



PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
CAPTAINS DINNER
MELBOURNE - 31 DECEMBER, 1987

I am delighted to respond to Captain Portal's toast.

In doing so, I note that Spain was the first country to accept the Australian Government's invitation to take part in the Tall Ships Australia 1988 event.

I note also that the Captain's ship, Juan Sebastian De Elcano is no stranger to Australian waters; she visited Australia on her maiden voyage in 1928.

60 years later, we welcome her back for Australia's Bicentenary.

Tall Ships Australia 1988 honours Australia's maritime past.

The modern Australian story is written upon the sea.

And it is, first of all, a story of sailing ships.

It begins with the epic voyages of exploration - by the Portugese, Spanish, Dutch, French, British.

Then, from the time of the first European settlement 200 years ago, sail determined our survival.

Sailing ships carried vital supplies to the infant colony.

For most of the first century, sailing ships brought immigrants across the ocean to these shores.

Sail played a vital role in trade as fast clippers carried our wheat and wool to faraway markets.

Steam replaced sail. The telegraph provided fast communication.

But the sea remained our vital link with the rest of the world.

And today, as a nation which lives by trade, the sea remains our life-line.

Nothing could symbolise so dramatically - or more beautifully - Australia's past, present, and future than the presence of these magnificent ships.

Long after the Bicentenary celebrations have finished we in Australia will remember with pride that the people and Governments of Ecuador, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Poland, The Principality of Andorra, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Uruguay accepted our invitation to send ships to take part in this great event.

We especially welcome the young people who form so large a proportion of the crews.

I understand that fifty percent of the crew of every ship in the Tall Ships race must be between the ages of 16 and 25.

Young people all over the world have risen magnificently to the challenge of Tall Ships.

For example, in the Netherlands, 9000 young women and men applied to sail the Abel Tasman to Australia.

I congratulate the young crews on their endurance of the many difficulties that must have confronted them during their voyages to Australia.

I know that the visiting trainees will be entertained by young Australians, during their stay.

And one of the great things about this event is that it brings the young people of many nations together in a spirit of friendship and goodwill.

I am pleased to say that young Australians have also taken up the challenge to crew the visiting vessels.

Twelve young Australians sailed on the Young Endeavour, Britain's Bicentennial gift to Australia.

But those twelve were chosen from over 7000 young Australians who applied to sail on the Young Endeavour.

It is clear that our young people, too, respond to the challenge of the sea.

that berits a people who are, overwhelmingly, a nation,
coastal dwellers.

We have this vast continent for our home.

Yet three-quarters of our people live within fifty miles of
the oceans, even after 200 years of European settlement.

I congratulate the Australian Bicentennial Authority on the
conception and organisation of this fine event.

And on behalf of the Government and people of Australia I
thank all those participating in it and so contributing
memories which will give lasting pleasure to millions of
people around the world, whether they see it first hand or
on television. Yours is a truly magnificent contribution to
our celebration.
