



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

6 APRIL 1990

EMBARGOED UNTIL 6.00AM - 6 APRIL 1990

I am delighted to announce that the British Government has agreed to make a gift to Australia of an original document containing our Australian Constitution.

The document is an original copy of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act - the British Act of Parliament which was passed in 1900 and which brought our nation into existence on 1 January 1901.

The document, which has been on loan to Australia since the Bicentenary and is on display in Parliament House, is the British Government's own record of the Act. There would be no more original version of the Australia Constitution.

This is the first time that such a gift has been made to any country by the British Government and it follows some six years of negotiations by the Australian Government.

Release of the document to Australia will require legislation in the British Parliament and Mrs Thatcher has informed me that the necessary legislative arrangements will be made as soon as possible. I expect that the formal transfer will occur later this year.

I wish to express my gratitude, on behalf of the Australian people, to the British Government and to Mrs Thatcher in particular for making possible this unique gift.

I would also like to thank Mr Alf Morris MP, the Chairman of the ANZAC Group of Parliamentarians at Westminster, who previously introduced a private member's Bill into the House of Commons on this subject.

I am also appreciative of the efforts of High Commissioner Doug McClelland and his staff in London.

In a very real sense, our birth certificate as a nation will be returning home.