



PRIME MINISTER

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DEPARTURE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
PERTH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - 1 DECEMBER 1986

Your Holiness,

It is with some regret that I undertake the task of farewelling you from our country. For it has been a great honour to have you as our guest over the last week; more than that, it has been a great pleasure.

You have visited every Australian State and mainland Territory. You have made contact with hundreds of thousands of Australians in all walks of life - the young, the old, the sick, the unemployed; in hospitals and in our homes; at work in the country, in industries and in universities. For people of all faiths, and most especially Australia's large Roman Catholic community, your visit has been an inspiration and a cause for great joy.

It has been an experience which all of us have found stimulating and inspiring and which you yourself, we are pleased to see, have evidently found rewarding.

Your schedule has been an extremely demanding one. Yet you have retained throughout your freshness and enthusiasm and your genuine interest in Australian people and their problems.

Your Holiness,

When you arrived in Canberra last Monday you said that you came to us as a pilgrim, as one who journeys as an act of religious devotion.

While you have been here you preached a message of peace, of hope, and of justice. You reminded us of the dignity and importance of human work. You drew attention to the tragedy of unemployment. You issued a message of hope to the Aboriginal people. And you have caught the imagination and tapped the idealism of our young people who seek peace and justice in the world.

Australians who have seen you, whether at first hand or through the media, have been reminded that despite differences in religious beliefs, political opinions and material circumstances, we are united as one nation, basically sharing a common core of ideals, a responsibility towards each other and an aspiration to live in peace and harmony.

On behalf of all Australians I thank you for the efforts you have made so willingly and unstintingly to remind us of those great values.

I hope you leave our shores with a strong conviction that this is a country prepared to support the cause of peace and justice.

You leave behind you the impression of a leader committed to those universal values of peace and justice, and of a man with an abiding compassion for all people.

Your Holiness,

On behalf of all Australians I wish you a safe return to Rome and every success in your continuing endeavours for peace and for the betterment of mankind.
