

SPEECH FOR REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
GALA CONCERT IN TRIBUTE TO MADAME NANCY CARUANA
OF THE GREEK FOLKLORE CENTRE
TEACHERS' FEDERATION THEATRE, SUSSEX STREET, SYDNEY
8.00 PM, 30 JUNE 1989

Madame Caruana, Members of the Greek Folklore Centre,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to have this opportunity to represent the
Prime Minister at this very happy occasion tonight.

Madame Caruana is well known to you all, not only for
her own notable performances, on stage and on screen,
but also for her enormous dedication over nearly a
quarter of a century to preserving ancient Greek
folkloric custom in a new land.

We are all aware of the deep affinity that all people of
Greek descent have for their heritage and their culture.
Even so, it still needs special people with the vision,
talent and energy of Madame Caruana to keep the
traditions alive and vibrant, and to highlight for the
younger members of the community the importance of
maintaining the music, the drama and the dances which
are their precious birthright.

Of course, it is not only the Greek Australians who have benefited from Madame Caruana's work - all Australians are the richer for it.

The Australian Government not only welcomes but encourages the preservation of time-honoured cultures which have been brought to this nation from many non-English speaking countries.

The Government sees it as basic to the foundation and maintenance of a truly multicultural society that the members of different ethnic communities in Australia are able to celebrate their own cultures, and to share them with all other Australians.

This sharing of lifestyles is fundamental to increasing the mutual understanding between various groups which forms the basis of a truly harmonious society.

I am reminded tonight that in earliest times, the ancient Greeks paid homage to Terpsichore (*Terp-sik-or-ee*) the muse of Dance.

Your presence here this evening is proof of how important these music and dance traditions still are in your lives. With these roots so deep in Greek culture, it is very notable how strongly the love of dance is passed on through from parents to children, as a

manifestation of the unquenchable Greek spirit and love of life. No significant occasion in Greek life is complete without the music and dance.

Tonight is therefore not only a celebration of the life-work of Madame Caruana but it is, in a very real sense, a time for renewal, for handing on to the young people whom she has trained to carry forward the torch, in the best Greek tradition. The spirited and graceful performances which we are enjoying this evening are a tribute both to the young performers and to Madame Caruana herself.

I am sure that all Greek Australians, in New South Wales and beyond, feel a debt of gratitude to Madame Caruana for her great contribution to maintaining your traditions, educating your young people, and enlightening the rest of Australia about your colourful heritage.

Madame Caruana has proved herself to be one of the great Greek-Australian women of our time. I am proud to offer her, on the Government's behalf, our heartiest congratulations on her achievements.