



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

MONDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 1982

ADDRESS TO THE NATION FOR AUSTRALIA DAY

Australia is now a country of fifteen million people. Our population has doubled since the Second World War. It is timely to review some of our achievements over those years, and on that basis to look ahead to the kind of Australia we want to build for our children.

Since the 1940's not only has our population doubled, material living standards have also doubled, there has been enormous development of Australia's resources and productive capacities, family homes were vastly different in 1945 from what we take for granted in the average home today; and our horizons as a nation have been transformed and uplifted. The Australian way of life has been enriched by people from almost every country, educational opportunities have widened, cultural and artistic activities have expanded, our comparative isolation from the rest of the world has been reduced by better communications, and we have become more independent and outward looking as well as vastly more self-confident as a nation.

There is a growing pride in Australia and things Australian, and I am confident that any tendency to knock Australia is fast becoming a thing of the past. Australia is known around the world as a country which is stable but at the same time exciting, and people in many other countries now look to us for inspiration and hope. There are famous Australians in almost every field of human achievement, in sport and science, in business and the arts. But it is important for us to remember that the Australia that we know and love has been essentially built by millions of average Australians.

It is their work and efforts, their values, their belief in fair play, their commitment to the advancement of this country, that have made Australia what it is. We have the opportunity to keep building on their achievements, and as an open society of fifteen million people, we have many high hopes for the years ahead. Continuing economic growth is obviously essential for many of these hopes to be realised. But I believe that over and above that, we have all enjoyed the feeling of being part of a more vibrant society in recent years, and many of the traditional values of the Australian way of life have been strengthened in the process.

We are lucky to possess the freedom and living standards which we often take for granted, and we are also lucky that there are grounds for optimism about the future.

There are obviously challenges we need to face up to if we are to take advantage of our opportunities. There is no doubt that unreasonableness and selfishness, whether in the form of needless strikes or tax avoidance or whatever, can damage us all. In addition, some of the problems of other countries are certain to have an impact upon Australia's prospects, especially in the short term, no matter how carefully we try to insulate ourselves from them, because we live in an interdependent world.

But while the challenges are obvious and real, Australia has enormous advantages as we look ahead. We have many resources, especially energy resources, which the world wants and needs. Our economy has great underlying strength, and the skills of our workforce are being progressively improved and upgraded. Geographically, we are situated in one of the fastest growing corners of the world, with the Pacific and South East Asia on our doorstep.

Our potential is great, but we must remember that success is not automatic, that our objectives will not be met by chance. The world does not owe us a living, and while a population of fifteen million may seem large for Australia, it is in fact less than half of one percent of the world's population. We have the capacity and the basis to go ahead, and continue to grow. But if we are to achieve our common objectives, we must co-operate and work together, we must accept the responsibilities and obligations which we have to each other, we must strive for the best, we must do everything within our power to give people the opportunities and the security which they need.

I have already spoken of the positive attitude towards Australia and things Australian which is becoming more prominent in our community. If this attitude can be extended, so that people become committed to the well-being of the whole community as well as themselves, then we will all benefit and Australia will advance. As a result, we will build a well-adjusted and more prosperous Australia for our children and this is after all, one of the greatest objectives which binds us together.