



# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
SPEECH AT CORRIDOR OF OAKS TREE PLANTING, JACKSON PARK  
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It is a great occasion for me - it may be that one's Prime Ministership is confirmed when one plants a tree here. At any rate, we will have a tree. And I am glad that I have had the opportunity to plant it. It's always been that...there are places in Australia which are quite important to the Federation, to the nation, and also the Labor Party. And Maggie (Deahm) has mentioned the fact that Macquarie was an electorate which, of course, was the home of a former Labor Prime Minister in Ben Chifley, and as well as that, Tony Luchetti when I first went to Federal parliament, had been the Member for Macquarie for the better part of a quarter of a century. So there are very great Labor traditions here in the Blue Mountains, and interestingly, we have this connection with Henry Parkes. And it was the case, of course, in the 19th century, most people of his standing in public life had a house in the country. And his house in the country, of course, was at Faulconbridge. And happily, it has been preserved. And he was one of the principal people involved in the Federation of our nation. And the notion occurred to him as it did to many others, that there was no point in us being simply colonies, but rather that we should federate and become a nation. And this happened, of course, on the first of January, 1901. And he played a very proud role in it. And Faulconbridge has kept that connection with the birth of the Federation. And here we are now, just a hundred years later, trying to close the circle and see us establish an Australian republic with an Australian person as our Head of State. It shouldn't have taken one hundred years, but better late than never.

Now, I think that in these years, when we think back upon it, that great period of Australian nationalism was in the 1890s - it was one hundred years ago. Where we saw the big maritime strikes, one of the worst droughts, one of the worst depressions - recessions - but we saw the birth of Australian nationalism, we saw the birth of the Labor Party and that sense of the nation, of course, we saw the Federation in 1901, and that nationalism went through until it was snuffed out in 1914 by the First World War. And we are seeing in

a sense that regenerate in the 1990s, where we have seen some of the same characteristics: the early 1990s, the recession, the drought, but again, I think a new sense by Australians in who we are and what we have become - what we have made for ourselves as a nation, and now, how we have come to celebrate what we have created here in Australia. And we know that our aspirations as Australians - that the sentiments we feel and the instincts we have - will be completely represented when we represent ourself to the world, as ourselves. And that we can't go on one hundred years later borrowing the monarchy of another country and say here we are, making our way in Asia, with this great opportunity, this ancient continent bequeathed to us, where just two hundred years ago there were no people of European descent, where this continent in a sense was saved by the Aboriginal community and kept in trust for the rest of us. And having been kept in trust, and again having that opportunity to go now as part of the community in Asia and say "oh, just by the way, the Head of State of Australia is the Queen of Great Britain". Now, it has served us, and in some parts of our history it has served us well. But now, of course, we must make the break - to do proud, to do justice to all of the instincts which Henry Parkes had, and all of those people interested in the Federation of the nation we now have to make that change, and make it to an Australian republic.

And let me tell you this - the moment it happens...*(interrupted by train passing)*...I was going to say this - that as we make this change, we will feel good about ourselves. You know, once people understand that there is an Australian person who represents the nation, and who is the embodiment of the nation, it will make us feel stronger, and it will make us feel better about ourselves - it will make it more clear to us who we are and what we are, and who we have become. So, today, I plant this tree not simply to do as other Prime Ministers have done, but to celebrate the spirit of nationalism of a century ago. To celebrate the fact that Henry Parkes his way up here from Sydney, weekends and from time to time, while having in his heart and mind the notion that we were better - and deserved to be better - than a collection of disparate colonies. That we were a people and that we were a nation then, as we certainly are today. That's why I am very pleased to be here.

I do have this collection of Henry's letters, and they are quite an interesting lot of letters - they are letters between Henry and his financier. He used to lend him money from time to time, and a few other personal things as well. So, all it proves is nothing changes - nothing ever changes. So, can I say also how pleased I am to be in the Blue Mountains, and particularly with Maggie Deahm. I see her sitting next to Bob Debus - part of a Labor Government. The thing I say about the Labor Party is that it has always had belief in Australia, and belief in Australians.

We have always seen the better instinct in people - there has always been two categories of Australians, as Manning Clarke has always said: the enlargers, and the punishers and straiteners. The people who have believed in something bigger and better, who have faith in Australians, and belief in them, that knew they could always do something more, and the people that said "know your place, keep your eyes down, stay at your last - that is our

place in life", the straiteners. And it has always been about this. And the enlargers have always had to pull Australia along, whether it has been into Federation, or whether it has been into engagement with the rest of the world, or whether it is to the republic, the enlargers - whoever they might be - have always been about pulling the country progressively to the next stage. And I was saying the other day - John Olsen, the great Australian artist, at a presentation about a year ago in Canberra, said "there are only two kinds of Australians - lovers and others, and we know what to think of the others, don't we?". Well, anyway, I am here on behalf of the lovers, of the enlargers, of the people who believe in a bigger Australia. Who have faith in themselves, have faith in these young people, in the children, who always see something better. So, that's why I am planting the tree - not simply to be part of a series, but to be part of something new, and be part of something better. Thank you.

ends.