



PRIME MINISTER

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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
DEDICATION OF NATIONAL MEMORIAL TO THE ARMY
CANBERRA - 1 NOVEMBER 1989

Throughout the cities and the country towns of the nation, Australians have proudly built memorials to those of our fellow citizens who have served in the Australian armed forces.

The cairns, plaques, memorial halls and avenues of honour all bear silent but eloquent testimony to those who offered their lives as hostages for liberty - and those who gave their lives to create a better world.

Today we dedicate a new memorial - a memorial to the Australian Army here in the heart of the nation; here on the grand sweep that connects the seat of parliamentary democracy with the Australian War Memorial; here in this avenue that proudly bears the name Anzac.

Since before the Federation of the nation Australian armed forces have been defending and protecting the interests of the Australian people in times of danger

Providing assistance to civil authorities in the event of natural disasters; supporting peace-keeping missions overseas in difficult situations, such as today in Namibia; safeguarding the national estate in time of war.

This memorial serves to honour the memory of all those involved in those great tasks - not just the recognised, the famous, the generals, the winners of medals but all who served their country in the Australian Army. That lack of distinction, that egalitarianism, is of course very fitting and it is very Australian. It recognises the fact that courage, dedication and professionalism in the face of adversity were the characteristics not just of the few but were part of the baggage that every Australian digger took with him on service overseas.

It cannot have been an easy task to translate into the tangible structures of this sculpture all the nation's sense of respect for, and gratitude to, its armed forces. But I congratulate the sculptors, and all those involved in this project. They have given us a memorial that does capture in permanent form our national sense of debt to the army.

It will help remind us that too many theatres of war have seen the deaths of too many young Australians.

But it will also remind us - residents of Canberra and visitors alike - that it was through such sacrifice that we can now enjoy the freedom, prosperity and independence that we must not take for granted.
