



MP. UZED

## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

1 APRIL 1979

### ELECTORATE TALK

All Australians will welcome the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. President Carter, Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat have begun a significant new chapter in the saga of the Middle East. For the Israeli people that saga has spanned thousands of years with their exile to Babylon. For the Egyptian people the signing of the treaty marks the end of thirty years of hostility with a neighbour, punctuated by fierce wars in the Sinai Desert. For America, this treaty is a fitting tribute to the skilled and unrelenting efforts of President Carter in leading the two nations together in the quest for peace.

The signing of the treaty in Washington this week came after months of work by the three leaders. It began in 1977 with President Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem to address the Knesset. It was there he renewed his pledge that Israel and Egypt should no longer attempt to settle their differences by war. In that one visit, Israel achieved the implicit recognition of a major Arab nation and new and exhilarating prospects of real and lasting peace.

Australia welcomed President Sadat's courageous initiative because it represented the first real breakthrough in 30 years of continual warfare. It opened a new path which Israel has always wanted, but which had until then seemed inaccessible -- the path to negotiation.

That historic journey in search of peace was followed by the Camp David meeting last September, which came from the personal initiative of President Carter. After Camp David, there were lengthy, difficult negotiations, and often despair about the resolution of problems. President Carter's decision to visit the Middle East early in March however, led to the final breakthrough.

The three leaders are to be congratulated for their dedication. They displayed statesmanship of the highest order. Today, in the aftermath of the treaty, the world hopes that work on a comprehensive Middle East settlement can proceed.

.../2

Much remains to be done. It is Egypt and Israel that have taken this step to peace. Elsewhere, Arab countries have protested - often vehemently. It is our earnest hope that these countries can be encouraged to accept the treaty as a first step on the road to a just and lasting peace.

Your Government has supported, and will continue to support, all moves designed to meet this end. We have done this in the hope that peace can become a reality for all the peoples of the region. I have no doubt this hope will be embraced by families who have settled in Australia from countries throughout the Middle East and who have friends and relatives still living there.

The treaty is a triumph for the forces of moderation and reason. It is a victory for those who believe in the capacity of man to resolve differences by thought and word -- and not by fighting.

In world forums, Australia pleads the cause and course of moderation. As an independent nation - joining with other aligned and non-aligned nations -- by seeking to find reasonable answers to world problems we strengthen the cause of moderation.

Our earnest desire is to break down the barriers between nations -- between people. Symbolically, a great barrier tumbled in Washington this week. We all hope that symbol gives new impetus around the world for man's highest mission -- peace.