



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

OPENING ADDRESS, ST MARY'S VILLA, CONCORD, 7 JULY 1985

YOUR GRACE, ARCHBISHOP CLANCY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY TO SHARE THE SATISFACTION AND JOY YOU MUST ALL BE FEELING IN SEEING ST MARY'S VILLA NOW A REALITY.

I REALISE THAT OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT, AND THEIR GENEROSITY HAS BEEN REMARKABLE.

BY GIVING SO GENEROUSLY OF YOUR TIME, EFFORT AND MONEY YOU HAVE EXPRESSED YOUR CONCERN FOR THE AGED IN YOUR COMMUNITY IN A VERY PRACTICAL WAY.

IN THIS REGARD I WAS QUITE STRUCK BY THE PERSPECTIVE OF A PARISHIONER WHO RECENTLY WROTE OF ST MARY'S VILLA:

"FIRSTLY IT HAS TO BE RECOGNISED AS THE CULMINATION OF ONE MAN'S IDEALS AND PERSISTENCE. I'M SURE THERE WERE TIMES WHEN FINANCIALLY IT SEEMED AN IMPOSSIBILITY OUR FATHER DELANEY HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN TO GIVE IN NOR GIVE UP EASILY.

"SOMEHOW OR OTHER HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO RING THAT LAST CENT, THAT LAST GRANT FROM SOME GOVERNMENT BODY. NEEDLESS TO SAY HIS PARISHIONERS WERE NOT OVERLOOKED AND MANY FOUND THEIR POCKETS WERE MUCH DEEPER THAN THEY REALISED...

"SECONDLY (THE PARISHIONER CONTINUED) THIS BUILDING MEANS LOVE, CARING AND SHARING. SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SO MANY WAYS, SOME LARGE, SOME SMALL. SOME HAVE GIVEN CASH DONATIONS, OTHERS HAVE ORGANISED FUNCTIONS TO RAISE MONEY, WHILE OTHERS HAVE HELPED IN THE PLANNING OF THE PROJECT. A COMMITTEE HAS BEEN ORGANISED TO HELP THE ELDERLY PEOPLE AFTER THEY HAVE SETTLED IN. ALL THESE ACTIONS", CONCLUDED THE PARISHIONER, "TO ME SYMBOLISE LOVE AND CARING."

IT HAS INDEED BEEN A PHENOMENAL, DEDICATED, CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT ON THE PART OF MANY PEOPLE. IN ADDITION TO FATHER DELANEY, I SHOULD LIKE TO SINGLE OUT OTHER SUCH AS SISTER M. THELCA WHOSE YEARS OF DEVOTED EFFORT AS ADMINISTRATOR OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR THE AGED HAVE BEEN CONSPICUOUS. THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE PARISHES OF STRATHFIELD, FIVE DOCK, HABERFIELD, EASTWOOD, ENFIELD, HOMEBUSH AND BY THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE HAS ALSO BEEN A VITAL INGREDIENT IN THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROJECT.

THERE IS ALSO HOW THE CONTRIBUTION BEING MADE BY THE SISTERS OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN AND THE BAND OF DEDICATED STAFF WHO TOGETHER WILL ENSURE A GENEROUS, CARING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE AGED AND ELDERLY IN THEIR CHARGE.

AND LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, THERE IS A MICHAEL MAHER - YOUR LOCAL MEMBER. HE IS WELL KNOWN, INDEED RENOWNED FOR HIS DETERMINED, PERSISTENT AND CERTAINLY IRREPRESSIBLE PURSUIT OF HIS CONSTITUTENTS INTERESTS. HIS SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ST MARY'S VILLA IS NO EXCEPTION.

BUILDING A FACILITY SUCH AS THIS IS A VERY VISIBLE RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF THE AGED IN OUR COMMUNITY.

BY NEXT CENTURY THE AGED WILL REPRESENT A LARGER AND A GROWING PROPORTION OF AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION. THEIR NEEDS WILL DEMAND INCREASINGLY CLOSE ATTENTION FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

YOU WOULD ALL APPRECIATE THAT THE AGED ARE A VERY DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH VERY DIFFERENT NEEDS; AND THOSE NEEDS ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE OVER TIME.

HERE AT ST MARY'S VILLA YOU NOW HAVE A DAY CARE CENTRE, A HOSTEL AND A NURSING HOME, ALL OF WHICH ARE VITALLY NEEDED BY DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF YOUR AGED COMMUNITY.

