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PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE AUSTRALIAN ENCYCLOPAEDIA
(4TH EDITION) - 2 NOVEMBER 1983**

Let me say at the outset how pleased I am to be here to launch this new edition - the fourth - of the Australian Encyclopaedia.

The existence of such a reference work is indispensable to the needs of contemporary Australia.

There is now, both locally and world-wide, a growing interest in all things Australian

In commercial, industrial, scientific, sporting and cultural fields - across a wide range of Australian endeavour - Australians are making distinctive and valuable contributions.

We can point, for example, to an increasing number of Australian technological and manufacturing successes. The interscan airport approach system is a particularly impressive recent case in point.

On the cultural side, we take pleasure in the international reputation Australians have achieved in the highly competitive field of film and T.V. production.

Australian authors have also won world acclaim; among them, Patrick White, our resident Nobel Prize winner for literature; Morris West, who invariably makes the world best-sellers list; and Thomas Keneally, who last year won the prestigious British Booker-McConnell prize with "Schindler's Ark".

This encyclopaedia draws many of these strands of Australian experience and achievement together in readily accessible form.

That it has been done so effectively is a tribute to the editorial advisory board whose members we are told established the preliminary list of encyclopaedia entries, recommended suitable consultants and contributors and provided invaluable ongoing advice and assistance to the editors.

Special recognition is due to

- Sir Harold White, former National and Parliamentary Librarian, who served as Chairman of the editorial board for both this 4th edition and its predecessor;
- Donald Horne, distinguished author and commentator;
- Bruce Pratt, Editor-in-Chief of the 3rd edition; and
- Dr Alan Day, senior lecturer in geology and geophysics at the University of Sydney.

Through these board members I would also like to pay tribute to the work of hundreds of specialist consultants and contributors who are too numerous to mention individually

- collectively they are responsible for what has been a massive enterprise

The 12th volume deserves special mention. The appendix and index are no less an achievement than the other 11 volumes.

The indexing system is notably innovative and helpful.

Significantly it is integrated with the encyclopaedia's own computerised typesetting and alphabetic sorting program.

This topical application of advances in information technology provides a more precise guide for the user than did the conventional folio and column indexing approach used previously.

I agree with the publishers of this encyclopaedia that its particular achievement is to present "a comprehensive picture of Australia and its people both past and present"

- to present "a changing Australia in a changing world"

I think it is important that we appreciate the inevitability, scope and accelerating rate of change - and the need to try to identify its causes, origins, trends and effects so that we can better confront and determine our future as a nation.

There has hardly been a facet of contemporary Australia that has been untouched by change.

Even basic and cherished assumptions must regularly be reviewed.

No longer, for example, can we view Australia as an island continent isolated on the rim of Asia.

For, while our Western roots will continue to contribute significantly to Australia's distinctive character, it is indisputable that culturally and economically our future will be very bound up with this region.

Ongoing changes within Australia are also having profound implications for our future.

I think it is especially significant, for example, that the information given about our Aboriginal people has been significantly expanded in this edition.

This reflects not only greater awareness of the original inhabitants of our land, but more genuine interest in their way of life, their culture, beliefs and history

- and, I hope, a greater concern for their well-being and respect for their traditions and aspirations.

Similarly the treatment of our ethnic communities has been expanded.

Australia's emergence as a multi-cultural community has generated changes across the whole spectrum of national life

- from our recreational and cultural pursuits to welfare, employment and educational programs

An equally profound but more subtle aspect of population change in Australia has to do with the ageing of our community.

We tend to see ourselves as a 'young country', particularly by comparison with many other countries.

But, paradoxically, we are a steadily ageing society.

Recent Government projections suggest that in 40 years time the number of Australians over 65 will have more than doubled, while the total population will only have grown by slightly more than one third.

The implications this will have for health, social security and education services, employment patterns and, not least, our own perceptions of ourselves are fundamental.

The perception and management of change is often a confusing and complex exercise.

Adjustments in attitudes, social structures, and institutions are usually involved.

A successful transition will depend, I believe, on the willingness of the social partners - Government, unions, employers, and ultimately and most importantly, the people - to consult at all levels in a climate of mutual trust and respect.

A proper appreciation of the factors contributing to change, of the implications of change, is necessary to a healthy, well-ordered society.

Anything which can help us understand our past and present, and gives us a perspective of the future, deserves our attention and respect.

That is one of the many reasons why I commend this edition of the Australian Encyclopaedia.

It is not, of course, an encyclopaedia's function to provide a particular perspective, nor to furnish ready-made conclusions, on any issue.

The encyclopaedia properly leaves to its readers the responsibility of fashioning their own perspectives and the exercise of drawing their own conclusions.

What I am suggesting is that the Australian Encyclopaedia can provide considerable help in such pursuits

- through its well presented entries
- through the excellent suggestions for further reading which accompany most entries
- through its useful cross-referencing between relevant entries
- and through its invaluable and comprehensive index system

Again I must congratulate all who are responsible for the Australian Encyclopaedia - it is a top quality production in every way

- Except on one point.

It has been said that a book should not be judged by its cover but in this case I am compelled to make, if not a judgement, at least a comment.

For inside the cover of Volume One you will note that this edition of the Australian Encyclopaedia was printed in Singapore.

The result may be absolutely first class.

But, an equally fine job could have been done by our own printing industry

- and, I believe, at a comparable cost.

When last July I launched the "Keep Printing in Australia" campaign, I did so with the conviction that Australia's printing industry could produce at a price and quality competitive with anywhere else in the world.

I sincerely hope that the bicentennial edition of this Encyclopaedia will be all Australian.

However, that criticism aside, this project shows again what Australians from all their diverse areas of skills, backgrounds and fields of interest can achieve when all work together towards a common aim.

It gives me great pleasure to commend all those responsible for the preparation of this excellent 4th edition of the Australian Encyclopaedia and to welcome it to the bookshops and bookshelves of our nation.
