



# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, MAY 4 1980

## OPENING OF THE YESHIVA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thank you for inviting me to share with you the opening of your new school. I am deeply honoured to be involved in what is a most important day in the history of this school, the Yeshiva organisation in particular, and Sydney Jewry in general.

That you have named your school, "Yeshiva" is significant. For "Yeshiva" carries with it the ancient idea of learning and the spread of knowledge, so important to the Jewish community. And the Yeshiva, by its dedication to the study of the Talmud and Rabbinic literature, continues directly the academic traditions of early Palestine and Babylonia.

Because of these strong links with the deeper past, the Yeshiva is able to ensure the continuing and future strength of the Jewish community.

A strong Jewish community derives its strength from the value of the fundamental principles of Judaism. These are especially important to young people. They help promote individual development and demonstrate to young people the importance of their family and the wider community of which they are members. And this community is enriched through the continued growth of the Jewish tradition.

The influence of that tradition has been felt in Australia since its foundation. Since then, Jews have participated conspicuously in the life and development of Australia as a multicultural society. Some have been renowned for their contribution.

I need only remind you of Sir Isaac Isaacs our first Australian born Governor-General and the present distinguished occupant of that office, Sir Zelman Cowen.

Your community and this school play a vital role in the furtherance of this great tradition within the Australian nation.

Australia has a deep appreciation of the fact that these traditions have been forged through thousands of years and countless struggles for independence in the pursuit of values and beliefs. These struggles regrettably continue today. Jewish people are still discriminated against in the Soviet Union, and their rights as people are suppressed. This only serves to highlight the increasing importance of Israel as a homeland; a dream achieved; a hope fulfilled. It also emphasises the importance of countries like Australia where there is an acceptance and a welcome for all people; especially those of Jewish faith who have done so much for Australia.

Be assured that Jewish people, their customs, their traditions, their religion and their practices will always be welcome in Australia. We prosper through your contributions to our community and we enjoy your company as proud Australians.

Your role in the community emphasises the acceptance and encouragement of diversity in the Australian way of life. This is not a country where we expect everyone to be the same. We believe we are a better, more tolerant and more mature nation because our people have come from many lands and from many different backgrounds.

And the Jewish community plays a proud part in the successes that come from our diversity.

For us all, the decade has opened in an atmosphere of international concern. The Middle East is the focus of that concern. The difficulties involving and surrounding the strength and survival of the state of Israel; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the illegal detention of American hostages in Iran; the threat that all this poses to oil supplies for industrialised countries; all these cast shadows of turmoil and unpredictability over the Middle East.

The minds of world leaders are centred upon these problems. Our hope is that they will secure practical and peaceful solutions to these grave and threatening crises.

Against this background, the links between our nations have stood the test of time. In 1948, Australia was one of the strong supporters of the creation of the state of Israel. And we remain absolutely committed to its continuation within secure and recognised borders.

Within this context, we welcome the Camp David agreements as providing a constructive framework for progress towards peace in the Middle East. And I know that with these new facilities, your school, by educating the children who pass through it in the long tradition of Yeshiva, will carry on serving, not only the Jewish community, but also our wider Australian community.

In this way, education at this school will be an education enriched with the truths of the past and will be, for its fortunate students, education for life. Of course, it is in the home that the most formative part of our education begins. It is the family, to which the young child first looks for love and approval; for help, encouragement, inspiration and for rules.

I strongly believe children need to know, and want to know, what is permissible and what is not. Families who believe they can raise children in an environment devoid of rules risk the moral development of their children and their capacity to adjust successfully to the demands of an adult world.

There is no doubt that the family model will always be the basis for a child's learning. It is the home, together with the school, which provides the basis for a constructive, useful and fulfilling life in the world. This is especially so today when many families lack the expertise and many of the experiences needed to prepare a child fully for the complex world outside the family unit.

