



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

13 MARCH 1989

Today is Commonwealth Day. Today, and every second Monday in March, the members of the Commonwealth celebrate this unique association of countries.

The Commonwealth has developed into an important international forum, having taken the lead on political issues such as the Rhodesia settlement and South Africa, and standing as a testament to co-operation between developed and developing nations on practical matters as varied as environmental issues and telecommunications.

In recent years the Commonwealth has pursued a constructive role in seeking to bring about an end to the apartheid system in South Africa. Australia is proud to have been deeply involved in developing Commonwealth initiatives in this area, particularly the establishment of the Eminent Persons Group and the Foreign Ministers' Committee on southern Africa. In July this year, Australia will be hosting the final meeting of this Committee, which will be discussing a number of new initiatives for the Commonwealth to consider.

The next meeting of the forty-eight Commonwealth Heads of Government will take place in Kuala Lumpur in October. I am looking forward to attending the meeting. It will address directly these pressing issues, as well as others such as the condition of the global environment and Commonwealth co-operation against drug trafficking.