



## PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
LAUNCH OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TV FOUNDATION "LIFT-OFF"  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE - WEDNESDAY, 29 APRIL 1992**

I am delighted to be asked to launch what is a marvellous venture in every regard.

Lift-Off is the product of a great initiative: from the Australian Children's Television Foundation under the inspired leadership of Patricia Edgar.

Patricia Edgar has made an unequalled contribution to children's television and children's education in this country - and I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank her.

In all she has done, of course, she has also made a great contribution to Australia.

There are many others I should mention.

The late Robert Holmes a Court made a vital initial investment. Janet Holmes a Court has played a major role. So has Don Edgar of the National Outreach Committee.

Yet, in a sense, it would be wrong to stress the contribution of any individuals - for the outstanding feature of this enterprise is its cooperative nature.

The ABC, the Film Finance Corporation, Penguin Books, Octopus Publishing, Text Media; various education Ministries and other educational bodies; teachers from right across the curriculum and curricula designers, experts in children's education and child psychology; writers, directors and technicians; actors, musicians, mimics, puppet-makers and puppeteers.

There is an extraordinary boldness and breadth to the conception, and plainly great skill in the execution.

If the children who watch Lift-Off, and read the Lift-Off spin-offs, develop the same skills of communication, cooperation and execution as producers have displayed, we will really be able to say that this country is pretty clever.

Among other things, the project suggests to me what we are collectively capable of - I think, almost as much as the program itself, we are celebrating that today.

Lift-Off also suggests what television is capable of - which is to say much more than we and our children are generally given.

I think most of us feel that, despite some illustrious exceptions, television has never really lived up to its great promise as a medium of human growth and enlightenment.

Our children, particularly, deserve much more than they are given in the way of intellectual stimulation.

So, quite frankly, do we adults - both as consumers of adult entertainment, and as parents.

Parents in the contemporary environment need whatever help they can get with the task of parenting.

This is an extraordinarily complex, largely artificial, rapidly changing world.

The information we and our children are required to absorb is infinitely greater, more complex, and, in many senses, more elusive and ephemeral than it was a generation ago - or half a generation ago.

The need for new channels of learning, over and above parents and schools, seems to me to be greater than it has ever been before.

The need to develop the capacities for learning and creativity - and the ability to enjoy them - has never been greater.

Television is one obvious answer. But it has been for forty years.

The truth is, television, which first presented itself as such a marvellous new learning medium, has always been an infuriating mixture of cause and cure.

Lift-Off is most definitely in the category of cure.

I am also excited by it for this reason: it is a two way window on the world.

It means that we will go to the world as well as having the world come to us.

We are good at these sorts of things.

Perhaps not enough Australians know it - but we are good at education. We export it.

We are good at making films and television; good at entertainment; good at the arts. We export all those things too.

We are also good at looking after those who need looking after. Not perfect by a long shot, but better than most.

No Australians are more deserving of our attention - meaning the investment of money, energy and expertise - than our children.

That is why Lift-Off is a truly great Australian venture. I congratulate all those who have been associated with it, and on behalf of all Australians, wish them all the success the project deserves.

Thank you.