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FILE

**PRIME MINISTER**



FOR PRESS

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PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON FOR HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
THE PRINCE OF WALES

This is a special occasion for us all, because it is a pleasure and privilege to have you, Sir, as our guest today in Parliament House.

We welcome you most warmly, for you come, not only as the young and greatly respected Prince of Wales, but also as an old friend of many Australians inside and outside this place. Moreover, on this, your seventh visit to Australia in 13 years, you've made many new friends some of whom, if our newspaper photos are accurate, seemed to dispense with the formalities usually associated with greeting royalty. But perhaps that only serves to highlight the warm feelings that the people of Australia have for the Royal Family.

Your participation in some special anniversaries in Australia has involved you in some hard travelling, but neither distances nor our ubiquitous bush flies nor even the rigorous attention of our press seem to deter you. The good humour with which you take it all is characteristic of the Royal Family.

The Crown, of course, has a fundamental role to play in this Parliament. In the Constitution, our founding fathers wrote that "the legislative power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a Federal Parliament which shall consist of the Queen, a Senate and a House of Representatives".

This point was well made by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second when, as the first ruling Sovereign to visit Australia, she opened Federal Parliament here in 1954. Her Majesty told the assembled Members and Senators that -- and I quote -- "In a real sense you are here as my colleagues, friends and advisers." It is in that spirit, Your Royal Highness, we welcome you today.

Just as the Monarchy has a strong and an assured place in the hearts of the British people, so it has here in Australia. The traditions, the stability and the continuity of the British monarchy make one of the great stories of history.

The ability and the readiness of the Crown to respond to the needs and aspirations of its people, its recognition of the need to change as circumstances alter, has enabled the Monarchy to make a positive contribution to democratic government in the 20th Century. This was seen most clearly by the founders of our nation.

Our form of Government, with the Crown at its Head, was deliberately chosen by the people of the six founding states. Their's was an act of free choice. In the words of the Constitution they: "...agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown..." This was a natural decision for them to make. They had seen that the Monarchy could adapt to change and, as was expected, the Crown did not hinder nor resist the Australian people's deeply-felt yearning to govern themselves.

Our history has been one in which the transition from colonialism to self-government has been peaceful and in which the Crown has played an important, constructive part.

The Commonwealth of Nations is a further example of how the Crown responds to new situations. In not much more than half a century the "British Empire" became the "British Commonwealth" and later the "Commonwealth of Nations". Throughout, the Monarchy has retained its central role. It has given a focal point for the unity of the Commonwealth of Nations -- "a unity with diversity" as it has been described -- with members pledged to co-operate in the cause of "peace, liberty and progress".

Last year, Australia hosted the Regional Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government. It was a stimulating experience to sit in that company, seeking to find solutions to common problems by discussion and a readiness to co-operate for mutual benefit.

The Crown helps to link nations of different races in a common purpose as it has linked the British people in a more direct way over all the years. Australia is proud of its links with the Throne and I firmly believe that the great majority of Australians want our relationship with the Crown to continue. Of course, early Australians' links with England were of a more material kind -- they rattled when they walked. Yet from those early settlements has sprung a free, independent and prosperous nation which will be ever conscious of the traditions it has inherited.

As the Monarchy has changed, so Australia has changed. In earlier times, we were very much an Anglo-Saxon community. Our geography made it inevitable that one day that would end. The aftermath of the Second World War accelerated that process. In the post-war period many people from many lands saw Australia as a land of political freedom, a land of economic opportunity.

The great migration brought with it significant changes to Australia. We are steadily developing into a multi-cultural society, where people from many backgrounds still cherish and preserve their traditions and at the same time contribute to the emergence of a distinctive Australian culture and the evolution of a stronger Australia.

Together Australians are building a greater country -- to do this they have needed independence and freedom of spirit. Perhaps it is a consequence of this individualism that we do not think often enough about what Australia has done for our well-being and in turn what we can do for Australia. This suggests a need for a greater effort to focus attention on our nation's achievements and aspirations.

Australia Day presents us with such an opportunity. It is a day on which we can reflect on the progress our nation has made and re-affirm our faith in the ability of Australians to meet the challenges of the future. The Government, therefore, has decided to appoint a new National Australia Day Committee. It will advise on and co-ordinate efforts to foster the observance of Australia Day through existing Australia Day organisations and through other cultural, historical, ethnic, sporting, children's and youth organisations. The committee will be selected from as wide a spectrum of the community as possible to reflect Australia's diversity. The new Australia Day committee will contribute, I hope, to giving expression to our national pride as an independent nation and a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, owing allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen.

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