



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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RELEASE OF NELSON MANDELA

The imminent release of Nelson Mandela gives me deep personal pleasure and will be welcomed whole-heartedly by all Australians. I join in spirit with Winnie Mandela and the rest of Nelson Mandela's family and friends as they celebrate this joyous occasion, postponed for so long. I was honoured to accept recently an invitation by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston to join with other international leaders in a Nelson Mandela Reception Committee, aimed at underlining the international community's commitment to ensuring that the opportunities presented by Nelson Mandela's release are not wasted.

Following on the heels of the reforms announced by State President de Klerk in his parliamentary address of 2 February, Mandela's release is the most positive sign the world has yet seen that the walls of the abhorrent apartheid system may soon be breached.

The opportunity is now at last there for constructive negotiations to begin between the South African Government and representatives of the black population.

The goodwill provided by the release of Mandela and the South African Government's unbanning of the ANC and other anti-apartheid organisations provides the basis for negotiations which clearly would otherwise have been absent.

That goodwill must now urgently be built upon, with the aim of seeing the black majority of South Africa receive the political rights which will enable them to participate at last as equal citizens in a democratic and non-racial South Africa. Australia will do whatever it can to assist in this process.

I congratulate the South African Government for the wisdom it has shown by making the first steps towards remedying past and continuing injustices. I urge State President de Klerk to continue the process with the release of other political prisoners and the lifting of the State of Emergency.