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## **PRIME MINISTER**

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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
FAREWELL TO HIS HOLINESS, POPE JOHN PAUL II  
SYDNEY AIRPORT - FRIDAY, 20 JANUARY 1995**

Your Holiness, we are sorry to see you go.

Your visit will leave memories which millions of Australians will always cherish.

It is a pity that we were not able to share you with more of Australia.

But had you been able to travel more widely I can assure you that the warmth of Sydney's welcome would have been repeated in every other city and community across the continent.

I trust that you will leave us in the knowledge that Sydney welcomed you on behalf of all Australia.

And I know all Australia will join with me in thanking you for making the long journey to bestow a great honour on Mary MacKillop.

It is true that women as much as men pioneered this country, but their contribution has not always been truly acknowledged.

The labour and love, the courage and perseverance, and not least the moral strength that women brought to the frontier of Australia, and now bring to the modern Australian community, have been fundamental defining forces in Australia's development.

In honouring this great Australian woman you have honoured all Australian women - and all Australians.

Your Holiness, you have also reminded us of where greatness in nations lies.

In Mary MacKillop the greatness was, as you said, in her openness and generosity to others, in her sense of justice and in the unconquerable courage which she brought to the task of seeing justice done.

We recognise that it is much the same with nations: that the promise and potential of Australia principally lie in these great human qualities.

In other words, the promise lies in our people.

When you spoke of the need for harmony and solidarity with one another we heard you very clearly.

This is a country of deep democratic traditions. It is also a society of many cultures.

These days we are very conscious of the need to marry our traditions and institutions with tolerance and openness towards others.

This is what we mean by multiculturalism in Australia.

In recent years we have concentrated our efforts on developing policies of inclusion, by which we mean policies which draw all Australians into the mainstream of our national life.

This has driven our response to the challenge of Aboriginal Australia, in which you expressed particular interest yesterday and on your last visit.

The same sentiment drives our approach to building a culturally diverse but cohesive society.

We recognise that we will not create a more cohesive and stronger Australia without creating a fairer and more just Australia.

When we talk of inclusion, therefore, we mean that the poor and disadvantaged must not be left without care. We mean the basic comforts and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives must be extended to them.

We do not say we have done enough, but these are our priorities and we know very well what you mean, Your Holiness, when you say that our response to such human needs now will largely determine the kind of society we pass on to future generations of Australians.

We know that there is no greater challenge facing us than the challenge of our youth.

There have been developments in the modern world which have the potential to greatly improve the lives of people - and yet those same developments have the potential to impoverish them.

We know that technological progress, like the wealth that will flow from our economic growth, will never be enough.

Experience tells us - as the lesson of Mary MacKillop tells us - that our young people need both a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging.

They need what Mary MacKillop understood so well - they need hope. And they need what she had so abundantly - they need faith.

We recognise the truth in what you say when you speak of "a growing sense of the need for a moral and spiritual renewal".

And we know that it demands of all of us in positions of influence - from political leaders to parents and teachers - that we address the spiritual needs of our children.

Your Holiness, you leave us conscious of the great honour you have done us on this brief visit and mindful of the message you have brought.

On behalf of all Australians I thank you and wish you a safe return.