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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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OPENING OF HOCKEY STADIUM, PERTH

I am delighted to be in Western Australia and to be amongst sportsmen and sportswomen. It is indeed an honour to be asked to open the "Commonwealth Hockey Stadium" -- Australia's gift to Western Australia on the occasion of its sesqui-centenary celebrations. The stadium is also a tribute to the hockey associations of Western Australia.

It is a matter of regret that the late Eric Eastman -- whose vision this stadium was -- did not live to see it completed. I'm sure we all wish that he was here to share this day with us.

No doubt, the sesqui-centenary celebrations will remain long in the memory of all the people of the State and this stadium will stand as a permanent mark of the interest that the Commonwealth has taken in this milestone in Western Australia's history. The game that has just finished has shown us how the stadium will add to the sporting life of Western Australia.

Synthetic all-weather grounds are a remarkable development and this is a particularly fine example. We have just seen played on it an excellent game of women's hockey. I had to put a restraining hand towards Tamie, a former hockey player herself.

The women's hockey teams of Western Australia have a magnificent record with one exception. They have been Australian champions every year since 1962 and nine captains of Australian women's hockey have been West Australians.

The Western Australian Women's Hockey Association has been helped immeasurably by the drive and enthusiasm of a large number of people, but to mention two -- the names of Pat Goodrich and Bertha Beecroft -- will be familiar to all those who love hockey in this State.

The Commonwealth chose a hockey stadium as its gift for two reasons. First the gentle arm-twisting of your Premier -- who is no mean arm-twister, and secondly, the unabashed advocacy of the Commonwealth Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, Mr. Viner. He is a redoubtable Minister, and, I am reliably informed, is an equally redoubtable and active hockey player in Western Australia. But influence or not, I am very happy that we have managed to hit on something which will be

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manifestly useful and which meets with the wishes of Government, sportsmen and sportswomen in Western Australia.

Western Australia has made its mark in sport over many years. It is still producing stars, and I go no further than to mention Rick Charlesworth, Captain of Western Australia at cricket and Captain of Australia at hockey.

Western Australia has made its contribution to Australia's reputation in international sport, just as it makes its contribution to Australia's reputation in many other fields. For example, in cultural affairs, in education, in community activities and community welfare and in the development of the State's tremendous resources.

One cannot be in Western Australia for long without acknowledging the tremendous part that your Premier, Sir Charles Court, has played in its development in mining, and the international trade in iron ore in particular, which has had a tremendous effect on Australia's prosperity.

We look now to the encouraging prospects of the North-West Shelf to provide further stimulus to the economy.

Truly, Western Australia is in the forefront of Australia's development. But we are not quite at the stage -- as his Royal Highness, Prince Charles, suggested of expecting Western Australia to buy out the East.

The Commonwealth Government, as you know, has its own programme for assisting in the development of sport and in particular, the encouragement of excellence in sport. We are assisting with financing the Olympic Appeal and Australian hockey has shone in the Olympic Games. I believe that since 1956 it has never finished lower than sixth in the Olympic Games and in that time it has won two silver medals and a bronze medal -- a record of which it can be justifiably proud. Also, in 1978, the Australian team won the Bronze Medal in the world cup competition.

Ian Viner doesn't let me forget that Western Australia has played a key part in Australia's success and for many years has provided the nucleus of Australian international hockey teams, as well as a number of Captains for our teams such as Ian Dick, Brian Glencross, Kevin Charlton and Ric Charlesworth.

This stadium is the outcome of the dedication of many people -- the outcome of energy and single-minded purpose. It is a magnificent arena, a fitting gift from the Commonwealth of Australia to mark Western Australia's sesqui-centenary. I have much pleasure in declaring the "Commonwealth Hockey Stadium" open.