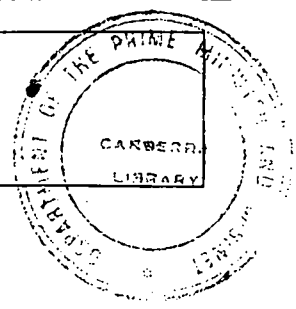




EMBARGO: AGAINST DELIVERY

PRIME MINISTER



FOR MEDIA

MONDAY, 26 MAY, 1980

THE OPENING OF THE HIGH COURT

Today marks a further step in the evolution of our nation. For today, in our national capital, in close proximity to the Federal Parliament, and to those buildings which house the executive arm of Government, we are giving a permanent home to the High Court of Australia.

Now, for the first time, the three great institutions of the Commonwealth, wherein reside its legislative, executive and judicial power, are brought together with a visible presence in our national capital.

To add to this sense of history, we are privileged, your Majesty, and honoured, to have you perform the opening ceremony.

For my Government, and for the people of Australia, it is a distinct pleasure to welcome you and his Royal Highness to our midst. Both of you, and your family, enjoy a deep respect and a warm affection from all Australians.

Little more than 53 years ago, when Canberra was a forbidding environment compared to its beautiful setting today, your late father, then Duke of York and later King George VI, officiated at the inaugural sitting of our Parliament in this city.

Since then, buildings which house the executive Government have inevitably been drawn to Canberra. Today, with your opening of the High Court building, the seat of the nation's supreme judicial body, Canberra becomes even more so our national capital.

The High Court of Australia is of special importance to all Australians - a vital element in our Federal constitutional system.

This system involves a division of powers and it is a fundamental function of the High Court to pronounce upon the boundaries of these powers. The Court performs this function by express direction from the Constitution itself. It may seem strange that the High Court, which is so essential to the structure of our democracy, should acquire a permanent home only in the 80th year of our nationhood.

Over the years, sittings of the High Court have been held in State capital cities. And each year, sittings have been designated to be held in every State. And yet, even now, Sir Garfield will not be saying to his brethren: "Oh rest ye brother mariners, we will not wander more". For the sittings of the Court will not be entirely confined to Canberra.

But the decision of 1968, by the Government of the day, means that the national court will now have its home in the national capital.

In all, four Federal Governments have played a part in its establishment. But to bring the project to fruition has required a special impetus.

As my predecessor, Mr. Whitlam, acknowledged, when unveiling the foundation plaque in September 1975, the driving force behind the concept has been the present Chief Justice of Australia. This building bears testimony to Sir Garfield's vision, energy and imagination, and will stand as a memorial to the high standards of Australian designers and builders; craftsmen and artists.

It is a building which will attract a growing national pride as the years pass.

All too often, in the design of modern buildings, we are left with a functional result with little else to commend it. On this occasion, the pursuit of function and excellence has been rigorous and successful.

Indeed, "I submit", that function and excellence can co-exist, as this magnificent structure proves, "beyond reasonable doubt"; or at least, "on the balance of probabilities".

Today we celebrate the completion of a home worthy of the institution it is to serve; and we are grateful to all those whose skill and dedication have made this possible.

Now, the three arms of Government, in their inter-dependent and independent roles, will be made manifest to all. And those who reflect, will recognise that the presence amongst them of the judicial power, is an affirmation of the permanence and supremacy of the rule of law. For, in the final analysis, this is but a building: a means whereby the Justices of the High Court of Australia, as their oath of office requires, shall: "Do right to all manner of people, according to law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will".

Your Majesty, this is a momentous occasion for us all. We are delighted that you and so many distinguished guests have been able to share it with us.

In this way, you have secured for this day, an indelible place in Australia's history.