That is why a school such as this is important. Not only is it small enough for every child to have the scope and opportunity to contribute to its life. But also, because schools must offer young people a stance for life, it is important for children to absorb at school values and standards which complement those they learn at home.

I know this happens here and I commend particularly the efforts of the staff, some of which are voluntary, all of which provide a stimulating and enriching environment in which the attitudes and values of those in their care are nurtured and developed.

This occasion is an especially happy one, because this successful building project has come from past disappointments. Today's opening serves as a reminder that schools such as this cannot operate without the support of an active, caring community, and the very welcome generosity of philanthropists.

Just as the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Rabinovitch in earlier years enabled a dream to become a reality, so the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brender and Mr. Sam Moss now enables Yeshiva to continue and to grow. The substantial donations from Mr. and Mrs. Brender and Mr. Moss, together with the Government's grant of some \$200,000 made through the Schools Commission, have enabled this school to be built.

And it is indeed a tribute to your community that through the individual and parental involvement of its members, this Yeshiva college is now a reality. Too often, some members of our community expect everything to be provided by governments, at the taxpayers' expense. Yet today is proof that it is through community effort, and through involvement and hard work from individual people that progress in society is most often achieved and rewards we gain in life are often the most satisfying.

Of course, here, where community effort has been clearly demonstrated, the Government has been pleased to help Yeshiva Primary School to be built. Where government assistance promotes diversity, it confirms the Government's commitment to the concept of choice in education, and to the diversification in range and type of educational institutions available to the community.

In 1970, the Government initiated Federal involvement in the funding for non-government schools through the principle of direct Commonwealth per capita grants. Since that time the operating costs of Rabinovitch Yeshiva College have been significantly offset by grants by the Commonwealth Government.

This support has continued and extended through other Commonwealth programmes administered by the Schools Commission. Rabinovitch Yeshiva has also benefitted, for example, since 1975 from library and equipment grants.

The young people who are already enjoying the benefits provided by this school and its facilities are well placed to face, along with others of their age, a future of challenge and change. That is why, in developing a capacity in our young people to respond adequately to both of these, we need always to keep in mind what we are seeking to achieve through education.

Certainly, expertise in science, or maths, or literature, are valid objectives of our educational programme, but they are merely rungs on the educational ladder, not the ladder itself. An educated person is someone who has benefitted from what he has been taught. He has a knowledge and a sense of a role in society for all of life, not just of adolescence or vocational life.

And if modern education is to weather the attacks against it, its products must be able to demonstrate rationality, skills, knowledge, attitudes, spiritual strength and principles, and the ability to put all of these to the right use.

Education then, is not a mass of learning, but an understanding of the use that can be made of the learning that takes place in our schools. Because that is so, we need to replace blind trust in any sort of education by a search for the best kind of education.

This will involve an understanding that our children must encounter training which will enable them to live in our community; to recognise their responsibilities; to widen their sympathies; and to find out what their duty is towards their neighbour.

This school is uniquely placed to contribute to this process. I know that it is inspired by the principle that a responsible citizen is not one who single-mindedly pursues his own interests alone; but rather one who shows a concern for the well-being of others in his attempts to make the world a better place.

While such values guide what you do at Yeshiva School, schools of this kind will serve well the community of the future and help impart to young people the living traditions of the Jewish culture and faith. The traditions are some of the oldest, warmest and deepest in our society, being based on the family, on tolerance and on community service.

The preservation of these traditions builds, maintains and strengthens the legacy of our ancestors. It is all too often forgotten that our national identity, our drive for a secure place in the world, lies in the lessons all our peoples have acquired in their histories.

To ensure our future, we must draw on the experience of all those who have chosen to make Australia their home. I congratulate our Jewish schools on their important contribution to the vital task of the preservation of your heritage.

This school's strong ties with time-tested traditions, coupled to the support you have from all sections of Sydney's Jewish community, well enable Yeshiva Primary School to prosper while meeting the educational challenges of the 80's and beyond.

It gives me great pleasure to declare Yeshiva Primary School open.