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## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

5 APRIL 1979

### AUSTRALIAN 1988 BICENTENARY

1988 will be the Bicentenary of the first European settlement in Australia. In June 1978, the Premiers' Conference agreed that there should be a major commemoration of Australia's Bicentenary. Following this decision, there has been consultation between the Commonwealth, States and the Northern Territory to devise and agree on a framework of administrative arrangements by which an Australian Bicentennial Authority can be established.

The Authority will be responsible for the planning and staging of this historic commemoration. As befits a national endeavour of this kind, the commitment to it will be completely bi-partisan. The Authority, therefore, will be a joint organisation of seventeen members: seven appointed by the Commonwealth; seven appointed by the States and the Northern Territory; two members drawn respectively from the Government and the Opposition in Federal Parliament; and with a Chairman appointed by the Commonwealth.

I am pleased to be able to inform the House that Mr. John Reid has agreed to serve as the Chairman. His work and reputation will be known to many Members. He is a businessman and administrator of outstanding calibre. I am in no doubt that under his experienced and forceful guidance, the Authority will be established on a sound, businesslike footing, and that he will handle the task he has been given with distinction.

The Authority will be established administratively, as a company incorporated in the A.C.T. There will be companion legislation of a general kind to identify the status and role of the Authority and guarantee its autonomy and continuity. Such an arrangement will confer an appropriate degree of independence and flexibility so that the Authority can cope with changing requirements during the next decade.

The structure envisaged will enable the Authority to operate expeditiously in a business-like way, and will facilitate such operations as licensing, franchising and normal commercial agreements.

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At the same time, the Authority will be accountable to the Parliament through the Minister for Administrative Services who will consult, as necessary, with the appropriate Minister in each of the States and in the Northern Territory.

The Authority's accounts will be subject to audit by the Auditor-General. Any appropriation by the Parliament for the purposes of the Authority will be subject to the normal Parliamentary scrutiny. The Authority will also be required to submit an Annual Report to the Parliament. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Authority and, as appropriate, the companion legislation, will give effect to the Government's wishes in this regard.

The Authority will have both advising and operational roles. In its advising role it will be required at an early date to make recommendations in relation to a "theme" and a "focus" for the celebrations and on the matter of international participation. Generally, it will be empowered to do all things necessary for the successful prosecution of the role given to it by the Governments and the objectives specified in its charter.

The charter will be expressed in an appropriately drawn Memorandum and Articles of Association designed to provide the desired wide ambit of activity and authority within the administrative framework I have indicated, subject, of course, to the decisions of Governments in relation to policy.

The Bicentenary will be a most important event for Australia. Deep in any human community is consciousness of its origins and identity and its hopes and resolutions for the future, a consciousness to which it will want to return and dwell upon at particular moments in its history. The marking of a Bicentenary is one such time.

It will be a time for calling to mind the achievements throughout this country and by its people over two centuries. It will be a time to reflect upon our developing and changing national entity as a united community transformed in a remarkable way by the migration programmes of the years since World War II. It will be a time for weighing the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead and for considering our place in the world community.

It will, as I have said, be a matter for the Authority to propose for the consideration of Governments a theme and a focus for the celebrations and in doing this, it will need to draw upon the ideas of highly imaginative and creative people within our community. It will be for the Authority to recommend that concrete programmes by which the commemoration will find expression.

In the drawing of these programmes, and for their discharge the Authority will, as far as practicable, be seeking to devolve responsibility and initiative to State, Municipal and Local Governments. As well, the Authority will be seeking to involve all sections and members of the community individually and collectively. It will look to encourage initiatives at the grass roots. Within these programmes there will no doubt be a strong emphasis on history. This must under-pin any such commemoration. We are now embarking on an exciting and challenging project for the nation and I commend it to Honourable Members for their support.

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