



PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
DEDICATION CEREMONY OF THE AUSTRALIAN HELLENIC MEMORIAL
CANBERRA - 21 MAY 1988**

Mr Deputy Prime Minister
Sir William Refshauge
Sir William Keys
Archbishop Stylianos
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today we are dedicating the Australian-Hellenic Memorial which symbolises the bonds of friendship which, in time of peace and of war, have united Australia and Greece.

Our friendship has strong roots stretching over a century and a half of Greek settlement in Australia.

It was strengthened immeasurably by the ties formed between Australian and Greek servicemen and women and civilians in the First and Second World Wars.

Most importantly, it is a friendship nourished by the most powerful of forces - our shared commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. That commitment is constantly renewed by the thousands of Australians who visit Greece each year and by the presence in Australia of a strong, resilient, and vigorous community of Greek-Australians, who have made and are making such a tremendous contribution to our country.

On 25 April 1986, as part of my visit to Greece, I had the moving and memorable experience of speaking at the Anzac Day ceremony in Athens. As you would yourself recall, Mr Deputy Prime Minister, it was an occasion full of the memory of the Battle of Crete, where Australians and Greeks stood side by side with our allies defending Greece against the invasion.

It was a most appropriate time to announce that Greek-Australians and Australian ex-service personnel were joining to build this Memorial. I said then that the Government had made available this site for the construction of the Memorial, in the vicinity of the Australian War Memorial.

I was delighted at the encouragement Prime Minister Papandreou gave to the project. The Greek Government's contribution of olive trees - from Griffith, but of Greek stock - is a singularly fitting gesture. And your presence here today, Mr Deputy Prime Minister, is a very welcome further proof of your Government's willingness to assist this project.

I know, Sir, from our meeting yesterday, that you have warm personal memories of Australian troops, flowing from your own distinguished service during the Second World War. I am gratified by your assurances that even today Greek people remember the courage and friendship shown by Australian troops during the War.

This is our Bicentennial year, in which Australians are reflecting on their achievements over the two hundred years since Europeans first settled our continent.

Our celebrations - most recently the opening of the new Parliament House directly over the lake from us - have had, I believe, a significant impact on our national character.

I think we have become more aware, and more proud, of our achievements in building in that relatively short span of time, a nation that is both free and prosperous. At the same time I believe we have become more humble in recognising the crucial contribution, made by those who have gone before us, to the effort of building this free and prosperous nation.

This Australian-Hellenic Memorial will play a valuable role in reminding us of that contribution.

And I hope it will serve as something of an inspiration to those who will inspect it. Because it is not just a war memorial but a symbol of the shared sacrifices and the enduring friendship between the Greek and Australian people.
