improving administrative arrangements between the various spheres of government.

The Council will bring together representatives of the Federal, State and local governments and private citizens for the consideration of common problems. We will introduce appropriate legislation to establish the Advisory Council during the current sitting of Parliament.

We believe that each sphere of government, Commonwealth, state and local, should make decisions on matters appropriate to that sphere, with matters of proper concern to more than one level being decided through a process of genuine consultation and cooperation.

There are many matters where appropriate information and the greatest opportunity for administrative efficiency and effectiveness, are at the local level. In these matters local governments must have the necessary capacity to act as they believe best.

The Liberal/National Country Party Government places great emphasis on cooperative effort by community groups. For example, in social welfare, we believe that action by individuals and groups - at the local level - is absolutely necessary for an effective approach to social welfare.

Indeed this approach covers many activities including cultural ones. Only if community groups define their own needs - without unnecessary government interference - will we have the diversity, choice and quality that we all want.

As local government is the level of government closest to the people, it is appropriate that cultural initiative should come from the grass roots level.

Because of its geographical position - only 60 kilometres from Sydney - its rural nature and its historical associations, the Windsor Municipality has become a recreation area for the population of Sydney. It has accepted the responsibility thrust upon it by these factors.

The Council is proposing in its forward programme to construct libraries, parks and playing fields and to carry out roadworks, drainage works and flood mitigation works.

The excellent facilities provided by this Centre will long serve the community as a whole. The Centre will be of great benefit to the community as a forum where the arts will find a natural and beneficial focus.

The various boards and programmes of the Australia Council are able to assist - within funding limitations - a wide range of activities to broaden the community's participation and interest in the arts, from the community to the specialist level. The Council has a special concern for the arts needs of country people and outlying regions beyond the main metropolitan areas.

I wish all those concerned with the Macquarie Towns Festival very much success and I am certain it will provide great pleasure and enjoyment for the people of this community.

Finally, I would like to congratulate everyone associated with this community and cultural centre, the Councillors and employees, the architects and builders - everyone who has played a part in the preparations for this official opening.

I have much pleasure in declaring open the Windsor Community and Cultural Centre.