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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

THURDAY, MAY 28 1981

RETIREMENT OF MR. R. HAMER

I would like to pay a tribute to a great Australian and a great Victorian who is stepping down after 19 years of service in the Victorian Government, including almost a decade as Premier.

Dick Hamer has served Victoria well. He has been a great Premier and a strong voice on behalf of his State - a much stronger voice than many know, and a man who has given good government to Victoria. The people of Victoria endorsed his leadership and his government in three successive elections.

As Prime Minister, I have valued my relationship with Dick Hamer. I am grateful for his co-operation and support.

There is now a great obligation on the part of the Members of the Victorian Parliamentary Liberal Party as they meet to choose a new leader, to re-establish their purpose, their unity, and to carry Victoria forward in accordance with the great Liberal tradition of that State.

Division must be put aside and the new leader, with his colleagues, will have our total support as he takes up the reins of Government. I have no doubt that if the new leader is given the full support of his party the Liberal Party will win the next State election - and win it comfortably. The Federal Government stands ready to co-operate with the new Ministry in Victoria. I pledge the total support of myself, Sir Phillip Lynch and the Federal Liberal Party for the new Victorian Ministry. We must remember that, while the Liberal Party is important, it is the people of Victoria who are affected by the decisions that are made.

I make this statement now to pay tribute to Dick Hamer, whom I have known for many years. I thank him for his services to Victoria, and to Australia. I do so before the Party Meeting which will elect his successor so that Victorians will know that this support is not just for a person but for the ideal of the Liberal Party and for the way of life for which Dick Hamer strove so hard.

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