



PRIME MINISTER

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ADDRESS AT BOOK LAUNCHING OF "AUSTRALIAN JEWS OF TODAY,
AND THE PART THEY HAVE PLAYED", SYDNEY

I am delighted to be here today to launch Rabbi Brasch's latest book, because it provides one of the best opportunities I have had to pay tribute to the contribution that Australian Jews and the Australian Jewish community have made to our country.

In Rabbi Brasch's thirty four biographies, people excelling in almost every field of endeavour are represented, including the military, the arts, sports, commerce and industry, medicine and the law. The biographies show clearly the richness, diversity and significance of the contribution that Australian Jews have made to Australian society. They also give an insight into the diversity of the Jewish experience itself.

The families of some of the people Rabbi Brasch writes about have lived in Australia for many generation others have come to Australia more recently. They have come from all parts of the world, sometimes fleeing from evil or oppressive regimes. Australia has offered them, as it has offered people from all nations, the freedom and opportunity to achieve and create, to rise to the top of their professions and occupations, freedom and opportunity to retain their traditional and their religious and cultural identities. At a time when freedom and opportunity is still denied to so many people in so many things, when religious, racial and cultural oppression is still in existence, the freedom and opportunity Australia has to offer is important.

The Australians about whom Rabbi Brasch writes have taken the opportunity Australia offers and by doing so they have enhanced all our lives. They have protected Australia as is shown by Major General Paul Cullens' outstanding career. They have made Australia laugh at a time when laughter was a very scarce and precious commodity. Roy Rene - Mo - is still looked upon as epitomising Australian humour. They have cured the sick and advanced medical research. They have enriched Australia's culture and strengthened our commerce and industry. They have gained Australia international reputation in sport.

I am particularly glad that Lionel Van Praag was the sportsman Rabbi Brasch chose to include in his book. It is all too often that motorcyclists are overlooked and Lionel Van Praag was one of the world's greatest speed-way racers.

Rabbi Brasch's book was well advanced before it was announced that Sir Zelman Cowen would be Australia's next Governor General, but the inclusion of his biography in this volume was inevitable. Rabbi Brasch well brings out Sir Zelman's outstanding personal and intellectual qualities. Sir Zelman - a past Rhodes Scholar - has had a remarkable career in academic life, administration and the law, and he has been actively involved in the arts and community affairs. Amongst the many books he has written, is a biography of the first Australian born and the first Jewish Governor General of Australia, Sir Isaac Isaacs. Sir Zelman will be an excellent successor in that office.

The Australian Jews the Rabbi writes about have made an outstanding contribution to our country, as has the Jewish community as a whole. The Jewish community has been a major force in our society, establishing a network of institutions, synagogues, schools welfare organisations which have been of inestimable value to the quality of our nation's life, which has made Australia a better place in which to live.

The Jewish community's commitment to preserving its cultural, linguistic and religious heritage, while participating in Australian society, has enhanced Australian pluralism.

Rabbi Brasch who has served the Temple Emanuel as its chief Minister for almost 30 years, has played a great part in the shaping of the Australian Jewish community. And I pay tribute to the work he has done for the benefit of his congregation, community and country. It is only fitting that he should have written this book on great Australian Jewish figures. He comments that many more people deserve to be written about, and seems to promise us a sequel.

I very much hope that this is a promise and it is my very great pleasure to launch "Australian Jews of Today, and the Part They Have Played".
