



PRIME MINISTER

**PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
SPEECH TO THE TOURISM TASK FORCE, PARK GRAND HOTEL SYDNEY
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This program has already brought about the splendid restoration of the Old Treasury Building in Melbourne, a great example of what can be achieved when we get co-operation from State Governments. I know that Jeffrey is going to do his best to claim all that for himself, but that's par for the course.

The Customs House here in Sydney, which is now I'm happy to say, part of a very important public debate, is one of the city's oldest and best loved buildings, is another heritage building receiving assistance. Under the program the Federal Government is providing \$24 million towards its restoration so it can serve as an important tourist and cultural centre, and I'm very pleased can I say, that with the debate that we have had on this building, that it's engendered the debate about East Circular Quay and I'm delighted that we are able to work with the Lord Mayor who has shown a tremendous amount of leadership in this, and the various authorities and the owners, to get a really first-class result on the buildings that abut the Opera House, which is arguably the most important building – easily the most important building in the country – and arguably the most important building built in the 1960s anywhere in the world.

And I think it is – you know that the debate now about Circular Quay and the government of New South Wales has invited public comment about how it might be developed – but I will be seeing the Premier next week and I think it should be possible for the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to agree on a regime which gives some focus to Circular Quay, and makes the Customs House the central focus as the central civic building of the Quayside, and hopefully develops a square in front of it that lets all the people of this country come to the Quay not to view it, if you like, at the margin from the overseas terminal, or on the way around the Opera House, but centrally, in the central part of a central site of the city.

And this is going to take some...I think it's a proposition that can really come to life, but it does mean removing the Cahill Expressway and I think we can remove it at a very acceptable cost. At any rate, the Commonwealth is prepared to do this. And I think the important thing about it is that with the Olympics coming in the year 2000, it's important that when the Olympics come and go, that we leave things behind for the city and for the country, and this key tourism site in Australia - Circular Quay, the Opera House - I think getting that focus now and the opportunity of the Games, is something that we shouldn't let pass. There are other things that I'm speaking to NSW about, which are about the city of Sydney - the Expressway as it leaves that part of the city and goes down towards Woolloomooloo Bay, as you know divides the Domain from the Gardens, which were once one single area, and there's a discussion going about burying that roadway so that it no longer divides that green space in the city. All these things, I think, are going to be important. But as well as East Circular Quay, we've got the GPO and Martin Place, and the Commonwealth has been involved - I've been involved myself - to see that it is sympathetically developed, and that again, in this key precinct of the city and Martin Place, in what is one of the most important heritage buildings, the uses not yet defined, probably a hotel, but one that will sit with some sympathy and comfort with the site. And again, I'm indebted to the Lord Mayor and the Sydney City Planning Authority, in dealing with this and of course Australia Post which has cooperated in trying to get a decent development.

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