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PRIME MINISTER

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
AUSTRALIAN AND YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS
SYDNEY - 26 JANUARY 1991**

With our vantage point here looking out onto Sydney Harbour it's easy to understand why Australia's lifestyle is envied throughout the world.

Simply, it reminds us just what a great nation Australia is.

Australia Day is traditionally a day for getting out of doors and enjoying the Harbours and beaches and parks and backyards throughout the nation, and for enjoying the company of family and friends.

I hope everyone has a chance to do that today.

But it was never intended that Australia Day would merely be a day for self indulgence or complacency.

It's a day for reflecting on the character of our nation, and for remembering the debt we owe to our predecessors who achieved so much and built so much on our behalf and for our benefit.

And especially on Australia Day 1991 do we need to bear in mind the sacrifices others are making on our behalf.

For the first time in twenty years, Australia Day 1991 sees Australian defence forces serving overseas, committed to combat in a difficult and hazardous conflict in the Persian Gulf.

The thoughts of all of us today are with those of our fellow Australians performing this vital task on our behalf. And let us remember too their families and loved ones who are waiting for them to come home safely. No one can tell precisely when that will be, but as I said in Parliament this week it will be as soon as possible, when the job is done.

Let's also bear in mind the hardships being experienced by our embassy staff in the Middle East and by other Australians living and working in the region. We wish them all a safe return.

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My friends,

Australians have good reason for feeling and expressing their pride in this our country today.

We have created a free and democratic land - a tolerant and civilised society - a close-knit community. Of course we should be proud of all that. Certainly, our lifestyle is and remains one that the world envies; we're still a magnet for tourists - and for new settlers - from around the world.

But we who have the stewardship of our nation today must continue to work hard if we are to see these successes built on and not frittered away.

The past year was a testing one for the nation and 1991 will bring its own challenges and difficulties.

But I want all Australians to understand that this nation can successfully navigate its way through these difficult times - and that we will do so.

The past year for example has seen a new spirit of co-operation emerge among the three levels of government, and a new commitment to building a more effective and efficient federal system and a more flexible and competitive Australian economy.

We have made significant progress. But our governments will not achieve this goal alone. It is my hope that this remaining decade before we celebrate the centenary of the Australian Commonwealth will be one marked by continued co-operation at all levels of our community.

We must not sacrifice the gains made for us nor squander the opportunities now before us. We have built with the support of people from around the globe a nation of tolerance, fairness, innovation and courage. John Newcombe and I are about to present a number of Australia Day awards to individual Australians who embody these very qualities - people whom we honour today, our national day, as Australians of the Year.

It is my belief too that these very qualities - of tolerance, fairness, innovation and courage - must now carry us forward to the prosperity and peace which we seek for ourselves and our children.

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