



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

26 JANUARY 1978

ADDRESS AT AUSTRALIA DAY LUNCHEON, MELBOURNE

My Lord Mayor, I am delighted to have had this opportunity to join with you at this luncheon to celebrate our national day.

Australians do not as a rule talk much about their feelings towards their country. It is not part of our normal character to display ardent public patriotism, except perhaps upon returning from overseas when many Australians declare their conviction that, after all they have seen, Australia is the best country on earth.

More public fervour by far is displayed at the V.F.L. Grand Final than at all Australia Day celebrations combined. But underlying all this, there is a great strong current of pride in our country, and a belief in the future destiny of Australia.

Australia Day is an appropriate occasion for Australians to take a few minutes to think about what it means to be an Australian - what makes us distinctive as a nation. Like any other group of people, we are a product of the experiences we have had together, and the experiences and the cultures and traditions so many Australians have brought with them to us from other countries. We have enjoyed good times. We have helped one another, and other people, in some exceedingly tough times - wars, depression, bushfires, floods. Through it all, our country has steadily grown and developed, until we have now created a whole complex civilisation on this continent. Much has been achieved. Much remains to be done.

By thinking more clearly about Australia and what it means to each of us, we can find ways to make this country an even better place to live in than it already is. We can preserve our freedom and protect our people from injustice. And we can and must take care of those among us who need our help, and give it to them as a right and not a privilege, so that they retain their dignity and self-respect.

If Australia is to become the great country we all believe it can be - if we are to translate the present into a better future for all Australians - what obligations are on us? What do we need to do?

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The first thing we can all do is to strive harder to achieve our personal goals. The philosophy of "near enough is good enough" - of the half-hearted slapdash effort - just is not good enough any more. It does not matter what field of activity we are in.

In the arts, if we are to have ballet of world-wide distinction and excellence - if we are to give birth to authors whose works will be read in 1,000 years - in sport, if we are to beat the English at cricket - all of this takes a maximum effort by individuals, the company, the team. So far as Australia is concerned, we are all part of the team, every one of us. We must all put in our best effort, not just for ourselves, but for Australia.

The next thing we can do is to show more care for each other - a greater tolerance of others, a greater respect for others, a greater concern for the disadvantaged and underprivileged. It is too easy to take the selfish attitude that the plight of those less fortunate than ourselves is the Government's problem. If we can support each other more, we shall all be the stronger for it, for we shall be a more humane, a more liberal society.

Next, we must be prepared to initiate and adapt to necessary reforms, and be prepared to protect and preserve that which is best in our society. We need to strike a careful balance between smoothing the way for change which advances our goals, and providing the stability which will let our society prosper and flourish.

There is a final requirement. Over a range of issues and basic values, there is in Australia a strong degree of consensus. This broad agreement is often obscured by the heat of political debate - by the division of opinion on the political issue of the moment.

But Australians are not divided on the sort of country we want. The great majority of Australians want to see Australia thrive and develop. Want to see our young people have the opportunity to make their contribution to the nation's future. Want to see that no Australians go without basic necessities through no fault of their own. Want to see the rights and liberties of individual Australians protected and enhanced.

What we must all do - and political leaders have a particular responsibility in this - is to support and reinforce these common values and ideals. The media too has a responsibility in this. They have a duty to criticise and expose, but they have a like duty to emphasise those things of value in society - those things which act as a unifying force in our community. Let us all concentrate for a change on those things which unite us, not seek to emphasise those that divide us.

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It is not for nothing that Australians are known as knockers. Sometimes that may be a virtue, but it can be taken too far, as it is when its proponents live by that philosophy alone. There is more to life, more to Australia, than that.

The opportunities within our grasp are great. The possibilities for Australia endless. On Australia Day 1978 it is fitting to reflect for a few moments on what has given us a sense of national unity, and what it is that each of us can do to build on that unity. This is a role for Government and for every Australian, for Australia is no more than the sum of all its people; nothing but the actions of all Australians.

If we as individuals act with a sense of responsibility, Australia will be made a better place. In 1978, we should all think of what we can do for Australia.
