



13

# PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
OPENING OF CLUB 88 AT WORLD EXPO 88  
BRISBANE - 29 FEBRUARY 1988**

---

Sir Edward Williams,  
Sir Llew Edwards,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

We are now some two months into our Bicentennial year and have already shared such memorable events as the 'Australia Live' telecast, the start of the year-long journey around the continent by the Australian Bicentennial Exhibition, and the Australia Day celebrations on Sydney Harbor which were without doubt the most spectacular ever witnessed in this country.

A full year of special activities is set to unfold for the remainder of 1988. Some, the result of years of careful planning, have a high public profile, international participation and will attract world wide attention. Others are organised at a community level and are built simply on the enthusiasm and commitment to Australia of its citizens.

One event on the Bicentennial calendar stands out because it exhibits all of these characteristics. It is a major international event involving many years of careful planning; it has attracted some 50 government and 30 corporate participants; but with ticket sales far in excess of predictions it has also obviously struck a powerful chord at the community level.

I am, of course, referring to World Expo 88 in Brisbane.

World Expo 88 will be an undoubted highlight of the Bicentenary, and I am proud to be associated with it.

I share the confidence of the organisers and commentators alike that World Expo 88 will be an outstanding success.

My government will continue to support Expo 88 - through the office of the Commissioner-General, Sir Edward Williams, and his staff, and through our participation as an exhibitor.

004671

I pay tribute to Sir Llew Edwards, and his staff, for their dedication to the task of nurturing this project from its early, difficult, times. Today we see a very advanced site with participants fitting out their pavilions with what promises to be the world's most exciting exhibits.

Expo 88 is not a trade fair but a world fair. It is a unique gathering of nations brought together to review human achievement, an unparalleled opportunity for nations to meet and participate in cultural and technological exchanges.

The opening of Club 88 marks yet another stage in Expo's development; it symbolises the confidence we all - organisers and participants - share in World Expo 88.

With the Business Visitor Program in place, and with so many governments and corporate participants committed to attend, Expo 88 offers an excellent opportunity for Australians to establish business and personal contacts of lasting significance. Club 88 offers excellent private facilities, on location, to further these contacts.

Club 88 will provide high quality facilities for members to entertain their guests, and membership carries with it the opportunity to participate in major ceremonies and official functions.

Club 88 is an excellent example of Australian enterprise, but it does not stand in isolation; it is part of Expo 88 and it complements the other facilities and activities being planned. It is part of the overall picture; just as Expo 88 itself is part of our nation's overall Bicentennial celebrations.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Bicentenary is more than a celebration; 1988 is also a year of reflection.

Australia in 1988 is a dynamic, modern nation, a nation with much to be proud of but with much still to achieve. We are a young nation in an ancient land; a land whose history reaches back beyond 1788 through some 40,000 years of Aboriginal culture.

The Bicentenary provides an opportunity for us to consider what we have achieved as a nation, and what form of individual contribution each of us might make toward Australia's future.

This ceremony prompts us to reflect on the achievement of those who have worked to bring us World Expo 88, and to consider what efforts we as individuals might make to emulate this contribution to Australia's development.

I commend Club 88 to you, and have great pleasure in declaring it open.

\*\*\*\*\*

**SENATOR MARGARET REYNOLDS, MINISTER ASSISTING  
THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL AGENDA FOR WOMEN**

**MONDAY, 29 FEBRUARY 1988**

**BONDI JUNCTION PLAZA,**

**SYDNEY**

004673

This is a day of great significance for the women of Australia. It not only marks women's progress in having their voices heard, but also signifies the progress of Governments in introducing social reform.

This is the first time a Government has reached out and responded to the expressed needs of Australian women and established a set of strategies to provide them with greater opportunities in the future. It is the first time a Government has developed a detailed, practical and comprehensive long-term plan to improve the status of women.

Australian women have come a long way since 1902, when we won the right to vote in Federal elections. We and our New Zealand sisters were at the forefront of the suffragette movement. We were the first women to receive the right to vote, and were to take the battle to other countries.

Despite our early achievements, however, it has only been in the past 15 years that dramatic steps forward have been taken. Between 1969 and 1974, the concept of equal pay for work of equal value became enshrined into

004674

central wage-fixing. In 1973 unmarried mothers and deserted de facto wives were for the first time provided with some income support in the form of a Supporting Parents' Benefit. The Whitlam Government also introduced a system of Commonwealth subsidised child-care.

In the past 15 years women's participation in the workforce has increased from 40% in 1972 to 49% in 1987. 45% of all Australian women aged 15 and over are now in some form of employment. The retention of girls to Year 12 has escalated from 36% in 1972 to 50% in 1987. This has coincided with a growing awareness of the importance to girls of a full and balanced secondary education.

Advances for women have been made in every field of employment and education. Many initiatives have been taken which provide a framework in which women can make free choices and achieve economic independence.

