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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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AUSTRALIA'S BICENTENARY 1988: THE AUSTRALIAN ACHIEVEMENT

The Commonwealth Government has recently given further detailed consideration to the philosophy and overall strategy for Australia's bicentenary celebrations in 1988. This further development of the Government's thinking provides additional guidance to the Australian Bicentennial Authority in meeting its responsibility of planning and staging the Commonwealth Government's contribution to this historic commemoration.

The general principles on which the ABA was established were outlined in my speech to the Parliament on 5 April 1979. These principles were:

- . to make recommendations to the Government in relation to a "theme" and a "focus" for the celebrations;
- . to recommend concrete programmes by which the commemoration will find expression;
- . to seek to involve all sections of the community individually and collectively in the celebration and to encourage initiatives at the grass roots of Australian society;
- . to make recommendations on the matter of international participation.

It has now been decided that the major theme of the Bicentennial programme will be "The Australian Achievement".

This theme will encompass positive achievements and triumphs over adversity and social problems. It will focus attention on the goals and values of the Australian people, and on future achievements to which Australians can aspire. It will stimulate pride in Australia. It will include the variety of aspects of Australian life. It will recognise that the Bicentennial is primarily an Australian occasion, while also encouraging international participation and inviting consideration of our relationships to the rest of the world.

The Bicentennial will celebrate not just one event, but the efforts and achievements of millions of Australians.

Australians will choose to celebrate the Bicentenary in many ways using their own ideas and resources. The celebrations will reflect the various perspectives which people have on Australia and Australian history, as well as people's hopes and expectations for the future. Its success will depend largely on community enthusiasm. Bicentennial activities should obviously be such as to unite Australia.

Many annual events on the Australian calendar, such as sporting finals and cultural festivals, will obviously be given a bicentennial imprint by their organisers. This kind of imprint on regular Australian events will have a particular value in linking the Bicentennial with the Australian way of life. Responsibility for preparing the overall set of activities is a matter for co-operation between federal, state and local governments, the private sector, and the community generally. Maximum community involvement will be sought.

It is important to ensure the maximum possible degree of co-operation between and within all spheres of government and between government and the private sector. Indeed, the celebrations should receive their impetus from the enthusiasm and involvement of local communities which will be complemented by activities planned at the national level.

The Commonwealth Government will concentrate its efforts on the national and international aspects of the Bicentennial. The national programme celebrating Australia's achievements will be one in which people from every part of Australia will be involved, right down to the local level. The Bicentennial must be an occasion for all Australians, and the celebrations must provide for all Australians entertainment and enjoyment across a wide range of events and activities.

The Government does not believe that a specialised international exposition would be appropriate for the Bicentennial celebrations. An outlay in excess of \$200m at present prices would be required to stage such an exposition successfully. Such an expenditure for a single, fixed event would be both inappropriate and inconsistent with the need for the Government to support national and international events which would reach people across the nation.

The Government believes that in addition to providing for a celebration of Australia, by Australians, for Australians, it will be possible for us to involve those countries with which Australia has close ties, through migration, trade, cultural links and so on, and which would want to make their distinctive contribution to this Australian celebration.

Several kinds of international involvement in the Bicentennial would be desirable. In some areas, such as major sporting events, international participation is obviously essential. More broadly, it would be desirable for leading world figures to visit Australia, and for tours by international orchestras, dance companies, and so on to be organised. It may be possible to develop a programme whereby some countries which wish to mark their recognition of the Bicentenary could contribute a permanent and useful memorial.

The maximum involvement of Australians should be sought by celebrating achievements in a large number of areas of Australian life. The areas to be celebrated will include:

- . political democracy
- . private enterprise
- . trade unionism
- . educational, intellectual and technical achievements
- . the multicultural society
- . the contribution of Aboriginals
- . artistic and cultural achievements
- . military achievement
- . sporting achievement
- . interest in the Australian environment
- . Australia's international contribution

Consideration will be given to establishing an exciting and comprehensive exhibition on "The Australian Achievement" to travel around the nation during 1988, possibly associated with appropriate entertainment and cultural events. Smaller versions of the main exhibition would be established to tour country towns.

The ABA has the responsibility to recommend a concrete programme of events and projects to the Government.

It is important that a balance be struck in this programme between:

- . celebrations or educational activities designed to commemorate themes and historical events (such as the "Tall Ships" concept, exhibitions and publications)
- . adding a bicentennial dimension to events which would occur as a matter of course, or to sponsor unique events to celebrate the Bicentennial
- . seeking permanent memorials of the Bicentenary for the future.

In drawing up a programme of national events and projects, the ABA will bear in mind

- (a) an appropriate balance of entertainment and educative interest
- (b) consistency with the theme of the Bicentenary and as such association with significant aspects of Australia's achievements - its history, culture and future;

- (c) significance for the community at large; and
- (d) accessibility to as many Australians as possible.

Many of the individual Bicentennial events and projects will be the responsibility of State and local government authorities, organisations and individuals in the community as well as the Commonwealth.

Ministers will be examining whether events within the scope of their portfolios might be programmed to fall within the Bicentennial activities.

The ABA will be the co-ordinating focus for planning the activities. It will be important for it to ensure that the diverse range of individual projects, and activities would be co-ordinated within the overall framework of celebrating 200 years of Australian achievement. The ABA will also implement those elements of the national programme for which the Government feels it should be directly responsible.

The ABA has a further responsibility to act as a catalyst, as a clearing house for ideas and a source of advice to the community generally. It should draw to the attention of the principal institutions of Australian life possibilities for activities which could contribute to the overall national programme. The ABA's activities will obviously need to be informed by a recognition that the success of the Bicentennial celebration will depend on a high level of private community enthusiasm and involvement which will be largely self-financing.

So far as the national programme is concerned, there is room for a variety of funding approaches. In some cases events may be funded solely by the Commonwealth. In others, there could be Commonwealth assistance additional to other sources of funding. And there would also be a number of national events which would be entirely self-financing. Events and projects need to be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

I am sure that with the involvement of all Australians, supported by Governments in the way I have outlined, the Bicentenary will be an outstanding success, a great mark of Australian achievement.