



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 1982

MARIONETTE THEATRE, SYDNEY

I am very happy to be here with Tamie in support of this appeal to raise as I understand about \$700,000 for the renovation of an old building next door the major part of which is something considerably over 100 years old. Turning what used to be a very bare and rudimentary sailors' home when it was first constructed into a marionette theatre which will serve this part of Sydney and Australia for a very long, long while, is I think an imaginative project indeed.

I have had a quick look over the old building and there is a photograph of it, a large one and an old one in the foyer which showed the simplicity of the design and the proportions which could hardly be bettered. I think one of the quite remarkable changes that has occurred over Australia over the last ten maybe fifteen years at the most, is an enormous change of attitude to parts of Australia's early history. We want to preserve, we want to conserve and that is evident in many different ways in the views we have towards old buildings which are very much part of our past. Whether it is in relation to part of the Rocks area in Sydney or parts of Melbourne or parts of the Australian countryside that we want to get despoiled, the attitude of Australians now is one in which we all realise very greatly that there is much in a relatively brief past of something less than a couple of hundred years. There is much in that that we want to keep, that we want to conserve and that we want to improve so that people in the future can enjoy it.

Conservation by itself is just one thing. It has not necessarily got a great deal of point to it, unless conservation leads to something that people can enjoy, experience and in many cases use to a very useful purpose. Here we are going to have the renovation and internally pulling around a bit, an old building that is something to conserve, but something that is going to provide a very great deal of enjoyment and a permanent for the Marionette for as long as time may last. I think the putting together of these two objectives is very, very worthwhile.

I am sorry that we are only being given two very brief glimpses of what can happen. I can think of all sorts of possibilities. I think if there was a little time given, we really could have had a show put on which could have been relevant and pertinent and all sorts of things. Whether it was Carlton winning at the

football or Parliament last week or Parramatta maybe winning today, the possibilities would seem to be endless. It is an art form which Australians have devoted a great deal of time, a great deal of attention and care and have shown a great deal of skill not only no doubt because they themselves get a good deal of satisfaction from the profession, but because they give a very great deal of pleasure to a very large number of Australians and it is important that all of this be encouraged.

It would be very easy for people to just sit back and say there are a couple of governments, there is local government and there are State governments and Federal governments and one of them can do it. That also is an attitude which I sometimes think has been too evident. Certainly governments have a role. All governments now support the arts and different art forms very substantially. But if the artistic world had to rely on governments alone for the support of art, I think that in itself can tend to be stultifying and narrowing.

In some countries overseas where the support of the artistic world and artistic endeavour is entirely in the hands of government. If you don't perform the way those governments want in the proper revolutionary manner, then your work is condemned. One of the guarantors of freedom of artistic expression comes from the fact that art, literature can be sponsored and supported from a variety of sources, from governments, from the private sector, from state governments, the Commonwealth and at times also from local government. The fact that the arts are supported in Australia in a variety of sources I think is something much to be commended. It is one of the guarantors of freedom of artistic expression and that obviously is enormously important in a country like Australia.

If Australia has been a little behind over the years in the past in terms of public support for the arts, compared with some European countries I think maybe it was, not now. I think still it might be a little behind some other countries in terms of public and corporate support for the arts in its different forms. I am delighted that over the last several years there are many people in the private enterprise world who are coming to realise to a greater and greater extent that they also have a role to play in relation to this and while the role can be an altruistic one, I think that there is also a self-purpose served and a very good self purpose served in terms of the wider public reputation of the corporation that support this kind of activity.

I have very much that the appeal for funds is going to be thoroughly successful and I have got no doubt that if it is over-subscribed the funds will still be very well spent. But the purpose is a very worthwhile one and I am delighted and Tamie is delighted to have been asked here this afternoon to lend what support we personally can to this interesting and important endeavour. I would like to wish those concerned, Sir Charles Moses and everyone else all good fortune in what is being attempted because I think it is something of real value and I am sure it is going to not only preserve an important old building, but it is going to give a very great deal of pleasure to tens upon thousands of people and many of them young Australians down through the years. The best of luck and may the money roll in.