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PRIME MINISTER

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AUSTRALIAN BICENTENNIAL EXHIBITION - MELBOURNE
6 SEPTEMBER 1985

I am delighted to be here today to launch the Australian Bicentennial Exhibition, a major project in the Commonwealth Government's National Bicentennial Program.

The Commonwealth will provide \$19 million towards this exciting, innovative project with a most significant contribution of \$6 million being made by BHP. It is fitting that Australia's largest company should choose to support this the largest exhibition ever to tour Australia.

Like BHP, the Bicentenary is an Australian enterprise. Both the Commonwealth Government and the State and Territory Governments are shareholders in the Bicentenary, and all Australians have a special stake in the planning and implementation of our celebrations in 1988.

Only a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of being present at BHP's Centenary Dinner. On that occasion I mentioned how the development of BHP has mirrored the development of Australia itself. BHP and the strength of the Australian economy are closely intertwined.

BHP is taking a most welcome initiative through its commitment to the Bicentenary. The company's generous contribution to the Exhibition is a mark of its confidence in this nation. I have no doubt it will provide an incentive for other Australian companies to invest in our Bicentenary and I strongly urge them to join with BHP and the Australian Government and get behind our celebrations.

The returns on our investment in the Bicentenary will be substantial and lasting. The dividends will be a greater pride in our nation, in our heritage, in our skills and in our achievements. And all Australians

will be the richer for it.

The Bicentenary will also provide a unique opportunity for a national stocktake. It will be a time not only for celebration but for reflection, a time to learn from the past so that we can better plan for the future.

The Bicentennial Program will facilitate this process in a number of exciting ways.

- . The Terra Australis to Australia Conference will bring together experts in different fields from around the world to examine our history and our relationship with and perception of our unique environment.
- . The Australian Studies Project will review the teaching and research of Australian studies in our schools and tertiary institutions.
- . An extensive publications program will enrich our understanding of Australian life and culture.

The Australian Bicentennial Exhibition will invite Australians throughout the country to participate in this national stocktake. The Exhibition will offer new insights into what it means to be an Australian, it will communicate the uniqueness of our country and its enterprise, and will tell the story of those who have shaped our nation. It will also encourage us to turn our minds to the future through its use of the latest Australian technology and communications systems. The Exhibition will be tribute to Australian ingenuity. Its unique structure will lead the world in the development of travelling museum technology and will provide a legacy long after 1988 has passed.

I believe it is especially important to put on record the fact that the Bicentennial Program will provide a wide range of activities involving the arts, entertainment and sport;

- . A feature will be the tall ships event. Magnificent sailing ships from around the world will take part in a spectacular parade of sail on Sydney Harbour on 26 January 1988. While in Australian waters they will visit many ports around Australia.
- . There will be special international sporting events, for example in football, cricket and cycling.
- . There will be military tattoos and air displays in

capital cities across the country.

There will be tours by the very best of Australian and overseas artists and performing companies.

- A major Bicentennial project here in Melbourne is the construction of a new home for the Australian Ballet, to which the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments will each contribute \$2.6 million under the Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Commemorative Program.

So too will the Australian Bicentennial Exhibition provide a feast of exciting entertainment. Some of the highlights have already been outlined - the theatrical performances, the concerts, the laser beam displays and the audiovisuals. There will indeed be something for everyone.

The planning for the Exhibition is an excellent example of the way in which the Bicentennial Authority is developing its projects to achieve something of value for the Australian community.

Planning for this project began back in 1982. In a co-operative effort co-ordinated by the Authority, a Working Group of Australian scholars, historians, business people and advisers from many different fields came together to develop the proposal as the centrepiece of the celebrations.

The Exhibition continues to be a product of united effort. The Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction is acting as a project manager for the design and construction phases. The Exhibition structure has been designed by one of Australia's leading architects, Daryl Jackson.

The Australian Bicentennial Authority is seeking assistance from many other areas of government and private enterprise in this venture. It is seeking a selection of unique Australian artefacts and items from museums and collections around the country.

It is seeking assistance from experts in such fields as the transport and catering industries; from manufacturers of technical and display equipment; from local government authorities who will host the Exhibition as it traverses the countryside, and most importantly, it is seeking the participation of communities across Australia.

In this way and in many others the Exhibition fulfills the Bicentennial theme of "Living Together". This theme

was chosen to reflect a co-operative effort by every Australian. It speaks of our rich and varied heritage, and draws attention to the importance to our way of life of relations between Australians of different ethnic origins, between country and city people, between one state and another, and between Australia and other nations. It is a forward looking theme which refers to a process that is as yet uncompleted.

The Exhibition will carry this message throughout the nation encouraging the widest possible involvement of all Australians in our celebrations. It will visit more than fifty cities and towns in each State and Territory. Its arrival will provide a stimulus for community activities and will give a special focus to celebrations in outback areas.

These activities will be greatly assisted by local Bicentennial Community Committees, almost 500 of which have already been established in local government areas across Australia. The Commonwealth Government and the Australian Bicentennial Authority are very much aware of the importance of encouraging this grass roots involvement in our celebrations. With this in mind, an amount of \$17.5 million has been allocated from the National Program funds for the Bicentennial Local Government Initiative Grants scheme.

The Bicentenary and this Exhibition will also focus attention on our relationships with our neighbours and the rest of the world. We can look forward to a significant international participation in our Bicentenary.

The Government is of course aware of the recent criticisms of planning for our Bicentenary. Much of this has been proposed in a constructive way, and has been taken account of in our approach to the Bicentenary. What I believe will be achieved is a Bicentennial Program that has something for everyone. It will be both purposeful and exciting. The projects will be both large and small. They will involve our whole, diverse community. They will be of lasting benefit to future generations of Australians. All Governments will be involved; all political parties will be involved; private enterprise will be involved; and above all the people themselves will be involved.

Again, I pay tribute to the generous contribution of BHP in this venture - a venture which will link BHP's enterprise with the national goals and aspirations for this special year. And, may I add, the increasing international vision and involvement of BHP itself reflects the fact that our bicentennial celebration will

not be simply introspective but will enable us to see ourselves as part of an increasingly inter-dependent world.

It is with confidence, pride and pleasure that I now launch this Australian Bicentennial Exhibition.
