



PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE BICENTENARY
ADELAIDE - 31 DECEMBER 1988

John Bannon
John Howard
Jim Kirk
Ladies and Gentlemen
Young Australians

I am delighted to be here in the Adelaide foothills at the 15th National Australian Scout Jamboree to share with so many young Australians the closing ceremony of our Bicentenary. Speaking today to you I speak through you to young people throughout the nation.

This year we have celebrated our achievements as a nation with some tremendous events - the Tall Ships on Sydney Harbour on Australia Day, Expo in Brisbane, and hundreds of community events in cities and towns around the nation.

Indeed the Bicentenary has provided some magnificent memories - the cattle treks, the camel races, the bonfires, the historic climb to the peak of Mount Everest, re-enactments of historical events. It has given us world class sporting events and a brilliant program of art and entertainment.

But the Bicentenary has not been only, or even mainly, about celebrations such as these. Just as importantly, it gave us an opportunity to think about our past and our future. It helped us to understand our origins, to think honestly about our strengths and our weaknesses as a nation, to plan for the challenges ahead and to build a Bicentennial legacy for the future.

This is a legacy of a lasting nature - a legacy which you and the Australians of the future will use, enjoy and benefit from.

Together we have built new parks and cycling paths, heritage trails and walking tracks along the routes of the early explorers. There are new sporting facilities and galleries and museums such as the Stockman's Hall of Fame in Queensland and the Adelaide Railway museum and the Science and Technology Centre in Canberra with its hands-on scientific displays which will be enjoyed by children and adults for years to come.

And of course there is our new Parliament House - a place which is not just a building but a clear sign of Australia's commitment to our future as a democratic nation.

I think as a result of the Bicentenary we have come to a better understanding of who we are as Australians and what our place in the world is - we have a clearer appreciation of the achievements of our forebears in creating a nation that is free, democratic, independent and prosperous - and we have a sharper determination to take that legacy of freedom, democracy, independence and prosperity and to ensure it is passed on, in total, to future generations of Australians.

That's why we have this year gained a clearer recognition of the achievements of Aboriginal Australians - the original inhabitants of this continent whose culture reaches back 40,000 years and more into the Dreamtime. More than ever before I believe Australians stand ready to put right the wrongs done to Aboriginal people and to work for a fairer society for all Australians.

We are more aware too of the part migrants have played in the development of our nation, and we have worked for greater understanding among the peoples from many lands who together make up the free and tolerant Australia in which we can all take pride.

And when we think of the thousands of people from overseas who visited Australia this year for the Bicentenary - Prime Ministers and Presidents, scientists and scholars, students on exchange programs, tourists who visited Expo or who just came to see what a great country we've got - when we think of all these people we realise that the Bicentenary has been a very important year in terms of building friendships abroad and showing the world how proud we are to be Australians.

Because we do have much to be proud of, and we have among us - and especially among our young people - people of courage, resourcefulness, good humour and tolerance. We can go forward with confidence, knowing we have much to offer the world.

It's to help those young Australians that I'm pleased to announce - at this the last event of the Bicentenary year - that the Government will be establishing a special legacy to be called the Bicentennial Youth Foundation.

A lot of planning has still to be done, but I can tell you that the Foundation will be provided with an endowment of \$10 million from the Australian Bicentennial Authority.

It will help young Australians aged 16 to 25, who might not otherwise have the opportunity to develop their capabilities to contribute to Australia's future in fields such as the arts, commerce, industry, science, sport and community work.

The Bicentennial Authority will select a group of qualified Australians to serve as a Board of Directors whose job will be to see that grants are made in areas which will truly benefit the community.

The Foundation's plans accord with my Government's determination to make Australia a fairer place, and to help families give their children the best possible start in life, the best possible education, and the best chance for useful employment.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Australian Bicentennial Authority for their initiative. And I take this opportunity to thank Jim and the Authority for their hard work and diligence in preparing a truly memorable Bicentennial year.

What will Australia be like in one hundred years, when your children and grand children are celebrating the tercentenary - the three hundredth anniversary of European settlement of this continent?

It's impossible to make anything but the most general of educated guesses - because we can be sure only that the next ten decades will be decades of massive change in the world economy, in technological developments, in our society.

But we, today, have a special responsibility to those Australians of the future. It's up to us - and especially it will be up to you as the future leaders of Australia - to ensure that those third century celebrations take place in a world that is at peace and in an Australia in which all Australians have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of living in this great country.

So as our Bicentenary now comes to a close, I give you, our young people, this challenge : look into our past and see what we have done well and what we have done less well; look at our present and see what is good and what needs to be changed; then look to the future and ask yourself what contribution you can make to building an even better Australia.
