



**PRIME MINISTER**

EMBARGOED 7.00 PM 18 JANUARY 1995  
\*\*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY\*\*

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING  
ARRIVAL OF HIS HOLINESS, POPE JOHN PAUL II  
WEDNESDAY 18 JANUARY 1995, SYDNEY**

Your Holiness, Your Eminences, Your Excellency, Premier, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Your Holiness, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to Australia.

I welcome you as the spiritual leader of one billion people worldwide, and of five million Australians.

Your Holiness, I welcome you on behalf of all Australians.

I welcome you as a man of faith and as a respected and admired international figure - one, surely, known to more people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, than any other Pope in history; one who has given moral leadership in the pursuit of peace and justice; in the interests of the young; in defence of the family; and in the cause of ecumenism.

We are honoured by your presence. We thank you for making the long journey to Australia to bestow a great honour on an Australian woman whom we hold in the deepest affection and regard.

You have come to honour Mary MacKillop for her goodness, her heroic virtue, her dedication to the poorest of the poor. In doing so, you renew in all of us the message she brought to those she encountered in her own lifetime.

In a great many ways she is a woman of our time.

In the last century as in this one, people came to Australia from all over the world in search of better lives. In the remote areas of Australia, Mary MacKillop helped the children of the poor to find them.

She established communities of hope.

It is partly because she worked in the bush, in many ways the cradle of our tradition, that she became a legendary figure for Australians.

Mary MacKillop's sympathies were with those we call the underdogs of society which is where, by tradition, Australian sympathies lie.

If we have not succeeded in converting those sympathies to an entirely fair and just society, they continue to constitute an ideal and an inspiration - and Mary MacKillop continues to embody them for us.

Through her work she spoke to all Australians and she spoke for the kind of tolerant and diverse society we aspire to today.

She readily crossed denominational boundaries. Protestant and Jewish Australians supported her and were her friends.

She was the daughter of Gaelic-speaking Scottish migrants, but her voice became a distinctly Australian one. When she wrote to the Vatican she began with the words: "It is an Australian who speaks".

Today, the Order she founded, the Josephites, continue to serve the children of the poor. Today, they bring hope to those on the margins of society in the suburbs of modern multicultural Australia, and, increasingly, to those in need in the countries of the Third World.

Your Holiness, in the next two days, many thousands of people who have journeyed from all over Australia and New Zealand, will gather in Sydney to greet you and be present at Mass and the beatification of Mary MacKillop.

These will be great days in the lives of all who attend. They will be very significant days in the life of our nation.

The presence of so many reflects both their continuing affection for Mary MacKillop and the Josephites, and, Your Holiness, their great regard for you.

I said we feel honoured to have you here among us: I dare say many of us also feel stronger.

Stronger for having among us a man whose steadfast defence and unremitting advocacy of Catholic faith and Christian ideals is a source of comfort and a guiding light.

Again, on behalf of all Australians, I welcome you.

**ENDS**