Change has not come as quickly as many of us would have liked, however, nor as rapidly as it should have. And while our status has improved substantially, it would be unwise to think no more efforts are needed. We cannot afford to be complacent.

The National Agenda for Women is the prime mechanism for ensuring that the great surge forward in social and

economic reform for women maintains its momentum.

My predecessor, Susan Ryan, played an important part in realising so many of these reforms. She was an active and founding member of the Women's Electoral Lobby, which took part in the struggle of the late 60s and early 70s to achieve recognition from society that women should be treated as equal across all spectrums of society. Both the Sex Discrimination and Affirmative Action Acts came about largely because of her energies in pushing social reforms through Parliament.

Senator Ryan was a major force in developing the National Agenda for Women. She led the Australia-wide consultations in 1986 that involved more than 25,000 women from all walks of life, spending much of that year talking to women in the community about the importance of their contribution to the Government's proposed Agenda.

The consultations ran for six months. A number of women Members and Senators, including myself, took part and organised meetings and conferences. The National Women's Consultative Council also assisted in the consultations. Meetings, small and large, were held all around the country, in capital cities and in smaller towns.

004676

More than one hundred consultation reports and proposals were received. Some women made individual contributions. Two major conferences were held. One was organised by the Women's Electoral Lobby and attended by approximately 500 women from 159 organisations. The other was organised by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and brought together 200 women from more than 30 ethnic backgrounds.

A questionnaire was distributed to encourage maximum participation from women who may not have been able to participate in conferences and meetings or to make submissions.

The report of the consultations was tabled in Parliament last year by the Prime Minister. Titled Setting the Agenda, it remains a valuable picture of what Australian women see as their future priorities.

Education, employment, women at home, child care, income security, violence against women and children, dignity, and health emerged as the major issues of concern.

There was also widespread recognition of the needs of groups of women who have characteristics which often mean they face additional disadvantages in relation to

Strait Islander women, women of non-English speaking backgrounds, women with a disability, sole parents, young women, older women and women living in regional Australia all have special needs and confront additional difficulties in accessing services or in participating to the full in Australian society.

The Government has already acted to respond to the particular needs of certain groups of women. Our response to Women's Business, the report on Aboriginal women, will be completed in the next few weeks. We have appointed a consultant to prepare a response to the Survey of Rural Women in Australia that was launched by the Prime Minister a few weeks ago.

Today the Prime Minister is launching our National Agenda for Women, the Government's response to the report of those consultations.

The National Agenda for Women represents a key element in the Government's ongoing program to achieve equality for all Australians.

Its significance cannot be overstated, but it is only the beginning.

In my capacity as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister



on the Status of Women, I will work with my ministerial colleagues to ensure that the policies and programs that make up the National Agenda will be introduced and that those already in place will continue to be developed.

How will we know if the National Agenda is being effective? The Government has developed a series of indicative measures to monitor progress relating to this Agenda. They have been devised to:

- illustrate the changing position of women in key areas of concern;
- establish the impact of economic and social progress on women in a form that is clear and easy to understand;
- identify clearly the policy issues which are being addressed and to highlight those in need of further attention;
- monitor the Government's progress to assist in achieving the National Agenda commitments towards the year 2000; and
- heighten public awareness of women's economic status.

Most of them will illustrate the position of women relative to men.

Ongoing responsibility for implementation of the Agenda

will be through annual reports to Cabinet by the combined heads of Commonwealth Government Departments.

Every Commonwealth department has a women's unit or an officer who is responsible for advising the Government on the impact of the policies and programs of the portfolio on women. By this means the Agenda will be monitored within each Department.

The Office of the Status of Women will play an important part in implementing the Agenda, and will provide advice to the Prime Minister and myself on the implementation and impact of Agenda policies.

The Women's Budget Statement is published annually by the Office. It will, in the future, report on progress in implementing the strategies included in the Agenda, and provide updated indicators of the status of Australian women.

It is vital that consultation with women continues. The National Women's Consultative Council is the Government's major formal link with women in the community. The Council represents 15 major women's organisations, covering all States and Territories. Its convenor, Mrs Edith Hall, is here with us today.

Only through consultation can the future needs of women be absorbed into the Agenda. The National Agenda for Women is not fixed. It will respond to changing social needs.

Many obstacles still remain, both institutional and attitudinal, which prevent women from exercising real choice and from participating to the full in Australian society.

The Government does not pretend to have a magic wand to resolve every need of Australian women. But it can help to create an environment which is more receptive to the needs of women, more willing to recognise and acknowledge their skills, and more able to accommodate their full and equal participation in society.

The National Agenda provides programs and policies that will enable women to move ahead. Different groups of women have different needs - the Government's consultations with both rural and Aboriginal women have indicated their particular concerns. And as women's lives change, their needs and priorities will change.

This Agenda with its five-year action plans and detailed strategies is evidence that the Government is serious about social and economic reform. It is committed to

social justice and looks forward to ongoing communication with Australian women to achieve the reality of genuine equality for men and women.

004682