



EMBARGO: 5.00pm

PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SUNDAY, 10 OCTOBER 1982

ELECTORATE TALK

Now that the Commonwealth Games has finished, I want to thank a great many people for what they have done for Australia in making the last 10 days so wonderfully successful. The Games brought out the best qualities in Australians and those qualities came through clearly in the efforts and achievements of the thousands of competitors and organisers. They worked together - many of them literally for years - to bring off a magnificent sporting occasion. And in doing so, they brought together the entire Australian nation.

The opening ceremony will stay in the minds of Australians for a very long time. There was a friendly and light-hearted atmosphere as the thousands of school children poured on to the QEII sports ground to create that memorable display of the Flag and the map of Australia which filled every Australian who saw it with a feeling of pride in our country that is difficult to put into words. The children and the arrangers of the display deserve great credit. So, too, do the dancers from the cross-section of national backgrounds who performed at the opening and who brought home to us the truly multi-cultural nature of Australian society today.

So many people contributed to the success of the Games. The organisers and officials not only in Brisbane but throughout Australia and the whole Commonwealth. The volunteers who gave their time and effort willingly for their country, there were thousands of them. The members of the Australian armed forces, the ABC, for their exceptional TV coverage in Australia and around the world. The people of Brisbane for being such good hosts in the dynamic and colourful city of which they can be very proud. And, of course, the competitors, our outstanding Australian team and their dedicated, long suffering coaches, families and other supporters.

I look back to 1976 when I visited the Australian team at the Olympic Games in Montreal where we had not won a single gold medal. The team were depressed; Australians in general were disappointed. Intensive training and coaching and a scientific approach to sport in other countries meant that our athletes were being left behind. The Government had to decide whether we would let the world pass us by or whether we would give our athletes the full-blooded support they needed to win world victories.

We established the Australian Institute of Sport, it has cost \$34 million to build and equip so far, and it has contributed significantly to Australia's 107 medals this year. Champions like triple gold medal winner Lisa Curry and marathon winner Robert de Castella came from the Institute. The Government gave the Commonwealth Games Association \$455,000 to help prepare athletes and to provide them with the international competition that is a vital part of their preparation. Another \$200,000 went towards the staging of the S.G.I.O. Games in Brisbane last year as a warm-up for the Commonwealth Games itself.

Now there are new targets in our sights. In 1984, the first Biennial Australia Games is planned for Sydney. Then, later that year, comes the Los Angeles Olympics. The Government is providing \$1.5 million to the Australian Olympic Federation for the preparation of our athletes.

At the same time this is on top of the continued funding of dozens of national sporting organisations through the Sports Development Program and, of course, the Australian Institute of Sport will grow and develop. Australia's athletes deserve the support of this nation. In the last 10 days they provided the hard evidence of a dramatic revival of Australia's sporting ability. They also set a wonderful example, displaying good sportsmanship whether they won or lost, and I believe, representing the true co-operative spirit of the Commonwealth. Our representatives took the nation with them in the intense national pride and purpose they exhibited. For that we thank them greatly.

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