



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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Forty nine member countries of the Commonwealth celebrate Commonwealth Day today.

The Commonwealth today represents a quarter of the world's population, a third of its sovereign and independent nations, and people of all colours and creeds.

Successive Australian Governments have regarded the Commonwealth as having a valuable role to play in international affairs. The Commonwealth has helped to promote international acceptance of the principles of self-determination, non-racialism, human freedom and equality and co-operation between nations in the service of international understanding, development and world peace.

Over the past two years the situation in South Africa has been of particular concern and the Commonwealth has endeavoured to promote dialogue between whites and blacks and has taken measures aimed at ending the abhorrent apartheid system.

In a less dramatic but no less important way, it has continued to provide both a forum for consultation and co-operation on a wide range of economic, social, educational and technical matters of particular benefit for both developed and developing country members.

The next meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government, which will be held in Vancouver in October this year, will provide a further opportunity for Commonwealth leaders to pursue the broad Commonwealth objectives of international co-operation and understanding.