AND I AM VERY PLEASED THAT THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ABLE TO ASSIST YOUR UNDERTAKINGS WITH CAPITAL ASSISTANCE OF SOME \$1.27 MILLION FOR THE NURSING HOME AND HOSTEL. IN ADDITION, WE WILL BE PROVIDING ONGOING ASSISTANCE TO THE NURSING HOME IN THE ORDER OF \$580,000 PER YEAR.

THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA, IN THE 1984-85 FINANCIAL YEAR JUST COMPLETED, COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON NURSING HOME ARRANGEMENTS WAS ALMOST \$1000 MILLION, INCLUDING ABOUT \$280 MILLION FOR DEFICIT FUNDED NURSING HOMES.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM IS A PARTICULAR MANIFESTATION OF OUR WISH TO TAILOR GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE TO THEIR NEEDS. SOME \$500 MILLION HAS BEEN DEDICATED TO THIS PROGRAM FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

AT PRESENT THE BULK OF COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE IS DIRECTED TO ONE SEGMENT OF THE AGED POPULATION - THOSE LIVING IN NURSING HOMES. WE SEE A VERY REAL NEED ALSO TO PROVIDE VARIOUS OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE TO THE GREAT NUMBER OF AGED PEOPLE LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY.

IN 1980, A SURVEY SHOWED THAT, OF THE PEOPLE AGED 65 YEARS AND OVER WHO WERE MODERATELY OR SEVERLY HANDICAPPED, NEARLY THREE QUARTERS LIVED IN THE COMMUNITY COMPARED WITH ONLY ONE QUARTER IN INSTITUTIONS.

FOR AGED PEOPLE LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY, WE, AS A GOVERNMENT, AIM TO ENSURE THAT THEIR NEEDS ARE MET IN A WAY WHICH IS AFFORDABLE BY THE AGED THEMSELVES AND BY THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY. WE AIM TO ENSURE THAT EVERY AGED PERSON IS ABLE TO SELECT, WITH HIS OR HER RELATIVES, THE COMBINATION OF SERVICES MOST APPROPRIATE TO HIS OR HER MEDICAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS.

WE AS A GOVERNMENT ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A RANGE OF SERVICES FOR THE AGED WHICH ARE EQUITABLE, COMPREHENSIVE, BALANCED AND COST EFFECTIVE. IN LINE WITH THIS APPROACH I CAN ASSURE YOU HEALTH SERVICES WILL BE EXEMPT FROM THE CONSUMPTION TAX ON SERVICES NOW BEING COMMITTED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THE SAME COMMITMENT IS APPARENT IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO SET UP AN OFFICE FOR THE AGED. THIS OFFICE, ALONG WITH THE OFFICE FOR DISABILITY, WILL ENSURE THAT THE NEEDS OF THE AGED AND THE ELDERLY WILL HAVE A PROMINENT PLACE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

THE NEW OFFICE FOR THE AGED WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN ASSESSING CLIENT NEEDS, QUALITY OF CARE AND THE CONCERNS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS. THE CLOSE LINKS IT WILL BUILD WITH INDIVIDUALS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL BE OF PARTICULAR VALUE TO ALL THOSE CONCERNED WITH ENSURING ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS TO THE ELDERLY.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE ARE MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING BETTER ASSISTANCE FOR AGED PEOPLE IN OUR SOCIETY.

IN THIS WE DEPEND HEAVILY ON THE ENORMOUS CONTRIBUTION MADE BY NUMEROUS ORGANISATIONS DEDICATED TO THE WELFARE OF AGED PEOPLE. THE TYPE OF ENTHUSIASM AND COMMITMENT WE HAVE SEEN UNDERPINNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ST MARY'S VILLA IS VITAL TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY'S EFFORTS TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF OUR GROWING NUMBER OF OLD PEOPLE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE PARISH OF ST MARY'S, CONCORD, CAN BE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF ITS EFFORTS, AND I AM SURE THAT THE REMARKABLE COMMUNITY COMMITMENT WHICH HAS CHARACTERISED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ST MARY'S VILLA WILL CONTINUE TO CHARACTERISE YOUR ENDEAVOURS IN THE YEARS TO COME.

IT NOW GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE, THEREFORE, TO DECLARE ST MARY'S VILLA OFFICIALLY OPEN.