



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OPENING OF THE EXTENSION TO THE
MT PRITCHARD AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY CLUB LIMITED
MT PRITCHARD - 9 JUNE 1985

Mr President, Mr Grace, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It was with much pleasure that I accepted your invitation to perform the official opening of the extensions to this magnificent club. Ted Grace had extolled the Club's virtues so strongly that I had to come to see for myself the progress you have made in the development of your club.

Looking around at what has been accomplished, members, directors and staff can all be proud of the giant strides that have been made since the opening of the club in 1961.

The transformation of what was then the Mt Pritchard Workers Club established in some old huts, into the magnificent edifice we see today is truly remarkable.

Three features characterise your club, namely:

- You have kept your original premises, a reminder of your humble beginnings;
- You have retained your initial patron, Gough Whitlam, a continuing reminder of your Labor roots (Gough incidentally officially opened the club under its new name in 1968); and
- You continue to fulfil the promise, enshrined in your club's name, of serving the local community.

Since the fifties licensed clubs in New South Wales have undergone a remarkable expansion both in suburban and country districts. Although many clubs have retained their specialist nature, there has been an evolution to the larger clubs such as your own which can rightly be considered community centres.

Recognition of clubs such as your own as community centres is, I think, very important.

Clubs such as this can be a focal point where people of quite diverse background can be at one with each other in a relaxed environment.

Clubs' importance in our communities is highlighted by the fact that the community they serve is a microcosm of the pluralist society that Australia has become.

One of Australia's greatest strengths has been its acceptance of people from quite diverse nationalities around the world.

Our plurality and diversity is a national asset to be cherished and safeguarded.

We live in a society which, while supporting a common group of institutions, legal rights and obligations leaves individuals free to maintain their particular religion, language and customs. In this way local communities, such as your own, contribute to the richness and traditions of our nation.

In an important sense of national unity can only exist where individuals feel at home within their local community. In this respect clubs such as this play a crucial role.

They bring men and women, young and old, people of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds, together. Many people now share in the recreational and leisure possibilities presented by the clubs.

Here in Australia we have seen developed, over time, a strong network of voluntary organisations which carry out a range of activities vital to the health of the community. Their role is indispensable in a society such as our own.

Our clubs are an essential focus for such activities. In this regard, the bricks and mortar are basic ingredients to providing facilities, but the really important role of the club is to provide services first to its members but also to the wider community.

Gone, hopefully, are the days where larger clubs were just poker machine and beer palaces. Clubs such as yours are now community and social centres providing entertainment, and a venue for functions and meetings both of your own sports clubs and outside organisations. Clubs such as yours not only serve as a focus for some of these activities; they should also be developing new directions and dimensions for local involvement.

Let me give you an example.

This International Youth Year is a good time to look at the needs of the younger people in our community. I know the Fairfield City area has a very high youth population. I am sure there are ways in which this Club could examine support for young people in things such as low-cost recreation, health, legal help, accommodation, or transport. I invite you to consider the challenge.

This Club could, for example, examine how best to make its facilities available for use by young people in the local area. In this regard I believe there is a particular need for services for young women. I am certain you could think of many other ways of contributing to the youth of the Fairfield area.

Celebrations such as you are holding today give everyone concerned an opportunity to reflect on the direction of the club and the contribution it is making to its members and the community.

It is in this spirit that I have much pleasure in declaring these extensions open, and extend my best wishes for the future activities of the club.
