



PRIME MINISTER

CANBERRA

24 February 1981

PRINCE OF WALES

The monarchy is interwoven in Australian life in a very real and vital way. The Crown is part of our constitutional processes of Government. Feeling for the Royal Family is deep-seated in the emotions of many Australians, and we all share and enjoy the public occasions which add colour to our contemporary scene. Each of us can look back on events in our own lifetime affecting the Royal Family and they stand out in our memory.

Tonight is such an occasion.

Her Majesty the Queen has announced from Buckingham Palace the engagement of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer. The announcement has been conveyed to his Excellency the Governor-General and to the Australian Government. On behalf of the Government, and all Australians, I welcome the announcement with great pleasure and extend congratulations and good wishes to Prince Charles and Lady Diana.

I am not able to say that the announcement has caught the Australian people entirely unaware or unprepared. The media has assisted us in, at times, graphic detail. But thus prepared I can say with even greater assurance that we applaud the announcement and look forward with excitement to the pageantry of a Royal wedding.

Australian people hold Prince Charles in special regard. From the completion of his schooling here as a young man, and his subsequent five visits to Australia, we have come to recognise and applaud his sense of humour and his dedication; his outgoing personality and his concern for people. He has spoken many times of his affection for Australia and Australians. We have a great affection for him, in which his wife-to-be will now share.

Prince Charles will be visiting Australia again later this year and he will be given a warm welcome. I do not know when we might have the great pleasure of welcoming Lady Diana to Australia but whenever that is, I am certain that the welcome will be equally warm, equally affectionate.

The Crown gives us a focal point in our development as a nation and links us with our history and our origins. The significance of the monarchy is not diminishing. It is not fading in Australian consciousness.

The Queen and her family are part of a living and relevant institution, which in Australia is very much tied to our own institutions and emotions. We all share with Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip, and the other members of the Royal Family, the joy of this particular occasion and to them also we extend our good wishes.

I shall be conveying our sentiments to Prince Charles and Lady Diana, and to Her Majesty the Queen, on behalf of all Australians.

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